

Analysis of Asset Mapping Initiatives in Rural NL

Final Report

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	2
Executive Summary	3
1.0 BACKGROUND	5
Rationale	5
Background to Project.....	6
Measuring and Mobilizing Regional Assets.....	9
Narratives about Sustainability in Rural NL.....	12
PROJECT OBJECTIVES	12
Objectives	13
Deliverables	13
METHODS	13
FINDINGS	16
Background on Study Regions and Asset Mapping Initiatives	16
<i>Tip of the Great Northern Peninsula</i>	16
<i>Bonne Bay region</i>	18
<i>Clareville-Bonavista Region</i>	20
<i>Cape Shore/Placentia Region</i>	22
<i>Tip of the Killick Coast</i>	25
Project Initiators	29
Motivations for Project	30
Level of Community Engagement	32
Outcomes of Project	34
Potential for Follow-up	37
<i>Choosing Appropriate Regional Scale</i>	37
<i>Need for a Regional Champion</i>	39
<i>Telling an Authentic Story</i>	41
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS	46
Recap of Findings	46
Recommendations	47
Conclusion	49
REFERENCES	50

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Executive Summary

Rural regions in Newfoundland and Labrador are searching for innovative ways to secure the sustainability of their communities and foster local economic development that is appropriate for these settings. Within this effort, many rural communities and regions have used asset mapping to find new resources for economic development. Asset mapping is an umbrella concept that may take on many forms, ranging from formal to informal initiatives and may consider a single sector or have a multi-sectoral scope. Closely related to asset mapping is the use of sustainability indicators, which are any kind of measurable trend that can be tracked over time to understand whether a community or region is moving closer to sustainable development. Rural communities and regions in Canada and around the world have used various asset mapping and indicator-based tools to understand their local assets and monitor progress towards sustainability over time. However, how these tools may fit into broader processes of regional economic development and governance in rural regions is not well understood.

This report describes the findings of a research project that conducted a province-wide scan of asset mapping initiatives in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. This project, which was carried out from January-March 2019, examined asset mapping projects that have been initiated in five different rural regions of the island portion of the province. This project builds on previous research supported by ACOA which investigated regional asset mapping in western NL. This study, carried out in 2014, conducted exploratory asset identification in western Newfoundland and southern Labrador, examining regional sustainability assets in four sub-regions of that larger area.

Building on this earlier study, this project considers how these initiatives were introduced, which kinds of actors initiated them (from both the local area and provincial or national organizations), to what extent they engaged local residents in assessing local assets, and what ultimate outcomes these projects had. This report also links these asset mapping initiatives to broader regional development and governance considerations, as well as offering recommendations for carrying out more targeted research and pilot project development to examine these regional dynamics more in-depth. The study on which this report had the following objectives:

1. Identify past and present asset mapping initiatives carried out in rural NL communities and regions
2. Determine how these initiatives came about: which groups introduced them, how the local community was engaged, the role of other actors (e.g. government, university, foundations), what frameworks were employed (including the use of software to collect and display the resulting asset inventories)
3. Assess whether any lasting outcomes resulted from the identified asset mapping initiatives, such as playing a role in local governance, contributing to economic development, etc.
4. Identify the factors that enabled or inhibited these initiatives from making a positive impact on regional economic development and sustainability

To meet these objectives, this study examined asset mapping initiatives in five rural regions of NL. These initiatives were defined broadly, considering a variety of

approaches to asset mapping and a span of socio-economic and geographic circumstances in regions in which they were carried out. The regions examined include:

- Tip of the Great Northern Peninsula
- Gros Morne/Bonne Bay region
- Bonavista Peninsula
- Cape Shore/Placentia area
- Tip of the Killick Coast

In each of these regions, a number of recent initiatives were examined that had asset mapping components. However, one initiative in each region was analyzed in depth. This analysis was informed by both the review of publicly available documents produced about the projects and key informant interviews with stakeholders from each region. The interviews targeted key regional stakeholders involved in community development efforts, including both individuals who were directly involved in the respective asset mapping projects and others who were not. Interviewees were asked questions about their own efforts in community and regional development, their thoughts on regional sustainability, what involvement (if any) they had in the initiative in question, how the initiative was conceived and carried out, and what outcomes they believed it had. Each initiative was also assessed for its potential to be built upon in future regional asset mapping work, with a particular emphasis on integrating this into current regional development and governance efforts.

