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REGIONAL PLANNING AND LOCAL AUTONOMY IN THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION, 1981-1984

BY

PATRICIA BAYNE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1986

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled REGIONAL PLANNING AND LOCAL AUTONOMY IN THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION, 1981-1984 submitted by PATRICIA BAYNE in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

DATE: April 22, 1986

DEDICATION

For my family: Don, Ethan, Jarrod and Logan

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between the issue of local autonomy and regional plan preparation in the Edmonton metropolitan region, 1981-1984. Two primary objectives are advanced:

1. To examine the regional plan preparation process for evidence of the manifestation of the issue of local autonomy on the events of the process.
2. To determine the influence of the regional plan preparation process on the willingness of member-municipalities to cooperate for a regional purpose.

The study focusses on five areas of concern within the process: the role of provincial authorities, the role of the regional plan committee of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, the role of commission staff, contentious policy issues, and the mandate for the regional plan. A two stage research method was undertaken, the first step being an examination of documentary records and reports to establish the events of the process, and the second stage being a series of semi-focussed interviews with members of the regional plan committee and commission staff to obtain their observations and opinions about the process.

The relationship between local autonomy and regional planning was shaped, most dramatically, by the context of interauthority relations for the regional plan preparation process. First, at the provincial level, the absence of precise terms of reference to define the balance between regional control and local autonomy enhanced the opportunity for misunderstanding and conflict amongst the participants in the process. The failure of the Alberta Planning Board to clarify the ambiguity

surrounding the mandate, over the course of the process, exacerbated tensions between the commission membership and staff.

Second, the members of the regional plan committee, representing both a local and a regional interest, gave primary allegiance to their own municipalities. Only staff of the commission, with no decision-making authority, represented the regional point-of-view. As a result, the regi[illegible]st operated from a weak political position during the formulation of policy. Moreo[illegible] two groups worked at cross-purposes, each criticizing the role [illegible] the other. Staff remained loyal to the theoretical bases for regional planning, which stress the need for strong coordination at the regional scale, while municipal representatives endorsed the responsibility of local governments to maintain efficiency and equity, within the region, through voluntary compliance.

Finally, the position of commission staff within the process was adversely affected by conflicting direction from provincial authorities and the inability of the commission membership to resolve the issue of mandate at the regional plan committee level. They were in the unenviable position of having to serve two masters, neither one willing to express true commitment to any one stance until late in the process. By aligning themselves with the position of provincial authorities, staff left themselves open to criticism by the other side, representing the local municipalities. In the final analysis, planners were confronted with a truly confusing context in which to carry out their task. Any possible failings on the part of regional planning staff must be viewed in terms of the shortcomings of other participants in the process.

The study concludes that the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation in the Edmonton region was adversarial. There was no common appreciation amongst local authorities of the benefits to be secured through cooperative regional management and, hence, no reason to take the regional cause seriously. In essence, the process is an example of the failure of the will to cooperate, made even more significant by its manifestation within a regional planning system premised on the continued existence of intermunicipal goodwill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many people, without whom the successful completion of this thesis would have been impossible. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the willing participation of members of the regional plan committee and staff of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, for their time commitment to my research during the frenetic final stages of the preparation of the 1983 draft plan. Special thanks is due to Susan Maceyovski for her patience in familiarizing me with the Commission's reports and records. Credit is also due to Christine Fowler, for her conscientious typing of the final draft of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

1.0 The Dilemma of Regional Planning for Metropolitan Areas

At the metropolitan scale, land use planning aims to secure, for the overall region, an appropriate spatial arrangement of all of the activities which interact to form the metropolitan landscape.[1] It is concerned with the management of growth and change toward some view of a desired future form for the densely settled space within an urban-centered region. That this task requires both a definition of what that future state should be and a decision as to whose view of the future is appropriate does not, in itself, distinguish regional planning from other public planning endeavors. Nor does the fact that regional planning is concerned with establishing an equitable and efficient balance of costs and benefits amongst all of the inhabitants in a community necessarily earmark it for special status. Indeed, regional planning confronts all of the usual public planning dilemmas. However, certain characteristics of both regional planning theory and the regional environment guarantee that regional planners must confront these dilemmas in an extreme form. First, regional planning theory presumes the existence of regional communities that are bound together by the common aspirations and unifying sense of identity which are thought to arise from spatial proximity (Gertler, 1972). This belief in the metropolitan community as a single community pursuing common goals implies that individual municipal governments within the region will forsake a degree of autonomy in land use control for the benefit of the broader community of interest. Yet, this belief in regional communities and their cooperative bent is difficult to defend empirically

(Kaplan, 1982; Wakstein, 1972). Moreover, it has left planners both reluctant to acknowledge and ill prepared to deal with the intense interlocal jealousies and dispute that often mar the regional decision-making process (Gillingwater and Hart, 1978). Second, individual municipalities defend their sovereignty and operate their assault on regional efforts from the strong position afforded them by a political tradition that links local autonomy with the ideals of democracy, freedom and individualism (Lim, 1983). This political heritage virtually assures, in the Western World at least, that the issue of local autonomy will impinge in some manner on the regional process. It may be unrealistic to expect the cooperative urge to prevail over a municipal government's own interest. At the same time, there is some evidence that the form of the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning is very much a product of the unique contextual features that characterize every metropolitan setting. The context exerts influence on the policy-making process, and the process in turn might condition the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning (Kaplan, 1982; Skelcher, 1982).

In light of these trends in thought, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between local autonomy and the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton metropolitan region. Specifically, the research concerns the plan preparation process that commenced with the formation of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commision (EMRPC) on January 1, 1982. That there would indeed be a relationship between local autonomy and regional planning in this context was predetermined by the Alberta Planning Act, 1977, which is founded upon an ethic of local autonomy and yet designates the regional plan as the premier planning document in the Alberta planning system.

1.1 Framework of Study

The nature of planning as an activity that is shaped by its social and political environment, and yet is devoted to change and control within that context, provides a framework for exploring the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation. Two general research objectives are immediately suggested. The first is to examine the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton metropolitan area for evidence that local autonomy was indeed an issue, and that it had a manifest effect on the events of the process. Then, recognizing the commitment of public planning to control and intervention, the second objective is to determine the influence of the regional plan preparation process on the willingness of member municipalities to cooperate for a regional purpose.

As its primary thrust, the thesis analysis will focus on the interaction of opposing viewpoints - those defending local self-interests and those nurturing the regional perspective. The emphasis is on defining the issues, sorting the loyalties and sentiments of participants, identifying the perceived points of contention, documenting attempts to thwart the regional effort and strategies for managing that conflict, and tracing the nature of the conflict throughout the process. Yet, it must be recognized that, fundamentally, this is also an exploration of the impact of one particular facet of context, as a shaping force, or constraint, on a decision-making process and the ability of that process to cope with that constraint. The emphasis here is on examining the nature of the context, the perceived role for regional planning within that context, and the impact of the context on the process.

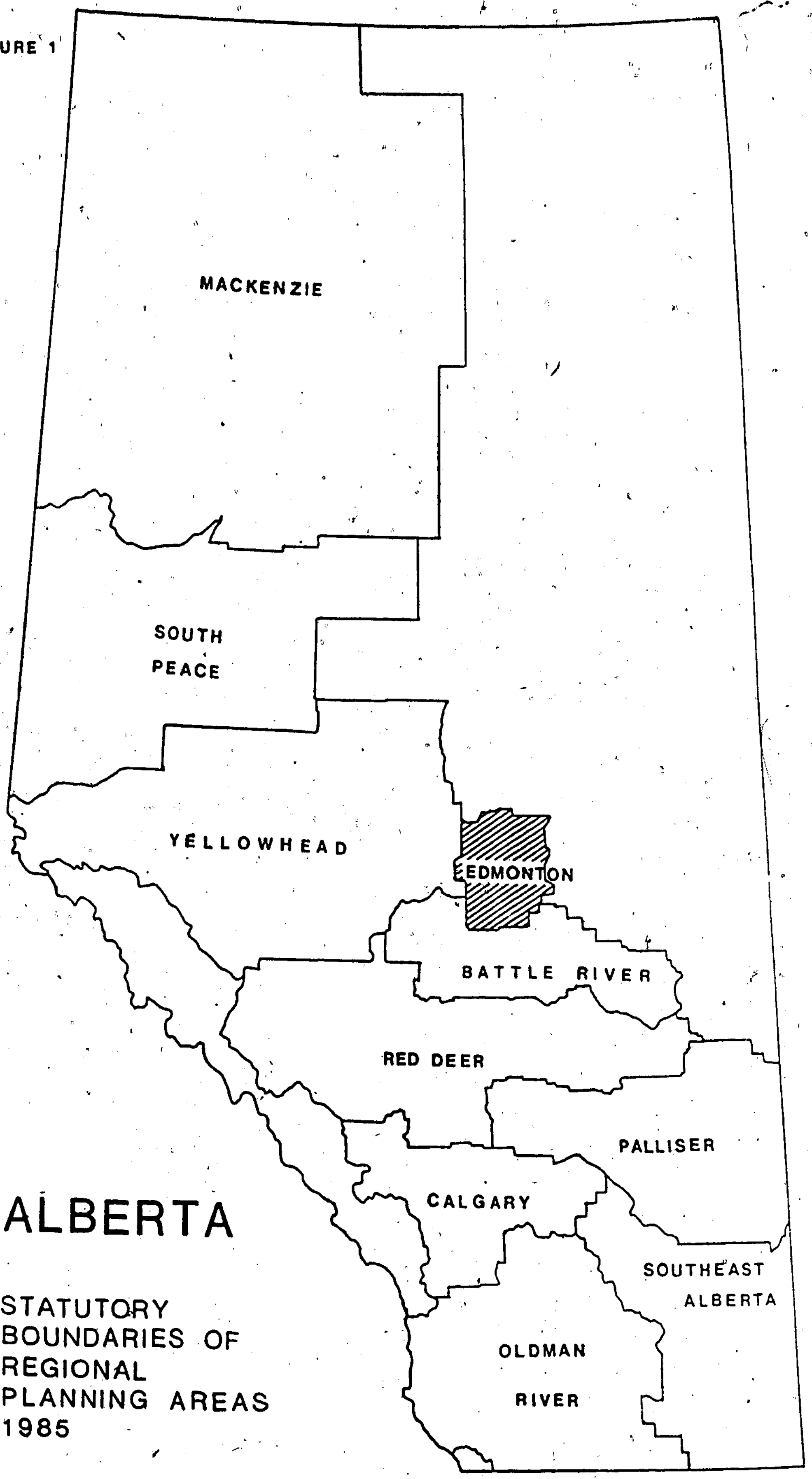
1.2 Appropriateness of Edmonton for a Case Study

Several factors indicate the suitability of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission as a case study of the relationship between local autonomy and the regional plan preparation process. First, in general terms, it is one of ten regional planning commissions in a regional planning system that is clearly based on the principles of cooperation and local responsibility (Figure 1) (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975; Smith, 1982). Under the Alberta Planning Act, 1977, the Lieutenant Governor in Council holds the power to establish and describe the area of jurisdiction for regional planning commissions (Section 21). The Minister of Municipal Affairs then designates those municipal councils that must appoint representatives to the commission and indicates the number of representatives that each council must appoint (Section 22). Membership on the commissions is thus compulsory, with each commission comprised solely of representatives delegated from municipal councils; that is, the commissioners are municipal politicians. In addition, each commission is authorized to employ technical staff to assist with the execution of its duties.

The Planning Act, 1977 assigned five responsibilities to regional planning commissions:

1. To prepare a regional plan, prior to December 31, 1982.

FIGURE 1


MACKENZIE
SOUTH PEACE
YELLOWHEAD
EDMONTON
BATTLE RIVER
RED DEER
PALLISER
CALGARY
SOUTHEAST ALBERTA
OLDMAN RIVER

ALBERTA

STATUTORY
BOUNDARIES OF
REGIONAL
PLANNING AREAS
1985

2. To assist municipalities with the preparation of land use bylaws or statutory plans, whenever requested to do so.
3. To provide assistance to municipalities on matters of a general nature.
4. To act as the subdivision approval authority for those member municipalities not designated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs as having subdivision approval authority in their own right.
5. To promote public interest and participation in the planning process (Section 26.3).

Many of these tasks, and in fact most of the provisions for regional planning commissions within the Act, simply echo planning statues of years gone by. However, in terms of the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning, certain of the changes which have occurred since the institution of the first regional planning commission, in 1950, seem to exemplify a firm commitment to regional planning by the provincial government. For example, membership of the commissions has become compulsory (Section 22), the commissions hold subdivision approval authority for most municipalities within their boundaries (Section 37), and the adoption of regional plans was made obligatory (Section 26). Furthermore, the regional plan is deemed the most important document in the Alberta hierarchy of plans and regulatory instruments. All statutory plans and bylaws and actions taken by local authorities, municipal and regional planning commissions, development appeal boards and development officers must now conform with the regional plan (Section 54). Another important development occurred in 1971 with the establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund, to be administered by the Alberta Planning Board and to provide monies for the continued stable operation of regional planning commissions. The fund is obtained in large part from a compulsory levy on all municipalities, based on a schedule of mill rates which takes into account differences in sizes of municipalities.

While these changes seem to support the concept of regional planning, certain other aspects of provincial government policy sanctify the principle of local autonomy. The regional plan may rest at the apex of the hierarchy of plans in the province, but the Planning Act, 1977 also decentralizes planning functions. In fact, one impetus for the revisions to the planning system, contained within the Act, was the strengthening of local autonomy (Alberta, 1980, A.A.C.I.P., 1985).[2] For example, whereas regional planning commissions and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary were once the only agencies to hold the prerogative of subdivision approval, the current Planning Act authorizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs, under certain conditions, to designate other municipal councils to be their own subdivision approval authorities. As a direct result of this provision, the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission no longer acts as subdivision approval authority for the cities of St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan and Leduc, or for the counties of Parkland and Strathcona. Since subdivision control is the only direct means of policy implementation available to regional planning commissions in Alberta, it obviously follows that the authority of the EMRPC over its member municipalities has been greatly reduced. Furthermore, the Act directs the Alberta Planning Board, as arbiter in the subdivision appeal process, to decide subdivision appeals in conformance with municipal land use bylaws and regulations, while only "paying regard to" the regional plan (Section 109).[3] This opens the prospect that the Board's decisions might undercut regional planning policies where they are in conflict with municipal government wishes (Black, 1983).

The Regional Planning System Study (Alberta, 1981a) undertaken by Alberta Municipal Affairs to clarify the role of regional planning in Alberta, noted that these provisions in the Act make plan non-conformity between the municipal and regional levels a serious issue. The Alberta Planning Board, in an attempt to rectify this and other ambiguities in the Act, has articulated a set of guidelines to define the nature of the regional plan. These stipulate that the regional plan should be a policy document rather than a prescriptive regulatory tool. It may outline future development patterns, but only in a general way, without circumscribing the discretion of a municipal authority. Regional plan policy, it is argued, "should not pre-empt the prerogative of Provincial departments or local authorities having responsibilities for areas associated with regional planning" (Alberta, 1982a, pp. 8-9). Hence, the relationship between regional planning and local autonomy as described in provincial policy is by no means clear cut.

With more specific reference to the Edmonton context, the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission administers a large population base in an urban-centered region of the type which planning theory suggests is most conducive to the concept of a regional community. Yet, during ~~an~~ intensive investigation of Alberta's regional planning system by Alberta Municipal Affairs (Alberta, 1981a, p. 32), people involved with the system (planners, commission members, government department personnel) expressed concern about the efficacy of regional planning in Alberta's two metropolitan regions. They offered the opinion that the policy regarding the local autonomy of metropolitan area municipalities needs clarifying and that there is no adequate forum for resolving intermunicipal conflict within a metropolitan region.[4] Concerns such as these no doubt arise from a recognition of the past pattern of intermunicipal conflict in the Edmonton region, where growth management issues have long sparked bitter controversy among member municipalities. In fact, Smith (1982, p. 4) calls the Edmonton region the "extreme case in point" that municipal governments in Alberta will promote individual interests above concerns for a regional good. These struggles within the Edmonton region are epitomized by amalgamation and annexation contests between the City of Edmonton and surrounding rural and suburban municipalities such that, in 1979, when Edmonton made further application to annex land from surrounding municipalities, the Provincial Cabinet exercised its right to intervene in the annexation proceedings. It did so in recognition of the intense municipal conflicts over growth management issues and development control within the region. The Cabinet order, released in 1981, expressed continued faith in the concept of a regional community and the regional planning commission as a forum for the cooperative resolution of dispute. The Edmonton Regional Planning Commission (ERPC) was reorganized so that its boundaries would reflect a metropolitan community based on commuting distance from Edmonton. Yet, at the same time, the principle of local autonomy was given its due, as the Cabinet order made plain:

> The needs and aspirations of the people of Edmonton and region are best served by a number of local municipal governments working together co-operatively, but maintaining their individual autonomy. SPECIFICALLY, THE AUTONOMY OF THE CITY OF ST. ALBERT AND THE COUNTY OF STRATHCONA, INCLUDING THE HAMLET OF SHERWOOD PARK, WILL BE PROTECTED IN

> TERMS OF THEIR CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY (Alberta, 1981b, p. 2)

Hence, with a legal framework which sanctions both municipal independence and regional cooperation as fundamental principles, the Edmonton region seems an appropriate locale for examining the relationship between regional plan preparation and local autonomy. Furthermore, since the 1979-1981 annexation hearings led to the stipulation of a new set of boundaries which were defined specifically to ease municipal tensions with respect to territorial jurisdiction and growth management issues, this thesis focusses primarily on the plan preparation process from the date of that decision until the ratification of the plan by the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission in September 1983. To a large extent, the reorganization imposed by the Cabinet required the remaining commission members to begin plan preparation anew. The rewritten regional plan was not finally ratified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs until August 1984, but the thesis was not extended to that date for two reasons. First, the Commission, itself, reached a consensus about the plan in September 1983. A regionally acceptable balance between regional and local interests existed at this point. The final year of the process, from September 1983 to August 1984, occurred solely because of criticism about the plan made by the Alberta Planning Board. Second, the focus during the last year was on regional-provincial relations and not the local-regional process. The issue of local autonomy was of secondary importance. It seems reasonable, then, to concentrate on plan preparations prior to September 1983.

1.3 Research Methods

The study relies on two sources of information, each for distinctly different purposes. Planning documents and records, correspondence, and minutes of the regional plan preparation proceedings of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission and its predecessor, the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, are used to trace the growth aspirations of the regional municipalities and the extent to which these have been accommodated over the years. As well, documentary sources are used to the following ends: to define the nature of the planning process, to identify issues of contention in terms of subject matter, timing, escalation and resolution of dispute, to locate principal actors in the conflict, and to outline the role planners appeared to take in managing conflicts during the process. The documentary evidence also provides a basis of comparison for the second source of information, a series of interviews in depth with individual participants in the process. These interviews with 11 members of the regional plan preparation committee and the seven planners most intimately involved in plan preparations reveal the personal opinions, observations and evaluations of key actors. The results of the interviews actually provide the core focus for the research, since it is these personal views, rather than the objective account of the events, which will ultimately determine future actions and commitments to the regional purpose (Adrian, 1971; Whalen, 1960).

The survey procedure employed semi-structured or focussed interviews, which allow participants to speak at length, in their own words, on specified themes or open-ended questions of relevance. This technique, according to Dixon and Leach (1978, p. 4), is particularly appropriate in studies such as this, where the complete population of interest is small and sampling is not indicated. The merits of the approach have been described by Stewart and Cash (1974, p. 48):

> They let the respondent do the talking while the interviewer plays his role as listener and observer ...open questions may reveal what the respondent thinks is important, and he may volunteer information you might not think to ask for. They may also reveal a respondent's lack of information or misunderstanding of words or concepts... The respondent might show an uncertainty of feeling or his intensity of feelings toward an issue.

A semi-structured interview format permits lengthy answers which might reveal a participant's biases and prejudices. It allows a spontaneity of response and the substantial detail that is necessary to a study such as this thesis, while still permitting the interviewer some control over subject matter. The main drawback is the difficulty of recording, coding, and tabulating the results obtained from the interviews (Stewart and Cash, 1974, p. 49). However, in this thesis, where the relationship between local autonomy and the plan preparation process is, itself, not quantifiable, the need for statistically precise measurement is tenuous. Instead, the method allows for a description of the participants' perceptions of the plan preparation process in a manner such that "what is sacrificed in analytical precision is recompensed through richness and detail" (Burton, 1981, pp. 3-5).

1.4 Outline and Plan of the Study

Chapters 2 and 3 will lay the theoretical groundwork from which the thesis research takes its shape. Chapter 2 will outline the development of regional planning, as well as the nature of the conflicts that occur in metropolitan regions, and will relate the tenets of regional doctrine to the principles underlying the belief in local autonomy. This chapter will also establish that the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning is a product of the unique decision-making environment in any region. In Chapter 3 the design of the regional plan preparation process will be viewed as a response to the individual context for decision-making. Here, the elements that make up the environment for planning will be defined, and those aspects of the decision-making context that represent, for the planner, an opportunity for choice will be characterized. Limits on the effectiveness of regional planning will also be discussed.

Next, in Chapters 4 and 5, the political context for regional planning in the Edmonton region will be described. More specifically, the provincial policy which juxtaposes regional planning and local autonomy within the same legislative framework will be reviewed in Chapter 4. Then, in Chapter 5, the history of inter- municipal dispute that has marred the regional process within the Edmonton area will be described. The impact of the McNally Commission report on intermunicipal relations, the fiscal arguments for territorial reform, and the 1973-1979 regional plan preparation process were the critical forerunners of a municipal assault on the City of Edmonton's bid in 1979 to annex a large territory from surrounding municipalities. The annexation application and the resulting Cabinet decision will then be presented as immediate precursors of the intermunicipal relations within the regional plan preparation process under consideration in this thesis.

In Chapters 6 and 7 the results of the research will be presented. The interpretation will begin by tracing the trajectory of events in the process and will then proceed to consider, from documentary sources, those factors that figured most prominently in shaping the relationships between local autonomy and regional plan preparations. The distinguishing traits of the relationship between the two forces in the Edmonton region will also be pinpointed. Chapter 7 will present the results of the interview survey, that is, the opinions and observations of members of the regional plan committee of the EMRPC and technical planning staff. This discussion is to be organized around five topic areas: the role of provincial authorities, the role of the regional plan committee, the role of regional planning staff, contentious issues in the formulation of regional policy, and the mandate for regional planning. Finally, in Chapter 8 the conclusions that can be drawn from this case study, and their theoretical ramifications, will be set out.

Footnotes

1. Hall (1970) defines the type of regional planning that is the focus of this thesis as regional/local planning. Its stress is on the internal relationships between parts of the region and the whole, or between one segment of the region and another. It is primarily concerned with physical problems of land use and design, and the various social, economic, and aesthetic considerations subsumed thereunder.

   This is distinct from regional/national planning which is principally concerned with the allocation of national resources amongst regions that are most often defined by economic criteria. Hence, economic planning is the fundamental realm of interest in regional/national planning.

2. Both the then Minister of Municipal Affairs, Marvin Moore, and the current Minister, Julian Koziak, isolate local autonomy as a key issue in the design of the Planning Act, 1977 (A.A.C.I.P., 1985, pp. 4,6). To cite Koziak,

   > The 1977 Act not only confirmed the commitment of the Government to land use planning, but it also introduced a revised planning system which was based on the premise of a greater municipal autonomy.

3. The Alberta Planning Board, under the Planning Act, 1977 is directly involved in regional planning. The Board, which is comprised of senior provincial civil servants and citizens at large, as appointed by the Provincial Cabinet, administers the Alberta Planning Fund, reviews and approves regional plans and regional plan amendments, adjudicates subdivision appeals, and investigates relevant planning matters, at its discretion (Section 13, 48, 52, 54 and 56). It also adjudicates intermunicipal disputes (Section 44) and disputes between a regional planning commission and a local authority (Section 55).

4. These comments, suggesting that there is no adequate forum for resolving dispute, were made despite the specific provisions of the Act (see Note 3).

REGIONAL COOPERATION AND LOCAL AUTONOMY AND THE DECISION-MAKING ENVIRONMENT

2.0 Introduction

> The conceptual basis of regional planning is the Achilles heel of pretty well every book which attempts the subject...time would be more fruitfully spent on improving the conceptual basis of regional planning than on refining some esoteric aspects of regional science (Chadwick, 1975, p. 332).

It is difficult to present a neat synthesis of all of the key elements that theoreticians deem critical to a theory of regional planning. In fact, the field is without a clearly articulated statement of theory that has been built upon the intellectual reassessments and practical lessons that have developed since the concept of the city-region was first suggested by the forerunners of the discipline, almost a century ago. In the words of Perloff (1968, p. 153), "regional planning has developed along pragmatic lines with relatively little attention paid to formal theory". In a similar vein, Hall (1970, p. 66) has referred to British regional planning experience as ad hoc, rule-of-thumb planning, for which no scrupulous and rigorous methodology yet exists. It thus becomes necessary, when isolating the concepts that are crucial to a study such as this thesis, to infer important points from an array of sources where the underlying assumptions and goals of regional planning are simply implied. In fact, discussion of regional planning principles is often subsumed within the larger question of local and regional government and reform (Hall, 1970, p. 70).[1]

Nevertheless, the literature does reveal persistent veins of thought that are critical in designing a framework to examine the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation. Implicit in the concept of regionalism, from the beginning, has been the belief that local authorities will be prepared to transcend the parochial bounds of their own jurisdictions in some cooperative framework, when the good of the entire region is at stake. It is presumed that a community of interest exists at the regional scale, and that it will be recognized and valued by municipal units. Yet, the purported benefits of this regional bond are often defined in functional and economic terms which appear, from empirical evidence, to be less important to municipal governments than political allegiances at the local level. Thus, local autonomy emerges as a countervailing force in regional planning efforts. The task for regional authorities becomes one of establishing a balance between the two opposing views. It is further suggested in the literature that the definition of this balance must be unique for every region. No one regional structure is universally suited to the circumstances of every region. Therefore, the regional plan preparation process must be designed to fit the context, or the impact of planning in its ability to shape the future or facilitate change is diluted. Hence, an examination of the relationship between regional planning and local autonomy, such as this thesis intends, must be premised on a clear awareness of the decision-making context. A significant aspect of this context is, of course, the presence or absence of a municipal will to cooperate for the regional purpose. The understanding of the context, then, serves as a basis for interpreting the actual events of the plan preparation process.

2.1 Early Concepts

2.1.1 Urban Containment and Rural Revitalization

One of the first suggestions for regional planning appeared in the work of Howard at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Hall, Gracey, et al (1973), this period of rapid industrialization and urbanization in Britain and its concomitant problems of overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions led critics like Howard to conclude that a new form of community was needed to capture a more perfect version of the good life. Howard's own vision, which proposed that town and country, the two aspects of the regional environment, be planned simultaneously, was the vanguard of an intellectual movement that championed the objectives of urban containment and the revitalization of the rural environment. In addition, Howard's theory reveals the implicit assumption that urban and rural dwellers cherish common goals that are best served by treating the two environments as a whole. The problem of improving life at both ends of the urban-rural spectrum is treated as a single one - the provision of a balanced environment (Mumford, 1938, p. 395).[2]

2.1.2 The Regional Community

These ideas were translated into precepts for regional planning action by Geddes and his later disciples. According to Geddes (1968, p. 343), "it is time to be ending the ancient feud, the artificial separation of town and country, the isolation of town councils and county councils, and to be seeing that town-mouse and country-mouse have too long been treated as distinct species". Mumford (1938, pp. 367-369), who built explicitly on the work of Geddes, continued this train of thought:

> The human region, in brief, is a complex of geographic, economic, and cultural elements. Not found as a finished product in nature, not solely the creation of human will and fantasy, the region, like its corresponding artifact, the city, is a collective work of art... The effective redefinition of regional areas - a scientific remapping of these areas and a political and cultural 'rewilling' of them - is one of the essential preliminary tasks toward building up a cooperative and serviceable civiliation.

A region, then, was to be understood as a composite of natural forces and human spirit with each regional community unique and distinguishable from all others. From this, Geddes (1968, p. 397) concluded that regional planning must capture the individual essence of every region so that "each valid scheme should and must embody the full utilization of its local and regional conditions, and be the expression of local and regional personality". In response to this task, Mumford (1937, pp. 371-381) suggested that effective regional planning must go beyond a simple survey of regional resources and activities to a critical evaluation of the needs, desires, ideals, and ethics of the regional community. The plan must embody the very essence of regional goals. Implementation of the plan, a vital step in the regional planning process, would involve a deliberate campaign to educate and convince community members of the regional point of view. In sum, then, regional plan preparation would have to go beyond the analysis of technical data to the task of discovering and nurturing the unique qualities that bind together each community of interest.

2.1.3 Regional Reform

Inherent in these concepts is the belief that existing systems of local authorities might be ill-suited to the task of city-region reform. Geddes, using Britain as an example, suggested that some evolution of local government institutions will occur as a natural and necessary process when the existing parochial methods of administration become cumbersome and inefficient. It is implied that regional cooperation will arise out of a reasoned awareness that it is both necessary and inevitable. A rational system of administration based on this area wide consciousness, will then emerge. Yet, at the same time, Geddes (1968, p. 44) cautioned against hasty political rearrangements of local authority boundaries as being a stimulus to dispute, friction, and legal difficulties. Abercrombie (1923), too, in a discussion of regional planning for Britain, recognized a potential for parochial disputes when he addressed the means by which regional planning is to be enforced. The possibility that a local authority might wish to evade its regional responsibility clearly underlies the perception that it is necessary to outline mechanisms for control. According to Abercrombie (1923, pp. 117,118), one of the principal aims of regional planning is to "eliminate that parochialism which is inevitably set by the artificial boundaries between local authorities which are so necessary for the detailed carrying out of their services but which, without a regional community, tend to produce isolated communities resentful of any interference with their own existence to meet the needs of their neighbors". So while, on the one hand, regional planning is justified by the presumed existence of regional communities and a concomitant spirit of cooperation, it is also suggested that the viability of regional planning might be eroded by self-seeking local authorities. Early theory leaves regional planners with somewhat contradictory terms of reference.

2.1.4 Link to the Present

The seeming incongruity between the theoretical ideal of a united community of interest and the reality of intense inter-local jealousies and dispute has plagued regional planners since early times. As will become apparent shortly, contemporary regional planners are no closer to resolving this dilemma than their predecessors. Yet, even the early theoretical discussions suggested that the question of political control rests at the heart of any quest for regional planning reform. In more modern terms, Abrams (1967, p. 1033) referred to political jurisdiction as "the rock on which regional planning is either shattered or to which it is firmly secured". In light of these observations, it would seem that the critical issue to be resolved in any regional planning exercise is the appropriate balance between two countervailing forces - regional cooperation and local autonomy - and the task for regional planning in the face of this balance. Given the suggestions by early theorists that each region is unique and that each planning exercise must respect that individuality, it seems reasonable to expect that the regional planning task will differ over time and space, depending upon the particular circumstances encountered. In accompanying terms, the relationship between local autonomy, as one issue of relevance in the regional arena, and regional plan preparation will be the product of the unique decision-making environment of every region. Yet, it is necessary to examine a more current state of the art to discover how these early threads have been incorporated into contemporary regional planning doctrine.

2.2 The Rationale for Coordinated Regional Management

Like the moves for metropolitan government reform of which it is often a part, regional planning is touted in theory as a vehicle for achieving efficiency, equity, and areawide coordination in policy and servicing for the urban region. It is a framework for directing growth and change. Problems of policy coordination, policy accountability, and policy inequities stimulate the desire for a cohesive form of regional management. Lim (1983, pp. 6,7) has consolidated the many justifications for regional integration into six neat arguments:

1. Scale economies in the production of public services.
2. Effective distribution of public goods.
3. Resolution of interjurisdictional externalities.
4. Improved exchange of information and coordination among subunits.
5. Reduction of fiscal disparities among subareas.
6. Promotion of income distribution.

Yet, Bradford and Oates (1974) have suggested that empirical evidence fails to provide absolute endorsement of these claims. They observed that although integrated systems of local government may yield a more equitable distribution of income, they may not be preferable to decentralized systems in terms of service efficiency. Hirsh (1968), likewise, questioned the validity of the arguments for regional management when he indicated that not all services, particularly those in human service delivery, reap significant scale economies. In fact, the literature abounds with case studies disputing one or more of the claimed benefits for regional administration. Even more important to the purpose of this thesis, Long (1968), Wood (1959), and Lim (1983) have suggested that these types of arguments stress the economic and functional issues involved in reform at the expense of questions of political control and public values. Discussions are thereby reduced to questions of efficiency and appropriate service standards, with the underlying presumption that economic rationality will prevail in the quest for regional control. Long (1968, pp. 2,4,5), likening the arguments for fragmented and centralized forms of metropolitan administration to a comparison of the merits of the corner grocery store and the supermarket, saw folly in such an assumption:

> In both cases efficiency is contrasted with what is purported to be an anachronism. Power and competence are taken as self-evident grounds for the euthanasia of the great majority of local governments which are blithely to be consigned to the dustbin of history... But while arguments of scale and competence are persuasive for those who share a common object, they miss the mark when addressed to an audience whose views are widely divergent... The corner grocery store is obsolete only when its customers so regard it.

In a similar vein, Banfield (1957, p. 90) claimed that "the idea that there are values, such as efficiency, which pertain to the community as a whole and to which the private interests of individuals ought to be subordinated, has never impressed the working class voter". According to these authors, the rationale for regional management must be derived from a clear assessment of the political climate of the community involved and an appreciation of the political structures that are necessary for effective control.

2.3 The Regional Community

These critical observations, which will form the core of later discussion, raise a related point about the concept of the regional community. Many of the classic arguments for reform rest on the premise that the region is a viable level of focus for a discussion of community. Yet, the literature does not even indicate universal agreement as to how a region or a community is best defined. For example, while Friedmann and Miller (1965) considered a region to extend outward from the metropolitan core for a distance of up to two hours driving time, Berry (1973) proposed that it be based on the daily commuting range from the city. Guest and Lee (1983) discussed two forms of community as being relevant within the metropolitan Seattle region, one based on primary intimate relationships and another based on more distant functional ties.

For thesis purposes, it is not pertinent to further catalogue the different approaches to region delimitation.[3] Rather, what is of interest here is the continued faith of regional planners in the existence of an identifiable, organic community of interest and the implications of this belief for regional planning practice. Gertler (1972, pp. 17,18) provided an example of this school of thought when he suggested that the significant region coalesces around an ~~organic~~ social community whose interdependent parts are united by joint economic, transportation and communication systems and a resultant shared life and destiny. Implicit in this definition is the belief that a common existence serves as a bond for the region. Hancock (1976), too, showed his support for this view when he noted that community and cooperation are born of the shared functionalism and spatial proximity which exist in the city-region.[4] These definitions of a socially and functionally linked sphere of interest implicitly accept one particular concept of community:

> A group of people make up a community so far as they join together in valuing something. The common value that unites them may be a goal they all consider worth achieving, so that each, by noticing the identity of his objective with that of the others develops a sense of kinship with them (Haworth, 1963, pp. 19,20).

It is a community based on a common sense of purpose and a spirit of unity and cooperation. It is presumed that a common environment and daily functional interactions are sufficient impetus for the growth of this communal bond.

Others have challenged the wisdom of such an assumption. Bollens and Schmandt (1982, p. 14), for example, described the metropolitan region as a mosaic of diverse units where the concept of metropolitan citizenship has little concrete meaning:

> Metropolitan areas are communities in the sense that they constitute settlements of people living within specified geographic space and interacting with each other in terms of their daily needs. Few, if any of them, are communities in the classical meaning that their residents identify with the overall area, take pride in its features and accomplishments, and have strong feelings of commitment to it (Bollens and Schmandt, 1982, p. 11).

Adrian (1971), too, characterized the metropolitan region, not as a community, but as an aggregate of persons and places pursuing a variety of economic and social goals. To Wakstein (1972, pp. 294,295), these interpretations of the metropolitan region support the historical record of the last one hundred years and with respect to theory, point to the "persistence of some highly questionable assumptions. One is the continual assumption that a metropolitan community is a single community steadfastly pursuing universally agreed upon goals." In fact, the belief in an areawide consciousness that will foster cooperation and consensus about goals seems difficult to defend empirically. To isolate three representative examples from the seemingly endless sea of case studies, evidence supplied by Wak[illegible]in (1972) for Boston, Kaplan (1982) for Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal, and Aron (1969) for New York indicates that political and community allegiances do not rest at the regional level. In every instance local authorities worked systematically to undermine the efforts aimed at a redefinition of issues away from the local level of decision making.

This second interpretation of the metropolitan region reorients both the rationale and the framework for regional planning. The picture of a metropolitan area as a diverse yet functionally integrated system, with joint problems and joint responsibilities as a result of these linkages, outlines a need for coordinated action. Yet, returning to points drawn earlier from Long (1968) and Banfield (1957), neither the reasoned desirability nor the functional necessity of coordination guarantees a corresponding political success. The critical issue would seem to be the attainment of an appropriate balance between the desires of the parts and the needs of the whole. In an attempt to clarify this dilemma, Ash (1969, pp. 73,74) likened the city-region to human personality:

> The structure of personality for anyone alive today mirrors the complexity of the city-region itself.

> We each simultaneously play many roles, have diverse interests - often with no other link between them than our own brittle selves. The problem of personal identification today, surely, centring as it does on the question of 'alienation', is that of finding the balance between these disparate parts and of sustaining resultant tensions... The city-region is not a community, but rather an environment.

2.3.1 A Redefinition

One is left, then, with a definition of the metropolitan community that is based on a set of boundaries delimiting functional linkages and interactive priorities and enclosing an array of politically diverse groups with conflicting goals and different values. The conflict bred by this diversity can be interpreted within a locational framework (Cox, 1973). Individuals, based on particular needs and wants, make decisions with respect to the maximum utilization of resources at their disposal. Each resource allocation scheme may have repercussions, or externality effects, both positive and negative, on the utilities of other individuals. The desire to minimize negative externalities and maximize positive ones leads individuals to cluster together with others with like resource allocation schemes, into distinct spatial clusters, or territories, thereby limiting contact with dissimilar groups. However, in the metropolitan region, with close spatial juxtaposition of these distinct groups, conflicts may occur along the territorial boundaries when the effects of one group's decisions are perceived as imposing negative externalities upon the other groups. In light of this, Dye and Hawkins (1971) suggested that the problem of decision making in the metropolis is essentially one of politics - politics being the means by which the controversy which arises through the interplay of community interests is resolved. In these terms, the management of these politics, or the resolution of the conflict that stems from diversity, is the principal task of metropolitan government.

Gillingwater and Hart (1978) have made a similar claim, suggesting that regional planning must expand its role beyond the traditional technical drafting of plans to correspond with the political nature of the decision-making task.[5] They define regional planning as a complex process of policy development, communication, negotiation, and control. Gillingwater (1975) further described regional planning as being concerned with the influence and manipulation of power and political influence within and between political adminitstrations. Rhodes (1980), referring to the United Kingdom, also suggested that the influence of political factors and the power-game aspect of regional planning are dimensions of central-local relations that have been too long forgotten. These chara[illegible]izations of regional planning fit with Rondinelli's (1973) descriptions of urban policy making, in general, as an inherently political activity in which conflicts over values, goals, means and interpretations of reality are resolved through processes of reciprocal exchange such as negotiation, intermediation, and bargaining. The opportunity for exchange, or a predisposition toward cooperation amongst participants, arises from the anticipation of perceived mutual benefits; while the propensity for conflict, or thwarting of cooperative processes, arises out of perceptions of an asymmetrical pattern of gains and losses and concomitant self-seeking behaviour by participants (Skelcher, 1982). Regional planning, as a framework for the benefit of the overall regional community, provides one perspective for interpreting the claims of gains and losses for different groups. Yet, the methods of weighing the claims will depend on the particular concept of equity that is judged appropriate and will have vastly different consequences on the outcome of the decision-making process (Beatley, 1984; Berry and Steiker, 1974). However, before discussing the characteristics of the regional planning process in any greater depth, it will be helpful to examine further the nature of the political backdrop against which such a process takes place.

2.4 Government Structure and the Areal Division of Powers

Government and administrative structures are one manifestation of the arrangement of politics in the metropolitan region. Schattschneider (1960) made this point when he stated that political organizations are, in fact, mobilizations of bias in favor of one particular brand of politics deemed appropriate in a given time and space. The areal division of powers in the city-region is thus designed, according to Wood (1959, p. 54), to implement a particular set of values held in high esteem:

> The basic definition is, of course, that of division of powers in general, a governmental arrangement with the objective of distributing various segments of public authority in various ways for the purposes of assembling and restraining power for some given ends.

Wood took this point further when he suggested that the analysis of the need for metropolitan government reform must begin with a consideration of both the patterns for effective distribution of power and the relationship of these patterns to the goals of the community. In the final analysis, the appropriate division of powers is that which grants the capacity to govern effectively within the community framework and value structure of its constituency. From this, it is possible to infer that any shift in the areal distribution of powers should be in response to a change in either those values or the circumstances affecting their means of attainment. Money (1973, p. 321), in the context of local government reform in Britain, provided the rationale for this statement:

> Unless one assumes local government to be an end in itself, the nature of any proposed reforms must stem ultimately from what local government is supposed to be for, in the sense of helping to realize a given value or values... In short, it is a simple case of the end determining the means or, put another way, saying that the nature of the problem determines the nature of the solution.

2.4.1 Objectives Behind Local Government Decentralization

In light of the above discussion, it is necessary to examine the objectives which lie behind the fragmented pattern of decision making that regional land use planning aims to correct. Leemans (1975) outlined five categories of objectives for local government decentralization, and suggested that the exact form of local government that emerges will be a reflection of the different weights attached to each objective in a given political setting:

1. Decentralization as an instrument of nation building.
2. Democracy.
3. Freedom.
4. Efficiency of administration.
5. Social and economic development.

The precise definitions of each of these interrelated objectives occurs within a given societal framework where a particular concept of man and society, and the need to achieve certain results, will shape the exact pattern of decentralization that occurs.

2.4.2 Local Autonomy

Two of Leemans' objectives, democracy and freedom, are most often cited in defense of preserving local autonomy, or the right of individual communities to make independent decisions about their own futures. Before examining these objectives, however, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the concept of local autonomy. According to Clark (1984), the discretion of local governments to define and carry out their own objectives and, hence, the degree of autonomy they possess, is defined by two specific powers: immunity and initiative. The extent to which their decisions and actions are immune from surveillance and revision by higher tiers of authorities and the actual power of local authorities "to regulate and legislate in their own interests" determines their degree of self-determination (Clark, 1984, p. 205). Critical to the concept of autonomy, then, is the relative power balance between different levels of authority.

Based on this theory of autonomy, Clark (1984, p. 199) outlined a typology of local autonomy:

Type 1: initiative and immunity
Type 2: initiative and no immunity
Type 3: no initiative and immunity
Type 4: no initiative and no immunity

Type 1 autonomy represents virtually complete local control while type 4 allows no local discretion. Type 2 autonomy permits local authorities the power to act but makes every decision subject to review and possible amendment by upper-level tiers. Type 3 autonomy requires local authorities to respond to centrally-defined functions and regulations although there is no central scrutiny of the implementation of these rules. Hence, according to Clark (1984) the precise nature of local autonomy will depend upon the freedom of local governments to exercise their own initiative without fear of review by higher authorities. It follows from Leemans (1975) that the degree of latitude granted to local authorities will depend upon the particular societal framework and the objectives behind local government decentralization determined therein.

2.4.3 Democracy

Democracy, as it relates to the concept of local self-government, is an extremely difficult term to define. This, Whalen (1960) has suggested, is because there are as many traditions of democracy and local self-government as there are operational democracies. Langrod (1976, p. 7) elaborated on this point and suggested that the difference between reality and facade, or what is professed to occur and what actually takes place, further complicates the analysis of the two concepts:

> Neither democracy nor local government constitutes values which are absolute, uniform, comparable everywhere, and recognizable without difficulty... When we speak then of local government in democracy there is at bottom nothing but an equation of two unknowns. There is to be found a variety of formulae rarely corresponding with reality.

Yet, despite these complications, there are three elements that recur, in various guises, in most discussions about democracy and local government. These are control, participation, and consensus. For example, focussing on national political institutions, Whalen (1960) suggested that democracy means a system where citizens choose, influence, and dismiss government. In similar terms, Martin (1964, p. 88) defined democracy as "a system in which the individual has the controlling voice in determining the goals of the state and the ways by which these goals are to be sought"; Money (1973) indicated that democratic government must make laws and rules by or with the consent of the majority of citizens; Greer (1972) has called consensus "the crux of democracy", noting that it is often interpreted as a continual reaffirmation of authority from the grass roots level; and, most recently, Masson (1985, p. 1) argued that in a democracy, "the citizenry gives government its legitimacy by consenting to be governed". In all of these definitions, there is an implicit belief in the fundamental worth of the individual citizen. And, in every case, the elements of control, consensus and participation are inextricably linked. Relating these elements back to Clark's (1984) discussion of local autonomy, all three are concerned with the power of local authorities to legislate and regulate the behavior of their residents according to their own objectives and without surveillance by a higher institutional authority. Limits to action are imposed by the local population.

The arguments for local autonomy which rest on a belief in democracy suggest that local self-government is most suited to the central tenets of this political ideology. It is assumed that direct, personal, and frequent involvement of citizens is required to achieve both a meaningful consensus and control of elected representatives. This, it is theorized, is most likely to occur in small local settings (Masson, 1985). As boundaries expand, the less direct and more one-sided are the channels of communication between the citizen and the leadership, with the bulk of information flowing from the government downward (Dahl, 1976). In fact, Greer (1972) has claimed that the association of local self-government with democratic tradition is so strong that localism has become accepted as a good in itself. A belief in the inalienable rights of the individual has been translated into the protection of individual communities.

2.4.4 Freedom

The concept of freedom is often linked to democracy. Yet, there is one aspect of freedom that is separate from the political values discussed above. Here, the decentralized form of the metropolitan region is likened to a private market and local autonomy justified by an economic argument that stresses the ability of the system to provide a wide assortment of different bundles of services to metropolitan consumers (Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren, 1961). Individuals are free to select residential locations that are most suited to their lifestyle preferences. Shepard (1975, p. 301) linked these arguments to local autonomy:

> Since the costs of changing residential locations are quite often high, the strategy followed is to attempt to stabilize the strategic value of sites by exerting control over the geographic location of units which relate to strategic values. One of the primary functions of metropolitan political subunits is to exert such control.

The economic lifestyle argument assumes that local governments will define their range of functions in response to the demands of local consumers. Local autonomy preserves the ability of local governments to respond effectively to these demands.

It may not be particularly relevant here to pursue the debate over the question of whether local self-government actually does further the values ascribed to it, and thereby justifies local autonomy within certain political cultures. Political decisions are taken on the basis of what the individual perceives to be true, not necessarily what the reasoned arguments of reformers outline as a rational course of action (Adrian, 1971). Whalen (1960) made a similar point when he suggested that political institutions result as much from the cultural and social environment, unconscious habits, traditions, values and fears as from reasoned human will. Indeed, local autonomy, or the preservation of sovereignty, might be sought not with any clear goal in mind, but as an end in itself (Sheppard, 1975). The important point for regional planners is that local autonomy is a cherished goal, and this may have repercussions on the planning process if regional planning is perceived as a threat to autonomy.

2.5 The Environment

To synthesize the above points, it would seem that local autonomy is valued for different reasons and in varying degrees in different environmental settings. The manner in which the belief in local autonomy manifests itself will depend upon the complex interplay of many different variables at work on the urban scene. This point is of critical significance in setting a framework to examine the objectives of this thesis. It indicates that regional planners will encounter vastly different political circumstances in different settings. These circumstances will define the task before them. Returning to the points made by Banfield (1957) and Long (1968), the rationale for regional planning must be derived from a clear assessment of the political climate of each community and an awareness of the political structures that are necessary for effective management within that setting.

These arguments, about the importance of environment, are supported by Foley's (1972) interpretation of the differences between the British and American political environments, based on his analysis of the events surrounding the reform of the Greater London Region in 1963. He particularly noted the differences and similarities in "the organizational dilemmas, and in the basic relationships among actors and institutions" in the two countries (Foley, 1972, p. vi). The British political culture is characterized as one where the central government is empowered and entrusted to govern so that its authority is routinely exercised as a natural course of events. Hence, "to a remarkable degree, the system functions on the basis of the acceptance of authority" (Foley, 1972, p. 20). The American system of federalism, on the other hand, rests a large bulk of residual powers (that is, those not constitutionally assigned to the state or federal governments) with local institutions. Many municipalities have entrenched "home rule" powers that, by tradition, grant them virtual final authority on regional reform efforts.[6] As a result, a loose cooperative affiliation of local authorities is often the most stringent form of regional management that is politically feasible. The contrast between the two political cultures, then, is a difference in the "locus of the power to decide", which has a profound impact on the outcome of regional reform efforts (Smallwood, 1965). Of importance to this thesis, the arrangement of powers between levels of authority was seen as a critical feature of the overall environment which sets the parameters for regional planning.

2.6 Structural Reorganization of Local Governments

In what almost seems an intellectual step backwards from the above discussion, in which the significance of the individual environment in determining the nature of a regional process was emphasized, it is necessary to examine the belief that the structure for regional administration is, in itself, sufficient impetus for the growth of effective regional management. This necessity arises out of the attention, both past and present, that structure has commanded in the literature.

One rationale for the belief in structural reform is that an appropriate structure will stimulate a regional consciousness, even if one does not already exist. As Long (1965, p. 5) described it, "the lack of a significant political structure leads to an ethic of escapism. There being no sufficiently powerful unit of government to ensure the possibility of effective action, there is no central point to rally the imagination of the populace of the area and no stage to attract such natural aristocracy as may be available." Self (1982, p. 149) continued in the same vein:

> The existence of significant common problems will be enough to generate an effective regional constituency once appropriate institutions exist... The difficulty is to establish regional institutions that are genuinely capable of tackling these problems.

A large number of structures have arisen in response to this challenge, each one representing a different interpretation of the appropriate balance between local and regional concerns and the best means of achieving consensus and control. For convenience and conciseness, but in gross simplification of the real world diversity of institutional arrangements, these can be classified into three categories (Horan and Taylor, 1977; Wikstrom, 1977; Bollens and Schmandt, 1982). The consolidated form, or single government structure, administers and defines all services and functions for an entire region, with all local authorities abolished. The federal or tiered structure recognizes the general lack of political feasibility in consolidation; it represents a compromise solution, in which local authorities administer purely local functions and a regional tier of government deals with issues of an areawide concern. In the third approach, the fragmented pattern of local governments is overlain with a variable number of ad hoc or special purpose bodies, which are created to administer specific functions on an areawide basis. These special purpose bodies run the gamut of responsibilities and power, ranging from agencies that are narrow in focus and have clear authority to carry out a specific service, such as a regional utilities board, to loose cooperative affiliations of local authorities examining a broad area of concern, with no prerogatives for implementation. Councils of government in the United States are an example of this latter form.

2.6.1 Councils of Government

Metropolitan councils of government merit specific elaboration because of their similarity to the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional

Planning Commission in membership composition and implementation authority. The similarities between the two suggest that many of the criticisms of councils of government (COGs) warrant consideration when examining the regional plan preparation process undertaken by the EMRPC. Councils of government and the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission are both special purpose bodies. They are associations of local governments that meet on a regular basis to discuss and resolve matters of an areawide concern,[7] but neither of them holds authority to implement policy decisions taken at the regional level. Still, because they retain a large number of local governments working together cooperatively to establish regional policy, these types of structures are considered to represent the epitome of political feasibility (Horan and Taylor, 1977). They often exist where local opposition prevents any stronger form of regional control.

Criticism has been levelled at COGs for a variety of reasons relating to membership structure and implementation authority. Because they rely on the nearly unanimous support of their members, who are representatives of local municipalities in the region, they tend to avoid controversial problems and focus on simple tasks that will not generate conflict (Horan and Taylor, 1977). This has made them too timid to be effective. In addition, the fact that members must wear two hats, a regional one and a local one, while relying on local constituents for re-election, means that the interests of local governments invariably outweigh regional concerns in a conflict of interest situation (Lim, 1983). On top of that, a municipality holds the responsibility for carrying out policies that may contradict its own best interest. In summary, the membership composition and limited implementation authority means that councils of government wield little clout (Allensworth, 1975, p. 131).

Aron's (1969) study of the council of government approach in the New York metropolitan area supports the above contentions. She pointed out that a regional body comprised of local members relies on the continued goodwill of those members for its success. Otherwise, negotiation for consensus and the implementation of proposals are equally likely to dissolve into factional dispute. Drawing on the failures in New York, she concluded that COGs must be flexible in their approach, skillful in their assessment of the political circumstances, and well versed in the arts of cooperation and communication. In the New York case, ambiguity about the overall role of the council and uncertainty about objectives for regional management made it difficult for the principle of regional cooperation to gain acceptance. Indeed, in the absence of intelligent deliberation of issues and policies at the local level, regional cooperation often became subject to factional attack, with debate revolving around personalities and irrelevant considerations rather than focussing on the principle of cooperation itself (Aron, 1969, p. 145). Aron's study illustrates, then, the debilitating impact of self-seeking local authorities on a regional process, in the absence of purposeful strategies to manage conflict and promote regional cooperation.

In contrast to the New York experience, the Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis-St. Paul provides an example where a council has been designed specifically to alleviate many of the criticisms of the typical COG format. This council structure represents a compromise between regional governments with the authority to impose regional decisions, irrespective of the concerns of local authorities, and cooperative affiliations of local authorities which are able to function only on issues where local interests coincide. The Council's members are appointed by the State and possess no direct local attachments. Yet, an essential role of this special purpose body is to involve local authorities in the decision-making process with the aim of securing local endorsement for any controversial regional policy decision before the fact. Kolderie (1983, p. 146) utilized the business management philosophy of General Motors to illustrate this feature of the Council's approach:

> This practice of selling major proposals is an important feature of our management. Any proposal must be sold to central management, and, as it affects other divisions, it must be sold to them as well. Sound management also requires that the central office should in most cases sell [illegible] proposals to the divisions. Our 'selling' approach assures that any basic decision is made only [illegible] thorough consideration by all parties concerned. Our tradition of selling ideas, rather than simply giving orders, imposes the need upon all levels of management to make a good case for what they propose.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul approach recognizes that the Council must work with and through local municipalities. It is significant to this thesis in two respects. First, the conscious inclusion of a provision for "selling proposals" and defusing conflict over contentious issues suggests that a regional plan preparation process should be as much an exercise in managing intermunicipal relations as a means of defining technical solutions. Second, the task of instituting a structure to administer regional management goes beyond simple legislative sanction of that structure to the techniques and skills used to operationalize its mandate.

2.7 The Canadian Context

The empirical examples discussed above address the relationship between regional planning and local interests, and demonstrate the importance of the decision-making environment in influencing that relationship. Two Canadian examples, presented here, further underscore the need for a careful and critical assessment of the environment as a prerequisite for building workable regional strategies. The Toronto and Winnipeg cases were selected, instead of other Canadian examples, because the range of information available about them allows an exploration of the simultaneous interplay of the many factors influencing the local-regional relationship. The Winnipeg reform efforts are important because of their shortcomings. They represent a failure on the part of regional authorities to address the underlying political power structure in the region, and are a classic example of the absence of the will to cooperate amongst local municipalities. In contrast, the Toronto case illustrates a situation where one individual utilized his awareness of the environment to manipulate the political situation for the benefit of the metropolitan cause. These two examples, taken together, demonstrate vividly that the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation is very much a product of the actions of participants in that process. This point has major importance for the research design of this thesis.

2.7.1 Winnipeg

A federated metropolitan structure that retained the identities and geographic boundaries of existing municipalities was imposed on the Winnipeg region by the Manitoba government in 1960. With respect to land use planning, the metropolitan government was given the authority to prepare and implement a regional plan. According to Kaplan (1982), the populist flavor of the Winnipeg political culture, combined with the fact that the metropolitan solution ran counter alike to the amalgamation sentiments of the City of Winnipeg and the decentralization objectives of the suburbs, made conflict inevitable. Beyond that, however, the escalation of conflict to a level exceeding workable limits was stimulated by the roles and strategies adopted by the actors and institutions involved. In particular, rapid moves by the Metropolitan Council to solidify and extend its power base and implement regional policy effectively squelched any chance for municipal support (Kaplan, 1982, pp. 554,560,564):

> What occurred was a virtual municipal insurrection, an assault on Metro far exceeding anyone's expectations... The system was characterized by a large degree of self-closure, a moral self righteousness, an unwillingness to learn, an inability to be self critical, an inability to appreciate the need for adaptation to the political environment as a condition for the system's long term success... Metro's tactless handling of the municipal opposition, its elementary lack of prudence or self restraint in the face of mounting municipal criticisms, and even mounting provincial criticisms was based largely on its inability to correctly read the motives or interests of the key actors in its environment.

According to Kaplan, the ineptitude of the Metro Council in skills of communication, negotation, accommodation and compromise fed the fires of diehard opponents of the system and forced potential neutrals into the hostile camp. This unyielding attitude, combined with the skillful manipulation of the media by the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg, in his "characteristically strident, affectively charged, assaultive style", focused public attention away from Metro's areawide concerns and accomplishments to trivial complaints and petty scandals (Kaplan, 1982, p. 562). The municipal demands were intensified as well by the unwillingness of the Premier to endorse Metro unequivocally, in the midst of these municipal assaults.

With respect to regional planning, planning officials felt the best approach to the task, given the hostile political climate, was to move toward regional goals through cooperation and consensus, rather than through their legal authority. In preparing a draft regional plan, planners deliberately avoided controversial issues and made a conscious plea to the City of Winnipeg to endorse the plan because of the economic benefits it afforded the central area. Yet, in Kaplan's view, the planners overestimated the impact of their rational arguments and underestimated the fierce local affiliations. Municipalities fought the plan on the principle of local autonomy - simply because it was a product of Metro. The plan never secured official status and an ad hoc decision-making pattern emerged. Earl Levin, a former planning director, attributed the failure of Metro to a deliberate and continuous strategy of political subversion from very narrow political quarters (Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983). Even the institution of a consolidated government structure in 1971 did not end the conflict and touted inequity of the Metro system. Suburban opponents were able to force the provincial government to compromise so that the new Council's scope for action was insignificantly altered from the previous arrangement (Lightbody, 1978). Critics maintain that the reorganization failed to address the underlying socio-economic power structure and placed too much faith in the efficacy of structural reform (Axworthy and Cassidy, 1974, Brownstone and Plunkett, 1983). Hence, both of the Winnipeg reforms indicate that effective regional control goes beyond the simple imposition of a reformed structure. The objectives of the regional effort and the actions taken to secure these ends must accord with the political realities of the region.

2.7.2 Toronto

The Toronto metropolitan experiment was the first in what is now a system of two-tiered regional municipalities extending across southern Ontario. Its upper tier is comprised of appointees from the councils of member municipalities. Only the chairman does not possess local affiliations. In contrast to the Winnipeg example, where the actions of metro officials created impassable barriers between the two tiers, the strategies adopted by Frederick Gardiner, the first chairman of the Toronto Metropolitan Council, in its early years, displayed a conscious avoidance of controversy and deliberate attempts to foster consensus (Kaplan, 1982). Recognizing the strong parochial interests on the metropolitan council, Gardiner first mobilized power by dealing with physical service decisions that did not antagonize any member municipalities. Support for them was not an active endorsement of the metropolitan system but rather a passive support by virtue of unexercised opposition. To prevent hostile forces from crystallizing to the point of stultifying any of his favored programs, Gardiner deliberately played municipalities off against one another and thereby limited their opportunity to unite against him. In addition, Gardiner adopted a gradualist strategy for policy implementation that effectively utilized the disunity in suburban forces to his advantage:

> Thus, a controversial long-term plan, like a series of public housing projects on suburban sites, could be divided into seemingly isolated projects; and a controversial project, like the Spadina expressway, could be divided into segments. Gardiner would then proceed step by step, provoking only isolated opposition at any one step, insisting that council examine only the single measure before it, refusing to discuss how this step related to others or to a larger context, sometimes denying that such a context or program plan existed. Thus, each suburb cast a lone, dissenting vote against a public housing project in its midst; and, step by step, five projects were given approval (Kaplan, 1982, p. 689).

Gardiner achieved results through skillful personal effort.

Metro planners ran counter to Gardiner's personal manipulations and incrementalist tactics when they insisted on bringing a regional plan forward to the entire metro council for debate and scrutiny. According to Kaplan, this accomplished two things. First, it spelled out long range intentions that provided a clear focus around which all of the opposition forces could coalesce. The plan managed to antagonize everyone. Second, the process fueled an ongoing rivalry, based on institutional loyalties, between city and metro planning staff. This rivalry saw planners abandon the discussion of substantive planning issues to couch their arguments in terms of "metro's imperialistic encroachments of city autonomy" on one side and, on the regional side, a defense of metro against a "hysterical one-sided viewpoint" (Kaplan, 1982, p. 696). In the end, Gardiner's incrementalist strategy prevailed, so that Kaplan could characterize the post-1959 era for regional planning as a time of confusion, disorder, and limited achievement. Horan and Taylor (1977) and Rose (1972) have similarly noted the absence of a concerted attack on controversial problems that involved conflicts over ideology or social goals and objectives. In 1978, at a meeting on urban development at York University, speakers from Toronto described their metro system as "very good at doing things and very bad at deciding what is the right thing to do" (Kolderie, 1983, p. 167).

The Toronto example thus illustrates how one key participant was able to utilize specific strategies to quell the opposition of local authorities. But, it also indicates that the particular method chosen, the incrementalist approach, shaped the ability of the metro system to manage controversial problems and issues requiring ideological accord between municipalities. The value of strategies selected to manage conflict, then, must be assessed in terms of their ability to serve the actual purpose of the regional process.

2.8 A Synthesis

Regional planning, at the metropolitan scale, is a framework for managing and controlling change in urban-centered regions. Traditionally, its theory has placed faith in the presumed existence of regional communities bound together by the similar aspirations and sense of community which arise from the spatial proximity of groups within a densely settled space. It has been further presumed that a reasoned awareness of a shared life and destiny, joint problems, and functional linkages will result in a spirit of cooperation to foster the good of the entire region. yet, planning experience suggests that this theory has sorely underestimated the diversity of goals within a region and the resulting conflicts amongst individual municipalities fighting for autonomy. Regions become embroiled in political and philosophical wrangles that do not mirror the participatory spirit outlined by regional planning theorists. It would seem, in the Western World at least, where political philosophy stresses individual rights and democratic tradition, that the principle of local autonomy is a key issue for regional planners to face. Furthermore, the design of any one universally applicable framework for regional decision making does not ensure regional consciousness. Rather, each urban region represents a unique decision-making environment where the complex interplay of many different factors shapes the decision-making process. In essence, the context provides "a stage for community decision-making episodes" (Bolan and Nuttall, 1975, p. 10). According to Skelcher (1982, p. 146) an awareness of this context is essential in the design of planning processes and structures.

2.9 Relationship to the Thesis

The discussion in this chapter isolates, for the interpretive framework of the thesis problem, the importance of the decision-making context in shaping the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation. On the basis of empirical example, it also indicates that particular elements within the context serve as constraints to regional planning while other elements serve to enhance the potential of the regional effort. Issues and ideologies, strategies and actions of participants, impetus for the will to cooperate, and the historical trajectory of intermunicipal relations, all appear to play a role in shaping the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning.

In order to define the nature of the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning in the Edmonton region, several questions must be answered:

1. What elements within the context played a significant role in shaping the events of the plan preparation process?
2. What policy issues were identified for resolution?
3. How did conflict between local and regional viewpoints manifest itself in the process?
4. How does the Alberta Planning Act define the respective roles of local and regional authorities? Was this mandate reflected in the events of the process?
5. What are the ideological bases for local autonomy and regional planning in the process?

It is obvious that the answers to these questions depend upon a substantial base of factual information to document the political culture in the province and the trajectory of events during the plan preparation process. It thus becomes necessary to analyze the records and reports of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission and the provincial documents defining the role of regional planning to secure this information. Yet, the points made by Adrian (1971) and Whalen (1960) emphasize another area of concern. The attitudes and opinions of participants, by virtue of their ability to shape the course of events, warrant attention in the study. It becomes desirable to supplement the records of what actually occurred with the participants' assessments of the same events. Further to this point, the discussion that each region presents a unique set of circumstances for a planning process suggests that it is advisable to grant participants wide latitude in their manner of response in order that they might reveal information that I was unaware could prove significant. Hence, a semi-structured interview format, which allows the interviewer some control over subject matter without curtailing information that the participant considers important, is a valid choice of research method for the study. A critical first step in defining areas of concern for these interviews though, is an expanded awareness of the characteristics of different facets of context that might bear on the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning. This topic will be considered in Chapter 3.

Footnotes

1. Hall (1970) maintained that regional planning for the urban-centered region is necessarily associated with the reform of local government.

2. Howard's vision of a balanced environment was really part of an international trend-in-thought during the last half of the nineteenth century. Working independently in Spain, Soria y Mata developed the concept of lineal cities (Boileau, 1959) while in France, Garnier developed a framework for the cite industrielle. All three concepts stressed the organic interrelationship of the city and the surrounding country (Wiebenson, 1979).

3. Glasson (1974) and Richards (1970) have provided discussion of the issues involved in region delimitation.

4. It is not intended to oversimplify Gertler's and Hancock's discussions of a regional community. Like their historical counterparts, they also noted the likelihood of the intrusion of local autonomy on the regional scene. This awareness of conflict, however, did not weaken their faith in the overall concept of a regional community. This faith provides a good illustrative contrast to other authors who explicitly identify parochial interests as a reason for discounting the concept of a regional community, entirely.

5. There is ample support in the literature for the point of view that planning is concerned with politics. Blowers (1980) and Allensworth (1975) provide discussion of relevant points with specific reference to the type of political setting studied here.

6. Home rule refers to an arrangement under which local governments may establish their own charters and control their own affairs. Traditionally, although there is no legal provision for it, this is interpreted to mean that regional reform requires consent through local referenda.

7. Unlike the Councils of Government, the EMRPC has a compulsory membership. This difference may not be particularly significant though, as Plunkett (1979) notes that members of COGs have never exercised their right to withdraw.

DECISION MAKING AND THE DECISION ENVIRONMENT

3.0 Introduction

It is apparent from Chapter 2 that the analysis of a regional decision-making process cannot be isolated from an assessment of the decision environment. It was indicated that the complex and multifaceted interplay of contextual variables has an impact on the progression of a regional planning process. In Chapter 3 this discussion of the context-process relationship is refined by describing key elements within the environment and, then, isolating those that are most important for the thesis problem.

Since it is the mutual interaction of context and process that is of concern here, it is possible to sidestep debate about the validity of various planning approaches in the abstract.[1] Without paying allegiance to any particular theory of planning, a planning process can be described simply as a series of decisions, strategies, and actions, conducing to some purpose. Then, without distorting this interpretation and by examining the process in a vein similar to that in which Bolan (1980) explores the professional planning episode, the nature of context as a conditioning factor is assured a focus. According to Bolan, the "episode" encompasses a series of situations or scenes, all of the persons involved, and the interactions of individuals and settings that are focussed on a common problem. The successful choice of specific strategies, roles and actions - and, in fact, the interpretation of the problem at which the process is aimed - hinges upon the assessment of the decision environment (Bolan, 1980; Schon, 1983). Yet, there is no absolute determinism implied. Rather, choice of method represents a creative response to the various constraints and opportunities which can be exploited in varying degree and in a different manner in each unique set of circumstances. Context constrains the range of choice but it does not dictate the choices actually made (Stewart, 1982). Hence, the skill of the planner in assessing the environment, defining the range of choice within that context, and determining the appropriate roles, strategies and tactics within that range might shape his potential to intervene in regional policy decisions. Remembering from Chapter 2 that the regional environment is characterized by a propensity to conflict, rather than cooperation, it seems reasonable to expect that part of that skill might rest on the planner's ability to participate effectively in politics, or the management of conflict. Within the web of organizations with which the regional planning exercise is concerned, the planner must make maximum use of the resources at his disposal (Skelcher, 1982). Hence, in examining the relationship between the regional plan preparation process and local autonomy, as one facet of the context that impinges on that process, a critical focus might be the opportunity that is afforded for choice.

3.1 The Culture of Planning

Bolan (1969, p. 301) synthesized the relationship between planning and its environment in his assertion that "the community decision arena could be considered the 'culture' of planning since its rules, customs, and actions determine the fate of planning proposals". This observation is supported and elaborated on by authors such as Skelcher (1982) and Ranney (1969), who have concluded that sentiments, values and ideology, community power structure, local political culture, organizational structure, socio-economic characteristics, the legal framework, demographic features, the scope, timing and subject matter of planning proposals, and the personalities, roles, and strategies of the actors will all affect the politics of planning in a region.

Bolan's model (Bolan, 1969; Bolan and Nuttall, 1975) incorporates a bidirectional relationship between the structure of the environment and the actions of the participants in the decision-making process. As such, in undertaking the process steps of decision making, the "culture" of planning can be understood as the interaction of four variables - decision field characteristics, planning and action strategies, issue attributes, and process roles (Figure 2). Two of these variable sets, issue attributes and decision field characteristics, represent structural features of the decision-making context to which the planner must react. The other two variables, process roles and planning strategies and tactics, are at least partially within the realm of the planner's control and represent, in a sense, the resources with which he reacts (Bolan, 1969, p. 303):

> How skillfully each actor plays his role, his ability to marshall and manipulate resources, his ability to enlist other individuals to play other roles, and the influences of motivation and self-interest have a bearing in the decision process and influence decision outcomes... Similarly, the strategies of planning and intervention have a substantial influence on the nature of community decision making. These are the factors of primary concern to the planner.

The planning function, according to Bolan, must take its cue from the contextual features which shape the planning situation.

FIGURE 2: THE CULTURE OF PLANNING
ADAPTED FROM BOLAN AND NUTTALL (1975)

Independent Variable Sets Influencing Decision Outcomes

Variable Set 1: Process Roles	Variable Set 3: Planning and Action Strategies
a. Process role specialties b. Process role measures Actor motivation Actor opportunity Actor skills	a. Planning strategies Relation to decision focus Method strategies Content variables b. Action strategies Reallocation of resources Institutional change Client change
Variable Set 2: Decision Field Characteristics	**Variable Set 4: Issue Attributes**
a. Socio-political environment Formal structure Informal structure General policy structure b. Decision unit character Source of power Accountability Group dynamics Group role	a. Ideological stress b. Distribuion of effects c. Flexibility d. Action focus e. Predictability and risk f. Communicability

↓

Dependent Variable

Decision Outcomes

3.2 Planning Method and the Decision Environment

There are two ways of translating the cue from the environment into planning method or planning practice (Metcalfe, 1976, Skelcher, 1982, Bolan and Nuttall, 1975). The first is the "environmental responsiveness" approach which portrays the planning process as "highly responsive to features of the context, to the extent that context could be said to shape methodology" (Skelcher, 1982, p. 12). Cohen (1970) provided an example of this interpretation of the context-process relationship when he stressed, with respect to the placement of the planning function within the decision-making system, that such determination is largely beyond the planner's control. Instead, it is basically a response to the broader social, economic, and political context of a society. In the environmentnal responsiveness approach, planning method is, for all intents and purposes, a dependent variable.

The second interpretation of the relationship between context and process focusses on the ability of the planning function to intervene in environmental circumstances. It is concerned with the conditions under which the impact on the context for organizational or planning action can be enhanced. Context is no less important in this "environmental effectiveness" approach, but the emphasis is on those aspects of the context that can be utilized as a springboard for planning action and intervention. It is a positive emphasis - on the opportunity for choice afforded within a specific context. It rests on the premise that planning is shaped and conditioned by its environment yet, at the same time, is devoted to change and guidance within that context. Friedmann's (1969) action-planning model, where the planner must learn to intervene in the societal guidance system, epitomizes the environmental effectiveness approach.[2] Stewart (1982, p. 238) elaborated on the relationship between context and choice:

> In design [of policy-making systems] the constraints of context and the possibility of choice have both to be allowed for and to be used.... Context does not determine policy-making processes. There is no deterministic relationship between context and policy or policy-making systems. The design (or, if that is the choice, the non-design) of a policy-making system is an exercise in organizational choice.

In the environmental effectiveness type of approach, the design of planning methods "exploits the space between what exists and what might be desirable" (Leach and Stewart, 1982, p. 4). According to Alexander (1984), the blend of normative prescription with realistic circumstance offers the best outlook for the design of a decision-making paradigm.

3.3 The Organizational Context

The context, as an arena for choice, can be more explicitly delimited for the purposes of regional planning by isolating that part of the environment with which the regional planning agency is actively or potentially engaged for goal setting or goal attainment purposes. This immediate context can be characterized "as a web or network of organizations having executive resource allocation functions in relation to substantive issues with which the regional planning exercise is concerned" (Skelcher, 1982, p. 128). The concept of the multiorganization is used to describe the interorganizational network that results from the joining of parts of numerous organizations, each part being a subset of the interests of its own parent organization (Stringer, 1967, p. 107).

In similar terms, using Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974, p. 43) as a guide, a decision network is defined as "an open network of communications among people acting either within policy systems or across the interfaces between them which may influence the commitments reached in any specific class of decision problems". Communication is the core of this interaction and language, as a key instrument in communication, defines the rules, purposes, and interpretive quality of the entire interactive process (Bolan, 1980). Furthermore, the interactions within this network, and hence between organizations, produce visible products that, once produced, are placed on official record (e.g. land use plans and municipal bylaws), as well as invisible products that "remain in the consciousness of particular individuals, influencing their abilities and perceptions as a result of person learning experiences to which their participation in the process has exposed them" (Carter, Friend, Pollard and Yewlett, 1975, p. 20). It is, in Forester's (1982a) terms, a distinction between organizations as producers of instrumental results and organizations as perpetuators of social relations. A balanced view of planning organizations includes both of these aspects (Forester, 1982a, p. 5):

> As structures of practical communicative action, organizations not only produce instrumental results, they also produce social relations... Each organizational interaction or practical communication, including nonverbal interactions, not only has a point, an end-in-view, a result to be produced, but it reproduces and develops (or retards) the specific [illegible] 'working' relations of those who interact.

A key feature in the design of regional planning methods, then, is an awareness of social relations and interorganizational interactions. The concept of a regional planning agency as a "network organization" which focusses on the interactive roles, or procedural and interorganizational issues in the network becomes significant (Skelcher, 1982, pp. 133-135).