This inquiry uncovered a number of key findings to inform future regional asset mapping in rural NL. These initiatives were initiated by a range of different actors, including local community leaders, regional development organizations, academic researchers, and provincial and federal government agencies. Insights from the inception of these previous initiatives revealed that their initiators strongly influenced the kinds of outcomes they ultimately had, with initiatives that were driven by a strong regional organization tending to have more lasting outcomes. In terms of community engagement, initiatives that had greater levels of participation from regional residents and a wide range of stakeholders were generally perceived by interviewees to have resulted in more lasting outcomes. In terms of outcomes, another key finding is the vulnerability of these initiatives to political shifts, such as the closure of the Regional Economic Development Boards and later the Rural Secretariat. In other regions, other regional organizations exist that are more independent of political shifts which could potentially lead future asset mapping initiatives.

In light of these findings, this report offers a series of recommendations for building on the asset mapping initiatives examined in this study and considering more broadly how asset mapping tools can be integrated into regional development and governance in rural NL. These recommendations include:

1. Conduct follow-up asset mapping initiatives in two to three rural regions.
2. Continue to examine asset mapping within the regional governance context.
3. Compare the experiences of rural NL asset mapping initiatives to those of rural regions in similar jurisdictions across Canada and internationally.
4. Explore the development of an asset mapping methodology to be made available to rural NL communities and regions.

BACKGROUND

Rationale

Rural regions in Newfoundland and Labrador are searching for innovative ways to secure the sustainability of their communities and foster local economic development that is appropriate for these settings. Nearly three decades since the moratorium on cod and other groundfish species was declared, rural coastal communities province-wide are seeking to redefine their local economies and understand how to draw on their existing resources for new opportunities. Within this effort, ongoing discussions of regional governance have considered how small communities – often with very constrained capacity – can band together to share services and plan for development that enhances the wider region. Some rural regions in the province have had remarkable economic growth based primarily in tourism, while other regions continue to seek an effective regional development strategy that enhances economic, social, environmental, cultural, and institutional capacity.

Within this effort, many rural communities and regions have used asset mapping to find new resources for economic development. Asset mapping is a method for taking stock of the existing resources and capabilities of a community to enhance its local economic development prospects.¹ Asset mapping originates in the framework of Asset-based Community Development (ABCD), an alternative approach to community and regional development that is based not in diagnosing needs and deficits, but in building on the strengths of communities.² Asset mapping is an umbrella concept that may take on many forms, ranging from formal to informal initiatives and may consider a single sector (e.g. forestry) or have a multi-sectoral scope. Closely related to asset mapping is the use of sustainability indicators (SIs), which are any kind of measurable trend that can be tracked over time to understand whether a community or region is moving closer to sustainable development.³ When approached in a participatory manner that engages residents in defining local sustainability and identifying assets, these tools can support place-based development with a holistic understanding of local assets and challenges.⁴ Rural communities and regions in Canada and around the world have used various asset mapping and indicator-based tools to understand their local assets and monitor progress towards sustainability over time, for example the Kootenays region of British Columbia where an SI initiative has been going on since 2012.⁵ However, how these

¹ C. Fuller, T., Guy, D., & Pletsch, “Asset Mapping: A Handbook” (Guelph, ON, n.d.), http://www.rwmc.uoguelph.ca/cms/documents/11/Asset_Mapping1.pdf.

² J. Kretzmann, J. & McKnight, *Building Communities from the inside out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1993).

³ S. Bell & S. Morse, *Sustainability Indicators: Measuring the Immeasurable?, Second Edition Earthscan.London. Sterling, VA*, 2008, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(99\)00036-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(99)00036-4).

⁴ K. Vodden, G. Baldacchino, and R. Gibson, *Place Peripheral: The Promise and Challenge of Place-Based Development in Rural and Remote Regions* (St. John's, NL: ISER Books, 2015).