3.3.1 Interauthority Relationships

From the standpoint of interauthority relationships, several factors affect the nature and quality of the planning episode and, hence, the relationship between regional planning and local autonomy. According to Leach (1982), with reference to county-district relations in Britain, the quality of organizational relationships is characterized by the structure of the interrelationship, the values, sentiments, attitudes and interests of key actors which act as filters for policy matters, and the nature of the legal and quasi-legal documents governing the relationship. Moore and Leach (1979), describing the structure of relationships, suggested that organizations form connections because of a mutual, though not necessarily balanced, dependency on one another. Each participant values the bond and, hence, exhibits dependency on the other participant, to a degree that reflects the importance of the relationship to its own functioning. The structure of the dependency determines the power balance within the relationship and presents opportunities for conflict or cooperation between authorities. Where recognition and acceptance of the interdependency is present, coordinating strategies are de[illegible] maximize the benefits of the relationship and minimize [illegible] about each organization's independent actions. This common appreciation and commitment to the joint task are necessary ingredients for the successful functioning of decision networks (Brazier and Harris, 1975). At the same time, however, the acceptance of a structural interdependency will not supersede the importance of an organization's own interests (Leach, 1980). Within every relationship, each organization seeks to minimize the degree of dependency and maximize its own autonomy. Similarly, within a multiorganization structure, each participant retains primary allegiance to its own parent structure (Skelcher, 1982; Brazier and Harris, 1975).

Where one or both parties fails to appreciate the nature of the interdependency, there is an opportunity for the conflict to be escalated and for spurious issues to intrude (Brazier and Harris, 1975). This is most likely to occur where divergent policy options have different resource consequences for participants or where participants are unable to agree on the relevance of certain issues (Skelcher, 1982). In turn, the conflict will result in a deterioration of communication and, because the nature of the relationship is conditioned by a series of events over time, repeated antagonism will result in a negative stereotype which routinely dominates every response (Leach, 1982). One result is that the interagency process may be defeated through a strategy of avoiding firm commitment to any one position. By framing the policy output in ambiguous or indefinite terms, the substantive impact of the exercise ~~is~~ neutralized (Skelcher, 1982). Rhodes (1980) referred to a similar "advantage" in obscurity when he proposed that the vague legislative framework which defines the respective roles for central and local authorities in the United Kingdom serves as a device for preserving flexibility, avoiding commitment on politically sensitive issues, and enhancing the autonomy of both sides.[3] Hence, the interauthority context may provide an opportunity for either conflict or cooperation and lays the ground rules for managing the decision-making process.

3.3.2 Organizational Learning

One final point about the interorganizational context bears directly on the relationship between regional plan preparation and local autonomy, and provides a strategic entry point to the discussion of the management of resources and contraints within actual contextual settings. The interorganizational setting is a dynamic one where changes in relationships can be expected over time. For example, changes in the nature of legal and quasi-legal guidelines, a change in key actors, the development of new issues or crises in old ones, or the perceived threat by an outside force can all trigger changes in interauthority relationships and thereby alter the context for decision making in the metropolitan region (Moore and Leach, 1979).

The potential for change, and the complexity of relationships in general, necessitate the need for organizational monitoring and learning. There is, first, single-loop learning which occurs when members of an organization respond to changes in the environment of the organization by detecting and correcting errors, so that the basic assumptions, norms and structure of the organization remain unchanged. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, occurs when error is managed in ways that involve the reassessment and restructuring of an organization's underlying norms, policies, and objectives. According to Argyris and Schön (1978, p. 21), "there is in this sort of episode, a double feedback loop which connects the detection of error not only to strategies and assumptions for effective performance but to the very norms which define effective performance". Schön (1983) has developed this into the concept of reflecting-in-action, in which the outcomes of an action, the action itself, and the intuitive basis for that action are all subject to critical reflection after the fact. It is contended that organizations, like individuals, tend to create learning systems that restrict this kind of learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978). Yet, in the face of a volatile and conflictual environment, the ability of an organization to restructure the fit of its assumptions, strategies, and tactics to the circumstances becomes a critical resource for effective inquiry and performance. Stewart (1980, p. 260) has made a similar point:

> Planning does not and cannot stand apart from change. For planning, which is concerned with change, must itself be capable of change and in the capacity of networks to change lies the capacity of planning in an interorganizational context to respond to change.

Organizations, however, do not interact with one another as whole entities. Rather, they are comprised of individual planners whose decisions, actions and interactions meld to form the organizational image and response. The ability of the planning agency to respond to change or to learn may be less than, but certainly no more than, the capabilities of the individuals involved. The individual planner thus assumes critical importance as a resource in the decision-making process.

3.4 The Planner

Bolan (1971) has suggested that planners and the client groups they serve are part of a social interaction network that is bound together by the respective roles of the participants. Hence, the discussion of the role of the planner is relevant only in relation to the characteristics of the client group. One feature of this role relationship is a power/dependency continuum ranging from an authoritarian relationship, where the planner holds maximum power and the client group is totally dependent, to a submissive relationship where the planner is totally dependent on the client and thus has minimal impact on policy. Certain contextual factors, including the past history of the relationship, perceived status differentials between the client group and the planner, sanctions available to the planner, and resource and skill differential between the two groups, condition the nature of the dependency relationship and the range of choices available to the planner. According to Bolan (1971), the less status, power, and resources held by the client, the more the client needs organizing and political aid. Authoritarian regimes, by contrast, might require only technical input.

Rabinovitz's (1969) study of planning effectiveness in six New Jersey cities supports these points in general. At one extreme, the "technician" role proved most effective for planners working in cohesive political communities with unified sets of goals. Here, where power and resources were concentrated in the hands of a leadership group, planners provided technical planning aid in conformity with leadership goals since this was the only way they could inject their professional advice into the planning process. In fragmented communities, where no visible leadership groups existed, and resources, status, and power were widely dispersed, planners became effective by acting as "mobilizers" who activated resources and interest groups lying dormant in the community. Midway along the continuum, in competitive systems where at least two powerful leadership groups existed, planners were most effective when they played a "broker" role, coordinating and integrating the demands of rival groups and mediating rival claims.

With respect to the settings for regional planning, which have already been characterized, in Chapter 2, as being likely to belong to the latter two groups, Rabinovitz's findings suggest that political skills should assume key importance for planners. This conclusion runs counter to the traditional technical stance of the planner. Here, "the planner is traditionally envisioned as an expert capable of discovering the answers to factual questions by detailed analysis in a comprehensive framework... The planner wishes his programs to be implemented but he does not regard himself as the promoter of select paths of development" (Rabinovitz, 1969, p. 11). More recently, however, the need for politicized planners to effectuate planning proposals has been advocated in a deluge of articles. Empirical evidence also suggests that practising planners, themselves, recognize the need for political intervention skills (Howe, 1980; Baum, 1980; Bryson and Delbecq, 1979). Yet, simple recognition of the need for political skills may be insufficient. According to Kaufman (1979, p. 185), planners in the main:

> lack sufficient knowledge of what it takes to bring about successful policy interventions. The analyses done to devise intervention strategies are often sparse and spotty. And they are generally unwilling

> to go as far as they should in their specific interventions. In other words, while many planners know which route to take to increase their policy and decision-making influence, they are not particularly adept at traversing the route.

Hence, if the planner is to affect the decision-making process - or, in terms of this thesis topic, if the planner is to impact on the relationship of local autonomy to the regional plan preparation process - certain skills and strategies are imperative. They will be reviewed in the following sections.

3.4.1 Social Interaction Skills

With interaction amongst individuals and groups at the core of the regional planning process, communication and interpersonal relations are critical areas for skill development. Planning practitioners, like other participants in the process, bring their own images of the world and their own understandings of the situation to the planning episode (Bolan, 1980; Low, 1979). The problem of achieving mutual awareness and common understanding of all of these difficult perceptions is of vital concern.

This theme has received considerable attention in recent theoretical writing. Friedmann (1973), for example, proposed a transactive planning process where the communication gap between planner and client is bridged through a process of intense, personal dialogue. A common image of the situation then evolves, and understanding of the possibilities for change is enhanced (see also Rondinelli, 1973). Friedmann (1969) also suggested that, in this world of interaction and interpersonal contact, the planner must develop an increased understanding of self, the capacity to empathize, the ability to tolerate conflict, and an ease of rapid learning. Sensitivity and acute perception are key qualities in this realm. Kaufman (1979) has described experts in social relations as "boundary spanners" with the capacity to reduce the distances between themselves and other actors in the decision process. Necessary boundary-spanning skills include persuasion, negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution, organizing, coalition management, and bargaining. In similar terms, and with particular reference to regional planning situations, Brazier and Harris (1975, p. 263) called for a "reticulist". This they characterized as someone who "maintains appreciation [of the task] through the development of communications between members of a multiorganization by sounding out opinion, bringing issues which require joint decision making to the attention of the appropriate people, and generally acting as a contact man/trouble shooter". Empirical examples in which the development of appreciation and improved communication was integral to the planning process, have been provided by Pearsall (1984) and Rothblatt (1982). The emphasis, in these cases, was on social interaction skills.

3.4.2 Organization and Process Skills

The traditional planner is not normally considered to be expert in the assessment of decision-making processes and organizational structures. In Baum's (1980) view, most planners fail to analyze their tasks in terms either of the broader context of economic and political interests affected by the issue or of the bureaucratic organization where they are employed and by which their effective intervention in the decision-making process is constrained. Friedmann (1969), too, has asserted that planners must understand the patterns of institutional arrangements that guide the processes of change if they are to have an effective impact on these processes. In his action planning model, planners seek to affect the pattern of organizations responsible for action, and thereby influence the quality of the result. The planner becomes a "strategist", an expert on the workings of the decision process with the necessary talents to analyze the decision environment and translate these analyses into strategies for greater decision impact:

> Without people who possess the acumen of the strategist, having the capacity to chart paths of least resistance for the planning agency to follow as it tries to affect decision outcomes, the agency's chances of achieving success in specific intervention situations will be lessened (Kaufman, 1979, p. 126).

The strategist requires training in decision theory, organizational behavior, small group dynamics and strategy design to supplement the technical skills of the substantive area specialist and the interpersonal skills of the boundary spanner.

3.4.3 Knowing-in-Action

The need to prepare versatile planners for action in different political and social environments suggests the need for equally diversified information to guide them in decision-making arenas. In light of this, Schön (1982, p. 352) contends that the knowledge planners ought to possess should be fixed firmly in what planners actually do:

> It would describe the knowledge implicit in planning practice, including the know-how by which planners frame both the situation of their practice and the

> roles which mediate their activities in interpersonal, institutional and political contexts. It would also show how role and context contribute to the formulation of knowing-in-practice.

In this conception, the planner approaches each planning episode as a unique case to which he applies his repertoire of professional images, understandings, and actions. His intention is to see the new situation as both similar to and different from past experiences, without subsuming it under restrictive frameworks and general rules. He frames the problem and his roles with particular attention to the peculiarities at hand. He does not trim the uncertain planning situation to fit a general prescriptive theory, but rather reshapes his knowledge to attend to the situation at hand. He examines his choice of roles and strategies and his framing of the problem by evaluating the intended and unintended effects of his actions. According to Schon (1983, p. 131) the practitioner "judges a problem setting by the quality and direction of the reflective conversation to which it leads". Hence, knowing-in-action and reflecting-in-action require a planner with keen perception and observational skills. Yet, Alexander (1981) provides a cautionary note about approaches which throw practitioners back onto their intuitive resources. The cost, to society, of real work experimentation is too high.

3.4.4 Information

The participation of planners in the decision-making process is legitimated by their presumed skill as land use specialists. They are the only actors on the urban scene with sufficient time and motivation to gather a vast array of knowledge and information about a wide range of land use issues. Their skill in utilizing this information can be a powerful tool. Other actors become involved in the planning process at infrequent intervals and generally for very specific purposes. The planners, then, have an opportunity to pyramid information resources and can even, to an extent, control the access of their clients and the public to certain types of data (Rabinovitz, 1969, pp. 123-126). The most senior planning officer directs the work of his department and can suppress or release whatever information is practicable to his purposes (Blowers, 1980, p. 27). Politicians who recognize the planner's facility with land use information might rely heavily on his policy recommendations in making their own decisions. Furthermore, the planner's own skill with information enables him to interpret the beliefs and exhortations of interest groups in light of the broader regional picture:

> The problem...is for the planner to be able...to anticipate just what sorts of practical misinformation to expect and from whom, from what organizational channels and political sources, to expect it. With such vision, the progressive planner can then draw upon the repertoire of possible responses in order to counteract the disabling and misleading effects of misinformation on the planning process (Forester, 1982a, p. 4).

A wise use of information allows planners to counteract distortions in communication. According to Forester (1982b), if information and communication in the planning process are not clear and comprehensible, sincere and trustworthy, appropriate and legitimate, and accurate and true, then to that extent is the planning process subject to potential misinformation and distortion. Hence, the planner's use of information must be tempered by a strong sense of morality and professional ethics.

3.4.5 Bureaucratic Position

The position of the planner within an organization has significant impact on his utilization of resources. On the one hand, the bureaucracy lends the planning function stability and continuity, and affords the planner control over routine decisions. Furthermore, as outlined previously, through his position in an organization the planner has access to a wide range of relationships with other organizational actors on a continuing basis. Using appropriate skills, he can build these relationships into a positive source of support for his planning position. Yet, the bureaucracy is also perceived in the literature as a constraint on the planner. Leach (1980) maintains that an organization will advance its own survival above professional and philanthropic objectives. It will exercise behavior that promotes its own stable growth and continued existence. In addition, the planning officer in charge of a department has almost complete control over planning officers functioning as subordinates. He controls promotions and job security and it is to him that planners owe allegiance (Blowers, 1980). Therefore, he sets the agenda, steers the direction of work, and establishes policy guidelines for his department. The organization might then reflect only one person's view and be less than the total knowledge pooled within its confines.

3.4.6 Personality

The planner approaches each planning episode as an individual with specific character traits. Roles are defined by a set of limits and abstract behavior patterns, but the person assuming a particular role may be straightforward or devious, disposed to be tranquil or angry, approachable or remote, eager for power or reluctant to assume responsibility (Friedmann, 1973, p. 171). Catanese and Farmer (1978, p. 205) maintain that it is the proper blend of personality and style with a particular planning situation that determines a planner's effectiveness there:

> The individual as city planner is a major factor of success. Such individual traits as leadership, values, morality, commitment, and work ethic are strong factors for the implementation of planning... Individuals may do things in different ways even to achieve the same ends and that, in itself, has a great deal to do with success and survival.

Kaplan (1982), Gerecke (1975), and Caro (1974) have all documented instances where the powerful impact of personality has profoundly altered the urban decision-making process.

3.5 Summary

Every regional plan preparation process occurs within a specific socio-political culture and a unique set of interorganizational relationships. The nature of planning, as an activity that is shaped by and yet devoted to change within a specific context, emphasizes the need for a plan preparation process geared to the constraints of that context and the possibility for choice that it affords. The inherently conflictual composition of the environment for regional planning suggests the need for planners well-versed in the arts of interpersonal relations, social interaction, conflict management, and intervention in the decision-making process. Recognizing the bidirectional quality of the planning task, local autonomy, as one potential issue in the regional planning context, represents both a challenge for and limits to the planner's professional expertise. Local autonomy will shape the plan preparation process - and the planner geared to intervention might aim to influence that impact. At least in part, and in some instances, the planner has the potential to play an active role in shaping the relationship between a contextual issue and the regional plan preparation process. Yet, the planner is only one force within the complete context and the overall impact of his intervention might therefore be [illegible]. As Kaufman (1979, p. 198) has observed, planning, in general, [illegible] from a weak political position:

> Even done well...intervention offers no panacea for planners. For, even if the act of intervention is elevated to a higher level, the planner's ability to influence public policies and decision will still be limited overall. The decision process is a tough nut to crack. What can result, however, is a relative gain, with planners moving up the influence ladder a notch.

Hence, in affecting the relationship between a regional plan preparation process and local autonomy, the planner may not be able to guarantee "ideal" regional planning solutions. Yet, his choice of appropriate roles and strategies will ensure that he does the best he can within a particular web of contextual constraints.

3.6 Importance to the Thesis Problem

The literature which describes the organizational context of planning suggests several areas of concern for this thesis. The first is the nature of the relationship between the three levels of planning authority in Alberta - the provincial government and its agencies, the regional planning commission, and the local authorities. It seems necessary to identify the legal framework for the relationship, as defined in the Planning Act and other provincial documents, and to trace the impact of this power arrangement upon the regional plan preparation process. Specifically, in what way did the balance of power manifest itself in the process? Did the balance shift over time? What opportunities for conflict or cooperation between authorities did the structure of interauthority relations provide? Is there evidence that participants shared a common appreciation of the task before them? Was there a clear mandate for regional planning in the region?

Second, it would seem that the sentiments, values, and attitudes of the key actors merit consideration. What were the critical issues for each of the participants in the process? Which participants shared common values and points of view about issues? How did these attitudes manifest themselves within the process? Was consensus about issues ever achieved?

The third area of concern arising from the literature on organizational relationships is organizational learning during the plan preparation process. Were there changes in the decision-making context that implied a need for participants to review their interpretation of the planning problem? Did participants respond to these changes? If so, what were the manners of response? These questions arise from the contention by Argyris and Schon (1978) that in the [illegible] of a volatile and conflictual environment, it is the ability of an organization to restructure its response that is critical to effective performance.

The literature describing the role of the planner and his relationship to the politician suggests several additional research questions. It becomes necessary to establish, from commission documents, what roles were assigned to the regional plan committee, as the political faction, and regional planning commission staff. Do these descriptions match the actual roles? How do they evaluate the performance of the regional plan committee and planning staff? What factors seemed to affect their ability to perform the assigned roles? Is there evidence within commission records to indicate the nature of the relationship between the political arm of the commission and its technical staff?

There also exists a substantial body of opinion which favors the need for planners with politicial acumen - individuals who possess the social interaction and process skills necessary to manage interauthority relationships and play an active part in conflict -resolution. It suggests that planners need be keenly aware of the political and organizational environment. While it is beyond the stated purview of this thesis to establish criteria to test the effectiveness of planners in this regard, this literature still bears directly on the study. It provides a framework for interpreting the strategies and actions of planners and their own perceptions of their roles. It might also help to interpret the politicians' evaluation of the planners' performance. Hence, without defining precise standards against which to measure the skill levels of planning staff, it might be possible to isolate, in general terms, the opportunities that existed for planners to exercise organizational and political expertise.

The material presented in this chapter, then, suggests that the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning in the Edmonton region will have been shaped by the many forces within the political and organizational context. Specifically, three broad areas of concern have been isolated for investigation in this thesis: the role of the planners, the role of the regional plan committee, and the nature of interauthority relationships in the Edmonton region. The political culture in Alberta and the legal framework for regional planning will provide a basis for interpreting this last facet. As such, they form the subject matter of the next chapter.

Footnotes

1. See, for example, Hudson (1982).

2. In Friedmann's (1973, pp. 245-246) own terms societal guidance is "the processes by which the incidence, rate, and direction of change in society are controlled". The guidance system is "the pattern of institutional arrangements (political, legal, administrative, economic, cognitive, and planning) that guides the processes of change in society".

3. Seley and Wolpert (1974) have described "the strategy of ambiguity", as utilized by policy makers in North Nashville, Tennessee to neutralize opposition to an interstate highway. In this case ambiguity was used purposely to misinform and confuse opponents.

THE ALBERTA CONTEXT FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

4.0 Introduction

Chapter 2 outlined the concepts of regional planning and local autonomy, and emphasized the significance of the particular decision-making environment in shaping the relationship between the two forces. In Chapter 3, the elements within the decision-making context that might be expected to play an important role in this relationship were identified. One of these was the nature of interauthority relationships, in terms of the political heritage and the existing balance of power amongst the levels of decision-making authority. The purpose of Chapter 4 is therefore to describe these aspects of the context in Alberta.

The political culture of Alberta has long emphasized an ethic of local autonomy, accompanied by a corresponding belief in the principles of intermunicipal cooperation and local responsibility. The belief that municipal governments will wish to cooperate with one another for their common good has, in fact, been the basis for the regional planning system from the beginning. Yet, at the same time that the framework for regional planning has been designed with clear regard for local autonomy, the provincial government has expressed a commitment to the orderly development of urban and regional affairs within the province by placing the regional plan at the apex of the hierarchy of statutory planning instruments. The difficulty of reconciling these divergent ideals is of central importance to the interpretive framework adopted here, so it is necessary to specify the grounds of divergence in some detail. That will be done by linking the political culture of Alberta and the ideology of local autonomy to the development of the legislative framework for regional planning that was in effect for the period of this study.

4.1 The Political Culture of Alberta and the Ideology of Local Autonomy

Regional planning in Alberta has evolved within a larger political culture that has, at its roots, a firmly entrenched faith in the sanctity of individual rights and the preservation of local self-government. Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975), in documenting the persistence of the ethic of local autonomy on the Alberta political scene, noted that the drive for independence by municipal governments has not lessened since the early part of this century, when a pattern of cooperation and consultation became a routine feature of provincial-municipal relations. Under the United Farmers of Alberta, which governed Alberta from 1921 to 1935, local autonomy was explicitly linked to the tenets of democracy and group government. The Social Credit government (1935-1971) further fed the fires of local initiative: "In terms of urban concentration, the critical feature of Social Credit policy was the autonomy afforded local government, in almost every direction, to man its own ship and to make its own decisions regulated largely by ad hoc boards separated formally from the daily routine of governmental, departmental administration" (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975, p. 81). The current Progressive Conservative government equally came to power on an election [illegible] stressed decentralization and municipal autonomy. The party professed "to return, wherever practical, the decision-making process to local government", to recognize "the very different problems of the metropolitan centers of Edmonton and Calgary", to "build a much more diversified economy", and "to cr[illegible] more balanced province-wide growth, and hence, encourage decentralization of both public and private investments" (Dragushan, 1979, [illegible] 90-93). Local autonomy, then, remains a cherished ideal and forms the stated foundation for provincial- municipal relations [illegible] Alberta.[1]

Three facets of the Alberta political heritage add substance to an interpretive framework for the thesis topic and so merit specific, albeit brief, consideration. They are the belief that municipal governments will cooperate with one another to secure larger benefits, the pattern of sporadic intervention in urban affairs by the provincial government, and the reality of intermunicipal competition.

4.1.1 Cooperation

The pre-eminence given to local autonomy has meant a corresponding faith in local responsibility and the rational willingness of municipalities to cooperate for some higher purpose. This philosophy was explicitly articulated in U.F.A. political theory and since it was this government that, in 1929, fleshed out the framework for regional planning that was first set up in the Town Planning Act of 1913, their theory is worthy of some elaboration.

Summarizing Macpherson (1953), U.F.A. political philosophy espoused a group government system that conceived of a number of groups, each bound together by an overriding selfish interest (e.g. occupational, industrial, or economic) and relating to one another in a non-exploitive social order. This concept of democracy presumed that a natural harmony of group interests would emerge from the realization that the self-interest of each group was inextricably bound to the interests of the whole. The resistance to one group's unjust demands by all other groups would ensure equal treatment of all and an unselfish and just resolution of social problems. Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975, p. 32) summarized the doctrine of resistance in the following way:

> Only resisted power was selfish, and it was necessary to build up resistance to selfish power to achieve the true ends of democracy. Resistance was to be generated both among peers in the Legislature and between the delegated representatives and their grass roots membership... This theory imputed the role of maintaining democratic equality to competition.

Yet, while this doctrine presumed that undue domination by any one group could be prevented, it did not specifically articulate a common basis for agreement on policy and legislation amongst the groups (Macpherson, 1953). It was simply presumed that the actual operation of group government would somehow resolve itself so that a cooperative harmony would prevail. As will soon become apparent, the legacy of planning legislation that defines the role of regional planning commissions exhibits the same optimistic faith in responsible local government and, not surprisingly, has encountered similar queries regarding the common basis for cooperation (Smith, 1982).

4.1.2 Intervention

For all that the principle of local autonomy has dominated local-provincial relations, provincial governments, through the twentieth century, have intervened in urban affairs when a substantial threat to the orderly management of urban growth and change has been perceived. For example, in 1948, following the return of ex-servicemen from the

Second World War and the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947, the provincial government countered the inability of city administrations to manage the surge of speculative investment and development in the two metropolitan centers by transferring substantial power over the zoning of land covered by new plans of subdivision to provincial authorities (Statutes of Alberta, Amending Act, 1948, Chapter 54). Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975, p. 93) comment on this move:

> The stringency of these measures (the executive use of the Minister, the director and the Titles Office, and the transfer of local authority responsibility to the provincial administration) illustrates how seriously the threat to orderly urban development was felt to be. It also illustrates the reserve power of the provincial administration when needed, though it is important to note that these measures required special admendments to the Town Planning Act to make them effective.

Then, in 1974, following the boom in northeastern Alberta which resulted from major oil sands development in that area, the provincial government established the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission as a direct administrative arm of Alberta Municipal Affairs. The agency has a broad mandate and wide ranging powers that far exceed the land use planning role ascribed to the ten regional planning commissions. Under the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act, 1974, the Commission is empowered to prepare plans; to administer and/or implement programs to serve the region; and to coordinate the programs and services of provincial departments. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may also make regulations to modify or exempt the Commission from the provisions of a dozen pieces of legislation governing local planning and servicing matters, including the New Towns Act, the Municipal Government Act and the Planning Act, 1977 (Alberta Municipal Affairs, I.A.P.B., 1981, p. 18). Because the Commission is capable of delivering programs and services as well as planning for them, it is an obvious anomaly in Alberta's regional planning system. There, the preparation of regional plans rests with organizations comprised of local representatives, and the implementation of policy rests almost entirely at the local level.

In yet another case, the 1979-1981 annexation conflict between the City of Edmonton and surrounding municipalities, the judgment of the Local Authorities Board, as the arbiter in annexation applications, had to be referred to the provincial Cabinet for final decision. The Cabinet exercised its right to intervene in annexation hearings in recognition of the intense inter-local conflict within the region (Smith, 1982, pp. 219-222).

These three cases represent instances where the provincial government has been provoked into direct involvement in local government affairs. Yet this evidence of the government's willingness to intervene by no means reduces the significance of the ethic of local autonomy on the provincial scene. Each case constituted an ad hoc, infrequent incursion into the affairs of local governments under what were seen as extreme conditions. There has been no consistent and purposeful effort to establish and enforce an overall framework to guide urban and regional affairs within Alberta (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975).

4.1.3 The Reality of Intermunicipal Competition

According to Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975), the lack of a precise and unambiguous statement of provincial policy on urban growth and the intended relationships among local, regional and provincial authorities has contributed substantially to a competitive atmosphere permeated with jealousy and mistrust. While, on one hand, the lack of an overall framework can be said to promote flexibility and freedom of decision for participants, in another sense it presents opportunities for misunderstanding and manipulation and leaves municipalities particularly vulnerable to the political circumstances of the moment:

> The one irremovable attribute of the present social structure is the recognition by all responsible local leaders of the dire necessity 'to remain on top of the situation'. Any intrusion by the province into the 'on top of the situation' position of the metropolitan centers is countered speedily and vehemently. Yet, paradoxically, this very defensiveness leads to the subordination of the metropolitan centers to the situation. Suspicion of the intent of others, a constant search for the means of getting one up on one's peers, care to ensure there is room to manoeuvre, and similar behavior, typify the motives of local government leadership in the current structural arrangement. Within the context of this situation, and within the context of these motives, the provincial policy of local autonomy is in practice brought to naught (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975, p. 208).

The manner in which provincial governments have committed themselves to the ethic of local autonomy might then be said to have been self-defeating, at least during the period of Social Credit administration, at which Bettison, Kenward and Taylor's ana[illegible]is was chiefly directed. More recently, Masson (1985) has provided a more favorable assessment of the arrangement of powers between provincial and local authorities. In discussing the overall role for local self-government in Alberta, he suggested that municipal governments fall between two extremes in policy-making powers. While they do not exercise complete control over decision making, neither are they simple administrative conduits for the provincial government. Fiscal control is the real test of autonomy, however, and there continues to be a discrepancy between the provincial government's rhetoric and actual balance of power between provincial and local authorities:

> In Alberta, permissive legislation clauses in the Municipal Government Act seem to give municipalities a wide latitude of policy alternatives in certain areas. Despite this show in the past of the provincial government of granting political autonomy, local officials are acutely aware that the real key is financial autonomy and adequate fiscal resources... The province has not been responsive to plans that would make the municipalities fiscally autonomous (Massôn, 1985, p. 26).

4.1.4 Implications

The facets of the political heritage described above, are significant to the thesis in that they help define the framework for the regional plan preparation process. Discrepancies between political facade and practical reality have established an ambiguous set of circumstances that might be expected to affect the ability of participants to define the appropriate balance between regional control and local autonomy. The power balance amongst levels of authority, traditionally has not been well defined in Alberta, and the reality of intermunicipal competition rests at odds with the belief in the principle of cooperation. From this, it seems desirable to use the Edmonton case study to determine whether or not participants in the regional plan preparation process were able to resolve the question of a proper balance between cooperation and autonomy, and whether or not there is evidence to suggest that ambiguity in the overall political culture affected this task. The principles of cooperation and local autonomy as embodied in planning legislation relate directly to these questions.

4.2 Development of the Legislative Framework for Regional Planning

4.2.1 Early Legislation: 1913-1950

Alberta has had statutory provision for a form of regional land use planning since 1913 when the first Town Planning Act permitted municipalities to cooperate in the preparation of joint "town planning schemes". That local autonomy was a fundamental political aim, even at that time, is underscored by the fact that membership on a joint commission was voluntary. In the view of Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975, p. 48), the Act represented "the very essence of government by consultation, of respect for the autonomy of local government, and of respect for the interests of individuals which has been characteristic of Alberta urban affairs from the beginning".

The first use of the term regional planning was not until the Town Planning Act, 1929, but the principle of voluntary cooperation still applied. The regional planning provisions of the 1929 Act remained in force for 21 years but were not put to practical test. The first district planning commission was not established until 1950, shortly after the Town Planning Act had been amended (Statutes of Alberta, 1950, Chapter 71) to redefine the roles and structure of the regional planning agencies.

4.2.2 Bland Spence-Sales Report

Many of the amendments adopted in the Town and Rural Planning Act, 1950, as well as the establishment of the first two district planning commissions in Edmonton (1950) and Calgary (1951), were in direct response to a report by Professors Bland and Spence-Sales in 1949.[2] They had been commissioned by the City of Edmonton to investigate the failure of the planning apparatus in the post-war period. What is of principal interest here is the report's argument, in light of Edmonton's development trends, for a regional control system that would protect the autonomy of municipalities surrounding the City. Since the alternative to the integration of this "complex of interdependent cities and towns" under district planning commissions was direct control by the City of Edmonton, through annexation and amalgamation, the idea of regional planning for Edmonton has been synonomous with local autonomy since the beginning. Bland and Spence-Sales envisioned a district planning board, funded jointly by provincial and municipal contributions and comprised of members from participating authorities, plus one member nominated by the Minister of Public Works. The board's staff was to be drawn from the Provincial Town Planning Branch (Bland and Spence-Sales, 1949, pp. 36-39).

In the 1950 amendment to the Town Planning Act, the Bland Spence-Sales recommendations were modified by providing for the appointment of up to three provincial members on a district planning commission. According to Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975, p. 97) this was an attempt by the province to intervene in the rivalry between municipalities over planning, whereas Dragushan (1979, p. 51) has suggested that it was motivated by a concern for the professional quality of plan preparation efforts. In any event, district planning commissions under the 1950 Act were voluntary associations of municipalities with largely advisory powers. Their roles were limited to the preparation of municipal or joint municipal plans and zoning bylaws at the request of member municipalities.

4.2.3 Further Changes in Legislation before 1977

Since the first district planning commission was established, the Alberta Planning Act has been subject to frequent revision. Major rewrites affecting regional planning occurred in 1953, 1957, 1963 and 1977. Most notably, covering the years prior to the 1977 Act which was in force for the period of this study, membership on commissions became compulsory, at the direction of the Lieutenant Governor in Council; the commissions were made subdivision approval authorities for municipalities within their boundaries, excepting the cities of Edmonton and Calgary;[3] and the preparation of regional plans became obligatory. Another most important development during this period was the establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund to be administered by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The fund, which provides a stable flow of monies to the regional planning commissions, is obtained in large part from a compulsory levy on all municipalities according to a schedule of mill rates which takes into account differences in the size of municipalities and whether or not they have planning and subdivision approval authority.

These features of the evolution of the regional planning legislation seem to imply a strengthened commitment to regional planning. Yet, when they are juxtaposed with other elements of the policy environment which encourage local autonomy, the framework which governs the relationship between these two forces seems ambiguous and therefore problematic. This much seems obvious from the Planning Act, 1977 and other documents which shaped the nature of regional planning during the period of this study.

4.3. Provincial-Municipal Relations und[illegible]ing Act, 1977

As noted in Chapter 1, the Planning Act, 1977 assigns five responsibilities to all regional planning commissions. Briefly, once again, these are:

1. To prepare and adopt a regional plan.
2. To prepare other statutory plans or land use bylaws at the request of a municipal council.
3. To assist municipalities with planning matters when requested to do so.
4. To act as subdivision approval authority for municipalities that are not authorized to act as subdivision approval authorities.
5. To promote public participation in planning matters.

(Sections 26(3) and 87(b)(i))

The Act also stipulates the procedure of regional plan preparation and adoption. At some time during the preparation of a regional plan, the regional planning commission must provide opportunity to the Alberta Planning Board, councils of municipalities within the planning region, and other affected parties to comment on the proposed document (Section 48). Public hearings on the proposed regional plan must be held and the regional planning commission must consider representations from the hearings in finalizing the draft document (Sections 49(i) and 50(i)). Prior to adopting a regional plan, the commission must advise every local authority in the region of its intention to do so (Section 50(2)). The adoption of a plan then requires the support of a two-thirds majority of those members in attendance (Section 51) and, once adopted, the plan must be referred to the Alberta Planning Board for review:

> On receipt of a proposed regional plan adopted by a regional planning commission, the Board shall review it and may
> (a) return it to the regional planning commission with suggestions for changes, or
> (b) approve it and send the plan to the Minister with or without recommendations.
> (Section 52(1) and (2))

When the Minister of Municipal Affairs receives the regional plan, he may refer it back to the Board with recommendations for changes, or ratify the plan (Section 52(3)).

In very general terms, then, the Planning Act, 1977 sets a framework for provincial, local and regional roles within the regional plan preparation process. However, the definition of this framework leaves room for individual interpretation and thereby increases the likelihood of misunderstanding and interauthority dispute. For example, at some time during the plan preparation exercise, a commission must allow the opportunity for affected parties to make representations with respect to the proposed plan. But other than specifying that this be done prior to adoption of the plan by the commission, there is nothing to indicate just when these representations should be sought or what weight they should carry in determining final policy decisions. A report by Alberta Municipal Affairs (Alberta, 1981a) deems this latter point particularly significant. Because the success of the regional planning process is dependent upon the goodwill of member municipalities toward the ideals of cooperation and consensus, a failure to recognize the sentiments of some members might jeopardize ongoing relations on the commission. Moreover, failure to secure widespread commitment to policies early in the planning exercise could lead to time consuming delays and conflict in the final stages of the process.

The above points are, perhaps, doubly significant with respect to the timing and weight of input from the Alberta Planning Board. Under the Planning Act, the Board is assigned four responsibilities with respect to regional planning commissions. First, it must notify each member-municipality of the amount it is required to pay into the Alberta Planning Fund (Section 11). Second, in what has historically been its most important role, the Board serves as the subdivision appeal body in the province. It's decisions are subject only to appeal to the Alberta Supreme Court on points of law and jurisdiction (Sections 106-109, 152). Third, the Board hears and adjudicates intermunicipal disputes and conflicts between a regional planning commission and a municipality when requested to do so by either party (Sections 54(4) and 44(1)). Finally, the Board reviews regional plans and regional plan amendments (Section 52).

In terms of this last role, it seems reasonable to assume that the Alberta Planning Board is intended to ensure that regional decisions accord with provincial policy. Yet, it is unclear in the Act whether the role of the Board is simply to observe and advise the regional planning commission or if it is to lead in policy formulation in the region. It would seem that the potential does exist for the Board to play a part in directing policy, although there is no indication whether a commission must comply with that direction or what the implications for the commission would be if it chose not to do so. It is not clear, either, whether the Minister of Municipal Affairs would consider ratifying a regional plan that has not been sanctioned by the Alberta Planning Board. Hence, the definition of roles for the regional plan preparation process leaves considerable room for speculation and considerable latitude to the provincial agencies.

The vagueness just described is part and parcel of a larger problem of ambiguity in the definition of interauthority relations for the entire planning system. The regional plan rests at the apex of the hierarchy of planning documents, in the sense that all statutory plans and bylaws must "conform" to policy specified in the regional plan (Section 54). Hence, it is supposed to establish a framework within which local or municipal planning can occur. Yet, certain other provisions in the Act, describing the balance of power amongst levels of planning authority, undermine the authority of regional planning commissions to establish an effective framework for managing growth and change at the regional scale.

Clark's (1984) discussion of autonomy in terms of the principles of initiative and immunity is a useful vehicle for exploring the respective powers of municipal governments and regional planning commissions within the planning system. Despite the position accorded to the regional plan as the premier planning document in the province, local authorities possess greater powers of both initiative and immunity than regional planning commissions. With the intent of strengthening local autonomy, the Act grants municipal governments virtually absolute control over land use development within their own jurisdictions. They are given the authority to determine the content of general municipal plans and land use bylaws (Sections 61-66) and are not expressly required to submit their planning instruments to any external authority prior to adoption (Section 62). While, on the surface, there appears to be no problem - since land use bylaws must conform with the regional plan - in practice, where regional policy might be framed so loosely that its original intent can be transformed or circumvented at the local level, dispute between regional and local authorities, each wielding different interpretations of both the Act and the regional policy, is a very real possibility. Moreover, the only avenue open to a regional planning commission if it feels the intent of the regional plan has been thwarted is to refer the dispute to the Alberta Planning Board. Yet, in rendering decisions about subdivision appeals (and it should be remembered that the subdivision control system is the only direct means of policy implementation that is available to commissions), the Board is directed only to "have regard" to any regional plan, whereas it "shall conform with" land use bylaws and regulations (Section 109(2)). These provisions seem to lend ultimate support to municipal regulations. Hence, local governments have substantial autonomy in planning matters. They hold the power to legislate and regulate their residents and, with the exception of the discretion of the Alberta Planning Board in adjudicating disputes, they are relatively immune from intervention by other levels on the planning hierarchy.

Translating Clark's two principles of power to the regional level, it is apparent that regional planning commissions do not share the same degree of autonomy as local governments. In terms of initiative, or the power to act on behalf of the regional interest, the commissions are constrained, most significantly, in two respects. The first is the nature of representation on the commissions. Their membership is comprised of elected officials from local municipalities. As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, this form of representation, where members must serve both a local and a regional interest while relying on a local electorate for election, invariably means that regional concerns are sacrificed in conflict of interest situations.

Second, as noted above, the regional planning commissions suffer from a lack of enforcement authority. The responsibility for implementing regional policy decisions rests entirely with municipal governments. Even in cases of alleged non-conformity between regional and municipal documents, the commissions have no power to compel a local authority to comply with the commission's interpretation of the situation. Regional planning commissions, then, have limited power to legislate and regulate on behalf of the regional community of interest.

Regional planning commissions also have limited power of immunity. Although the Act requires that municipal governments abide by the policies of the regional plan, each local council has the opportunity to tailor the nature of that very document in its own interest. In repetition of the point made above, the membership composition of the commissions ensures local input to the plan. In addition, the regional planning commission must formally invite and pay regard to local submissions before the contents of the plan are finalized. Hence, the policies of the regional planning commission are clearly subject to local review. Then, whittling the power of immunity to an even lower level, the draft regional plan is also subject to scrutiny by two provincial authorities, the Alberta Planning Board and the Minister of

Municipal Affairs. Yet, the Act does not require any other level of the planning hierarchy, either provincial or municipal, to obtain similar comment from the regional planning commissions prior to policy pronouncement. The relationship between the three levels of planning authority is thus ambiguous, to say the least. Above all, it is unclear how the regional plan is to live up to its status as the premier planning document in the province given the limited mandate granted to the regional planning commissions.

4.4 The Regional Planning System and its Consequences

In 1980-1982, the Inter-agency Planning Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs[4] undertook a massive review of the regional planning system in Alberta, primarily because of the need to define the balance in the relationship of the municipal, regional, and provincial levels in the regional planning process (Alberta, 1981a). This review is significant to the thesis in three respects. First, it is the most comprehensive review and assessment that has been made of all aspects of the regional planning system.[5] It involved all the key participants in regional planning in the province, and identified issues, concerns, and recommendations for change from a coordinated assessment of the responses of all these groups.[6] Second, the study reflects a clear recognition of the problems and unresolved issues within the present legislative framework and practical organization of the system. The study found "widespread misunderstanding and ignorance concerning why the Province has established and maintained the regional planning system" (Alberta, 1981a, p. vi). Since the study concentrated on key actors in the system, rather than lay people, this statement is particularly revealing about the ambiguity surrounding the regional planning framework. Third, in an attempt to redress these concerns, a number of recommendations were made. Those concerning guidelines for regional plan preparation and review, and related suggestions about the role of the Alberta Planning Board, had a substantial impact on the regional plan preparation process undertaken by the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission.

4.4.1 Issues Identified in the Regional Planning System Study

More than 50 issues and concerns were identified during the course of the study. The following excerpt summarizes some of the key points:

> Specifically, the commissions expressed a need for clarification of the intent and scope of the regional plan, its legal and functional relationship with other municipal statutory planning documents and provincial policies, and the criteria to be used by the Alberta Planning Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for reviewing, approving and ratifying the plan, once completed... [To] clarify the role relationship between RPC staff and Commission members... [To] clarify the liaison function of the RPCs and the Province... The policy regarding the local autonomy of metro and municipalities needs clarifying... As the effort is being made to strengthen regional planning through the Planning Act, regional decision-making continues to be eroded by an increasing centralization of authority in Provincial departments, lessening flexibility for regional representatives to work meaningfully with the RPCs... The administrative procedure set out in the Act for plan review and approval leaves some scope for defining the stages and timing of the process and the roles of the key actors (A.M.A., 1981, pp. 31-32).

In addition to these widespread concerns, member municipalities from the Edmonton region criticized their commission as being too dictatorial. They expressed a need for changes in membership representation, for the role of the commission to be clarified, and for a more advisory format for regional planning policy (A.A.M.D.C. and A.U.M.A., 1980, pp. 9,16,27-30).

4.4.2 Recommendations for the Regional Planning System

Noting that "there are no 'right' and 'wrong' ways to do regional planning, only appropriate or less appropriate ways" (A.M.A., 1981, p. 50), 37 recommendations were put forward in the study report. Briefly, it was suggested that the regional plan should be a leadership document, simply written in non-technical language; that it should be a policy statement about growth and change, yet be sensitive to provincial and municipal concerns, without intruding on either of these other levels, and that it should serve as "the focus for continuous discussion and negotiation between the regional planning authorities, the provincial departments, and the municipalities". In addition, with respect to regional planning commissions, the study suggested an orientation seminar on planning for newly elected members, the participation of commission members at an early stage of technical planning exercises, and the development of skills in negotiation, facilitation and conciliation for planners. The report further recommended that the Alberta Planning Board play a leadership and organizational role in assisting commissions to develop these new skills. In fact the study advocated, in general, a prominent role for the Alberta Planning Board in policy formulation, evaluation and monitoring activities. The Board, it was urged, should develop guidelines for regional plan preparation and review, and similar frameworks for each level in the planning hierarchy, it should examine questions of staffing and organization in regional planning agencies, and it should provide consistent and ongoing consultation with the regional planning commissions during the plan preparation process to ensure that provincial aims are met. In addition, it was recommended that the Board "initiate a joint process to closely and continuously monitor development of large urban centers, with a view to recommending solutions to the problems that may arise from time to time". Hence, in a dramatic reorientation of the Board's traditional role, which was primarily concerned with a statutory appeal function, the report envisioned a strong leadership and watchdog role for the Alberta Planning Board in areas of policy formulation and coordination, information exchange, training, and intermunicipal conflict resolution. The Alberta Planning Board would thus come to assume a substantial role in the regional plan preparation process.

4.4.3 Guidelines for Plan Preparation and Review

As direct follow-up to the Regional Planning System Study, the Alberta Planning Board prepared guidelines for regional plan preparation and review and a framework for their application (March 1982). The guidelines "make clear the responsibility of regional plans to serve rather than to dictate to member-municipalities" (Alberta, 1982a, p. vii). Regional plans are to provide guidance for municipalities without encroaching upon municipal rights "through being unduly restrictive" (p. vii). Hence, the framework for growth management "may outline future patterns in a general way, but should not seek to be either highly detailed or regulatory, permitting a flexibility in interpretation for the municipal planning instruments. All growth management policies should be the result of a full and joint consultative process with the municipalities and the Provincial agencies" (p. 8).

To assist commissions in meeting these requirements, the report established a four stage process for consultation and review between regional agencies and the Board during the plan preparation process. Only the last two phases are mandatory contact points but "regional planning commissions are encouraged to take advantage of the consultation opportunities at the early stages since this would greatly facilitate the processing of draft and adopted plans by dealing with potential problems before the mandatory stages are reached" (p. 6). Ongoing contact with member municipalities and provincial agencies is also of vital concern during the process:

Phase I - Work Program: The work program for regional plan preparation should be submitted to the Board for information and review. There will be agreement as to the times when Provincial input will be required during the process.

Phase II - Technical Background or Draft Policy Papers: The commission should distribute these reports to the Board and relevant provincial departments. "The purpose of this phase is to check out the completeness and accuracy of available technical information, in addition to assisting staff to better appreciate the basis for subsequent policy documents, and to allow the Province to comment on the consistency between Provincial and regional policies... It is hoped that this type of consultation...will minimize the areas of policy conflict which are too often picked up at the draft plan stage when it is difficult to negotiate mutually acceptable policies."

Phase III - Draft Plan: This is the first required phase in the plan review and approval mechanism. "It is a required step because a consultation at this point is considered essential if opportunities for joint exploration are to be identified and pursued and if conflicts are to be resolved prior to the commission adopting a plan which the Board cannot approve due to clear policy conflicts".

Phase IV - Adopted Plan: After the commission has adopted a plan, it must submit the adopted plan to the Board "for its approval".

In keeping with this format, which was designed to encourage a high degree of consultation and negotiation, criteria for plan approval require that "the plan reflects full and continuing coordination between the regional planning commission, the provincial departments and local municipalities, authorities and boards" (p. 7). Thus, while the guidelines do not define the substance of policy for the regional planning commissions, they do indicate the manner in which policy areas should be covered.

4.5 Conclusions

Clearly, the context for regional planning in the Province of Alberta places the regional planning system in a position of conflict. Local autonomy and regional planning are two principles that are held in high esteem in planning legislation. In fact, both are representative of philosophical threads that wind back to the political culture of the early twentieth century. Yet, the environment for planning seems to be a blend of provincial and local control with no clearly defined mandate for regional planning commissions. It is not surprising, then, that many participants in the Regional Planning System Study identified the need to define the role for regional planning in more explicit terms as a pressing priority for the regional planning system.

In terms of the thesis, it becomes possible to interpret the events within the regional plan preparation process in terms of the broader picture of conflict and ambiguity about roles that persists on the provincial scene. Specific questions arise in response to these circumstances:

1. In what way did the ambiguity about provincial, local and regional responsibilities manifest itself in the plan preparation process?
2. What issues generated controversy amongst the participants?
3. Given the reorientation of the Alberta Planning Board's role in the Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review, what role did the Board play during the process?
4. What are the participants' opinions about the expanded role in the process?
5. Were participants able to settle the issue of mandate for the regional planning commission? Did they derive a workable balance between local autonomy and regional control?
6. Did the issue of local autonomy manifest itself in the process?
7. Is there evidence of a willingness on the part of member-municipalities to cooperate in achieving a regional plan?

This chapter has enabled a narrowing of focus to the specific elements within the Alberta context that can be expected to shape the process under consideration; namely, the role of the Alberta Planning Board, the ambiguity about the mandate of regional planning, and the discrepancy between the political rhetoric of local autonomy and the actual balance of power amongst the provincial government, the regional planning commissions, and local authorities. This chapter has provided the factual information that is necessary to place the events of the regional plan preparation process into a proper perspective of inter-authority relations in the province.

Footnotes

1. Reality does not always match the political rhetoric (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975, p. 208 and Masson, 1985, p. 26).

2. The Act referred to these commissions as district planning commissions, rather than regional planning commissions, although the concepts behind them are the same.

3. This was done in 1953, by Order-in-Council, under the Subdivision and Transfer Regulations of 1953, not the Planning Act.

4. The Inter-agency Planning Branch provides planning advisory services to regional planning commissions, government agencies, and the Alberta Planning Board. It coordinates the review of regional plans by government departments and advises the Board on approval of regional plans. In essence, the I.A.P.B. provides a research, information, and advisory service to the Alberta Planning Board.

5. Burton (1981) conducted a study which considered the roles of regional planning commissions in land and growth management according to the perceptions of developers, citizen groups, community organizations, planning professionals, commission planners, and other professional groups in planning related fields. It was much narrower in scope than the Regional Planning System Study in that its primary focus was on how relevant these roles appeared to be to major groups of participants involved with regional planning commissions in some capacity. Burton's study focused more directly upon the participants' assessment of the functions of the commission than the mandate of regional planning commissions and their role within the interauthority network, that was a primary concern of the Regional Planning System Study. Dale and Burton (1984) summarized the results of Burton's study and condensed the findings of other studies of the regional planning system.

6. The study involved the members, staff, and executive directors of the regional planning commissions, the Alberta Planning Board, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Association of Alberta Municipal Districts, major provincial departments having a role in regional planning, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

INTERMUNICIPAL RELATIONS IN THE EDMONTON REGION

5.0 Introduction

The thesis, to this point, has identified the elements of context that might be expected to play a significant role in the evolution of the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation; namely, the role of commission staff, the role of commission members, the role of provincial authorities, the major issues in policy formulation, and the mandate for levels of planning authority in the province. In addition, the political culture of Alberta has been described as a general framework for interpreting the events in the Edmonton region. In this chapter the focus will be narrowed even further, to particular events that have shaped the nature of inter-authority relationships and perceptions throughout the history of regional planning in the Edmonton region. According to Leach (1982), the nature of relationships is conditioned by a series of events over time, so the historical picture of political control in the study region provides a valuable clue to understanding the process under review in the thesis.

5.1 Some Aspects of Conflict in the Edmonton Region

5.1.1 Beginnings of Conflict

Norman Giffen, a long-time director of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission has asserted that intermunicipal conflict spans the entire history of regional planning in the Edmonton region (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 4 November 1982, p. 5,6).[1] As early as 1954, a dispute erupted between the Municipal District of Strathcona and the other metropolitan authorities over plans to locate a town of 30,000 people within the rural municipality, on the present site of Sherwood Park (Batey and Smith, 1981). It has been said that "to the regional planners, and to the other representatives on the regional planning commission, the scheme was an abomination; the site was too close to Edmonton for the community to be anything more than a dormitory suburb, and its development would undercut the growth prospects of the genuine satellites for years to come" (Smith, 1982, p. 213). The City of Edmonton even threatened to withdraw from the district planning commission if the proposal should be approved, and the Municipal District of Strathcona actually did so, when it became clear that the commission would not approve the plans of subdivision. The Sherwood Park incident contributed directly to the 1957 amendment of the Planning Act, which made membership on the district planning commissions compulsory (Bettison, Kenward and Taylor, 1975, pp. 191-194; Statutes of Alberta, 1957, Chapter 98). As early as 1954, then, conflict in the Edmonton region was significant enough to affect provincial planning legislation.

5.1.2 The McNally Commission Legacy

Also in 1954, as a result of more general concerns about urban growth in Alberta, the provincial government appointed a Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton to examine municipal boundaries, public finance, and government structure for the two metropolitan regions. According to Smith (1982, pp. 214,215), by requiring municipal governments to formalize their positions in a public arena, the McNally Commission process served to exacerbate intermunicipal conflicts in the region.

In its arguments to the Commission, the City of Edmonton laid formal support to the unification of the Edmonton region, basing its case on the eradication of servicing inefficiencies and fiscal inequities. The bordering municipalities, on the other hand, focussed on the political issue of the right of each municipality to determine its own destiny. As was made evident in Chapter 2, neither of these philosophical bents is unique to the Edmonton region, both impinge, in varying degree, on most contests over municipal reform. In the Alberta situation, however, the City of Edmonton's position won clear support from the McNally Commission, which recommended "that each metropolitan area would ~~be~~ best governed by enlarging each of the present cities to include its whole metropolitan area" (Alberta, 1956, Chapter 14). Yet, the provincial government did not leap to institute the recommendations for boundary reform:

> These recommendations caught the government off-guard since it still had a strong commitment to maintaining local autonomy. Taking the position that 'the metropolitan problem' was caused by a lack of fiscal resources [and so could be solved in other ways], it ignored the Commission's recommendations for expansion (Masson, 1985, p. 66)

The McNally Commission was out of tune with the provincial context, in which local autonomy was the established norm.

Over the next decade, the City of Edmonton was able to make substantial territorial gains, through a combination of annexation and amalgamation. Nonetheless, the city council persisted in its desire for the total consolidation of the metropolitan area under Edmonton's jurisdiction, and commissioned Professor Hanson to suggest the most appropriate boundaries, based on fiscal and related considerations (Hanson, 1968). Hanson's analysis, based as it was on criteria of functional efficiency and fiscal equity, bore close resemblance to the recommendations of the McNally Commission.[2] In fact, debates over annexation and reform of the metropolitan region, as the most dramatic exemplifications of intermunicipal conflict in the region, have followed much the same line of argument for 30 years, to the extent that the County of Strathcona, Edmonton's long term arch-rival in the contest for tax-rich industrial lands, has recently derided Edmonton for its "Bible-like veneration" of the McNally Commission and suggested that "it is time that the McNally Commission Report be allowed to rest in peace" (Strathcona, 1980, p. 28). At the same time, other opinions expressed on behalf of the County (e.g. "that the diversity and public choice now existing in the region . indicate a healthy state of affairs" (Strathcona, 1980, p. iii), and that "there is, a democratic criterion to be considered in questions of local government reorganization as well as a functional efficiency criterion" (Strathcona, 1980, p. 20)) reveal that Strathcona's philosophical position has not changed much over 30 years, either. Yet, with each succeeding clash between Edmonton and its neighbors, the parties have become more embittered and the battle lines more deeply entrenched. According to Smith (1982, pp. 216,217), with reference to an application made by Edmonton in 1962 to annex much of the land within the boundaries recommended by the McNally Commission:

> Even municipalities that had not been closely engaged in the annexation dispute began to realize that there was no visible limit to the City's expansion. Sooner or later, regional plan or no

> regional plan, they would all be under threat. And increasingly, through the 1970's, they reacted to this perception, not by uniting within the regional planning framework, but by trying to enhance their independence.

Within a region divided by the self-seeking interests of municipalities, and sustained by the rhetoric of local autonomy, regional cooperation of the type described by regional planning theorists has not characterized intermunicipal relations. Indeed, in its discussion of the Edmonton region, The Regional Planning System Study (Alberta, 1981a, p. 86) described intermunicipal relations as exhibiting a high degree of competition. The study further noted that it has been common, within the regional planning system, for this competition for growth to override the spirit of regional cooperation, such that municipalities with similar views have banded together to defeat the process of intermunicipal negotiation and compromise and so prevent consensus on strategies that might benefit all. Masson (1985, p. 275) cast this competition in fiscal terms:

> The root cause of the animosity between large cities and their outlying municipalities is money. With municipalities dependent upon inadequate provincial grants and locally derived property taxes for most of their revenue, and with regional planning commissions trying to make binding decisions on the location of industry, it is not surprising that the politics of planning often becomes bitter.

Hence, the process of devising a planning framework for the Edmonton region has been enmeshed in what are, in essence, fiscal concerns. Under the structure of municipal funding described by Masson, where municipal growth and particularly industrial expansion translate directly to tax dollars, it is not surprising that dispute between

Edmonton and the industrialized County of Strathcona has been waged with such ardor and at great cost to goodwill in the region. Since the McNally Commission (Chapter 12, p. 5) asserted that "it is unjust and inequitable that wide variations in the tax base should exist among the local governing bodies that comprise the metropolitan area where the area is in fact one economic and social unit", the City of Edmonton has intensified its claim to share in the industrial tax revenues accruing in disproportionately large amounts to the small-in-population County of Strathcona.

5.2 Growth Studies Project: 1974-1978

Nowhere, in recent times, was the futility of the struggle between Edmonton and its neighbors over growth management principles more evident than during debate over the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission's major planning activities of the 1970's: the growth studies project and the preparation of the first version of the draft regional plan. With only three of the 22 members on the planning commission, the City of Edmonton was impotent to ensure its own concerns within the region were addressed.

The ERPC embarked on the Edmonton region growth studies project in 1974, as part of an intensive program aimed at devising a regional plan to replace the Edmonton Regional Plan: Metropolitan Part which was adopted by the Commission, in a preliminary form, on January 8, 1958.[3] This plan was essentially a land use control document. Yet, through repeated amendments it maintained the fundamental principles of the 1958 document, which were "to maintain compact urban communities and industrial areas" and to "prevent unwarranted fragmentation of good agricultural land" (ERPC, 1980, p. 19). Spurred on by the rapid growth of the Edmonton metropolitan region, the Commission intended the growth studies project to update and enunciate, more precisely, the principles for guiding growth and development such that all municipalities could work from a common perspective. A complementary aim, which was to define a suitable form of local government for the region, was deleted from the task description for the project when it proved too contentious to be resolved at the committee level (Minutes of the Metropolitan Committee, 9 February 1977).

In 1977, the Growth Studies team released a report in which four growth management alternatives were advanced for the Commission's consideration (ERPC, 1977a). The City of Edmonton favored strategy "A" which proposed that growth be concentrated within the City, while the other municipalities, except Devon, supported strategy "B", which favored the widest dispersal of growth to outlying municipalities (ERPC, 1977b). Ultimately, after much deliberation, a compromise was established between the two sides, although not before representatives from Edmonton articulated their dismay over the City's weak position on the regional planning commission:

> Mr. Kennedy [from the City of Edmonton] stated: Mr. Chairman, you long ago excluded any possibility of having any meaningful participation from the majority of the citizens and the staff did the same because they came with alternatives which in no way tried to accommodate the views of Edmonton. The alternatives we had this morning were alternatives of yours. We took some of the alternatives that the other municipalities favored and tried to combine them. We couldn't agree on them. So I think that it's long past the point where the City of Edmonton is being accommodated in this process (Minutes of the Metropolitan Committee, 26 August 1977).

The compromise strategy, based on objectives of local autonomy, the balanced growth of residential and non-residential development, and a higher quality of public services, emphasized a city-centered region, with 65-70% of future population assigned to the inner-metropolitan area (Figure 8).[4] The Commission endorsed the strategy on May 3, 1978.

5.3 The 1979 Draft Regional Plan

The growth management framework endorsed by the Commission during the growth studies project [illegible] an integral part of the 1979 draft regional plan. With res[illegible] growth management, the plan advocated the following:

> The majority of the population and economic growth will be contained in a compact metropolitan area... The Plan proposes that the Inner Metropolitan Area would accommodate 65 to 70 percent of the Region's future population growth and employment opportunities. Edmonton would absorb 50 to 55 percent of the total Regional growth or 71 to 77 percent of the growth of the Inner Metropolitan Area (ERPC, 1979a, pp. 2-11, 2-13).

Despite its qualified approval of the growth management strategy in 1978, the City of Edmonton renewed its assault on the framework during the consideration of the draft plan. In its official comments to the regional planning commission, the City of Edmonton reiterated its belief that its own "best interests and the interests of the region as a whole are served through policies and programs aimed at achieving a compact form of urban development. As such, the City is strongly opposed to the Commission's proposed growth strategy which would encourage the continuance of the present trend of the decentralization of urban growth

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN AREA

ACCORDING TO THE 1979 DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN

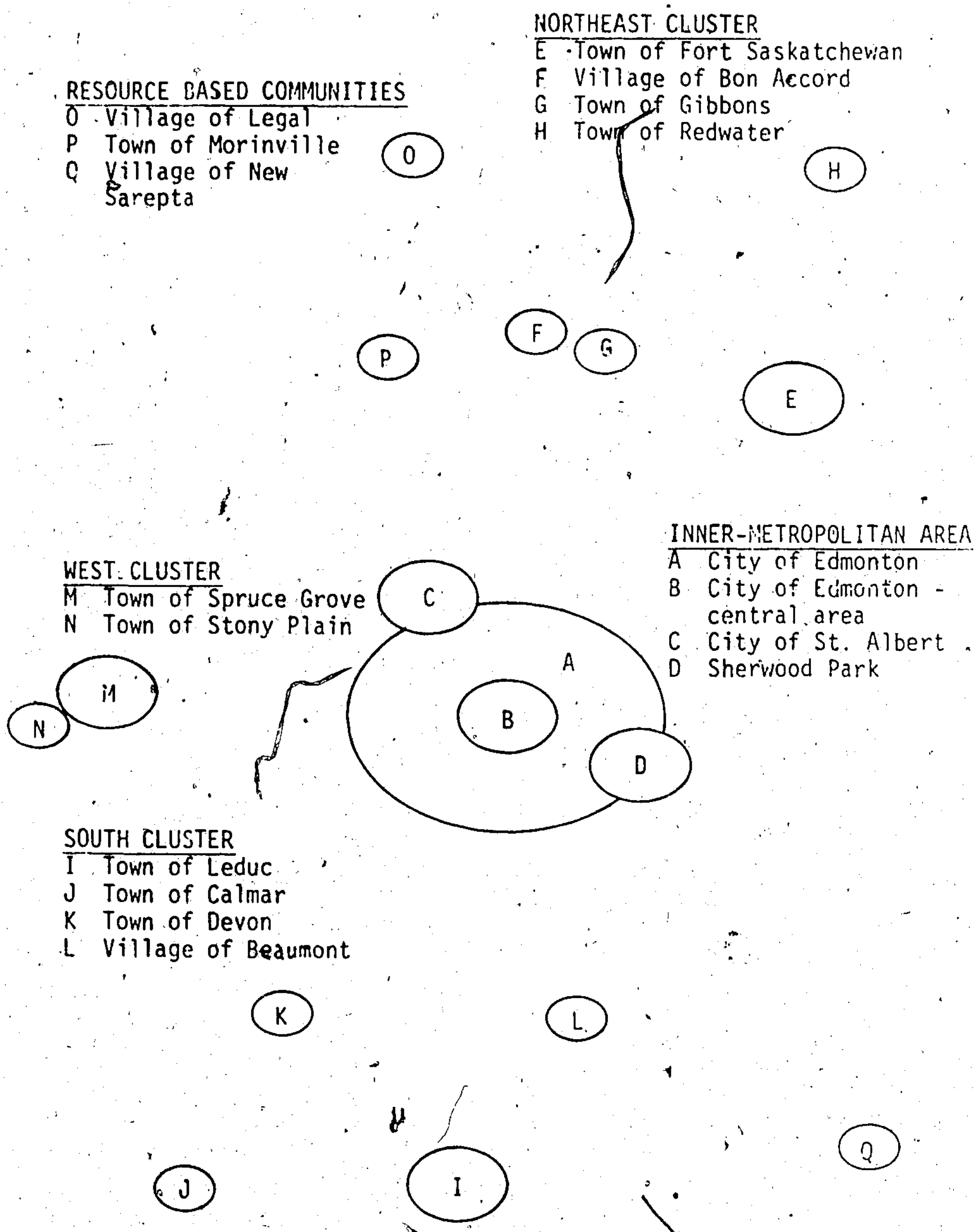

NORTHEAST CLUSTER
E Town of Fort Saskatchewan
F Village of Bon Accord
G Town of Gibbons
H Town of Redwater
RESOURCE BASED COMMUNITIES
O Village of Legal
P Town of Morinville
Q Village of New Sarepta
O
H
F
G
P
E
INNER-METROPOLITAN AREA
A City of Edmonton
B City of Edmonton - central area
C City of St. Albert
D Sherwood Park
WEST CLUSTER
M Town of Spruce Grove
N Town of Stony Plain
C
A
M
N
B
D
SOUTH CLUSTER
I Town of Leduc
J Town of Calmar
K Town of Devon
L Village of Beaumont
K
L
Q
J
I

FIGURE 3

within the 'inner-metropolitan' area" (ERPC, 1979b, p. 78). In fact, the City's ire spilled into the public arena when, on April 11, 1979, an alderman urged that the City withdraw its membership from the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission:[5]

> Alderman Roy Hayter told city council Edmonton is being duped and overwhelmed by the regional planning organization, which has three Edmonton representatives among its 22 members. 'We are completely overwhelmed even though we represent 85% of the population. We are simply being duped and the quicker we get out of it the better' (Edmonton Journal, 12 April 1979).

Not surprisingly, the representatives of the other municipalities did not agree. Thus, Lawrence Kluthe, representing the Municipal District of Sturgeon, observed that the Commission would simply become "another arm" of Edmonton should that City acquire representation in proportion to its population (Edmonton Journal, 12 April 1979). But the skirmish between Edmonton and its neighbors had escalated beyond the regional planning system. On March 20, 1979, in what surrounding municipalities would call a "massive land grab", the City of Edmonton applied to annex an area of 1800 km^2, including the City of St. Albert, the Hamlet of Sherwood Park (which then had a population upwards of 25,000), the whole of the County of Strathcona, and portions of the County of Parkland and the Municipal District of Sturgeon. The 1979 annexation application represents in a sense, the culmination of almost 30 years of frustration over the City of Edmonton's perceived low status in regional decision-making power, despite its obvious dominance in the region in terms of population and the provision of services.

5.4 Annexation: 1979-1981

5.4.1 The Arguments For and Against

In a political battle that would ultimately tally more than $7,000,000 in consultants' and legal fees to the municipalities involved,[6] the City of Edmonton and its neighbors documented their respective positions before the Local Authorities Board. The City of Edmonton based its case for annexation on several familiar points, including the lack of effective institutional and jurisdictional arrangements to ensure the orderly management of growth and development and efficient service provision. Not the least of Edmonton's arguments addressed the fiscal inequities inherent under the existing fragmented system:

> While growth in the peripheral municipalities is primarily residential, some industrial and commercial expansion will occur in these areas.... This, of course, puts an additional strain on urban transportation facilities, roadways and transit, which must be extended to accommodate the journey from residence to place of work and return of suburban residents who commute daily to the City. However, the tax yield from the industrial development assessment accrues exclusively to the municipality in which it is located, while the additional service costs are borne by others, mainly the City (Plunkett, 1979, p. 7).

In addition, the City of Edmonton levelled specific criticisms at the regional planning commission, claiming "general ineffectiveness" in its ability to cope with urban growth and a bias against the City's population. One consultant's report, prepared on the City's behalf, cited 70 instances, over a three year period, where the stance supported by the ERPC ran contrary to that of its largest member-municipality (Damas and Smith, Ltd., 1979).

The County of Strathcona (1980, p. 15), on the other hand, defended the regional planning commission as "an appropriate and effective forum for discussion of issues relating to planning and growth in the Edmonton area". In keeping with its overriding goal, which was to maintain local autonomy, the County chastized Edmonton for its expansionist moves (Strathcona, 1980, pp. 16 and 75):

> In summary, contrary to the City's evidence, there are other interests to be served, not the least of which are the interests of the citizens in other communities in the Edmonton area and their local governments. Increased representation for the City of Edmonton on any agency dealing with regional planning matters must be balanced against these other interests. In support of democratic principles...Strathcona strongly urges that the established and viable municipal governments be maintained and, in the future, be protected against upheavals such as are caused by this type of annexation proposal.

Strathcona's solution to the jurisdictional controversies was an area planning and service agency to provide regional land use planning and the delivery of water, sewerage and solid waste disposal services to the Edmonton region.

5.4.2 The Cabinet Order

Faced with such dramatically different positions, and a level of conflict that was certain to have an adverse impact on future growth accommodation within the region, the Government of Alberta was forced to intervene in the annexation proceedings. In fact, when the application was first submitted to the Local Authorities Board, the provincial government indicated its intent to do so under the provisions of the 1978 Municipal Government Act which allowed it to review the Board's decision and to vary and approve the Board order at its own discretion.[7] The Edmonton Journal (14 May 1979, p. A2), aptly suggested that the annexation bid, with all its trappings, eliminated the "Lougheed government's option to sit in splendid isolation and chuckle at Edmonton's difficulties".

In June 1981, an Order-in-Council, issued by Cabinet, defined the boundaries of the land to be annexed to Edmonton (Figure 4), along with other stipulations pertaining to growth management and planning jurisdiction in the metropolitan region. The order dissolved the 30 year old Edmonton Regional Planning Commission and apportioned its territory between two new commissions, the Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission and the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (Figure 5). The latter now constitutes a city-centered region based on daily interaction patterns with Edmonton. Indeed, the dominance of Edmonton was clearly recognized, since the Cabinet order allotted an additional 34,800 hectares of land to the City. A growth management framework was also established, in the sense that the order specified that Edmonton was to "continue to maintain approximately 75% of the Metropolitan Region's population while all other communities, including St. Albert and Sherwood Park, in the new planning region will accommodate 25% of the region's population" (Alberta, 1981b, p. 2). The preservation of the autonomy of St. Albert and Sherwood Park was assured, with the further provision that each might expand to maximum populations of 70,000 people. In addition, the existing urban centers of Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Morinville, Redwater, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Devon were specifically identified as potential growth sites. Cabinet did agree that there were servicing problems arising from the

FIGURE 4

EDMONTON ANNEXATION

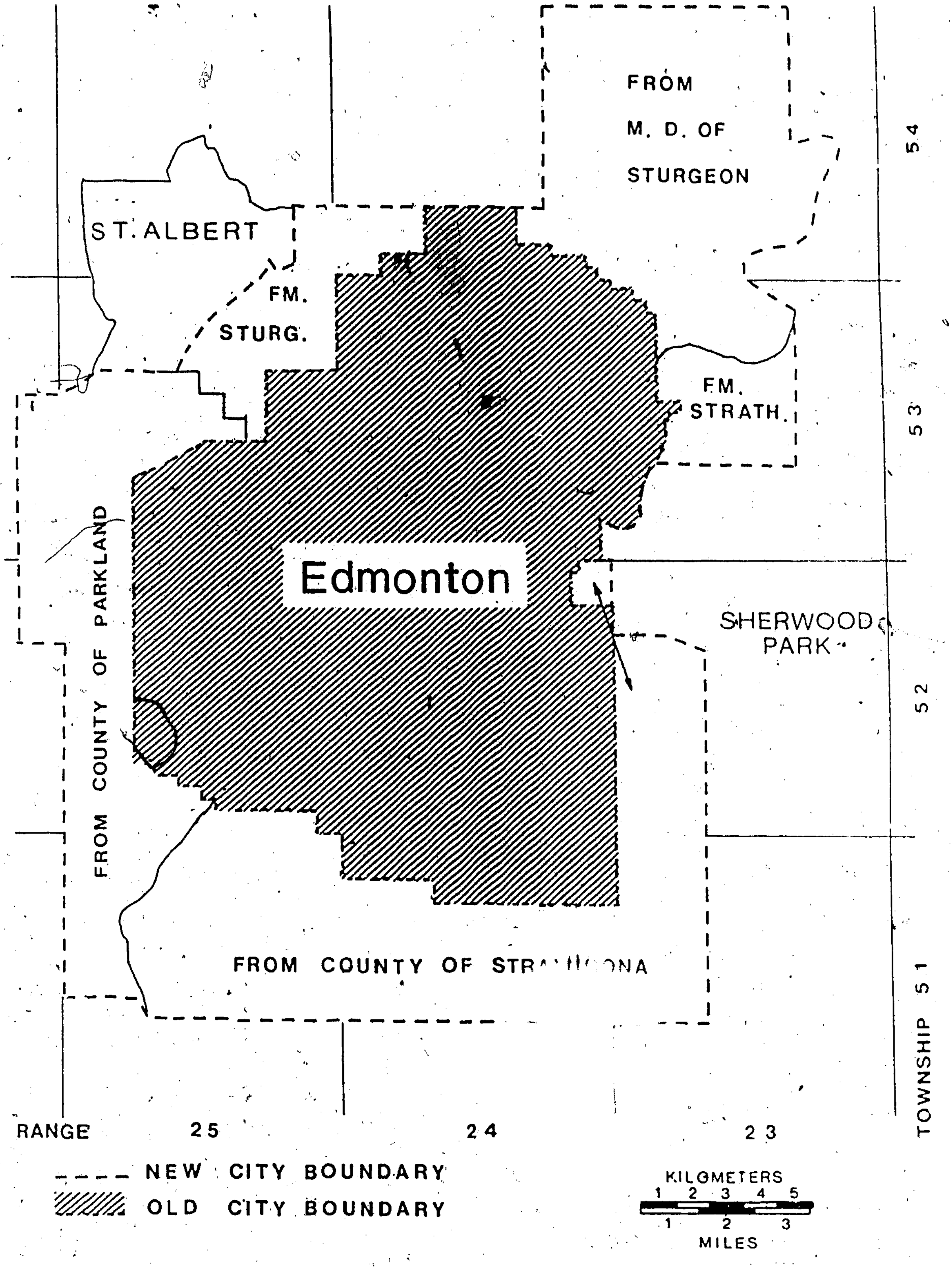
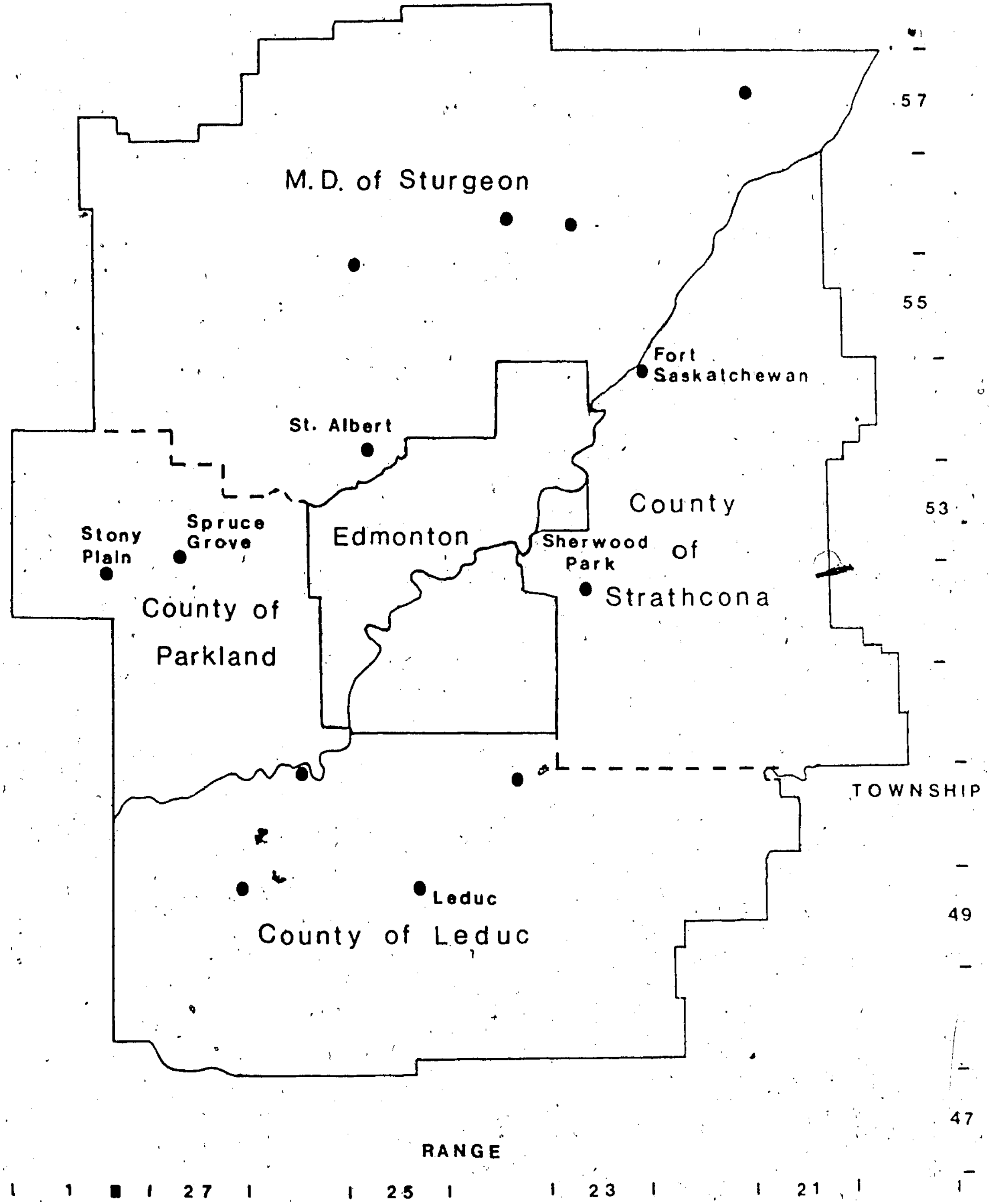

FROM
M. D. OF
STURGEON
ST. ALBERT
FM.
STURG.
FM.
STRATH.
Edmonton
SHERWOOD
PARK
FROM COUNTY OF PARKLAND
FROM COUNTY OF STRATHCONA
54
53
52
51
TOWNSHIP
RANGE
25
24
23
NEW CITY BOUNDARY
OLD CITY BOUNDARY
KILOMETERS
1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3
MILES

FIGURE 5

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION


M.D. of Sturgeon
Fort Saskatchewan
St. Albert
Stony Plain
Spruce Grove
Edmonton
County of Strathcona
Sherwood Park
County of Parkland
Leduc
County of Leduc
57
55
53
TOWNSHIP
49
47
RANGE
27
25
23
21

fragmentation of municipal authority, but these were not thought to be serious enough to warrant unification. Rather, Cabinet accepted the County of Strathcona's argument that a regional service authority would suffice. Above all, the Cabinet reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintain local autonomy:

> The needs and aspirations of the people of Edmonton and region are best served by a number of local municipal governments working together cooperatively, but maintaining their individual autonomy (Government of Alberta, 1981c, p. 2).