⁵ Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, “2017 State of the Basin Snapshot Report: A Region-Wide Check-up on Life in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region” (Castlegar, BC, 2017), http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/SOTB_2017_Snapshot_Final.pdf; Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, “Who Is Driving Development? Reflections on the Transformative Potential of Asset-Based Community Development,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*

tools may fit into broader processes of regional economic development and governance in rural regions is not well understood.

This report describes the findings of a research project that conducted a province-wide scan of asset mapping initiatives in rural Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). This project, which was carried out from January-March 2019, examined asset mapping projects that have been initiated in five different rural regions of the island portion of the province, considering how these initiatives were introduced, which kinds of actors initiated them (from both the local area and provincial or national organizations), to what extent they engaged local residents in assessing local assets, and what ultimate outcomes these projects had. This report also links these asset mapping initiatives to broader regional development and governance considerations, recommending more targeted research and pilot project development to examine these regional dynamics more in-depth.

Background to Project

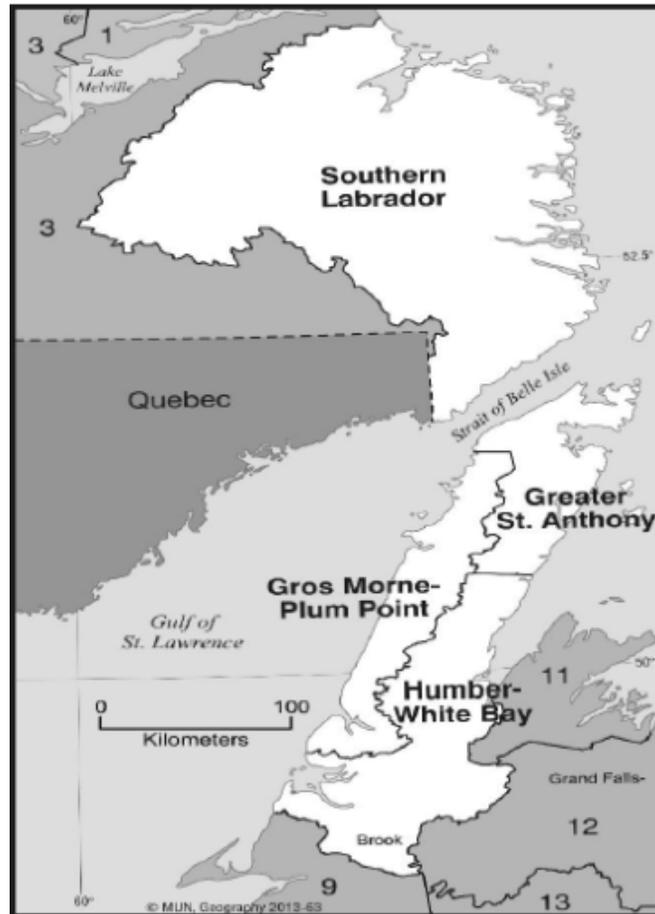
This project builds on previous research supported by ACOA which investigated regional asset mapping in western NL. This study, carried out in 2014, conducted exploratory asset identification in western Newfoundland and southern Labrador, examining regional sustainability assets in four sub-regions of that larger area.⁶ Part of the rationale for this project was to highlight the value of community assets such as cultural heritage for local economic development, which initiatives like the Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint had underlined in 2011.⁷ These sub-regions were based loosely on the former Regional Economic Development Boards (REDBs), which had been the primary vehicle for regionally-based development projects in NL from 1995-2012 and had collected information about local economic and social conditions. The sub-regions examined within the wider region considered during study are pictured in Figure 1 below.

26, no. 1 (2005): 175–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2005.9669031>; Mary Emery and Cornelia Flora, “Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework,” *Community Development* 37, no. 1 (2006): 19–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490152>.

⁶ E. Parill, K. White, K. Vodden, J. Walsh, & G. Wood, “Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Humber-Northern Peninsula-Southern Labrador Region” (Corner Brook, NL, 2014).