With respect to the regional planning process, Edmonton was awarded one-third of the 27 seats on the new commission, which means that it requires the support of only one other municipality to defeat a plan that runs contrary to its own position (Appendix I). Yet, in keeping with the government's commitment to intermunicipal cooperation, Edmonton must acquire a broad base of support (that is, nine other voting members) to ensure its own policies form the basis for a plan. This new scheme gives the City a greater share of representation than did the structure of the ERPC, without subjugating the other members to unilateral control. In this sense, too, it embodies the government's support for local autonomy.

5.5 Summary

Intermunicipal conflict in the Edmonton region predates the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission by some 30 years. Furthermore, despite the fact that the regional planning commission has long provided a forum for intermunicipal negotiation and cooperation, this conflict has persisted. The events of 1981 showed no sign that tensions had been eased or that the opposing ideological stances had been moderated. The spirit of regional cooperation, forecast by regional planning theorists, has remained elusive thus far. Yet, the Cabinet order certainly provides a pivotal point for urban affairs in the region. The government of Alberta has displayed a clear willingness to intervene, where necessary, in the interest of promoting some higher notion of proper metropolitan form. And the boundaries of the new commission more closely approximate a regional community of the type described in regional planning literature.. However, this order, like other planning legislation in the province, also reflects an ambivalence between the respective roles of regional planning and local autonomy. It is not entirely clear how the new commission might enforce the growth management stipulations in the order, while still supporting the principle of "a number of local municipal governments working together cooperatively" and simultaneously maintaining the role ascribed to it under the Planning Act, 1977. Very definitely, the impact of the Cabinet order merits critical evaluation in the investigation of the regional plan preparation process here under review.

Footnotes

1. Mr. Giffen was also director of the EMRPC during the period of thesis research.

2. Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975, p. 274) pointed out the essential difference between the McNally Commission and the Hanson study:

   > The McNally Commission was initiated by the province to provide for provincial policy with respect to the metropolitan development of Calgary and Edmonton. On the other hand, Dr. Hanson was, in effect, commissioned by the City to consider its case for expanding its boundaries to accommodate future growth and to make available to the City the industrial tax revenues in the metropolitan region.

3. In 1958, this document was entitled Preliminary District Plan-Metropolitan Section.

4. The inner-metropolitan area was defined as containing the City of Edmonton, City of St. Albert, Hamlet of Sherwood Park, Winterburn and rural and industrial lands between or on the periphery of these urban communities (ERPC, Edmonton Regional Plan Draft, Volume 2, pp. 2-13).

5. Under the Planning Act, 1977, the City does not have the option of withdrawing from the commission.

6. This is based on a conservative estimate of $3,000,000 for Edmonton, $660,000 for St. Albert, $450,000 for the County of Parkland and Municipal District of Sturgeon, and $2,982,549 for the County of Strathcona (Masson, 1985).

7. The Local Authorities Board is vested with the power to hear and rule upon annexation and amalgamation applications. Under the 1975 Municipal Government Act, decisions of the L.A.B. had to receive approval by the provincial cabinet. In 1978, powers of the cabinet, with respect to annexation decisions, were expanded such that, in addition to approving L.A.B. decision orders, cabinet was allowed to vary or attach conditions to the decisions, at its own discretion.

8. The boundaries for the EMRPC excluded "the County of Lac St. Anne and the western portions of the counties of Leduc and Parkland plus the other municipalities in this area formerly within the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission" (Alberta, 1981c, p. 8).

THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS AND LOCAL-REGIONAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter begins the examination of the regional plan preparation process which commenced anew with the formation of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission. Chapters 2 and 3 established the desirability of a two-part method for exploring the relationship between regional planning and local autonomy, one being the study of documentary sources to establish an objective account of the events of the process, and the other being personal interviews with participants in the process to gather their opinions and observations about these events. In this chapter the results of the analysis of the documentary sources are presented. The investigation is framed around five areas of concern which emerged in the foregoing chapters as potentially significant elements in the process-context relationship:

1. The role of the provincial government and its agencies.
2. The role of the regional plan committee.
3. The role of regional planning commission staff.
4. Contentious issues during policy development.
5. The mandate for regional planning (i.e. the definition of a balance between regional control and local autonomy).

6.1 The Plan Preparation Process

6.1.1 Definition and Participants

Following Bolan's (1971) discussion, it is worth reiterating that the analysis of the five elements, in a study such as this one, must be focussed on the plan preparation process as a series of decisions, strategies and actions conducing toward a purpose - in this case, the adoption of a regional plan. The process encompasses situations, scenes, all of the persons involved, and the interaction of these elements as they address a common problem. This interpretation does not emphasize or evaluate the formal statement of intended stages in the process in terms of theoretical precepts. Rather, the intent is to unravel the actions, decisions, roles, and strategies that took form as part of the actual staging of the process, insofar as they are relevant to the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation. This distinction can be made clear by example. In hypothetical terms, an initial decision to exclude the public as a source of information in defining goals and objectives is important to the research design not because it might confirm or contradict what planning theory deems good practice, but because of such impact as it might have had on the participants' awareness of the environment for regional planning. The overriding focus, then, is an exploratory assessment of the nature of the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation in terms of interauthority relations (i.e. the role of provincial government agencies and the regional plan committee), the role of planners, the contentious issues, and the overall mandate for regional planning in the Edmonton region. There is no attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of either the process or the plan.

The analysis of the process focuses on the workings of the regional plan committee and regional planning staff employed by the commission to assist in the preparation of the regional plan (Tables I and II). The regional plan committee of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning

TABLE I MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL PLAN COMMITTEE OF THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, JANUARY 1, 1982

Member	Municipality	Member	Municipality
B. Hewes*	City of Edmonton	D. Chalifoux	County of Leduc No. 25
O. Butti	City of Edmonton	M. McCullagh	County of Parkland No. 31
J. Cavanagh	City of Edmonton	R. Horley	County of Strathcona No. 20
J. Reimer	City of Edmonton	W. Bell	Town of Leduc***
L. Bakker**	City of St. Albert	R. Quinn	Town of Morinville
C. Schoenberger	M.D. of Sturgeon No. 90	D. Ganske	Town of Stony Plain
M. Abdurahman	Town of Fort Saskatchewan***		

* Chairman of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission
** Chairman of the Regional Plan Committee
*** These towns have since become cities

TABLE II MEMBERS OF PLANNING STAFF OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH DIVISION* OF THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, JUNE 1, 1983

Member	Position
1. N. Giffen	Director, EMRPC
2. E. Dmytruk	Manager, R.P. and R. Division
3. B. Fricson	Planner
4. B. Kwasny	Planner
5. J. Rudolph	Planner
6. S. Maceyovski	Planner
7. M. Exner	Planner

* This division also employed technicians, secretarial staff, and planning technicians who were not included in the study.

Commission is the counterpart of the regional plan review committee of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, which it replaced on January 1, 1982. The committee provides an appropriate level of focus when examining the actual events of the regional plan preparation process, since it had "the responsibility to provide clear and constructive direction and overall guidance to commission staff during the synthesis of policies for the draft regional plan (E[illegible]C, 1982a, p. 7). In short, this committee served as the main link between the technical and political aspects of the project, and had delegated to it all the duties and responsibilities normally expected of commission membership in the preparation of the regional plan, except the power to adopt the plan (EMRPC attached report, Minutes of November 25, 1981, pp. 7,37).

6.1.2 Implications of the Cabinet Order for the Process

As a preface to the events of the process which began with the formation of the new commission on January 1, 1982, it is tempting to be glib and suggest that this marked a fresh chance for member-municipalities to realize the benefits in cooperation and so establish a framework for effective growth management within the region. In the first place, the boundaries of the new planning region clearly encompass those communities with the strongest functional ties and for whom the benefits of cooperation should be most obvious. Second, the City of Edmonton's increased representation on the commission gives it cause "to take the regional planning process more seriously than it has tended to in the past" (Smith, 1982, p. 220). Finally, the Cabinet order gives a clear indication of the intent of the provincial government with respect to territorial claims and growth management within the region, and thus provides a starting point from which to build a cooperative regional strategy.

Yet, unbridled optimism would be naive. As was catalogued in the preceding chapter, intermunicipal conflict spans the entire history of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission. And while the new region does represent, more clearly, the reality of a metropolitan community, it also more closely approximates the area in which most of the inter-municipal conflict has historically occurred. Moreover, while the increase in membership for Edmonton is a boon for that City's participation, it has the potential to curdle the goodwill of other municipal representatives toward the regional purpose. Masson (1985, p. 281) provides an example. After the annexation decision, when the City expressed dismay at having to delegate nine councillors as commission members and proposed, instead, sending three members, each with three votes, "the response of Edmonton's neighbors was summed up by the Parkland County Reeve who said, 'if they can't handle it (the representation), tough'." In addition, the director of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission referred to Edmonton's annexation application as "hindering regional cooperation more than anything else at this point" (Edmonton Journal, 11 July 1980). Then, on top of everything else, the newly imposed rule governing the distribution of future population between Edmonton and the surrounding municipalities was a direct intrusion by the provincial government into a domain previously reserved for local authorities and their designated regional representatives. The potential for dispute created by the 75/25 rule was great in its own right, but the situation was made even more problematic by the fact that, as a premise for growth management, it ran counter to the decentralization strategy endorsed by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission on May 27, 1978, as well as to the actual decentralization trends of the day. While the City of Edmonton maintained an 85% share of the regional population between 1961 and 1971, its share decreased to 77% in 1976 and to 74% in 1981. In fact, between 1971 and 1981, 55% of the region's population growth was absorbed by the communities surrounding Edmonton (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 19 April 1982). Clearly, the recent trend had been for increased population growth in the communities peripheral to Edmonton. Hence, the Cabinet decision on Edmonton's annexation application did not present a clear path for planners and commission members to follow in the pursuit of regional harmony. Rather, it fostered a set of ambivalent circumstances for the participants to unravel and evaluate within the plan preparation process.

6.1.3 The Events: May 1981 - August 1984

The documentary sources reveal the trajectory of events that occurred within the plan preparation process (Table III). A description of these events, here, serves as a backdrop for analyzing the five elements in the interpretive framework for the thesis problem. On May 27, 1981, the regional plan review committee of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission suspended further consideration of policies for the draft regional plan, pending the results of Edmonton's annexation application. The Cabinet order was issued in June 1981. It stipulated the boundaries and framework of the new Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, which was to come into being on January 1, 1982.

TABLE III SUMMARY OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE REGIONAL PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS OF THE EMRPC: 1981-1984

Date	Event
May 1981	- Regional plan review committee (ERPC) postpones further consideration of the draft regional plan, pending the results of Edmonton's annexation application (27 May 1981).
June 1981	- Cabinet order, respecting Edmonton's annexation application, creates EMRPC. The order stipulates a 75/25 growth distribution formula (10 June 1981).
July-September 1981	- Ad Hoc Committee (ERPC) is created to identify and respond to the many and varied concerns raised by the Cabinet order.
November 1981	- Regional plan review committee reconvened (21 November 1981).
	- Staff present terms of reference and program outline for the regional plan program of the EMRPC. The regional plan review committee endorses terms of reference, to implement the 75/25 growth management rule as part of the regional plan (25 November 1981).
December 1981	- Staff and regional plan committee commence preparation of "Issues, Goals and Objectives, A Position Paper" (16 December 1981).
January 1982	- EMRPC comes into being; regional plan committee replaces regional plan review committee (1 January 1982).
	- Staff begin to generate scenarios for growth management, based on the 75/25 growth distribution principle of the Cabinet order.
May 1982	- Staff stress that commission members must resolve the issue of mandate of the EMRPC if plan preparations are to succeed in reaching consensus amongst municipalities (26 May 1982).
	- Committee reaffirms its support for staff position that the task before the committee is to implement the Cabinet order (26 May 1982).

Table III continued...

May 1982	- Committee moves to delete all references to specific growth targets (26 May 1982).
June-August 1982	- Responses received to "Issues, Goals and Objectives, A Position Paper".
September 1982	- Staff caution against excessive time spent on resolving conflicts at this stage (3 September 1982).
October 1982	- Staff present scenarios for growth management to the committee.
	- Committee asks A.P.B. for direction about incorporating 75/25 rule into draft plan (27 October 1983).
	- Staff present committee members with a working copy of the draft regional plan (27 October 1982).
November 1982	- Committee expresses serious reservations over the intent of growth management policies in the draft plan.
December 1982	- Committee agrees to support the release of the 1982 draft regional plan to public hearing stage, despite its own reservations.
January 1983	- Public hearings on 1982 draft document.
March 1983	- Written responses received from municipalities, provincial departments and other interested parties.
	- A.P.B. responds in writing, condemning the "regulatory" nature of the draft plan (17 March 1983).
April 1983	- Committee meets with A.P.B. to review their criticisms of the plan. A.P.B. advises against removing 75/25 rule from the text of the plan (6 April 1983).
	- Staff works to revise the draft, while advising that the commission retain the draft plan "more or less in its present form".
	- A.P.B. conference on regional planning, "Era of the Regional Plan" (26-29 April 1983).

Table III continued...

May 1983	- Committee questions the overall direction of the draft plan (4 May 1983).
	- Regional plan committee goes "in-camera" to discuss the future direction of the regional plan preparation process (4 May 1983).
	- Committee meets with A.P.B. to discuss problems in the process. EMRPC staff are excluded from the meeting (4 May 1983).
	- Subcommittee of three members is formed to work on a continuous basis guiding staff and formulating policy for a new draft document (5 May 1983).
	- A.P.B. agrees to allow the 75/25 rule to be deleted from the text of the plan and included in an appendix.
July 1983	- Proposed Edmonton Metropolitan Plan is released for public comment.
	- Notice of the commission's intent to consider the adoption of the Proposed Regional Plan.
August 1983	- Comments received on the July 1983 draft.
September 1983	- Proposed Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Plan is adopted, unanimously, by the commission (7 September 1983).
October 1983	- A.P.B. withholds approval of the plan pending changes in accordance with its own suggestions (26 October 1983).
	- Municipal elections.
November 1983	- Appointment of new committee members.
December 1983 -June 1984	- Revisions to 1983 draft plan, in accordance with A.P.B. suggestions.
August 1984	- Minister of Municipal Affairs ratifies plan on August 23, 1984.

Almost immediately, the ERPC created a so-called Ad Hoc Committee to respond to the many and varied concerns raised by the Cabinet order. Two of the resolutions passed by the Ad Hoc Committee had a significant bearing on the subsequent development of the terms of reference and design of the regional plan preparation program by the staff. They therefore merit consideration here. Moreover, these committee resolutions were but forerunners of a process-long practice in which regional plan committee members endorsed many of the staff recommendations, providing little guidance and critical direction to staff members who, by default, held principal responsibility for developing the regional plan.

On August 5, 1981, the Ad Hoc Committee directed staff "to develop alternative growth scenarios for the Edmonton Metropolitan Region, with the intent of implementing the growth strategy put forward in the Cabinet order, and to identify the most suitable population distribution for the communities peripheral to the City of Edmonton" (Minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee, p. 7). This resolution represents an almost verbatim transcription of a recommendation by planning staff, which further noted that the Cabinet decision required a reorientation of the Commission's growth management philosophy and necessitated that the Commission come to terms with the "political integrity" of the new program (EMRPC, 1981a, 30 July 1981, pp. 4-7).

The second resolution, "that the Commission support the structuring of a Metropolitan Planning Commission through legislative means with the intent of a strengthened mandate over growth management, economic and industrial development, and transportation and utility planning which would allow full implementation of the Cabinet decision" (Minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee, 26 August 1981, p. 10), was also a virtual restatement of a staff position. At a previous meeting of the committee, staff members had suggested "that the existing mandate of regional planning commissions...is insufficient to address the many and varied concerns which are generated for the Edmonton area as a result of the Cabinet decision" (Minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee, 13 August 1981, p. 15). These endorsements of the staff recommendations would not be noteworthy but for the fact that they represented a reversal of past policies of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, which held local autonomy as a critical issue in devising growth management strategies for the earlier draft plan. Yet now, this committee was apparently willing to accept a 75/25 growth management framework that was concocted without either local or regional assent. That committee members did not, in fact, support these early positions became apparent in the later stages of the process, but it was foreshadowed even in the early sessions.

When the regional plan review committee reconvened on November 21, 1981, to consider the implications of the Cabinet order, staff were able to present committee members with a proposed program outline and terms of reference for the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission regional plan, based on the directions from the Ad Hoc Committee. These received preliminary approval at the November 25, 1981 meeting, although there is some evidence of an underlying conflict:

> Questions arose over the 75-25% split as announced by the Cabinet in June of 1981. Mr. McCullagh wondered how support would be gained within the Committee setting when it was indicated only Edmonton, St. Albert and Sherwood Park would be allowed any significant growth. Mr. Giffen

> interjected that in the past this Commission has worked on a negotiation, give and take basis and would continue to do so in the future. He felt that an approximate growth split agreed to by all municipalities would satisfy Cabinet's wishes... Mr. Horley agreed that the Cabinet statement was open to interpretation, and that perhaps this committee should form an opinion and relay it to Cabinet (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 25 November 1981, pp. 3-4).

These comments are significant for their indication of concern over the growth management directive upon which the plan program was premised, but they also reveal an underlying hope that, on the basis of agreement between municipalities, it would be possible to have the provincial directives modified.[1]

The work program that was presented to the regional plan committee in November was designed to build upon the past efforts of the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission while reflecting "the recent decisions of the Provincial Cabinet and the Alberta Planning Board on a number of important planning issues" (Minutes of regional plan committee, 25 November 1981, appended report). It reveals that the planning staff had two important priorities. They were committed to implementing the growth strategies of the Cabinet order, and they intended to complete the draft plan within the short time frame granted by the Planning Act. In the words of staff:

> The task before the Committee is...to implement the Cabinet order (Minutes of regional plan committee, 5 May 1981, appended report, p. 9). It is proposed that the new regional plan program evolve by utilizing an accelerated phasing approach in order to expedite the completion of the plan. The phases and stages will overlap and certain stages in the process will be achieved simultaneously. This approach telescopes the study and evaluation process into a faster and more tightly organized system

> involving a number of events simultaneously. The process, while faster, produces the added problems of requiring earlier commitment with respect to the desired end result and closer coordination of work programs than the traditional linear approach. The advantages, however, should be time and cost saving. (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 25 November 1981, appended report, p. 9).

The success of the program, then, hinged upon a clear agreement, amongst committee members, as to the desired end result of the process. This proposed framework was endorsed by the regional plan review committee on November 25, 1981.

Then, in December, at the behest of the committee, the planners proposed a method to identify goals and objectives for the regional plan. Noting the ambiguity surrounding the mandate of the regional planning commission and the regional plan, they advised that the issue of an appropriate balance between local autonomy and regional control should be resolved during the goal formulation stage (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 16 December 1981, appended report). Concurrently, planners were generating scenarios for growth management, including a settlement hierarchy in which communities were assigned to functional levels, with the sole intent of applying the 75/25 rule. Still, the undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the Cabinet directive was ever-present at committee meetings between January and May, 1982. Related concerns arose at nearly every meeting. For example, on February 17, 1982, "Mrs. M. Abdurahman stated that all members have difficulty in interpreting the 75-25% split". On May 26, 1982, the planning staff suggested that failure to resolve the confusion over the directives would preclude the adoption of a regional plan by the commission; while failure to incorporate the 75/25 rule would compromise the approval of the plan by provincial authorities. The discussion period dealing with this staff report documents the confusion:

> The main issue discussed was the acceptance of the Cabinet order directives. Many members did not consider the directives to be realistic... The Committee recognized the significance of the Minister's statement, which had indicated that the directives are to be tried and tested. It was generally agreed that while most municipalities may not like the Cabinet order, the directives are something that the municipalities may have to accept and learn to live with...the committee agreed that the issue of regional growth management should be resolved in short order... On a motion by Mrs. M. Abdurahman, seconded by Mr. F. Schoenberger, it was moved that the committee reaffirm its commitment to the concept of a city-centered region, focussed on the City of Edmonton. Motion carried. (Minutes of regional plan committee, 26 May 1982).

Then, although it was agreed that the directives were a bitter pill that had to be swallowed, the committee moved to delete all references to specific growth targets, so that the position of the committee was simply to "locate more of the total regional population growth within the Inner Metropolitan Area, in accordance with the intent of the Cabinet order". Not acknowledging these somewhat contradictory terms of reference, the staff continued with the view that the task of the committee was to implement the Cabinet order, ratio and all.

At the same time that staff were attempting to finalize the scenarios for growth management, the member municipalities were responding to a position paper on issues, goals, and objectives that had been prepared by staff and released for public scrutiny in March 1982. This position paper synthesized the results of the goal formulation exercise. While it did not specifically incorporate the numbers in the

75/25 directive, it did, in general terms, reflect that intent. Hence, the central growth management issue was described as follows:

> To maintain the City of Edmonton as the center of the regional growth pattern and as the dominant community in the Region while providing the opportunity for all other existing communities to share in the accommodation of the Region's population and economic growth (EMRPC, 1982c, p. 14).

The suggested approach to growth management was questioned, even challenged, by many municipalities. The Town of Beaumont labelled the concept of a settlement hierarchy as dictatorial and beyond the purview of the regional planning commission. In milder terms, the Town of Fort Saskatchewan requested a "less prescriptive growth management framework - one which embodies the philosophy of maintaining Edmonton as a dominant center of the region but provides for a reasonable level of growth without unduly weakening the competitive position of the Town". The County of Leduc and Town of Gibbons specifically expressed concern about the 75/25 rule, while the County of Strathcona, noting an uncertainty over the methods by which the 75/25 distribution would be achieved, reserved comment until the public hearing stage of the draft regional plan. The Town of Morinville and the Alberta Planning Board likewise chose to reserve comment until the draft plan stage, although the Board stressed that "the Regional Plan should address the 75/25 formula".[2] The Commission was also reminded that the formula was "not negotiable at this time", no matter what some municipalities might feel about it.

Only the City of Edmonton suggested that the role of the regional planning commission, with respect to growth management, should be strengthened:

> The City is very concerned that the Cabinet order has not been dealt with in any detailed way in this chapter. The Honourable Marvin Moore has made it most clear that this must be the basis of the regional growth framework. The issues, concerns, and related intermunicipal conflicts of this order must be dealt with (EMRPC, 1982f, p. 4).

Staff response to these comments is of critical concern. Their [illegible]k, they re-affirmed, was to implement the Cabinet order, despite [illegible]ipal objections:

> The Commission is caught between the directives of the Cabinet order and the desires of some of its municipalities on the matter of growth manageme[illegible] and distribution. The Minister and the A.P.B. expect the Commission to reflect the Board order clearly in the plan. Staff will attempt to do this by defining certain growth parameters, including population distribution, servicing, and land use policy to reflect the Cabinet order (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 27 October 1982, Appended Agenda Item No. 4, p. 7).

Staff also cautioned against taking time to resolve conflict over the goals and objectives prior to their completing a working copy of the draft regional plan for the committee's consideration (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 3 September 1982). It was indicated that many of the concerns would be alleviated once the goals and objectives were translated into policy proposals that municipalities could assess. In actuality, however, the committee's working copy and the completed 1982 draft regional plan seemed to provide municipal representatives with a [illegible] which to build their defense of local autonomy

During the process of finalizing policy for the draft regional plan, the regional plan committee expressed serious reservations about the political feasibility of the policies contained within the working copy. Discussion and conflict crystallized around the growth management strategies, the concept of a settlement hierarchy, and the composite regional land use map which was a generalized representation of the existing and future regional land use designations (i.e. Map 4 of the 1982 draft plan).[3] In all of these areas, the intent of the Cabinet order was clearly reflected. From October 27, 1982, when the committee first met to consider the completed working copy of the draft plan, discussion bogged down on phraseology and the intent of policy. A few examples will illustrate the tone of these meetings:

> Mrs. M. Abdurahman took exception to the use of the word conflict in 1.5.4. Mr. R. N. Giffen replied that conflict between municipalities has been never ending throughout the history of the Commission... Mr. B. Bell suggested the word 'intermunicipal conflict' be replaced with 'joint agreement'... Mr. E. Dmytruk reiterated Mr. Giffen's previous comment that conflict has existed in the Region for 30 years and therefore the rephrasing would be ineffective (4 November 1982, p. 5,6).

. . .

> Mr. F. Schoenberger asked why one municipality had more to say about the urban fringe than another, referring to Mrs. O. Butti's request that the fringe be expanded around the City of Edmonton boundary... Mrs. O. Butti said she only mentioned it because all the other communities had been given more 'breathing space' than the City. Mr. F. Schoenberger concluded by remarking that last year at the end of the Edmonton annexation, the City had 100 years of room, now, one year later they are already worried (24 November 1982, p. 6).

> Mr. M. McCullagh stated that the committee should not dwell on the 75/25 population distribution, that a new elected Minister to this position could change the policy. He stated that rural municipalities would not vote for a plan that allowed them no growth over the next 25 years (27 October 1982, p. 6).
>
> . . .
>
> Mrs. M. Abdurahman said she could not support the Economic section. Mr. R. N. Giffen offered that the committee does not require 100% support in order for the plan to go out to the municipalities, but rather a general consensus... Mr. D. Ganske said his concern is what the intent of 'supporting' the draft is to be (29 November 1982, p. 9).

Once again, staff discouraged undue delay in the process and suggested that early decisions about policy direction would enable the committee to complete plan preparation efforts on schedule (4 November 1982, p. 2). Despite the reservations of many committee members, the committee did agree in December, to release the draft plan for public examination. However, it soon became apparent that committee concerns reflected a general unrest throughout the region. The time had come for these concerns to be addressed, formally and openly.

Official responses to the December 1982 draft plan were overwhelmingly critical of the manner in which the growth management issues had been dealt with. Moreover, although the erosion of local autonomy was the underlying concern of municipal governments throughout the entire process, it is at this stage, for the first time, that they couched their arguments in explicit defense of local independence. Table IV summarizes the general tone of these arguments. Of the eighteen municipalities responding, only three endorsed the draft plan, two indicated support with relatively minor amendments, and thirteen

TABLE IV SUMMARY OF EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS ON THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY OF THE 1982 DRAFT PLAN

Municipality	Comments
County of Leduc	"This Council certainly feels that the rural identity should not be jeopardized by the direction of all priority to urban land use.... It is hoped that this plan, its procedures, and its guidelines will not detract from local municipal autonomy" (pp. 1-4).
County of Parkland	"Generally, the County cannot support the Draft Plan as submitted... There is no doubt in our minds that one of the overriding problems associated with the Draft Plan is the mandatory reference to the 75/25 population split imposed by the Cabinet" (p. 14).
County of Strathcona	"The County accepts the fact t[illegible] was necessary for the proposed [illegible] recognize the 1981 Cabinet di[illegible]. Nevertheless, the long term maintenance of such an allocation is regarded by the County as being artificial and unworkable" (p. 2).
M.D. of Sturgeon	"Council finds the proposed Regional Plan to be acceptable" (p. 4).
City of Edmonton	"The City supports the regional growth framework as proposed in the Regional Plan" (p. 2).
City of St. Albert	"That Table 2 in Section 2.3 of Part II (page 10) be deleted in its entirety (Settlement Hierarchy, Designation of populations)" (p. 2).
Town of Beaumont	"The plan destroys the competition between municipalities as it is too specific and attempts to totally control competition through restrictive definitions of municipalities and land as categories as well as policies which make competition between municipalities impossible" (p. 2).

Table IV continued...

Municipality	Comments
Town of Bon Accord	"The Town of Bon Accord is in agreement with the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Plan in principle, objecting to the two constraints imposed by the previous annexation order... We feel there should be a certain amount of freedom and competition between municipalities to grow in any way they wish" (p. 1).
Town of Calmar	"The Council of the Town of Calmar have no concerns at this time" (p. 1).
Town of Devon	"In our view this policy tends to be very restrictive and regulatory in nature ([illegible]5).... It appears to us the 75/25% d[illegible]ctive interferes with the local decision making process of municipalities. We believe the directive should, be recognized in The Regional Plan but not to the extent of dictating its contents" (p. 2).
Town of Fort Saskatchewan	"The Town of Fort Saskatchewan cannot, in conscience, at this time, support a Regional Plan which is based upon the provincial government policy that 75% of the population of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region must be situated in the City of Edmonton" (p. 1).
Town of Gibbons	"The Growth Strategy prepared by the E.M.R.P.C. will affect Gibbons in the following manner... It appears to me that, if the Government of Alberta must begin dictating where people live, we are no longer in a progressive life-style but one of socialistic esteem... This indicates to me that the Government of Alberta is no longer operating on a 'free enterprise system'" (pp. 1,2).

Table IV continued...

Municipality	Comments
Town of Leduc	"The Draft quotes and verifies the annexation order (sic). The Plan should be intended to reflect or accommodate provincial policy or regulation... In being too specific and encroaching on local planning autonomy the Plan and the Commission step outside its jurisdiction of land use planning" (pp. 3,4).
Town of Redwater	"Council is disappointed in the cabinet directive that 75% of the growth occur in Edmonton and the remaining 25% in the balance of the region. This takes away from the free enterprise feature of Alberta" (p. 1).
Town of Spruce Grove	"The primary probem which stems from the entire plan, is the senseless and arbitrary figure of 75% growth in Edmonton and 25% growth in the remainder of the region... Spruce Grove supports the only alternative, remove all reference of 75/25 from the text of the Plan, and if necessary, place it in the reference or appendix sections" (pp. 1,2).
Town of Stony Plain	"The 75-25 Allocation of Growth - Stony Plain strongly disagrees with this position as it clearly favors the City of Edmonton at the expense of the other municipalities in the region. While we are well aware of the source of the policy, we believe it is being interpreted too literally."

Table IV continued...

Municipality	Comments
Village of New Sarepta	"A specific concern, no doubt shared by all municipalities other than the City of Edmonton, is the provincially directed 75/25 population growth ratio. Since this is a provincial policy, there is no need to make it a regional directive... Our major concern is that with the plan, the Village will lose its autonomy over its own development and that the regional planning commission will have too much influence over our local concerns" (pp. 2,3).
Town of Morinville	"The Town of Morinville strongly objects to the term LOCAL SERVICE CENTER as applied to the Town... The town strongly recommends a re-evaluation of the Regional Settlement Hierarchy... The plan should reflect and accommodate provincial policy... Quotations of provincial policy in a regional planning document erroneously renders such policy regional since it then becomes policy which the regional municipalities appear to agree with, support and have voted upon" (pp. 2,3).

* Comments are summarized from the document, EMRPC "Briefs and Letters Received from Municipalities on the Proposed Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Plan Draft (1982)", April, 1983.

condemned or indicated serious concern over the intent of the plan. Nor did municipalities confine themselves to voicing their concerns to the commission. In numerous articles in the Edmonton Journal, their views were broadcast to the public at large, in terms such as "Edmonton and its neighbors could be on a collision course over a proposed regional plan designed to concentrate growth in the City" (Edmonton Journal, 8 January 1983, p. 4). Here, too, municipalities argued for the protection of local rights:

> Town and village councils surrounding Edmonton have blasted the proposed plan for threatening their economic health, free enterprise and civil liberties, 'It[illegible] dictatorial and inherently dangerous' Spruce Grove Councillor Dave Hinch said recently (Edmonton Journal, 4 February 1983, p. 1).

The City of Edmonton, on the opposite side of the fence, declared that local municipalities should not be so critical of the proposed plan, since it was only fair that Edmonton, which supplied most of the services for the region, should reap most of the growth (Edmonton Journal, 4 February 1983, p. 1). Regional planners joined the public forum as well, suggesting that municipal fears that free enterprise could be eroded were unfounded (Edmonton Journal, 28 March 1982, p. 10).

Despite the counter-assault, the municipal arguments for local autonomy clearly found favor with the Alberta Planning Board. Publicly labelling the draft as too restrictive and regulatory, Board officials were reported as saying that Edmonton area politicians had to alter the plan substantially to "allow free enterprise some room to manoeuvre" (Edmonton Journal, 6 May 1982, p. 6). The Board cited the Guidelines and Framework documents for regional plan preparation and the discontent of Edmonton area municipalities in defense of their stance. Not surprisingly, the main thrust of the Board's criticism was levelled at provisions for implementing growth management, and the composite regional land use map (i.e. Map 4) - the same issues that created controversy at the committee level:

> The plan, in general, is prescriptive and regulatory in its approach to the management and growth in the region... The use of detailed maps, such as Map 4, is considered to be inappropriate in a regional plan and more properly the function of the municipal statutory documents... The plan contains certain provisions aimed, quite properly, at implementing the Cabinet directive relating to population distribution in the Edmonton region. While this is commendable, the Board feels that the particular method chosen is not appropriate... In order to provide for reasonable growth and competition between all existing municipal entities, the concept of a hierarchy which directs certain kinds of development to specific communities is not appropriate (Correspondence, Alberta Planning Board, 17 March 1983).

To clarify the intent of these directions, Alberta Planning Board officials met with the regional plan committee on April 6, 1983. Immediately prior to the meeting, Mr. Giffen advised the committee that a recent court ruling indicated that the Board could not compel the Commission to change its policies and that its role in the process to date represented an over-extension of the role assigned to the Board by the Planning Act.[4] The difference in regional planning philosophy held by regional planning staff and the Alberta Planning Board was thus clearly revealed. Some extracts from the transcript of the meeting between the Board and the committee will convey the flavor of the debate:

> Mr. J. Thomas...said the Board's impression on the Regional Plan is that in some areas, the Regional Plan has adopted 'a measure of overkill' in giving effect to those growth management strategies. Mr. R. N. Giffen stated that he has...the feeling that he and the Board have read a different document. Talking about overkill, he suggested that there is a bit of overkill in respect of the Board's comments... We are getting away from the whole picture as to what a regional plan is all about (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, p. 16).

On one hand, the Board questioned the "blatant mistrust" that the commission demonstrated towards the municipalities by trying to limit their authority to control their own affairs. The Board also reaffirmed its opinion that the plan was inflexible and ill-suited for inter-municipal cooperation. Mr. Giffen, as staff representative, countered by reminding the Board that the Commission represented all the municipalities in the region and that Board intervention implied that the provincial government was aiming to protect these municipalities from themselves. Speaking to one Board member's comments that a regional plan should be a compendium of local plans, Mr. Giffen asserted that some issues achieve significance only at the regional scale, because of 'intermunicipal competition,' and therefore tend to be overlooked in the compendium approach:

> We are reflecting on what the Commission considers as its mandate in dealing with matters it feels are of regional significance... How can you have a regional presence if you have complete autonomy between all municipalities? You can't get the coordination through a compendium of autonomous general plans... There are significant factors that are regional in nature which cannot be covered in a compendium of general plans (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, pp. 18,19).

Hence, different philosophical stances of Commission staff and the Alberta Planning Board contributed to different assessments of the 1982 draft plan. While staff deemed the plan as appropriately prescriptive and regulatory and only "on those issues where the Commission felt it was necessary because of the critical nature of the issue", the Board criticized the control-oriented policies and supported instead "regulation through trust and agreement" (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, pp. 16,17).

Two other facets of the role of the Board in the plan preparation process received attention at this meeting. First, the committee queried the Board about apparent inconsistencies in its recommendations. Comments related to the March 17, 1983 letter from the Board which criticized the draft plan for being overly restrictive while at the same time asserting that the commission had to "ensure that the Cabinet directive will be achieved":

> Mr. Ganske...said that he had some difficulty in reconciling the general position of the Board regarding implementation and growth allocation. He felt caught between the two positions...
>
> Mr. Giffen stated...the Commission's concern is that once the Commission reaches consensus, is the Board going to be in a different position six weeks later, when the Commission agrees on a plan? (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, pp. 19,29).

Yet, in their attempt to allay the confusion, Board members lent further justification to the committee's concern about the incoherence of the Board's direction. For while "Mr. B. Stecyk replied that the Board's letter perhaps did not word its comments quite as accurately as you might think and suggested that the Commission take the Board's comments of today as being the Board's position" (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, p. 19), another of his colleagues observed that the Board had not yet finalized its position:

> Mr. J. Thomas indicated that the Board did not purport to have given the plan an exhaustive or comprehensive review... The Board will pursue the indepth review of the plan...because even from today's meeting, he said, it is obvious enough that there are certain provisions in the plan that when read by the Board maybe were not related to other provisions of the plan (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, p. 29).

In the upshot, the Board did not leave the regional plan committee with a set of clear guidelines with which to modify the draft plan.

Second, members of staff and the committee expressed uncertainty about the nature and timing of Board involvement in the plan preparation process. Board intervention was perceived as sporadic and unpredictable, and without clear relation to the consultation and review provisions in the Board's own Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review (3 March 1982, pp. 5,6). Mr. Giffen suggested that the Board had not lived up to the requirements of the Cabinet order in which it was directed to "consult with and give direction to" the Commission during the preparation of the regional plan:

> You are consultants according to the Ministerial Order. How are you going to do this analysis in isolation [from the Commission]? As a good consultant, you were to have helped us reach the Edmonton Metropolitan Plan (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, p. 28).

The Board was criticized, then, for failing to utilize the provisions for early and meaningful consultation between the Commission and the

Board, which were intended to "minimize the areas of policy conflict which are too often picked up at the draft plan stage when it is difficult to negotiate mutually acceptable policies" (Alberta, 1982a, p. 5). The uncertainty over when and in what form the direction would finally come caused committee members to question the overall role of the Board in the plan preparation process:

> Mr. R. Horley asked, if the Planning Board goes through the plan line by line, and says this is what we would like to see...and we come back with something that does not totally meet with that requirement, is the Board prepared to pass this plan on to the Minister with the recommendation that that be the Regional Plan? Whose Plan is it?...
>
> Mr. R. N. Giffen reiterated that the Commission must do its own regional plan...
>
> Mr. L. Kluthe (Board member [and [illegible]ous chairman of the ERPC]) responded that there are no provisions in the legislation that would allow the Planning Board to in fact write the plan (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 6 April 1983, pp. 27-30).

Hence, the role of the Alberta Planning Board emerged as a contentious issue at this meeting between the Board and the regional plan committee on April 6, 1983.

Not surprisingly, given the overall trend of the process, the principal defense of the draft plan came from regional planning staff, not committee members. In the final analysis, the Alberta Planning Board chastized the Commission for the approach taken to incorporate the 75/25 directives in the plan, yet indicated that it would not be acceptable to appear to downplay their importance (e.g. by relegating the Cabinet order to an appendix of the plan, as some commissioners had suggested). The means of resolving that apparent contradiction were left up in the air, but the meeting with the Board on April 6, 1983 marked the beginning of overt conflict within the regional plan committee.

The events of the next two months depict a dramatic realignment of the regional plan preparation process. First, it was during this period that committee members consciously decided to conform with the direction of the Alberta Planning Board to make the plan less regulatory and prescriptive. On April 26-29, 1983, the Alberta Planning Board held its annual spring seminar on regional planning, at which commission representatives were treated to a brief outline of the Board's position on regional planning. The discussion, entitled the "Era of the Regional Plan", staunchly defended local autonomy and referred to regional planning as a non-regulatory and non-control-oriented method of achieving regional goals.[5] During questions from the floor, the Board directed the EMRPC to put the 75/25 formula in a form that was "most palatable" to local municipalities although it was not specified which particular form would also be acceptable to the Board. Upon their return from the seminar, members of the regional plan committee questioned the wisdom of trying to salvage the draft plan of December 1982, with a new-found zeal. For example, Alderman Olivia Butti, who on April 15, 1983 had moved to retain most of the draft plan in its submitted form, now suggested that the draft document was totally unworkable:

> Mrs. O. Butti initiated discussion by stating she had given the regional planning process considerable thought and had concluded that efforts to save this Plan would not meet the approval of the member municipalities or the Alberta Planning Board. She suggested that the administration should completely

> revise the Plan so that it would not be regulatory and would allow for municipal control. Asked if her position was a result of the Alberta Planning Board Conference, Mrs. O. Butti said the Minister of Municipal Affairs' comments had convinced her this Plan was not on the right path (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 4 May 1983, p. 4).

This stance is especially significant in that it comes from a representative of the City of Edmonton, on whose behalf the December 1982 draft plan had previously been endorsed.

Simultaneous with the realization that the draft document would require massive reworking to receive Commission approval, let alone Alberta Planning Board sanction, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the contributions of the regional planning staff. The latter continued to urge that it would be enough to modify the draft plan, to correct those aspects that were unclear, misinte[illegible]ed, or had been perceived as too regulatory. Committee members were not satisfied with this approach, and so began to question the effectiveness of staff efforts. Criticism was levelled at staff for neglecting to prepare reports when so directed (4 May 1983). Even more important, it was suggested that staff reports did not reflect the intent of the committee's wishes, particularly with respect to the crucial issue of the mandate for regional planning and control in the face of the municipalities' expressed desire to preserve their autonomy:

> Ms. J. Reimer commented that the mandate should be settled first... Mrs. M. Abdurahman inquired as to whose perception of mandate will be used. She pointed out that the municipalities feel the present mandate has been overstepped while administration feels otherwise (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 15 April 1983, p. 3).

As an isolated comment, this remark would be insignificant and could be dismissed as not representing the sentiments of the overall committee.[6] But then, on May 4, 1983, the regional plan committee went "in-camera", deliberately excluding staff, to review the future of the draft regional plan. In addition, the committee met with the Alberta Planning Board on the same day - again without staff present - and were offered direct assistance from Board members at all future meetings. Clearly, a rift had developed between staff and the regional plan committee. As a result, the committee asserted its authority. To achieve more control over the content of policy, a sub-committee of three members was formed to work on a continuous basis with staff in rewriting the regional plan. This sub-committee was to provide direct supervision and direction to staff members (Minutes of the regional plan committe, 5 May 1983).

The draft plan prepared by the sub-committee, while labelled a serious mistake by one Edmonton representative on the regional plan committee (Edmonton Journal, 10 June 1983, p. 2), received unanimous endorsement by the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission on September 7, 1983, as reported in the Edmonton Journal (8 September 1983, p. 3):

> Edmonton area politicians have passed a watered down regional land-use plan, admitting that it has flaws... Officials charged the original plan was an attack on free enterprise and civil liberties, fearing growth could be artificially directed to Edmonton if the 75/25 provision remained... Many 'shalls' were changed to shoulds in order to make the plan more discretionary.

The 1983 proposed regional plan differed from the 1982 draft in three important respects. First, the entire concept of a settlement hierarchy based on a functional assessment of each community was deleted. Secon[illegible]e 75/25 formula for growth management was removed from the text [illegible]e plan and placed in an appendix. In May 1983, the Alberta Planning Board relaxed its position on the 75/25 rule, clearing the way for this move, which had been requested by the regional plan committee since May 1982. Yet, the intent behind relegating the formula to an appendix is not readily apparent. For while the 1983 proposed plan stipulated that the "appendices of this regional plan are for information only and are not adopted as part of the Regional Plan", the text of the plan did incorporate the intent of the Cabinet order:

> The intent of the Commission and its member municipalities is for:
>
> Regional growth to be centered in Edmonton as the dominant community in the Region. Edmonton should maintain its present proportion of the Region's population. The remaining population growth to be focussed primarily on the Inner Metropolitan Area (St. Albert and Sherwood Park) and other existing urban municipalities (EMRPC, July 1983, p. 9).

Third, while the substance of the regional land use designation map remained much the same, it was redefined as a map which was meant for "illustrative purposes only". In the 1982 draft plan, Map 4 was referred to as a means to "guide and encourage" growth and government and private decisions related to land use and development. In 1983 it became a policy reference map, the purpose of which was to show "how the Regional Plan's objectives and policies could be applied in terms of land use of regional significance". Very clearly, it was not intended to have "a land use control function" (EMRPC, July 1983, p. 37). This redefinition of intent is part and parcel of the overall trend in the modifications to the 1982 draft, which relegated the Commission to a largely advisory role and placed primary responsibility for land use control with local authorities.

Yet, despite these revisions to bring procedural aspects of the regional land use plan in line with the expectations of the Alberta Planning Board, the 1983 draft, like its predecessor, failed to receive the Board's support. This led to charges by some Edmonton area politicians that the Alberta Planning Board was "power grabbing" and "issuing mixed-signals" (Edmonton Journal, 5 July 1983, p. 9). The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association also expressed its concern that provincial intervention was undermining regional planning. In this case, however, the Board did not condemn the Commission's interpretation of the mandate for the regional plan nor its method of incorporating the 75/25 growth management framework. Instead, the Board recommended only the refinement of policy in some areas (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 26 October 1983, pp. 1-6):

1. Fringe Area Planning Measures - The Board suggested that the Commission's use of "should provide for uses which" in policy 2.3 was inappropriate and that "shall address the following issues" was more acceptable. "There is a special need to provide for the rational conversion of land from rural to urban uses in the fringe areas".

2. Agricultural Subdivision (Policy 5.4) - The Board suggested that this policy be reworded to correct an error in the Commission's explanation of agricultural subdivision procedures.

3. Policy Reference Map - The Board recommended that the map be redrafted to include all present industrial areas in the region. The Board advised that "the Province would not look favorably on a map that misrepresents the region".

4. Policy Interpretation (Policy 1.1) - This policy makes reference to the Commission making "a decision" when a question of interpretation of the plan arises. The Board advised that the Commission does not have the legal prerogative to make such a decision nor impose a time frame on municipalities to bring land use plans and bylaws into conformance with the regional plan.

5. Plan Administration - The Board recommended that Policy 1.4 be reworded from "municipalities shall refer their proposed statutory plan(s) to the Commission for review..." to "municipalities shall make provision to refer their proposed statutory plan(s) for notification to the Commission...for review..." The Board recommended that policy 1.5 be be similarly reworded.

6. Transportation (Policy 9.1) - This policy creates an inaccurate impression that the Commission member-municipalities and the provincial government have equal status in drafting the regional transportation plan. The Board recommended that this policy be rewritten to more accurately reflect the Commission's consultation role.

In close consultation with the Board, the regional plan committee worked systematically, over the next year, to refine procedural policy to more clearly reflect the Board's wishes. Finally, on August 23, 1984, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Julian Koziak, ratified the proposed regional plan.

6.2 Discussion of the Relationship Between Local Autonomy and Regional Planning

6.2.1 Introduction

The relationship between local autonomy and the regional plan preparation process undertaken by the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission is clearly a consequence of the attempted marrying of two conflicting points of view. The issue of local autonomy shaped the course of the entire plan preparation process, presenting faces of indifference, hostility, and even false commitment to the regional effort where it seemed appropriate in order to secure local ends. It affected the development of issues, the role of the regional plan committee, the conception of the mandate for regional planning in the region, the nature and timing of conflict and the role of regional planning staff. Unflaggingly, proponents of local autonomy worked at cross purposes to the regional orientation which was designed to secure a balance of costs and benefits for the entire region. Similarly, the unfolding of the process and the actions of regional planning staff seemed to affect the manner in which the concern for local autonomy manifested itself in the course of events. Yet, contrary to the premises of regional planning theory, there was no gradual awakening of commitment to the concept of the regional community. Rather, the process seemed to exacerbate the conflict between regional and local points of view by forcing attention to divisive issues and demanding that local representatives adopt a public stand. Yet, as the analysis of the five areas of concern will demonstrate, the relationship between the two forces was not a simple cause and effect association.

6.2.2 The Role of the Provincial Government

The role of the provincial government in the process, via the Cabinet order on Edmonton's annexation application and the actions of the Alberta Planning Board, was a complicating factor that underscores, in dramatic fashion, the importance of the overall context in understanding a decision-making process. The annexation decision in 1981 laid ground rules for the regional plan preparation process. In the sense that it preserved the autonomy of communities adjacent to Edmonton (i.e. St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park), this framework could be interpreted as a defense of local autonomy. However, the Cabinet decision also established a specific 75/25 formula for growth management and, in this sense, represents a very definite encroachment into a domain previously held by local municipalities. Hence, the annexation decision did little to clarify the already murky association between local autonomy and regional planning as spelled out in the Planning Act. In fact, this confusion about an appropriate balance between the two forces plagued the entire process, to the extent that planning staff felt it necessary to include the mandate of the regional plan as a critical issue to be resolved within the process, rather than being able to develop a clear plan of action around a predetermined notion of the appropriate role for regional planning in the region.

Some municipalities and the Alberta Planning Board were later to comment that the mandate question was not ~~an appropr~~iate one to be considered at the goals and objectives phase or at the draft plan stage of the process. Yet, when staff had suggested to the Ad Hoc Committee, prior to beginning plan preparation, that the mandate of regional planning commissions required review, the issue received scant attention. In fact, minutes recorded some 20 months after staff first brought the issue forward to the Ad [illegible] Committee indicate that the appropriate role of the regional plan still remained elusive:

> Item 4: Review of Major Issues Respecting Proposed Regi[illegible]
> Mrs. [illegible] noted the six major issues listed on page [illegible] being: mandate (role of the Regional

> Plan); growth management; settlement hierarchy; population projections/targets; metropolitan fringe; and Map 4 general comments... Mrs. M. Abdurahman then asked that if the five issues of growth management, settlement hierarchy, population projections/targets, metropolitan fringe and Map 4 were settled first, would the issue of mandate sort itself out? Ms. J. Reimer commented that the mandate should be settled first, as that would establish what a Regional Plan is and what the Commission can do... The question was called on the Quinn/Bell motion to defer the discussion of mandate until the other issues had been discussed. Motion carried (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 15 April 1983, pp. 3-6).

This is not to imply that the task of defining an appropriate role for the regional plan would have been clear-cut without the stipulations in the Cabinet order. Such an assumption would beg the history of conflict within the region. However, the fact that this order decreed not only that growth had to be managed but laid down a growth allocation formula, certainly entrenched the struggle between the forces of local autonomy and the regional community. The individual municipalities were then compelled to take a stand. The Cabinet order, by virtue of the uncertainty surrounding its intent and the implications it carried for local autonomy, served to stultify the regional cause.

The role of the Alberta Planning Board during the process further complicated the divisive relationship between local autonomy and the regional community of interest. In a stance very similar to one endorsed by the Alberta Planning Board in The Regional Planning System Study, EMRPC documents characterized the commission as a forum for intermunicipal negotiation and compro[illegible] the appropriate locale for the resolution of dispute. Yet, [illegible] presence of the Board throughout the process, ostensibl[illegible] that its framework and guidelines for regional planning were followed and Cabinet directives incorporated, seemed to imply a mistrust of the ability of the EMRPC to live up to its own expectations. For example, the Board offered direct participation at meetings of the regional plan committee, and later even refused to endorse a draft plan that had received the unanimous approval of the Commission. As noted previously, one staff member suggested that the role of the Alberta Planning Board seemed to be to protect municipalities from themselves. The government of Alberta had based an entire regional planning system on the ability of local representatives to cooperate toward the regional cause and yet, in the final analysis, seemed unwilling to commit to the product of this fact. The regional level of decision making seemed to be losing so much ground to direct provincial and local control that one knowledgeable observer of the regional scene suggested that this should be deemed the "era of the non-regional plan".[7] He further suggested that the posture of the Board was inconsistent - on one hand treating the Commission members as "interlopers" or "outsiders" rather than responsible elected local officials, and at the same time championing local responsibility by opting for a non-regulatory approach to regional planning. Hence, while the Act allowed commissions to "regulate and control" at their discretion (Section 47(b)), there seemed, in practice, to be a strengthening of the provincial role on the regional scene. In light of these conflicting terms of reference, it seems open to debate whether or not this increased intervention is the type of provincial guidance for urban affairs that Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975) deemed essential for effective growth management.

As noted in section 6.1.3, part of the strengthened role of the Alberta Planning Board was to provide sanction to the cause of municipal self-determination. The Board criticized the draft plan of December 1982 for intruding into the domain of local authorities by assigning specific functional designations and population targets to municipalities within the region. Clearly, local autonomy was to be preserved:

> In general, we feel that the Draft severely extends into areas of municipal autonomy particularly in the areas of land use designation, allocation of growth, and creation of hierarchies of communities. The Regional Planning Commission should be a facilitator of development in all communities by establishing policy parameters within which an individual municipality can, to a large extent, determine its own destiny (Correspondence, Alberta Planning Board, 10 May 1983, p. 3).

Yet, when consulted by the regional plan committee on at least three separate occasions (27 October 1982, 17 March 1983, and 6 April 1983) the Board insisted that the 75/25 growth directive be incorporated into the plan, as a hard-and-fast rule. Only when municipal opposition seemed destined to thwart any regional plan carrying such specific growth designations did the Board relax its position to allow the directive to be relegated to an Appendix. By this time, however, the regional planning staff, as purveyors of the Cabinet order, had lost favor with the regional plan committee. Ultimately, in permitting flexibility about the interpretation of the 75/25 ratio, it seems as though the Board was rescuing the committee from an untenable position developed by staff - even though this position relayed precisely the growth directive in the Cabinet order. For its part, the Board maintained that the staff had usurped municipal responsibility in the way in which they had operationalized the directive. The Cabinet's desire, it was said, was for "long-term estimates of future population", not specific population targets and allocations (Correspondence from Alberta Planning Board, 17 March 1983).

Given the confusion over the appropriate regional-local balance within the provincial context, it is difficult to pinpoint whose interpretation of Cabinet intent is correct. A cynical observer of the process might suggest that this situation bears marked similarity to Kaplan's (1982) account of the failure of the Manitoba government to rally support behind its Metro system in the face of growing opposition. In both cases, it could be argued that delegates of the regional cause served as scapegoats for an unpopular provincial position. In the Edmonton case, the Alberta Planning Board seemed committed to furthering local autonomy at the expense of the regional cause. However, given the strengthened provincial role on the regional scene, it is questionable whether or not local municipalities gained autonomy in any real and usable sense. In the final analysis, the process was interlaced with an uncertainty about the appropriate mandate for the regional plan at the provincial level.

6.2.3 The Contentious Issues in Policy Formulation

Given the context established in section 6.2.2, it is not surprising that the issue of growth management dominated the entire regional plan preparation process. An early staff report predicted that the 75/25 formula would have a significant bearing on the plan preparation process, because it ran contrary both to the natural trends within the region and to the decentralized growth scenario adopted by the ERPC during the Growth Studies Project. However, the conflict within the process rests at a more basic level than this assessment reveals. It is true that the former commission had endorsed a growth management framework, but it did so in the face of vigorous opposition from the City of Edmonton which, despite its dominance in terms of population, had too few voting members to veto the proposal.[8] The decentralization policy clearly favored municipalities surrounding Edmonton by permitting them the latitude to accommodate whatever development they could attract. In fact, local autonomy was a basic objective against which all potential growth policies were weighed. Thus, the 75/25 split caused concern, not simply because it differed from natural trends and the decentralized growth strategy, but because it questioned the values they represented. As the antithesis of the decentralized growth strategy, the 75/25 rule was interpreted as an assault on local autonomy. The concentration of growth in Edmonton was seen as challenging the right of all municipalities to compete freely, with whatever resources lay at their disposal, to attract new development. In a system where growth, and in particular industrial growth, is reflected in the tax revenues accruing to each municipality, the ability to attract development affects a whole range of issues at the local level, not the least of which is the quality of service provision. Municipal descriptions of the growth management strategy in the 1982 plan as "dictatorial", "inherently dangerous" and "an attack on civil liberties" emphasized the general point - the preservation of local autonomy was paramount in the minds of municipal representatives involved in the regional debate.[9] Because the regional plan preparation process became so preoccupied with the 75/25 directive, the process itself was interpreted as a direct threat to local freedom. The City of Edmonton also threatened that freedom by virtue of its endorsement of the 75/25 split. Indeed, the whole controversy served as a reminder of the hardened positions and rivalries that had colored the annexation hearings of 1979-1981.

The animosity between Edmonton and the regional municipalities is evident from these excerpts:

> Motion: Abdurahman/Bell
> delete the concept of 75/25 from the text of the plan
> (i) delete references to provincial growth policy entirely;
> (ii) move references to provincial growth policy to the Appendix.
>
> Mrs. O. Butti questioned how such an alternative could be considered when it is in such direct opposition to the Minister, the Province, and the Alberta Planning Board...
>
> Mrs. L. Bakker informed the Committee that she must rule out of order the motion as presented... The vote was six to three in favor of defeating the chair... Mrs. M. Abdurahman indicated that it was her intent to delete the specific numbers of 75/25 from the text, not the entire strategy. Ms. J. Reimer wished to hear of more specific changes that would be made to the plan. She added that it was impossible to vote on such a motion if the specifics were not presented...
>
> Motion carried.
>
> It was noted that the City of Edmonton representatives...voted against the motion...
>
> J. Reimer...talked of the need for compromise within the structure of the Committee. She indicated her concern over the day's meeting and the way decisions were being made. She noted that everything the City endorsed in the plan has been destroyed today.

> Moved by Mrs. O. Butti, seconded by Ms. J. Reimer, to adjourn the meeting until Monday. Motion defeated (25 April 1983, pp. 7-17).
>
> Mrs. B. Hewes...said it had been her observation over the past two to three months that a polarization has taken place on the Committee. Mrs. B. Hewes continued that the impression the Plan was the City's Plan was not the case as she had emphasized two to three weeks ago (4 May 1983, p. 4).

Hence, the issue of growth management came to overshadow the entire plan preparation proceedings. At this time of intense conflict, it is apparent as well that the City of Edmonton questioned the effectiveness of the regional plan committee as a vehicle for negotiation and compromise. The pattern of the City of Edmonton representatives voting as a bloc and at clear odds with other municipalities raises yet another issue - the dilemma posed for the regional plan committee by its dual roles as a purveyor of the regional cause and as a compendium of local voices. These two alternatives have decidedly different implications for the relationship of local autonomy and regional planning.

6.2.4 The Regional Plan Committee

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By virtue of its responsibility to guide staff during policy formulation and to serve as a liaison between the technical and political arms of the Commission, the regional plan committee exerted a powerful influence on the nature of the plan preparation process. The manner in which it chose to execute or not execute these duties affected the entire course of events and indicates some turmoil in determining an appropriate role for the committee in the task of balancing local and regional concerns. The information presented in section 6.1 reveals that the committee abdicated its responsibility of providing consistent direction to the regional planning staff throughout the plan preparation process. Staff presented position papers to the committee which, for reasons that are not readily apparent, then endorsed these positions despite the serious reservations of some committee members. On the surface, the committee supported the intention of implementing the 75/25 directive, yet at a more remote level the overriding concern was with the directive's impact on local affairs. This underlying preoccupation can be interpreted through case studies such as Aron (1969) and Lim (1983), which have noted an inability on the part of cooperative affiliations of local representatives to resolve the dilemma of having to wear two hats, a regional one and a local one.[10] It was also critical that the main effort on the preparation of a draft plan occurred in a year immediately preceding local elections. In keeping with Brazier and Harris' (1975) contention that individuals will pay allegiance to their strongest and most beneficial ties, it is not unreasonable to expect local representatives on the regional plan committee to have felt the pull of the local electorate in determining the regional-local balance.

The December 1982 draft was the first clear public record of the plan preparation process. For the first time, faced with a deluge of criticism from their own municipalities, the regional plan committee was forced to defend its published position. Faced with supporting policies in a plan that had been prepared almost solely by staff and lacked any real support from most committee members, the committee behaved predictably - it disclaimed responsibility for the intent of the document and insisted that both staff and the Board reassess their positions. Hence, comments such as those made by Mrs. M. Abdurahman that she had always been opposed to the regulatory function of the plan, and that "direction had to be given to staff and staff would have to live up to it", imply that staff had been remiss in following committee directions in the past. Once again, staff were caught between the wishes of municipalities and the directions of the provincial government.

Whatever the reasons of committee members in allowing the plan preparation process to proceed for 20 months before forcing a showdown over the growth management framework, it certainly seemed to aid in achieving the precise ends sought by most municipalities. While not directly transferable, the experience is reminiscent of Skelcher's (1982) description of situations where participants in an interagency process react to situations of divergence of opinion and conflict by avoiding real commitment to any one stance and thereby effectively defeat the cooperative process. Passively endorsing staff presentations and provincial policy might be interpreted as avoiding real commitment on an issue until, in this instance, the real strength of the municipalities' belief in local autonomy was revealed at the most opportune time. Whether the strategy was deliberate or accidental matters little. Faced with an assault of the magnitude that occurred with the release of the draft plan in December 1982, the Alberta Planning Board acquiesced and approved the suggestion to relegate the 75/25 directive to an appendix of the plan. The sheer force of complaint, in April and May 1983, was difficult for the province to ignore. But whether the committee served the regional purpose by acting as it did is open to question. Once again, the dilemma of the role of the regional plan committee - that is, regional voice or compendium of local voices - emerges as a significant issue. This dilemma was considered at the Spring Conference on Regional Planning in April 1983:[11]

> F. Laux:
>
> Referring to the guidelines on the one hand he said they ask Commissions to allocate growth and ask them not to specify. He wondered how this could be achieved. He suggested that matters of regional significance cannot be achieved through "wish washy" language since developers could have a battery of lawyers and run through these policies. He suggested...that planning commission members have got to 'bite the bullet' - take off their local hat or not be members of the Commission. He felt that there was too much squabbling to protect individual areas and that in response the Board is over-reacting. He suggested that perhaps there is a need to rethink the matter of representation (regional plan committee briefing notes, Alberta Planning Board Conference, April 26-29, 1983, p. 3).

During the preparation of the draft plan, most committee members were not able to "bite the bullet" and take off their local hats. In terms of their role, the committee was unable to reconcile the stance of the technical arm, as defenders of the regional community, with the independent views of member municipalities, so that the integrity of both sides could be maintained.

It is difficult to assess whether or not members of the regional plan committee were all committed to and had a common appreciation of the need for regional planning. At the height of controversy, Alderman Bette Hewes, Chairman of the Commission, warned all the Commission members of the need to come to terms with this issue. As the italicized portion of the following passage indicates, she saw regional planning as a means of protecting municipal governments against the erosion of their autonomy by centralized control at the provincial level:

> The events of the past year have raised some important concerns in my mind as to the future for regional planning in this province. A major concern must be with the erosion of the planning commission's position as a viable organization of elected representatives and cooperating municipalities acting together for the benefit of their specific region in dealing with problems of land use. I see recent actions at the Provincial level, particularly by the Alberta Planning Board, as potentially undermining the principles of regional planning as we have practised it. Actions are being taken, in the name of local municipal autonomy, which have polarized the positions on land use control at the municipal and provincial levels. This, in my opinion, will in the long run act to the detriment of local municipal planning initiatives with the ultimate control being centralized in the Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs and the Alberta Planning Board. Do we wish to abdicate our mandate to a centralized system or do we want to maintain the control with the elected representatives through the Regional Planning Commission? I believe this issue is most important to the future of our municipalities. I think that it is essential that we, as Commission members representing our individual councils, make them aware as to what is at stake and the benefits derived from a cooperative approach to municipal planning through an effective Regional Planning Commission. Members of the Commission, it is my opinion that the time has come for each one of us to stand up and be counted as to our support for the principles of regional planning (Recorded in the Annual Report, EMRPC, 1982a, p. 12).

Hence, the relationship between local autonomy and regional plan preparation was complicated by the broader context of provincial-municipal relations. The issue of regional planning was caught up within the question of local-central control.

Given this context, it is not surprising that the plan preparation effort displayed such overt signs of the conflict between local and provincial authorities. The determination of an appropriate distribution of development costs and benefits across the region was never really the central issue. Rather, this task was overshadowed by the question of an appropriate role for provincial authorities in local and regional planning. The regional planning process became a convenient arena to air local grievances against the perceived threat of provincial domination in urban affairs. As Mrs. Hewes' comments reveal, the centralization of control by the province was a real concern to the members of the regional plan committee. This might help to explain why they ultimately pitched in at a sub-committee level to rewrite the draft document in terms that were acceptable to most members. For, even with the concession by the Alberta Planning Board that the 75/25 directive could be relegated to an appendix, the 1983 draft plan was still not of the same intent as the one endorsed by the committee prior to the annexation decision. Conceivably then, the committee might have held out for more concessions from the provincial authorities - but it chose not to do so. The regional plan committee meeting of May 4, 1983 revealed a growing fear that "if the Committee does not prepare a Plan it would be prepared for us" (p. 4). One member suggested that the failure of the committee to produce a workable plan would lead to the Alberta Planning Board forcing a plan on the Commission. Hence, at least part of the rationale behind the committee's renewed zeal for the regional cause in May 1983 was the preservation of local autonomy. In this context of confused relations among the province, the region, and the municipalities, the committee, comprised as it was of locally elected representatives, seemed committed to defining the regional perspective in terms of the interests of individual municipalities. Thus, while the December 1982 draft plan was condemned as "an attack on free enterprise and civil liberties", the August 1983 draft plan was described as "workable" (Edmonton Journal, 8 September 1983, p. 3). It was seen to have fulfilled the Commission's role as "a facilitating, consultative and advisory body acting in those capacities" (EMRPC, 1983b, p. 2).

6.2.5 The Role of Regional Planning Staff

For their part, the Commission staff appeared to try to ignore the changing play of interauthority relationships that was going on around them. They essentially interpreted their role as being to implement the directives of the Cabinet order regardless of municipal opposition (Staff report, 19 April 1982). In keeping with this aim, they defined goals and objectives, growth management policies, a land use designation map and a settlement hierarchy, all based on the Cabinet order. As well, because of their desire to have the regional plan adopted by December 1983, they employed an accelerated plan preparation process in which many of the stages overlapped or occurred simultaneously. This time-saving measure required an early commitment to the desired end product and close coordination of all facets of [illegible] decision-making process (Appended report, Minutes of the regional plan committee, 5 December 1981, p. 9). Yet, the diagrammatic representation of the plan preparation stages indicates no feedback loops between stages and hence no formal provision for ensuring sustained commitment and ongoing consultation. While this may have been a simple drafting oversight, it appears that the process-in-practise did lack this type of monitoring in any meaningful, evaluative sense. There is no evidence of the type of double-loop learning referred to by Argyrs and Schon (1978) or the reflecting-in-action discussed by Schon (1983). Throughout the entire process, the planning staff remained committed to their initial interpretation of the planning task. In May 1983, at the height of the controversy over the 75/25 rule, staff reinforced their original intent and cautioned against a massive rewrite of the December 1982 draft, in the face of doubts on the committee's part:

> Mrs. M. Abdurahman [illegible] found it disturbing that the committee was developing a Plan which the majority would not support. Mr. E. Dmytruk added that a lot of good work had gone into the Plan and much of it was re[illegible] was doubtful, he said, whether the Decemb[illegible] deadline could be achieved if the committee were to start on a totally new plan (Minutes of the regional plan committee, 4 May 1983, p. 5).

As noted earlier, this position was consistent with the advice given to the committee on at least two other occasions when the political feasibility of the 75/25 directive was questioned.

In Schön's (1983) terms, there is no indication that staff reflected upon the form in which the problem was initially framed, or the way roles and strategies were framed in response to that particular problem definition. Hence, although staff acknowledged that intermunicipal conflict had marked the regional planning process for some 30 years (4 November 1982), and that failure to resolve the dispute over the growth management framework would preclude adoption of a plan by the Commission, they proposed a planning process that required a clear and consistent statement of goals and a unity of purpose within the region. Furthermore, they proceeded throughout the process, despite conflicting signals, as though they had that required consensus. Given the tumultuous context for the process, these terms of reference were predicated on a set of circumstances which the planners knew - or should have known on the basis of history - did not exist. They seemed to devise their strategy on the basis of what should logically occur, given the provincial directives and regional harmony, rather than what was likely to occur given the tradition of local autonomy in the political culture of the region. Perhaps planners overestimated the power of reasoned argument. This seems likely, even at the outset of the process, where staff advised the committee of the need for a strengthened mandate for the Commission if it was to be able to secure the full intent of the Cabinet order. This advice seems particularly at odds with at least one of the criteria that the Commission had previously approved for selecting a growth management strategy - local autonomy. Caught between the perfunctory endorsements by the committee on one hand, and the history of the region and undercurrent of conflict on the other, planners chose to function on the basis of the former. This, however, put them at the mercy of the latter. Clearly, the success of the planners' strategy for the regional plan preparation process was undermined by the strength of the municipal governments' dedication to the principle of local autonomy.

The decisions made by the staff of the Commission represent their response to the various constraints and opportunities within the unique set of circumstances governing the process. Yet, this context, in constraining the range of choice, did not dictate the choices actually made. During the process, the planners indicated their awareness that they were caught between the directives of the provincial government and the wishes of member-municipalities. Yet, they nonetheless chose, with the seeming support of the regional plan committee, to align their policy recommendations with the provincial directives. As shown earlier, this decision did nothing to ingratiate the planners with the committee when it became apparent that most member-municipalities would not support a 75/25 growth management framework. By becoming identified with the 75/25 directive, the planners lost the ability to serve as impartial mediators between the conflicting parties when the process erupted in dispute. Still, the intent here is not to judge whether the planners made an appropriate choice. Rather, it is to indicate that the conflictual relationship among the three levels of authority confused the options available to planners. To have determined an appropriate course of action, the regional planners would have needed a clear understanding of the mandate of regional planning in the region and, hence, a valid interpretation of the balance of local and regional concerns. The committee minutes of April 15, 1983 indicate no consensus on these issues, even at that late date.

6.2.6 The Mandate for Regional Planning in the Region

The discussions in sections 6.1 and 6.2, to this point, indicate that the absence of a clear statement of the proper balance between local autonomy and regional control hindered the regional plan preparation process. They point to a fundamental inability, or unwillingness, of participants in the process to develop a common appreciation of the mandate of the regional plan. And of course this ambiguity about the role of regional planning can be traced back to the Planning Act, 1977 and the Framework and Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review. In this light, Mr. Giffen's comment to the Alberta Planning Board on April 6, 1983, that he felt as though he and the Board had read two different plans, is particularly relevant. For the municipalities, the planners and the Board might as well have read different documents, since each group evaluated the process and the draft plan according to its own interpretation of the mandate for regional planning. As is evident from the discussion of the intense conflict over the 1982 draft plan in section 6.1, these terms of reference were vastly different for each group. The regional plan committee favored a balance of power weighted toward local autonomy while regional planning staff envisioned the strength of regional authority espoused in regional planning theory. The Alberta Planning Board, on the other hand, borrowed strands from both points of view to develop its own set of confusing directions for the regional planning commission. Hence, there was no common appreciation amongst the participants of the proper role for the regional planning commission and no clear-cut guidelines in planning legislation to assist in resolving the differences in opinion. Yet, according to Moore and Leach (1979), common understanding and commitment to the task are necessary ingredients for the successful management of interauthority relationships. Where they do not exist, the opportunities for conflict are enhanced. It would seem that the Edmonton region is an extreme case-in-point.

6.3 Summary

The events of the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton metropolitan region are indicative of a process caught between three levels of authority, all vying for a degree of control at the regional level. The Alberta Planning Board, while endorsing the growth management provisions of the Cabinet order and testing its newly acquired role in regional plan preparation, also defended the principle of local autonomy in land use control as a basic right of all municipalities in the province. Member-municipalities couched their arguments in favor of local supremacy in decision making, but they did so in terms of the benefits accruing to their own individual interests. Hence, the City of Edmonton endorsed the efforts of the process, which favored urban growth, while rural municipalities decried the erosion of their individual right to attract development to suit their own purpose. Planners had to devise regional policies which incorporated provincial stipulations, yet in terms that were acceptable to these local municipalities without whose support the plan would not receive the sanction of either the Commission or the Board. This was a seemingly impossible task, since neither the regional plan committee nor the provincial authorities relayed consistent direction to staff, let alone came to terms with each other's definitions of local autonomy and regional planning. The protection of local autonomy became a fundamental aim in the process, to the point that agreement was finally reached, in May 1983, upon a regional policy, to guard against erosion of that autonomy by the province.

These criteria for decision making bear little resemblance to those professed in regional planning theory, where the derivation of an equitable balance of costs and benefits for the entire region is the overriding goal. Inherent in this goal, of course, is the willingness of member-municipalities to surrender some of their individual autonomy for the good of the entire region. The weak emphasis given to this theoretical concern during the plan preparation process suggests that local autonomy and regional planning do not make good bedfellows, particularly in circumstances where the actions of the governing authority work at cross purposes to the regional task. In fact, in the Edmonton case, where the role of the provincial government via the Alberta Planning Board and the Cabinet order served to increase the perceived threat felt by member-municipalities and a public document gave a focus for that fear, plan preparation exacerbated tensions within the region. The relationship between the regional plan preparation process and local autonomy was an adversarial one.

Footnotes

1. This sentiment is also evident in the draft program outline released by staff:

> Certain directives enunciated by the Provincial Cabinet set the stage for urban policy in the metropolitan region. It seems that there will be only limited opportunity to vary or depart from provincially stated directives. However, through intermunicipal negotiation and discussion and on the basis of agreement between municipalities, it may be possible to modify the provincial directives (Program Outline report, Minutes of the regional plan committee, 25 November 1981).

2. This action of the Alberta Planning Board was in spite of the "Edmonton Regional Planning Commission Amendment Regulation", January 1, 1982, which stated that the Alberta Planning Board shall consult with and give direction to the above named Commissions referred to in Section 1...particularly having regard to the following:

> Maintenance of the role of the City of Edmonton as the dominant community in the metropolitan region and maintenance of the City of Edmonton as the center of the regional growth pattern in future, with approximately similar importance in terms of population distribution.

3. It is not entirely clear why Map 4, which differs very little in substance from Map 3 of the approved regional plan, was singled out for criticism. This point is further discussed later in this chapter.

4. Mr. Giffen's opinion is derived from a document entitled "Reasons for Judgment of the Honorable Mr. Justice Belzil - the Alberta Supreme Court Decision of Helenslea Farms":

> There is no role assigned to the Board by the Act in the preparation of general municipal plans, area structure plans or land use bylaws, nor is there a role assigned to the Board in the preparation of regional plans except to receive [illegible], examine, suggest changes and pass them on to the [illegible] ratification with its recommendations. [illegible] Board cannot compel the changes which it suggests. Its role under the Act is to hear appeals from a regional planning commission's refusal to adopt an amendment to a regional plan (5.55 and following) and subdivision appeals (5.103(1)).

5. This discussion is summarized in briefing notes for the regional plan committee which were appended to [illegible] minutes of the regional plan committee meeting of May 4, 198[illegible] [illegible] original paper, "Era of the Regional Plan: A Discussion [illegible] for the Annual Spring Seminar" was presented by the Alberta Planning Board, April 26-29, 1983, Jasper, Alberta.

6. In fact, as will be indicated in Chapter 7, some of the committee members placed blame with the committee itself, rather than with staff. However, in terms of the actions that were taken, this negative perception did shape the outcome of events.

7. Professor Fred Laux delivered these remarks at the Spring Seminar on Regional Planning held by the Alberta Planning Board on 27 April 1983. A report appended to the 2 May 1983 minutes of the regional plan committee meeting summarizes the conference (Era of the Regional Plan, a Discussion Paper for the Annual Spring Seminar).

8. One example of the bad feeling which this caused was the suggestion by an Edmonton city council member of April 11, 1979 that Edmonton withdraw from the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission. The suggestion came during a discussion of Edmonton's membership on the Commission:

> Alderman Ron Hayter told city council Edmonton is being duped and overwhelmed by the regional planning organization, which has three Edmonton representatives among its 22 members. 'We shouldn't continue the charade', he told city council. 'We're making a real mistake if we think the present setup is beneficial to the city' (Edmonton Journal, 25 April 1979, p. B6).

Olive Elliot, columnist for the Journal, similarly suggested that Edmonton's tremendous growth pressures conflicted with the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission's stated priorities and asked "What happens to Edmonton's entirely inadequate voice in the regional planning input process when push inevitably becomes shove?" (Edmonton Journal, 15 May 1979).

9. References for these descriptions are cited previously in-text.

10. The dilemma that this posed for the regional plan committee will become clearer in the analysis of the interviews reported in Chapter 7.

11. Fred Laux is a good authority to quote on the intentions behind legislation, by virtue of his position as a consultant during the drafting of The Planning Act, 1977.

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

7.0 Interview Methods

The review of written materials and commission documents, in Chapter 6, established the framework for the plan preparation process, identified the key issues, and documented the nature of the conflict and the relationships of particpant groups, but it could not provide much information about the views of those members of the regional plan committee and planning commission staff who actually participated in preparation of the plan. In this chapter, therefore, the participants' interpretations of the process will be analyzed, with two aims: to understand the motivations underlying certain decisions and actions; and to determine the participants' overall assessments of the effect that the local autonomy issue had on regional plan preparation.

The data for this chapter were derived from a series of focussed interviews with seven members of the regional planning commission staff and 11 members of the regional plan committee. Two members of the 13 member-committee, one from the City of Edmonton and one from a rural municipality, declined to be interviewed, both stating that the impending municipal elections put severe constraints on their time. Of the seven staff members, two represented a management role in the regional plan preparation process and the other five were those planners involved on a daily basis with preparation of the draft documents. All but one of the participants consented to the use of a tape recorder during the interview. In that instance, the comments were transcribed directly to written copy during the interview. The interviews were conducted during prearranged appointments, with the actual time of discussion ranging from half an hour to two hours. The average length of the interviews was approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. These taped interviews transcribed to the equivalent of roughly 130 typewritten pages.

A focussed interview format was selected to allow participants to speak at length, in their own words. At some point during every interview, however, it was ensured that certain topics or issues were covered. The rationale behind the selection of issues stems from particular points in the regional planning literature and the documentary sources investigated in Chapter 6. In general terms, these issues fell into six broad categories:

1. Role of the regional plan committee.
2. Role of regional planning commission staff.
3. Regional perspective and local autonomy.
4. Role of provincial authorities.
5. Controversy about the draft plan (1982).
6. Resolution of contentious policy issues.

Table V provides a more specific breakdown of topics and issues.

The prime advantage of the focussed interview method is that it ensured a continuity of material on certain subject areas but did not restrict the degree of detail, the manner of response of the participant, nor the context in which the subject chose to relay the information. This all proved to be especially valuable in this study since certain factors, such as the role of regional planning commission staff and the Alberta Planning Board, were perceived by participants to have more prominence than I could have anticipated. An alternative

TABLE V TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS

1. Role of the Cabinet and the Alberta Planning Board

1.1 Subject's description of the role of the A.P.B. in the plan preparation process. Was A.P.B. involvement desirable? Was it effective?
1.2 Impact of the role of the Board on regional planning.
1.3 Impact of the role of the Board on local autonomy.
1.4 Subject's interpretation of the influence of the A.P.B.'s reaction to the 1982 draft plan on the remainder of the process.
1.5 Subject's evaluation of the impact of the Cabinet order on the process.

2. Role of the Regional Plan Committee

2.1 Participant's description of the role of this committee.
**2.2 Participant's interpretation of his/her role on the committee.
2.3 Participant's assessment of whether or not committee was an effective link between the technical and political arms of the commission.
2.4 Subject's evaluation of the committee's ability to maintain a regional perspective.

3. Conflict over 1982 Draft Plan - Formation of Sub-committee

3.1 Subject's interpretation of why conflict occurred when it did in the process.
3.2 Could the period of intense controversy have been avoided?
3.3 Subject's impression of why the sub-committee was formed. What was its purpose? Was it effective in achieving a regional plan?
3.4 Subject's interpretation of whether or not the 1983 draft plan, prepared by the sub-committee, constitutes effective regional planning.

Table V continued

4. Issues

4.1 Subject's definition of key issues in the process.
4.2 Subject's assessment of whether or not issues were resolved satisfactorily during the process.

5. Role of the Regional Planning Staff

5.1 Subject's description of the role of planners in the process.
*5.2 Planner's discussion of what factors affected the performance of that role.
5.3 Participant's evaluation of the planner's role in the process.
5.4 Subject's perception of the relationship between staff and the committee.

6. General Regional-Local Concerns

6.1 Subject's impression of the appropriate blend of local-regional levels of decision making.
6.2 Subject's assessment of the 1983 draft regional plan.
**6.3 Subject's interpretation of the impact of regional planning for his/her municipality - for the region?

* Planners only
** Regional Plan Committee members only

method relying solely on a series of predetermined questions, designed for quantitative analysis, might have lost or downgraded the importance of these factors. In addition, the semi-structured interview format seemed particularly well-suited to the volatile political climate, since it permitted participants to display the strong sentiments and intense frustrations that characterized many of the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted over a period of two-and-a-half months, commencing in June 1983, and immediately following the acute controversy over the draft plan and the subsequent formation of the sub-committee to guide staff in plan preparations. This timing may explain the strength of feeling expressed about certain issues and the degree of detail that most of the participants were willing to share with me. It may also help to explain the discrepancies between the tone of these assessments and the more positive evaluations of regional planning in Alberta that are found elsewhere.[1] On balance, the choice of the focussed or semi-structured interview format was a sound one, as far as the thesis research was concerned. Its application was not without difficulties, however. Most notably, by allowing the subjects to speak at length in their own words and relate and associate topics in an individual manner, the interviews generated a vast array of information that had to be categorized, in some semblance of order, into the topic areas described in Table V. Quite often, the discussion of one topic was inextricably linked to another in one participant's view, yet these associations were not uniform amongst all particiants nor did they separate neatly into any one box within the topic categorization. Hence, the organization of this mass of information was a time consuming and complex task. In fact, in the interest of clarity and to prevent duplication in the presentation of results, the six topic clusters have been condensed and reorganized to four. These are the role of provincial authorities, the role of the regional plan committee, the role of commission staff, and the resolution of contentious issues.

One other point about the organization and presentation of results relates to the issue of anonymity. Prior to the interviews, everyone was assured that the results would be presented in such a way that specific views and comments could not be attributed to the individual participants.[2] To safeguard this assurance, the study refrains from attributing comments even to sub-groups within the two study groups (e.g. rural versus urban municipalities; staff versus management) but rather describes results in terms of the overall committee unit and regional planning staff group. Regrettably, in instances where the viewpoints are particularly factionalized within the two groups, it might still be possible, despite these precautions, to identify the source of specific remarks. Hence, in an admittedly subjective assessment, where I thought that goodwill amongst the groups might be jeopardized, derogatory comments about a specific, named participant in the process were deleted or recast in more general terms, as relating to the entire group.[3] Also in the interests of protecting anonymity, all planners are referred to in the masculine form and all regional plan committee members in the feminine.

7.1 The Role of Provincial Authorities

In Alberta, the provincial government is responsible for delineating the framework of relationships amongst the levels of planning authority. As such, it has the ability to shape the context for a regional planning process and thereby influence the nature of the impact of local autonomy on the regional scene. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, the government of the day, through the decision report on the 1979-1981 Edmonton annexation application, the guidelines for regional plan preparation, and the actions of the Alberta Planning Board during the plan preparation process, did exercise a significant degree of influence on the nature of the relationship under consideration. These points make the perceptions of the role of the provincial authorities a reasonable place to begin.

7.1.1 Staff Perceptions

Given this preface, it is not surprising that all of the regional planning staff considered the provincial authorities to have had an overbearing influence on the course of events. Most of the staff comments were similar in content and all were decisive in condemning the nature and intent of provincial involvement in the plan preparation process. The content of these remarks can be discussed in terms of the actions of the Alberta Planning Board and the impact of the 75/25 growth management directive on the process.[1]

With respect to the latter, the general tenor of discussion can be summarized by one planner's comment:

> "The government directives dictated the entire process and context of the plan and tied our hands in dealing with the municipalities. If someone can tell me even now how we can put 75/25 in the plan and have it implemented by a bunch of municipalities who are totally uncommitted to it, I'd like to see the answer. It can't be done within the framework of an advisory plan. By imposing 75/25, the province left us with two irreconcilable points of

> view. Since we had to push the directives, we were scapegoats for the province. We did their dirty work."

Another planner suggested that the Cabinet annexation order affected the process even prior to the actual decision, since the mere anticipation of the outcome "got people busy protecting themselves instead of thinking regionally". One planner felt, however, that the effect of the 75/25 rule had been overemphasized, and that conflict over growth management was an ever-present problem because the municipalities could not come to terms with the idea of a regional allocation of growth: "Municipalities feel they and the market should control their destiny." This planner felt that the 75/25 directive was important not because it created the conflict over growth management in the region, but because it shifted the balance of decision-making power on the commission toward Edmonton and thereby threw the longstanding controversy into dramatic relief: "In settling growth management issues, local autonomy is a never ending problem. Municipalities perceived every issue as encroaching on their jurisdiction." Planners generally felt that the 75/25 directive intensified that perception.

With respect to the involvement of the Alberta Planning Board, through the general guidelines for regional plan preparation and direct participation in the Edmonton process, the planners' assessments were less charitable. The Board was referred to as "the biggest culprits of all", "a vehicle for political patronage appointments", and "a major stumbling block", and was considered to have made "comments of ignorance". Five of the planners aimed specific criticism at the Board for giving conflicting directions throughout the process, with interpretations of proper procedure changing from day to day, and according to whichever member spoke. Three of the planners cited the same example in which, after the controversy over the inclusion of the 75/25 rule in the 1982 draft plan, one member of the Board said to leave the directive in subsequent drafts, another member said to take it out, and a third suggested taking it out but writing the plan as though it was included.[4] One [illegible]cribed this type of direction as "spotty and inconsistent" and suggested that th[illegible]cated its own responsibility when it failed to provide guidance to planners when it was requested to do so early in the process.

In addition to being censured for vague direction, the Board was denounced for its support of local autonomy over regional control: "By jumping in to the negotiation process amongst committee members and siding with municipalities, the province left us without a bargaining position". Yet, clearly it was perceived that the Board's support of local autonomy was more posture than real intent. In one planner's words, "the Board used the catchword of local autonomy to gain municipal support but in fact they really wanted to centralize control with the Board, itself. Even the [regional plan] committee was suspicious. They were afraid that the province would just take over if the committee didn't get its act together". This fear made trade-offs and compromises more acceptable to some municipalities. Another planner discussed the contradiction between the Board's actual intent and its professed support for local autonomy in terms of its unwillingness to allow member-municipalities to make their own decisions for the region. He noted that while on the surface the provincial government appears to favor commissions made up of local viewpoints, by not allowing member-municipalities to have a free rein in negotiating policy without Board intervention, regional planning and local autonomy both lost ground to centralized control. The general consensus of planners was that the Board had overstepped its authority under the Planning Act, and had thereby served to undermine regional planning. The following are typical comments:

> "The current approach to regional planning by the province is to emasculate regional planning to the point that it doesn't really exist."
>
> "The Board allows no opportunity to tailor regional planning to the uniqueness of the region."
>
> "The Board jeopardized the regional planning process."
>
> "The province has made regional planning a farce."

7.1.2 Regional Plan Committee Perception

Like staff, all the members of the regional plan committee interpreted the 75/25 directive as distorting the focus of the plan preparation process:

> "The 75/25 was the major stumbling block in the process. It was impossible to integrate the annexation order and still address municipal concerns."
>
> "The Minister and the 75/25 order created much of the conflict in the region. They had no damn business interfering with growth management. 75/25 interfered in local autonomy and had no place in the plan."
>
> "The growth strategy was a major hurdle in the planning (sic). It confused the issue of local and central control."
>
> "We wanted the plan to be our plan, not the province's. There is big difference between being

> dictated to and allowing growth to occur naturally, even if the final result is the same. Freedom to decide has to be preserved. They should not tell people where to live."

Hence, the committee members, in general, perceived the 75/25 rule as a stumbling block in the process, because it took away the right of municipalities to decide for themselves how regional growth should be managed. Yet, at least one committee member, like one of the planners, did suggest that the issue had been blown out of proportion and became a smoke screen to cover the "self-seeking interests" of municipalities that stood to lose ground to the City of Edmonton under the proposed scheme of growth management. This person also surmised that many municipalities had never come to terms with the idea of planning at the regional scale. In her words, "75/25 was really just a sub-issue of local autonomy and that has always been here".

On balance, the members of the regional plan committee expressed more diverse opinion than the planners about the value of the Alberta Planning Board's intervention in the plan preparation process. In terms similar to the planners, seven committee members commented on the inconsistencies in Board policy and two of these members relayed the example discussed above. Two members suggested that Board recommendations concerning the 1982 draft were confusing and imprecise because the Board had not read the document in any depth prior to meeting with the committee to recommend changes. Also in terms similar to the planners, three committee members flatly condemned the Board's intervention in the process, even though it was done in apparent defense of local autonomy:

> "The Planning Board are meddlers and interferers. If they had really been championing the rights of municipalities they would have stayed out of it."

> "The Alberta Planning Board hurt the process as much as municipal conflicts did. They weakened the position of the regional planning commissions."

> "There is a danger in the increasing role of the Board for regional planning. The commissions are set up so that members are elected people, accountable to a constituency. The Board is not accountable."

These observations to the contrary, by far the most common sentiment was that although the Board's role in the process was problematic, in that it was unanticipated and the motivation behind it unclear, the actions of the Board in arbitrating among staff, the committee, and municipalities aided in the resolution of dispute. The degree of enthusiasm for Board involvement ranged from cool - "their input was somewhat helpful in dealing with planners but perhaps they overstepped their boundaries slightly" - to clear approbation - "It is as simple as this. The Board behaved appropriately in helping us get rid of what we didn't want. They were nothing but help". Still, the majority of members did express some regret that the Board involved itself to the degree that it did in scrutinizing the draft documents. Four members believed that the committee, itself, could have resolved the conflict over a growth management strategy had the Minister rescinded the 75/25 directive earlier in the process. Nine committee members asserted the specific point that the intent of the plan should spring from local municipalities and not from the Alberta Planning Board. In summary, then, while staff evaluated the role of the Board in terms of its impact for regional planning, most committee members couched their appraisals according to the impact perceived for local autonomy. Only four committee members expressed concern about the implications of the increased intervention of the Board for regional planning. This difference in viewpoint between staff and the regional plan committee permeates the remaining topic areas and seems to have played a large part in the way events unfolded.

7.2 The Role of the Regional Plan Committee and Sub-committee

7.2.1 Staff Perceptions

During the regional plan preparation process, the regional plan committee had "the responsibility to provide clear and constructive direction and overall guidance to commission staff during the synthesis of policies for the draft regional plan" (EMRPC Annual Report, 1982, p. 9). In addition, it was intended to serve as the main link between the technical and political arms of the commission by informing member-municipalities and the commission of the progress being made. By the nature of comment about the committee, it is evident that all of the staff had a clear understanding of this dual mandate and had specific expectations of the committee as a consequence. In addition, staff tended to link their evaluation of the committee's performance to the implicit assumption that the committee was to function as the purveyor of the regional perspective. Under these terms, staff, in general, judged the committee members to have been somewhat remiss:

> "One hopes that they will come as a member of a regional community rather than as a municipal representative but it is difficult for them to divorce one role from the other. They pay allegiance to their own community because they are elected there."

> "Some committee members could think regionally but the committee as a whole never accepted a regional perspective... Because everyone operates from their own point of view, there is no trust developed on the committee. Local autonomy makes everybody suspicious of everybody else. It is not the most effective way to regional plan with members whose loyalty is to their own councils."

> "We could never get agreement or commitment on anything. Some members can't see past their own nose. Members should be able to bite the bullet and give authority to us to plan regionally... We need regional appointments for this to happen... Planners need to be able to make a decision without fear of backlash from committee members."

In general terms, then, planners perceived that by involving a membership asked to wear two hats, a regional one and a local one, the regional planning process was compromised. Furthermore, some suggested that the lack of regional perspective hindered the ability of the committee to provide clear and constructive direction to commission staff. For example, one planner indicated that the committee failed to provide any real guidance to staff because members of the committee could not agree about the direction the process should take: "Conflict between members confused us about how to write the plan. There was no clear path through the maze of conflict... Committee members handled the controversy by not deciding anything." Another planner continued this line of thought: "Traditionally, the committee just doesn't get bent out of shape during the process. They just roll along until they are absolutely forced into making a decision... In retrospect, it seems the committee had concerns they felt weren't being addressed by staff, but at the same time they weren't really objecting to what we were doing... We thought we had their support but in the end they left us out on a limb. They didn't want to own up to what they felt should happen in the plan."

Three planners linked the reluctance of committee members to make policy commitments with the structure of the regional plan committee as a formal political body, answerable to every member-municipality: "The format makes for too much politicking and posturing. There is no open discussion, and real motives stay hidden... No honest communication goes on." In addition, four planners commented on the role of personality in affecting relationships on the committee and hence between the committee and staff. For example:

> "Personalities had a lot to do with the results. There were four very strong personalities on the committee that factionalized members and prevented agreement."
>
> "Personality really came into play with some fairly skilled politicians manipulating the process so staff ended up being caught between conflicting parties and looking like the bad guys."
>
> "Some personalities were so strong that the other members felt overpowered. They reacted by voting as a bloc against the City of Edmonton."

In summary, six of the 11 planners agreed that the committee failed to provide adequate direction to staff, at least prior to the formation of the sub-committee in May 1983. All seven of the planners commented upon the lack of open communication amongst members of the committee and between the committee and staff. One member summarized the impact of local autonomy on the ability of the committee to provide guidance, in the following terms:

> The municipalities think local autonomy is a bed of roses where they can do what they want. They have

> yet to realize the responsibility, work, and cost that goes with it. Until they do, they won't come together to agree on any real regional issues... Local autonomy has certainly aggravated the workings of this committee... Planners are only as good as their leadership. We had none.

Some members of regional planning staff also found the committee members to be wanting in their role of informing the commission and member-municipalities about the progress that was being made on the plan. It was acknowledged, however, that not all were negligent: "At some point we would wish and hope that some representatives would be a bit more active in passing information, as a whole, to councils." However, of the five planners commenting on this shortcoming, three made reference to the problem of members being trapped between local and regional duties: "The workload of municipal reps doesn't allow them time to fulfill their regional role effectively. They have no time to familiarize [themselves] with regional issues and the process suffers accordingly." One planner directly linked the blow-up over the 1982 draft plan with the fact that good-quality information was not being passed back to municipal councils. Yet another staff member suggested that staff must bear at least partial blame for this communication problem, since they made no effort to recognize the time constraints of committee members by making reports "concise and easily palatable". Overall, in terms of effective regional planning, all but one staff member deemed the committee to have failed.

7.2.2 Planners' Assessments of the Sub-committee

The formation of the sub-committee occurred as a direct response to the massive assault by municipalities on the 1982 draft plan and the subsequent feelings, as documented in the committee minutes, that staff were not developing policy in accordance with the true intent of the regional plan committee. As noted above (section 7.2.1), staff attributed part of this divergence in opinion to the inability of the committee to provide concrete and sincere direction to regional planning staff. Yet, five of the seven planners agreed that once the sub-committee was established the situation improved dramatically:

> "Political representatives became more intimately involved. Members did their homework and there was less concern with political posturing and self-interests. Initially, it was perceived that the role of the planner would be downgraded but we became a closely knit group of political and technical resource people that could relate on one level... This joint working team approach was very successful."

> "Initially I had serious doubts about the sub-committee. For the first couple of meetings the new committee was very critical of planners and things were very tense. They exaggerated the amount of input they needed to give us until we got in tune with one another. Towards the end, it worked beautifully. Great cooperation."

The remaining two planners, by contrast, did not endorse the sub-committee approach:

> "It was emotionally destroying, a terrible route to go. It questioned the integrity and responsibility of planners. It revealed the disgust of the committee with the administration and their frustration with themselves... In writing policies in this manner, it was not a truly professional and competent experience. It was a butchered and massacred job. Good planning has been sacrificed just to get a plan in print."

> "The sub-committee had no trust for staff... They kicked us in the face."

Of the planning staff who endorsed the sub-committee as a vehicle for cooperation and healthy communication, several had reservations about the quality of the regional plan that emerged:

> "A vague plan confuses the role of decision makers, but given these guidelines it was not possible to create good regional planning."
>
> "Better this plan than none at all but it is not very strong regional planning. Local autonomy politics won't allow the best situation to arise."
>
> "Under the politics of the region, this is the best document possible but in terms of regional control, it really doesn't matter if the plan is adopted or not... There is no meat behind the plan so in the traditional sense, its control is ineffective."
>
> "I think it is a bit of a tragedy for regional planning."

In brief, planning staff did not see the policy aims of the sub-committee as being compatible with their own perception of the regional community's best interest.

7.2.3 Regional Plan Committee Perceptions

Like staff, most members of the regional plan committee isolated the performance of the committee in guiding staff and informing member-municipalities and the issue of an appropriate regional perspective as important factors in their discussion of the role of the regional plan committee. In many cases, however, there are obvious differences between staff and the committee in terms of the reasoning behind the identification of these factors and the assessment of their importance in the plan preparation process. Like the majority of commission staff, all of the committee members viewed the formation of the sub-committee favorably:

> "The relationship with staff became more open."
>
> "Planners finally came down from their ivory tower."
>
> "It was very effective - once we survived the period of honesty."
>
> "The process was strengthened because it allowed us to take control of the process."

Also in similar terms to staff, of the 11 committee members interviewed, eight made reference to the lack of direction to staff early in the process:

> "The problem over the draft plan was not just planners. Politicians were not fulfilling their role...we shouldn't have allowed planners to lead us for so long... Planners don't understand the politics in the region... It is simply diabolical for any committee member to sabotage the plan in the final stages after not participating actively throughout the process."
>
> "Committee members abdicated their role in a terrible way. They allowed themselves to be led like sheep."
>
> "Politicians should have stood up earlier in the process... We had to go through the damn thing twice because people on the committee didn't vocalize concerns."
>
> "We should have taken the bull by the horns and given strong direction. Staff did not understand the politics very well."
>
> "It is curious to me how we got to this stage. How could we, as bona fide members of the committee, have approved a plan that we did not agree with?"

In contrast with the staff comments, however, no committee members suggested that there was a link between the ineffectiveness of the committee in guiding staff and its inability to resolve conflict within its own ranks. Furthermore, while the deficiencies in directing staff were noted and five members made reference to poor communication between the committee and the municipalities, there was a [illegible]neral feeling that the committee's performance, overall, was satisfactory:

> "Seeing as we did arrive at a final document, I don't think you can arrive at any other conclusion than it was effective."
>
> "The political arm needs advice from technical staff and the converse is also true. We were all working toward the same goal... We have a regional plan.".
>
> "Most importantly, the committee was a good watch dog for municipalities... As a final result, conflicts were resolved."

Only one committee member deemed the committee as ineffective and she did so in terms comparable to the staff assessment: "What's the point in regional planning if municipalities aren't willing to give up anything for the region as a whole... The plan made no difference whatsoever to my municipality." So, in general terms, while staff and the committee identified similar concerns about the performance of the regional plan committee in its two-part role, they came to markedly different conclusions about the committee's overall effectiveness. As already discussed, the nature of staff comments reveals that their assessments were made in terms of the impact of the committee's role for effective regional planning. Committee members, on the other hand, utilized a different set of criteria that included their dedication to the principle of local autonomy.

In discussing their roles on the committee, most members - in fact all but one - spoke of the conflicting demands of having to wear both a "local and a regional hat":

> "We are caught between weighing the benefits for our own municipality with that of the region, even though we know we should take the broader view."
>
> "It is very hard to maintain a regional perspective, being pulled between the wishes of my council and ~~the~~ province... I cannot take something back to my council if it goes against my council's wishes."
>
> "It is impossible to think regionally on issues that hurt your own municipality. If something is detrimental to my [municipality], you can bet I challenged it."

Fully eight of the members frankly admitted that in evaluating policy and reaching a compromise position on the commission, primary allegiance went to their own municipalities. In the most extreme terms, one member said, "I was on the committee to promote my own municipality's view. There is no need for a regional outlook... Regional planning is just a make-work project for a bunch of bureaucrats." Other members, however, were more temperate, and most of them admitted the ambivalence of being pulled in opposite directions.

In evaluating the quality of the regional plan that was eventually produced, committee members consistently remarked upon its value for the preservation of local autonomy:

> "The regional plan will have a good impact. It is the product of local municipalities and it gives guidelines to benefit the whole region."
>
> "The plan restores a great deal of autonomy to the municipalities."
>
> "The plan reflects what we can live with. The provision for joint planning between neighbors is excellent... Control is where it should be, with responsible local councils."
>
> "The regional plan is not weakened by removing control provisions at the regional level because they are still present at the local level."

> "In terms of local autonomy, it is a good plan and that is all that will work here... The plan will act as a forum for exchanging local viewpoints in the future. The intent is not to achieve control."

> "The plan will have little impact on my municipality but it is a good plan because we won't have to do much compromising... Municipalities have to be masters of their own fate and this plan protects that... Municipalities will behave responsibly in making their decisions."

Because of the difference in perspective between planning staff and the members of the regional plan committee, their overall assessments of the committee's actions yielded different conclusions. The committee members cast a more positive light on the proceedings, not because they thought the outcome was favorable to regional planning but because of the perceived implications for their local interests. Many of the members of the committee purposely expressed their faith that municipalities would behave responsibly and cooperatively, whereas only one staff member explicitly mentioned a similar confidence. He did so while reflecting upon the sentiments he perceived to be characteristic of fellow planners:

> Planners don't have confidence in local politicians. Some planners feel they have all the answers and make better decisions than politicians. It is not always true... We must have faith in municipalities to uphold the regional perspective... Municipalities will perceive it [the plan] as their own document and will be willing to work with it... It preserves local autonomy.

Interestingly enough, however, seven of the 11 members of the regional plan committee suggested that the regional plan would make little or no difference to the future decisions of their municipality. This brings to mind one member's comment that the policy of the plan "is a pretty weak sugary substance. It is throwing it open to everybody's wishes".

7.3 Issues

At this point, it seems almost repetitive to isolate the key issues, since it is obvious from past discussion that the issue of growth management, as embodied in the 75/25 directive, dominated the entire plan preparation process. Every committee member and every planner perceived this to be the case, with the further implication that it was also the single most disruptive element on the long road to developing a cooperative regional strategy. In discussing the period of intense controversy succeeding the release of the 1982 draft, all but two planners and one committee member made specific reference to the 75/25 strategy as, at the very least, one of the precipitating factors for the municipal insurrection.[5] One planner suggested that "the policy in the plan was no different than what was discussed throughout the rest of the process. But the plan hit closer to home by giving focus to the 75/25 strategy. 75/25 set the cat amongst the pigeons, so to speak... We could see the explosion coming for a long time but we couldn't avoid it. According to the Board, 75/25 was locked in". One committee member surmised that "the blow-up was inevitable, given the Cabinet order... But without the order, the conflict would still have been there. The instigator would have been the City". Hence, this committee member was linking the particular conflict to the broader issue of territorial control within the region. Similarly, in discussing the key issues in the process, many of the participants cast their comments in terms of the wider concerns of local autonomy, not the mandate for regional

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planning. In fact, five of the planners spontaneously suggested that the 75/25 directive was perceived by municipalities as interfering with the right of municipalities to decide their own destiny:

> "Many people felt that free enterprise and people's right to choose where to live were infringed upon... The commission had decided once before on a growth management framework that allowed the surrounding municipalities more growth potential. They weren't going to sit back and let Edmonton gain control at their expense."
>
> "There was the problem of interpreting the order as taking away the right to decide for municipalities. That brought in question the whole philosophical issue of the role of a regional planning commission. We needed to settle that before we could get on to other issues, like agriculture and fringe area planning... Even in the end we didn't have a clear understanding of our role. We're back to the whole contentious issue of local autonomy."
>
> "The municipalities are very selfish, so developing cooperation about any topic is a thorny issue. Municipalities don't like to see anything written in stone because it might restrict their room to manoeuvre in future development... So freedom of choice becomes the real issue, not the Cabinet order, or the nature of the growth management split."

Committee members, on the other hand, tended to shift more of the blame for conflict in the process toward the Alberta Planning Board and planning staff, and away from the unyielding positions of member-municipalities. Once again, on the surface their comments are very similar to those of the planners in speaking of the 75/25 split as the one critical issue. Clearly, however, while planners criticized the strident parochial interests as interfering with effective regional planning, member-municipalities identified the source of conflict over the 75/25 directive as emanating from planners and the Board. For in attempting to impose the Cabinet order [illegible]e region, both of these groups failed to appreciate that municipalities perceived themselves to be on the side of righteousness. They were defending the region against the 75/25 rule. These sentiments are clear from the array of comments already presented but they can be reinforced here:

> "We wanted the plan to be our plan, not the province's. There is a big difference between being dictated to and allowing growth to occur naturally, even if the final result is the same. Freedom to decide has to be preserved."
>
> "They had no damn business interfering with growth management. 75/25 interfered with local autonomy and had no place in the plan."
>
> "I was afraid for the freedom of municipalities if 75/25 was adopted... The draft was the planner's plan... The gall of planners in trying to force their ways on us astounds me to this day."

Hence, while committee members and staff both identified the main issue in the process to be the 75/25 directive vis-a-vis the protection of local autonomy, they interpreted the nature of its impact on the process from different perspectives. These differences led to markedly different conclusions, particularly with respect to the satisfactory resolution of the growth management issue.

In general terms, staff comments regarding the resolution of issues in the plan preparation process reflect a healthy dose of skepticism about the quality of policy that resulted. Invariably qualifying their observations - "The plan is better than none at all"; "Under the politics of the region, this is the best document possible"; "It's not very strong regional planning but local autonomy politics won't allow the best situation to arise" - all but one staff member decried the quality of the policy in the August 1983 draft plan:

> "Consensus was reached, to a degree, by taking out or watering down controversial issues, at least the major ones... Policies were presented in ways that leave loop-holes but technically speaking, it is difficult to do a really good plan in this climate."

> "The type of planning that resulted from this process is a compromise... Flexibility has been built in at great cost to regional control and conflicts have been pushed off into the future, to be dealt with as the problems resurface... Nothing was really resolved so future decisions cannot be made on rational issue discussion."

> "Good planning has been sacrificed just to get a plan in place... Controversial issues have been removed or made more palatable... But even though the plan has been endorsed in its present form, doesn't mean the growth management issue is resolved. There is less conflict now just because the strategy has been made more uncertain."

In a sense, then, planners generally agreed that the plan was made more palatable and agreement reached by removing the real substance from the regional policies. Yet, two planners did speculate that, in the long run, by making policy more flexible and resting the lion's share of control with local municipalities, greater benefits might be achieved for the region. By making the plan "their plan" and thereby restoring a semblance of regional harmony, municipal councils might be expected to work toward the general ideals embodied in the plan, rather than mounting continual vigilance against the erosion of local autonomy, as was likely under the 1982 draft. However, only one of these planners actually expressed faith that municipalities could be trusted to uphold the heavy municipal responsibility that must go hand in hand with the extra portion of local autonomy. Hence, by far the most common sentiment amongst planners was that the local autonomy issue compromised both the resolution of conflict and the construction of effective regional planning policy. Yet, planners also sensed that, in the final analysis, the political feasibility of regional planning constrained the range of choice available to them:

> "There is no single best technical plan... A good plan is one that is politically acceptable without losing every shred of regional control."
>
> "It's frustrating because planners have no real power. There isn't even really a midway point between the technical and political perspective... In the end, politics always wins."

The members of the regional plan committee, once again, construed the resolution of dispute and the effectiveness of the regional plan in a more favorable light. Significantly, however, six of the members did acknowledge that controversial issues had been removed from the plan in the interests of achieving a regional consensus and getting a plan in place. For example:

> "Regional consensus was not possible so something had to be deleted from the document."
>
> "I don't think we have resolved disputes. There are still issues that can never be resolved. For many, a lot of discussion will take place once the plan is in place."
>
> "Policy is diluted to a pretty weak sugary substance. It is throwing it open to everybody's wishes... But in terms of local autonomy, it is a good plan and that is all that will work here."

This last comment reflects the sentiments of an overwhelming majority of committee members - that the cost in terms of the effectiveness of regional policy was more than offset by benefits that were attained in local decision-making authority. The general tenor of opinion differs from that of the staff, in that although both groups acknowledged that local autonomy was strengthened in the 1983 draft plan at the expense of control at the regional level, only committee members viewed the trade-off as worthwhile:

> "The plan reflects what we can live with... Control is most effective at the local level and since local documents have to conform with the regional plan, I don't understand this fuss about non-conformity... Municipalities will be responsible for [their] decision."

> "If I was the director of a regional commission, I would see my role as changing - it would be weakened in my perception... But it is a matter of perspective. Municipalities will take up the slack and that is where authority belongs."

> "I would say 75/25 was removed, but it was a direct intrusion into local autonomy... I suppose some would say we have taken the meat out but it had no business there to begin with."

This last point, that regional control was diminished in the 1983 draft, but rightfully and justifiably so, was echoed in varying degrees by all but three of the committee members. And the presumption that municipal councils would behave responsibly in upholding the regional cause also found favor with the majority of committee members. As well, seven of them made reference to the provision for joint planning between neighboring jurisdictions as an added safeguard to insure municipal responsibility.[6] As a final note, one member did predict that the controversy between Edmonton and its neighbors would be an ongoing "melodrama": "Conflicts cannot be avoided when some municipalities have such intimate links with Edmonton... Show me a region anywhere where conflict does not exist. It is just not possible."

7.4 The Role of the Regional Planning Staff

7.4.1 Regional Plan Committee Perceptions

> "All of the problems did not come from the order-in-council. It was just icing on the cake so to speak. It was the technical view - the planner's interpretation of the planning situation and their interpretation of the order - that was the problem."

This comment, made by one committee member when discussing the tumultuous circumstances of the plan preparation process, provides an apt introduction to the consideration of the role of commission staff. In one sense or another, all 11 members of the regional plan committee implicated staff in the perceived failings of the process. Over the course of the interviews, planners were described as poorly versed in the political circumstances of the region (i.e. local autonomy), unreceptive to change, and overstepping the bounds of the technical role in the process. The following examples indicate the disparaging tone of comment, which ranged from a thoughtful weighing of the balance of failure between committee and staff to lengthy and abusive diatribes:

> "Planners became a mini-government, trying to dictate proper policy to the whole region. It was not a good fit with the political circumstances of local autonomy... The committee relied too much on technical staff... When staff were told to rewrite the draft to incorporate our concerns, they fed us the same crap back again. If they didn't like our direction, they just didn't take it."

> "Planners had a set notion of what planning should be like so they weren't receptive to change... Staff had no clear appreciation of the political perspective... The most negative thing of all was that no one but planners perceived the plan to be their plan... Planners are big producers of useless paper."

Yet, despite the fact that not one committee member had a positive assessment of the role of regional planning staff, several committee members did acknowledge that the committee, itself, must bear some responsibility for allowing staff to guide policy direction throughout the process:

> "The lesson learned is that we shouldn't have allowed staff to lead us for so long... I'll certainly fault politicians too. There were not enough members who were willing to stand up and be counted."
>
> "The committee had the responsibility to set policy as they wanted it and they let the plan get away from them. It's their own fault."

Two members even assessed the fault [illegible] proportional terms. In one case 75% of the blame was attributed to the planners, while in the other it was said that 90% of the fault rested with the committee for allowing planners to do it. One committee member made reference to the conflicting demands placed on planners by the volatile political situation:

> Planners...did overstress their own point of view, but their job was a difficult one. No matter what position they took they would have offended somebody. The job of balancing the municipal perspectives is a no-win situation.

In summary, the regional plan committee judged staff to be lacking in the necessary skills for evaluating the political environment and devoid of an appreciation of the proper balance between the political and technical perspectives: "Technical staff should have no part in political decision making".

7.4.2 Staff Perceptions

In analysing their own role in the process, regional planning staff explained what they perceived to be their own inability to influence the plan preparation process in a manner that would have advanced the regional cause. Their comments addressed many of the concerns raised by members of the regional plan committee, even though they had no foreknowledge of the content of these interview sessions. This is perhaps a testament to the fact that planning staff did have a greater awareness of the political climate than they were given credit for by the committee, and that their decisions and actions represent attempts to apply this knowledge to the regional planning process. In general terms, they expressed the same sentiments that appeared in official staff reports throughout the process.

Staff felt that they were caught in a predicament that, by and large, was not of their own making. They were scapegoats in the political battle. Snared between the provincial guidelines and directives on the one hand and the wishes of member-municipalities on the other, and awash in vague and noncommital direction from the regional plan committee, staff could not see their way through the maze of controversy to unravel an acceptable balance among local, regional and provincial concerns. The staff certainly admitted that there were failings and misunderstandings on their part in the initial framing of the planning problem. But this was invariably with the rider, either spoken or implied, that their responsibility for mistakes was mitigated by the no-win politics of the situation: "Planners are only as good as their leadership. We had none." Planning staff readily admitted that, in the absence of decisive direction from the committee members, they understood their role to be one of implementing the Cabinet order:

> "We attempted to put force and effect behind the order and this went against the grain of municipalities. We accepted the growth management framework as given... We asked the committee at these early stages if its implications should be studied further, they said no. We had inklings of feelings to the contrary but until the strong reaction against the draft, nothing was above board... This was our first real chance to address the conflict over the 75/25... We were caught between local autonomy, the province, and no mandate."
>
> "The committee did not object to our interpretation... In retrospect, it seems the committee had concerns they felt weren't being addressed by staff, but at the same time they weren't really objecting to what we were doing... We weren't surprised over the controversy about the draft. We knew some of the things we put in weren't popular. But the Board said we had to... You end up with staff caught between conflicting parties."
>
> "The region expressed many different needs, opinions, as did municipalities and provincial guidelines. I tell you, it was mass confusion for planners."
>
> "Our hands were tied. We had to try it even though we knew it was politically unwise."

Planners, then, were aware from the outset that the Cabinet order was an explosive issue but, given the direction from the Alberta Planning Board they presumed that the issue was non-negotiable. Five of the planners did indicate that conflict over the 1982 draft plan caused them to reassess the situation, but they nonetheless remained committed to the initial course of action. Four of the planners indicated that a more flexible approach on the part of planning staff in incorporating municipal concerns at the post-draft plan stage might have yielded more favorable results for staff-committee relations. The majority of planners indicated that directions from municipalities about how to rewrite the 1982 draft plan were sometimes ignored:

> "The conflict was between municipalities and staff and not just between municipalities: Municipalities felt staff weren't taking their direction. I agree with them... Staff were not all in agreement about how to proceed at this stage... It is incumbent upon planners to recommend and persuade politicians about good policy but maybe we were too inflexible ... We lost all credibility."
>
> "The planner's role goes beyond the issue at hand to personality, and how the issues are put across... The blow-up couldn't have been avoided...unless of course a different method of preparing and selling the plan had been used... Planners can be faulted for their reliance on a traditional, solely technical manner which wasn't appropriate to the situation... There are other approaches that we could have used to disperse hostilities, a completely different personality approach."

The common thread running through all the interviews with planning staff is that the planners were victims of the political situation, receiving little support from the committee and conflicting instructions from the Alberta Planning Board. Faced with the choice of honoring local autonomy or incorporating the 75/25 directive into the text of the plan, planners elected the latter. Of course, once again, judgment of whether or not this choice was appropriate depends upon one's point of view, as defender of the local cause or promoter of cohesive regional development. The positions sometimes differ.

7.5 Synthesis of Results

While members of the regional plan committee and staff of the regional planning commission perceived similar factors within the context as having a significant impact on the plan preparation process, they couched their evaluations and the accompanying rationales in different terms. According to staff, the Cabinet decision on the Edmonton annexation application, in June 1981, fanned the coals of intermunicipal squabbling over jurisdiction within the region and exacerbated the municipal fight to retain local autonomy. It broadened the struggle for municipal independence beyond the regional context, to the extent that municipal actions in the regional planning process were really directed at the provincial government, once removed. Given a political culture where municipalities view self-determination as a right, rather than a privilege, planners perceived the 75/25 growth management designation as an unrealistic expectation that thwarted any possibility for satisfactory negotiation and compromise toward an effective regional strategy. Rather, the municipal defense of local autonomy resulted in a plan that only one planner endorsed as effective regional planning, yet all planners deemed the best possible document within such a divisive political climate. It seemed to be commonly believed that the fact that any plan had received unanimous endorsement by the commission was a real feat in itself.[7] In general terms, then, staff did not perceive local autonomy as a positive force within the regional plan preparation process.

The planning staff further considered that the structure of the commission, by which representatives were expected to serve both local and regional responsibilities, was a major obstacle in its own right. Already taxed by their municipal government tasks, representatives on the commission were viewed as lacking time to prepare themselves for meetings and to keep member-municipalities informed during the process.

More important, staff perceived the regional plan committee representatives as maintaining a primary allegiance to their own municipal councils, while avoiding policy commitments on politically sensitive issues. Some staff felt it unrealistic to expect Commission members to do other than protect the best interests of the local constituency to which they were indebted for their election. But, at the same time, it was generally concluded that the inability of some members to adopt a regional perspective prevented the committee from settling the issue of an appropriate mandate for regional planning, and hence prevented it from providing clear and constructive guidance to staff. The committee, it was believed, had evaded its responsibilities with respect to the policy content of the plan until, with the force of most of the region's municipalities and the Alberta Planning Board behind them, they felt confident in chastizing the planning staff for misdirection and inflexibility. Staff, meanwhile, felt caught between two irreconcilable factors - local autonomy and the 75/25 directive. Given the overt endorsement of the committee, staff proceeded to design a draft plan which satisfied the Cabinet order and attempted some measure of regional control. When the 1982 draft document was rejected, hands down, staff felt caught in the midst of a municipal-provincial game that left them as scapegoats for an unpopular political position. Some staff conceded that different strategies on their part might have avoided the staff-committee animosity, and quelled the intense conflict over the draft plan, but none expressed optimism over the quality of the policies that would have emerged. Instead, some of the staff suggested that a different system of representation is required for effective regional planning:

> "The Commission needs more clout... A mesh of all local perspectives gives a highly inefficient system."
>
> "Regional planning will only work with a regional government that can enforce good regional design."

The members of the regional plan committee, by contrast, saw local autonomy as an asset in the regional plan preparation process. They did not regard it as a hindrance to effective regional planning, since they considered that the best regional plan is the one that interferes least with the prerogative of each municipality to decide for itself, and to pursue its own growth aspirations. In this view, the appropriate role for regional planning is to set general policy guidelines which each municipality can refine to suit its own requirements, while still upholding the overall intent of guidelines for the region. Thus, committee members favored a regional planning commission with a tightly constrained mandate for enforcement and control while staff, under the influence of regional planning theory and ideology, preferred a body with sufficient authority to set and implement policy on behalf of the regional community of interest.

The committee members' faith that all municipalities would behave responsibly and equitably toward others within the region in determining their own policies was a sentiment that was almost absent amongst staff perceptions, where provisions for regional control were deemed essential. It is not surprising, then, given these different philosophical bents, that members of the regional plan committee condemned staff as overbearing and single-minded in the pursuit of a regional plan based on the principles set down by the Cabinet order.

They criticized the Cabinet order as an intrusion into local autonomy and suggested that staff misinterpreted the directions of the Alberta Planning Board in translating the growth management principles into control-oriented regional policy. They agreed with the staff about the inconsistencies in the Board's intervention in the plan preparation process, but most of them nonetheless valued the Board's role as upholder of municipal autonomy. Some members decried any interference at all from the Board, stating that the act of intervention itself eroded the cause of local self-determination, but this was a minority view.

Like staff, committee members documented shortcomings in the willingness of municipal representatives to fulfill their dual roles of guiding staff and informing municipalities. Most often, however, in their overall assessment of their role, the committee was thought to have been an effective link between the political and technical arms of the commission. Again, very often, committee members referred to the defense of local autonomy as a mitigating factor in any critical evaluation of the committee's actions. In the final analysis, many members of the regional plan committee interpreted the regional plan preparation process and the draft documents according to the implications for local autonomy - the right of their own municipal councils to determine their own futures. They stressed the difficulty of attempting to balance the interests of their own municipalities against the needs of the region, with many conceding that they felt the strongest loyalty to their own municipality. In the upshot, the 1983 draft regional plan vested primary control and responsibility at the local level, where, in the opinion of the committee members, it should remain:

> "Municipalities must control their fate... If commissions have too much power, the electorate would lose control over decisions."
>
> "Any process not sensitive to municipal concerns is doomed from the start."

Footnotes

1. Dragushan (1979) and Burton (1981).

2. In fact, throughout the interview sessions, individual participants made comments such as "don't quote me on this".

3. Where comments have been recast in general terms, it is noted within the presentation of results.

4. The incident referred to is alleged to have taken place during a meeting between the Alberta Planning Board and the regional plan committee. Staff were not present.

5. Generally, both planners and committee members also implicated the role of staff, the role of member-municipalities, the Alberta Planning Board involvement, and local autonomy as factors in the complications in the process following the 1982 draft plan.

6. The provision for joint planning, as incorporated in the August 1983 draft, related to fringe areas at the urban/rural interface or the urban/urban interface:

   > Municipalities should undertake joint or complementary planning efforts, which include the preparation and adoption of Joint General Municipal Plans, as an appropriate means of providing detailed control over the use and development of lands in Fringe Areas (EMRPC Proposed Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Plan, 1983, p. 13).

   The Planning Act, 1977 makes express provision for joint general municipal plans and for joint municipal planning commissions (Section 28, 61(3)).

7. Even though the 1983 draft plan had not actually received unanimous endorsement at the time of the interviews, it seemed to be common, behind-the-scenes knowledge that it was a fait accompli.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction

At the outset, it was proposed in this thesis to examine the relationship between the issue of local autonomy and the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton region. Two primary objectives were identified:

1. To examine the regional plan preparation process for evidence of the manifestation of the issue of local autonomy on the events of the process.
2. To determine the influence of the regional plan preparation process on the willingness of member-municipalities to cooperate for a regional purpose.

To accomplish these objectives, a two-part research method was established. The first step was an examination of documentary records and reports relating to the process and the second was a series of semi-focussed interviews with members of the regional plan committee and planning commission staff to obtain their observations and opinions about the process. Based on the literature discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, an interpretive framework was developed for the research problem. It identified those features of the context for regional planning that might have been expected to play a significant role in shaping the relationship between the two seemingly contrary perspectives of local autonomy and regional control:

1. The role of provincial authorities.
2. The role of the regional plan committee.
3. The role of planning commission staff.

4. Contentious policy issues.
5. The mandate of the regional planning commission and the regional plan (i.e. the definition of the balance between local autonomy and regional control).

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the results obtained from the analysis of documentary sources with the perceptions of the participants in the process, whilst linking these findings to the political culture in Alberta. These results will also be discussed in terms of the general trends in the literature of Chapters 2 and 3. Recommendations for further study are then advanced.

8.1 The Definition of Mandate for Regional Planning

The success of regional planning is premised on the belief that individual local authorities will forsake some decision-making autonomy to secure certain benefits at the regional scale, through intermunicipal cooperation and coordination. Yet, because each metropolitan region possesses unique contextual features that determine both the actual and the perceived pattern of costs and benefits of regional planning, the nature of the regional task must be determined in light of the individual political environment. The critical issue to be resolved is the definition of the mandate of the regional authority - that is, the appropriate balance between local autonomy and regional control (Lim, 1983; Ash, 1969). This must be derived from a clear awareness of the political climate and an appreciation of the political structures that are necessary for effective control (Lim, 1983; Long, 1968; Money, 1973). Failure to resolve this question of balance undermines the viability of the regional cause (Aron, 1969). Moreover, failure on the part of participants to understand the mandate or to achieve a common appreciation of the role of the regional authority increases the likelihood of intermunicipal dispute (Moore and Leach, 1979, Brazier and Harris, 1975). Cooperation arises out of a common agreement as to the task and the need for interdependency. Following from these points, then, the absence of a clear statement of mandate could lead to ambiguity and conflict within the regional plan preparation process.

In the Edmonton metropolitan region, the failure to resolve the issue of mandate for both the commission and the regional plan plagued the entire regional plan preparation process. In fact, it overshadows the other four areas of concern identified within the research framework. A root cause of the ambiguity about the balance between local autonomy and regional control is the vague definition of mandate within the Planning Act, 1977 and the Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review. These already contradictory terms of reference were further complicated by the 75/25 growth allocation formula set by the Cabinet order, which seemed to require the regional planning commission to exercise implementation authority beyond the purview granted to it under the Planning Act. As early as August 1981, planning commission staff noted the discrepancies within these documents and expressed concern at being required to prepare a regional plan as the premier document for regulating major development in the region while still permitting municipal governments "the degree of flexibility" required "to satisfy local aspirations" (Alberta, 1982a). Some 20 months later, after the uproar over the intent of policies contained in the 1982 draft plan, regional planning commission staff again urged the regional plan committee to resolve the issue of mandate for the regional plan. There was no consensus yet as to the direction that policies should take. And without this clear indication of what the policies were supposed to achieve in terms of the division of responsibilities between levels of planning authority, planners could not assess the suitability of their proposed policies in furthering that aim. Furthermore, they could not determine if the actions of other participants in the process, the Alberta Planning Board and the regional plan committee, accorded with the regional cause for there was no definitive picture of what the regional cause should be. Like the New York example discussed by Aron (1969), the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton region became mired in ambiguity.

In the absence of precise terms of reference defining the relationship between regional control and local autonomy, the opportunity for conflict was enhanced - a point suggested earlier and in more general terms by Bettison, Kenward and Taylor (1975), about the inadequate provincial framework governing interauthority relations and growth management in Alberta. The ill-defined mandate provided no basic set of criteria against which the competing claims of rival groups could be weighed. The regional plan committee and planning commission staff, and for that matter, the Alberta Planning Board, all had different interpretations of what the mandate should be. They shaped their actions accordingly. As a result the key participant groups worked at cross purposes to one another, each one criticizing the role of the others. And the differences in perception of mandate persisted right through the process, so that the common appreciation of task that Brazier and Harris (1975) deemed essential to successful interauthority relations, remained elusive.

Nowhere did the difference in outlook become more evident than during the interviews with individual participants in the process. While members of the regional plan committee skewed the preferred balance of power toward local authorities, regional planning staff remained loyal to theoretical bases for regional planning which decry the fragmentation of control and stress the need for strong coordination at the regional scale. Municipal representatives endorsed the responsibility of local governments to maintai[illegible]fficiency and equity within the region through voluntary compliance while regional planners asserted that the impact of local autonomy on the process compromised the design of effective regional policy. Two planners went so far as to suggest that a regional government system that rests implementation power with regional authorities was essential for successful regional management. But the evidence in the literature does not support the notion that structure, in itself, guarantees effective regional planning and interauthority cooperation (Kaplan, 1982; Wakstein, 1972). In fact, there is some indication that change in the legal and quasi-legal guidelines governing a process might "accelerate" friction and hostility toward the regional cause as opponents fight for return to the status-quo (Foley, 1972; Kaplan, 1982). The events surrounding the Winnipeg regional reform effort are certainly a case in point. Still, the sentiment expressed by the two Edmonton planners does serve to re-emphasize the contrary stances of the regional plan committee and planning staff. Planners expressed very little faith in the unprompted willingness of individual municipalities to cooperate for the betterment of the region. On the other hand, committee members advocated not only the right of each municipality to determine its own destiny, but the trustworthiness of local authorities in promoting intermunicipal goodwill. Hence, in Friedmann's (1973) terms, planners and regional plan committee members did not share a common image of the situation.

As might be expected, this divergence in ideological viewpoint led the two groups to markedly different opinions about the quality of policy that emerged from the process. Committee members conceded that the plan restricted regional control, but applauded its implications for the cause of local autonomy. Regional planners were more apt to dismiss the entire worth of the document and question the future of regional planning in the province. Most certainly, the view of planning staff accords with planning theory where vague policies and those not clearly linked to a means of implementation are often criticized. Yet, in the task of reconciling the planners' view of mandate with that of the committee, this fact lent little credence to the planners' cause. That the lack of consensus persisted through the entire process is indication that the issue of mandate could not help but taint the relationship between local autonomy and the regional interest. Given the murky framework at the provincial level, there was no common ground for discussion between the two forces.

8.2 The Role of Provincial Authorities

Other than through the Planning Act, 1977 and the Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review, the role of the provincial authorities in shaping the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning was by way of the Cabinet order (June 12, 1981) on Edmonton's annexation application and the actions of the Alberta Planning Board. In fact, so strong was the impact of the

Cabinet order in laying the foundation for the process events that, for purposes of clarity here, the discussion of contentious issues in the process and the Cabinet order are treated simultaneously.

8.2.1 The Cabinet Order

In a very real sense, the role of the Cabinet order for the process relates closely to the discussion in section 8.1 about the implications of changes in legal and quasi-legal documents upon interauthority relationships. The Cabinet order overturned the growth management framework endorsed by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission and seemed to support a reversal of the actual growth trend of decentralization. As such, it challenged the positions of municipalities supporting the decentralized growth option and intensified the conflict between the City of Edmonton and its neighbors. Suburban and rural municipalities alike joined forces to battle the threat to the status quo in the region. [illegible] perceived the battle over Edmonton's aspirations as lost with the Cabinet order, and so turned their energies toward circumventing its intent at the regional planning commission level.

Both commission staff and regional plan committee members perceived the order as presenting an untenable growth management framework, the committee because of the implications for local autonomy and the staff because of the order's poor fit with the political realities of the region. The 75/25 formula became the single most contentious issue in the process. It was the one issue identified by each and every participant as a stimulus for dispute. In the final analysis, the 75/25 framework served as a vehicle around which municipalities couched their general defense of local self-government. Yet, within committee meetings, many members disguised the issue of local autonomy in arguments about the manner in which the 75/25 rule was being incorporated into the draft planning documents. Interviews with committee members indicated, however, that without a doubt, conflict rested at a more basic level, with the order itself:

> "The Minister and the 75/25 order created much of the conflict in the region. They had no damn business interfering with growth management. 75/25 interfered in local autonomy and had no place in the plan."

> "There is a big difference between being dictated to and allowing growth to occur naturally, even if the final result is the same... They should not tell people where to live."

Hence, the Cabinet order, by virtue of its role in redefining the terms of reference for the relationship between local autonomy and regional planning, exacerbated tensions within the regional plan preparation process.

It is worth noting, albeit briefly, the particular circumstances within Alberta's political culture that laid the groundwork for the Cabinet order to have the impact that it did. In some other political cultures, such as the United Kingdom's, where authority is routinely exercised, the outcome of the process might have been different (Foley, 1982; Blowers, 1980). The 75/25 order could have been incorporated into the regional plan with more force behind it. But in Alberta, the lines defining the division of power between levels of authority are vaguely drawn. The flexibility of interpretation provided therein presents opportunity for conflict amongst competing groups. Moreover, provincial intervention in urban affairs is infrequent and not according to comprehensive plan. And by virtue of tradition alone, local authorities possess a high degree of political autonomy which is seldom challenged or redefined. These factors combined to create a set of confusing circumstances for the regional planning process. As a reference point for resolving the issue of mandate, the Cabinet order further entrenched ambiguity in the decision-making context.

8.2.2 The Alberta Planning Board

Within the regional plan preparation process, the Alberta Planning Board held the responsibility to "consult with" and "give direction to" the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (Planning Act, 1977). Presumably, this was intended to provide for a smooth transition from the ERPC to the EMRPC and to assist member municipalities in understanding the true intent of the Cabinet order. Yet, the role of the Board within the process added yet another layer of ambiguity to the question of balance between local autonomy and regional management and ultimately served to undermine the position of regional planning. Two facets of this role merit attention: one is the inconsistencies in direction to the regional plan committee, and the other is the Board's usurpation of the role of the commission in the resolution of dispute.

Committee members and commission staff alike condemned the Alberta Planning Board for failing to provide the regular consultation and guidance stipulated in its own guidelines for regional plan preparation and in the Cabinet order on Edmonton's annexation application. Commission documents certainly bear testimony to the justice of these claims.

The Board chose to abdicate its responsibility to comment on the direction of proposed policies early in the plan preparation process, yet vehemently criticized the intent of the 1982 draft plan after staff had labored on the document for 18 months. The regional plan committee was particularly chastized for exceeding the role ascribed to regional authorities under the Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review, but the Board itself had been equally negligent with respect to the guidelines. Phase 2 of the Board's process for consultation and review was intended to allow "the Province to comment on the consistency between Provincial and regional policies" contained in technical background and draft policy papers. The Board was to "review and comment where requested". Yet, at the goals and objectives phase of the plan preparation process the Board indicated its intent to reserve comment until the draft plan stage. The provision that was designed to minimize areas of policy conflict between regional and provincial goals was, in practice, brought to naught. Moreover, when direction did finally come from the Board, it changed according to which member spoke and from meeting to meeting. On April 6, 1983 the Board reaffirmed that the 75/25 rule had to be incorporated into the text of the regional plan. One member said it was the Board's final position while another suggested that a more comprehensive analysis of the draft plan was needed before the Board could finalize its direction. Then, at the April 26-29, 1983 conference in Jasper, the Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs directed commission members to place the 75/25 formula in a form that was "palatable" to member-municipalities. But no specific guidelines were attached. Less than two weeks later, the Board and Minister granted permission for the commission to relegate the 75/25 stipulation to an appendix of the regional plan. Hence, the inconsistent direction of the Alberta Planning Board confused the issue of mandate rather than aiding its resolution and implementation as Cabinet intended.

Part of the confusion concerned the respective roles of the commission and the Board in negotiating and resolving intermunicipal dispute as part of the regional planning process. The Board's own guidelines state that "it is deemed the prerogative of the collective member-municipalities to decide what is in the best interest of the region to achieve their goals and objectives". Yet, the Board intervened in a strong way at the draft plan stage and directed the commission to reorient the intent of the document. Moreover, after the commission had unanimously supported the 1983 Proposed Regional Plan, the Board refused to endorse it. It is no wonder that at the same time the Board was criticizing the commission for failing to trust local authorities to behave responsibly, members of the planning staff were levelling accusations that the Board was unwilling to commit itself to the product of its own regional planning system. Once again, there was no common understanding of the proper interauthority relationships.

While it has been suggested that effective regional planning depends upon firm support from the central authority (Kolderie, 1983; Kaplan, 1982), the Alberta Planning Board seemed more apt to align itself with the cause of local municipalities. Both commission staff and committee members perceived this with particular reference to the draft plan stage. However, this shared observation led the two groups to markedly different assessments of the role of the Board in the process. Staff unilaterally condemned the Board's actions as hindering the process of intermunicipal negotiation and compromise. Most committee members, on the other hand, expressed gratitude for the Board's part in upholding the rights of local municipalities and cutting through the dense maze of conflict surrounding the growth management framework. Members of both groups did express concern about the implications of the Board's intervention for the future role of the provincial government in urban affairs. Some mused that perhaps the provincial government is moving toward a marked tightening of control at the provincial level. In any event, within the process, the Board undermined the position of regional planning on the local-regional balance scale by delivering inconsistent advice and overt support for local autonomy.

8.3 The Role of Commission Staff

The position of commission staff within the process was adversely affected by the conflicting direction from provincial authorities and the inability to resolve the issue of mandate at the committee level. By default on the part of the committee, staff were left to grapple with the unsettled growth management and mandate issues, and to translate their interpretations into concrete policy proposals. They were in the unenviable position of having to serve two masters, provincial authorities and member-municipalities, neither one willing to express true commitment to any one stance until late in the process. The regional plan committee openly directed staff, by formal motion, to incorporate the 75/25 rule into the draft plan, as the foundation for the growth management framework, while predicting that the policy was unacceptable,—in principle, to most municipalities. It was not until the draft plan hearing stage that the committee demonstrated willingness to participate actively in resolving the dilemma before the commission. At the same time, the Alberta Planning Board advised staff that the 75/25 formula in the plan was non-negotiable. But, at the draft plan hearing stage, when it became clearly apparent that this hardline approach was politically unwise for provincial authorities to uphold, the Board reneged on its position. Then, both the Board and the committee criticized staff for their misinterpretation of the planning situation. Staff possessed no comparable political safety hatch. It is no wonder that they described themselves as scapegoats of the no-win politics created by the 75/25 rule.

Yet, it is worth remembering that, given a particular set of circumstances, planners exercise choice in selecting a method for managing that situation. There is no deterministic relationship between the environment and the strategies the planners select; each planning environment provides both constraints and opportunities (Stewart, 1982; Schön, 1983). In a very real sense, then, the regional planning staff of the commission must bear some responsibility for the trajectory of events in the process, a fact admitted by many of the staff during the interview sessions. Faced with the conflicting views of the Alberta Planning Board and the commission membership, staff chose to align their position with that of the provincial authorities. Staff then reaffirmed this commitment on at least two separate occasions, one being the review of submissions on the goals and objectives position paper and the other during the controversy over the 1982 draft plan.

In siding with any position, staff were leaving themselves open to assault by the other side. Moreover, as was the case here, by aligning with the position that ultimately lost ground, staff were exposed to ridicule from both sides and lost credibility with their client group; the regional plan committee. According to Kaufman (1979) and Gillingwater (1975), planners must be concerned with the influence and manipulation of power since that is the nature of the decision-making task. Failure to fully appreciate and react to the political context leaves planners vulnerable to the circumstances of the moment. There seems to be some element of truth in this for commission planners, although it is not possible to conclude, from the nature of the results obtained, whether it was a failure to recognize and react to the political circumstances or an inability to act effectively on the basis of that knowledge. The interviews with some planners did reveal an awareness of the political circumstances not credited to them by committee members, so there may be some reason for suspecting it to be the latter. Kaufman (1979) has suggested that the inability to translate an understanding of the political environment into effective action is widespread among planners in general.

With further reference to staff's interpretation of the political situation, there is no evidence within the documentary sources that staff reassessed their adherence to the Cabinet order during the plan preparation process. Indications of double-loop learning (Argyrs and Schön, 1978) and reflecting-in-action (Schön, 1983) in which participants continually re-evaluate not only their strategies, but also their definition of the planning problem, are largely absent in staff reports. Yet, once again, interviews with staff members give rise to the suspicion that some reassessment did occur. Individual planners did refer to dissension amongst the planning group as to which course of action was appropriate after the political controversy over the 1982 draft plan. Ultimately, though, this re-evaluation was not translated into a change in the formal staff position. This fact lends support to the contention that an organization's response might reflect ~~much less~~ than the total knowledge and learning of its individual members (Argyrs and Schön, 1978).

In the final analysis, planners might have overestimated the impact of rational regional planning theories and underestimated the potential force behind fierce local affiliations. Like their counterparts in the Winnipeg reform effort, planners were genuinely surprised at the strength of the municipal assault on the policy positions they proposed. Yet, planners in the Edmonton region were confronted with a truly confusing context in which to carry out their task. Furthermore, the definition of mandate within those circumstances should not have been their responsibility. So any possible failings on the part of regional planning staff must be viewed in terms of the shortcomings of other participants in the process.

8.4 The Role of the Regional Plan Committee and Sub-committee

The regional plan committee is the group that should have undertaken the task of sifting through the ambiguous provincial directions to define a setting-specific mandate for the regional plan. At the behest of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, this committee had the responsibility to guide and direct commission staff during the synthesis of policies for the draft regional plan. It was to link the technical and political arms of the commission. That it chose to ignore its proper role and knowingly approved staff positions that it knew were untenable to member-municipalities is one of the most serious failings in the process. Very clearly, it represents a failure of the will to cooperate. From the regional perspective, the success of the plan preparation process hinged upon the commitment and cooperation of members toward the regional community of interest. Sporadic and superficial commitment was insufficient. Yet, the unwillingness of committee members to face up to the Cabinet order until it seemed politically expedient to do so had little to do with commitment to the regional task. In fact, many committee members expressly admitted their primary concern was for the implications of the 1982 draft plan for local autonomy.

In fairness to committee members, the role ascribed to them in being required to represent dual allegiances, is a difficult one. They are expected to interpret policy issues in terms of the broad regional community of interest yet they are dependent upon a local electorate for re-election. This type of structure has been often criticized for placing unrealistic demands on its members (Aron, 1969; Lim, 1983, Horan and Taylor, 1977). For when the needs of the region are at odds with the desires of a member's supporting electorate, allegiance must fall to the local level, for political survival (Leach, 1980). Alternatively, to circumvent conflicting demands, policy is couched in such general terms that it risks offending no one (Skelcher, 1982).

The events in the Edmonton region support these points. Staff and committee members, alike, spoke of the difficulty for members in having to play both a local and a regional role. Moreover, many committee members conceded that they would not support a position that was detrimental to their own municipality. Yet, most committee members did not feel that their commitment to the local prerogative necessarily had an adverse effect on the final regional plan. The very general policy positions adopted in the plan satisfied the cause of local autonomy and, of course, it was presumed that local authorities would act responsibly in carrying out the plan's intentions. Staff, on the other hand, suggested that given such a loose policy framework, local authorities could justify almost anything in terms of the intent of the plan. They perceived the effectiveness of regional planning to have been compromised by the inability of the committee to adopt a truly regional perspective. Hence, the commission's form of representation clearly fa[illegible] the cause of local autonomy, for members could ensure that their own interests were taken care of. This may meet with the aims of local authorities and the provincial government but it surely does not conform with regional planning theory. The betterment of the region, as a single community of interest, was never really the central issue for the regional plan committee.

8.4.1 The Sub-committee

The formation of the sub-committee in May 1983 resolved the problem perceived by the regional plan committee, that staff were unwilling to adapt the draft plan to reflect the committee's intent, saying nothing here about staff perceptions of the committee's reluctance to provide direction. By working continuously with staff in rewriting the policies of the draft plan, the regional plan committee met its assigned responsibility in the process for the first time. Both staff and committee members endorsed its effectiveness in enhancing the process of negotiation and compromise. However, its benefits for regional planning, in terms of the nature of the policy that emerged, are not so clear-cut. Once again, staff reflected upon the general tenor of the policies as being license for almost absolute local autonomy.

Moreover, some suggested that the role of the commission as a coordinating and facilitating body had been severely circumscribed. At least one provision in the 1983 proposed regional plan supports this claim. Under Section 2.0, municipalities are strongly encouraged to enter into joint planning agreements with neighboring authorities to manage fringe areas. This is intended to provide a mechanism in which "intermunicipal conflict in fringe areas can be resolved" (EMRPC, 1983a, p. 13). Yet, in the past, the commission, alone, had served as the forum for the resolution of intermunicipal dispute such that municipalities not involved in the immediate conflict could mediate competing claims. Under the new framework, the forum role of the commission in the fringe area is not clearly delimited. Whether the joint planning provision is ultimately successful for intermunicipal coordination is not at issue here, although the brewing conflict over the City of Leduc's proposal to annex territory from the County of Leduc suggests at least one failed attempt. The intent here, however, is to indicate the impact of the new policy in curtailing the activities of the regional planning commission in the planning of fringe areas and the resolution of dispute. Once again, the emphasis would appear to be on local responsibility and not regional control.

8.5 Implications for Further Study

The process that led to the adoption of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission's first regional plan is yet another case in the 36 year history of the region, of the failure of the will to cooperate. There was no common appreciation, amongst member-municipalities, of the benefits to be secured through cooperative regional management and hence no reason to take the regional cause more seriously than under the past regional planning regime. In fact, saddled as it was with the task of giving force to the 75/25 growth allocation formula, this process presented rather more of a disbenefit to members in terms of local autonomy than the previous plan preparation exercise, in which they were at least able to define their own growth management framework. The process became the obvious arena for local representatives to take issue with the intrusion of the provincial government into a perceived local domain, a task made easier by the absence of an unambiguous framework of interauthority responsibilities at the provincial level. Members of the commission, representing both a local and a regional interest, gave primary allegiance to their own municipalities. Confusing the distribution of interauthority responsibilities even further, the process was also an obvious chance for the Alberta Planning Board to test its self-proclaimed and newly expanded role within the regional planning process. The only group not in a conflict of interest situation, then, in defining the mandate for the regional plan on behalf of the theoretical regional community of interest, was regional planning staff. Yet, they had no decision-making authority. So the regional interest operated from a weak political position. Local autonomy assumed pre-eminence in the evaluation of policy issues. Yet, given the broader political culture for the process, to expect otherwise is politically naive. Events in the Edmonton region have never given cause for belief in the willingness of member-municipalities to act on behalf of the regional community of interest. The relationship between regional planning and local autonomy has always been adversarial.

That the influence of local autonomy on the plan preparation process seemed to be affected by the role of the Alberta Planning Board, the regional plan committee, and commission staff suggests outstanding areas of concern. Specifically, the clarification of the role of the Alberta Planning Board in regional planning warrants immediate attention. While the Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review (Alberta, 1982a) and the Framework for Application of Regional Plan Guidelines (Alberta, 1982b) had been intended to alleviate this concern, as raised in other studies (A.M.A., 1981; A.A.M.D.C/A.U.M.A., 1980), the findings in the Edmonton region indicate that further attention is yet required. The role of the Board in the Edmonton region's plan preparation process was a source of confusion for planners and committee members alike. Dale and Burton's (19[illegible] suggestion that clearer lines of communication are needed between the provincial government and the commissions seems particularly apt.

Another major area of concern relates to the nature of the representation on the commission. The results clearly indicated that members of the regional plan committee were decidedly more likely to place loyalty at the local level rather than with the regional community of interest. The provincial government needs to assess whether this manner of balancing concerns accords with its own intent for regional planning in the province. Or would the regional interest be better served by representatives that are elected or appointed regionally to serve wholly that interest?

Even more basically, the provincial government needs to reassess and define its aims for regional planning and the relation of these aims to those for other levels of authority on the planning hierarchy. This issue of mandate, or the proper balance of local, regional, and provincial concerns, stultified the entire regional planning exercise because there was no comprehensive framework at the provincial level to be used as a guide in resolving dispute. Many participants expressed uncertainty as to what was political posture and what was true intent behind the provincial government's stated commitments to regional planning and local autonomy. This type of study needs to assess the implications of different levels of commitment upon the type of regional management that can be expected under each, and the type of structure most suited to implementing the favored mandate. A conscious and deliberate evaluation of the costs and benefits inherent under each potential regime is required. Then, based on its choice of a preferred strategy, the provincial government should make the terms of reference for local autonomy and regional planning explicit.

Finally, the provincial authorities and regional planning commissions need to assess the training needs of planning staff. This suggestion is not a new one but rather builds on the conclusion of the Regional Planning System Study (Alberta, 1981a), that commission planners need to be skilled in areas of interpersonal relations and conflict resolution techniques. Within the Edmonton region, the fact that planners ended up caught between two competing claims, with little obvious awareness of the range of choice available to them, confirms that more is needed for managing the political environment for regional planning than technical skills in drafting plans.

8.6 A Final Word

The events of the regional plan preparation process in the Edmonton metropolitan region forecast a curtailed role for the regional planning commission in shaping future growth and development in the region. For the time being, at least, the balance of power in local-regional relations has swung in favor of local autonomy. Exactly what role the commission will play under this scheme of things is unclear, since its low profile in implementing and monitoring the regional plan has been reinforced by budget cuts which have already resulted in staff reductions in the regional planning division. The increasing number of local municipalities assuming their own subdivision approval authority has curtailed the responsibility of the commission in this area, as well. In the years to come, regional planning commissions will need new roles to justify their existence. For in the absence of the will to cooperate, the commitment to regional planning rests at a low ebb.

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APPENDIX I

MEMBERSHIP ON THE EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

City of Edmonton	9 representatives
City of St. Albert	2 representatives
County of Strathcona	2 representatives, one of which shall represent Sherwood Park
County of Leduc (part)	1 representative
County of Parkland (part)	1 representative
Municipal District of Sturgeon	1 representative
Towns of Fort Saskatchewan, Bon Accord, Devon, Calmar, Gibbons, Leduc, Morinville, Redwater, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Beaumont	1 representative each