⁷ Ginder Consulting, “Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint” (Montreal, QC, 2011).

Figure 1: Sub-regions examined in 2014 ACOA asset mapping study.⁸



Within each of these sub-regions, the project identified local assets according to the Community Capital Framework, a widely used model for sustainable community development that considers how development can balance multiple priorities for local well-being.⁹ These priorities are represented by various forms of ‘community capital’, which considered different categories of community resources that can be measured.¹⁰

⁸ Source for figure: Parill et al. (2014).

⁹ F. Butler et al., “Community Capitals: A Tool for Evaluating Strategic Interventions and Projects,” n.d., https://www.ffa.org/documents/lts_communitycapitals.pdf.

¹⁰ Emery and Flora, “Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework.”

Figure 2: Community Capital Model used in 2014 Asset Mapping Study.



The Western NL Asset Mapping Study catalogued community assets in six categories: built, economic, natural, human, socio-cultural, and political-institutional capital.¹¹ Relying on an extensive collection of secondary data supplied from regional organizations and other sources, the project also consulted local stakeholders in each sub-region to ground-truth the resources compiled and incorporate local concerns into the process. The result was an extensive asset inventory that listed a wide range of community assets ranging from local infrastructure to wildlife habitats.¹²

When the 2014 asset mapping study was conducted, it was intended to be the first phase of a more in-depth process, considering that its main objective was to identify regional assets primarily through secondary data compilation. Looking forward to potential follow-up work, the study recommended a number of next steps to build on the information that it compiled. These recommendations included:

1. Considering potential uses of the asset inventory with clear plans for how the information gathered would be used in resulting tools
2. Understanding the vast diversity between the sub-regions included, such as socio-economic differences, geography, and differing regional priorities
3. Collecting additional data to fill gaps in information encountered during the project, with an emphasis on community engagement
4. Creating an interactive online tool to display the asset inventory that community members and development practitioners could use
5. Plan for the maintenance of the asset inventory over time

¹¹ Parill et al., “Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Humber-Northern Peninsula-Southern Labrador Region.”

¹² Parill et al., “Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Report Appendices” (Corner Brook, NL, 2014).

6. Move beyond cataloguing of assets to a more in-depth assessment of the value and current state of regional assets.¹³

Measuring and Mobilizing Regional Assets

The project conducted in 2014 was also strongly informed by Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), a framework that considers how communities often labelled in terms of their needs or weaknesses can initiate development that builds on their existing strengths and abilities.¹⁴ This framework was developed through community-based research conducted by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), who visited hundreds of neighbourhoods in the inner-city United States to understand the strengths of these communities.¹⁵ At the core of ABCD is a shift in perception, where communities choose to focus on what is strong about their communities, as opposed to what is assumed to be wrong.¹⁶ In this “glass half-full” approach, individuals are not seen solely as clients in need of various social services, but citizens capable of meeting their own needs.¹⁷ This framework has also been informed by the Sustainable Livelihoods model, which emerged from work in rural Andean regions that had been considered “non-viable” to demonstrate that these communities could be sustained.¹⁸ ABCD is also informed by the concept of social capital, which highlights the importance of social bonds and networks in community life through local associations and linkages between local and external groups.¹⁹ Similar work in rural Canada has highlighted how rural communities can identify local assets to build on in community economic development.²⁰

Asset mapping refers to a variety of methods which communities and regions can use to operationalize the principles of ABCD in local development. The goal of asset mapping is to identify, catalogue, and ultimately mobilize local assets to help a community realize its full potential.²¹ There are a variety of ways to conduct asset mapping. One method for identifying local assets is to look at community strengths at different scales, including the talents and abilities of individuals, the role of local associations in community life, and the

¹³ Parill et al. 2014a, pp. 52-54.

¹⁴ Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the inside out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*.

¹⁵ Kretzmann & McKnight.

¹⁶ C. Russell, “Sustainable Community Development: From What’s Wrong to What’s Strong,” An Independent TEDx Event, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5xR4QB1ADw&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁷ Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the inside out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*.

¹⁸ A. Bebbington, “Capitals and Capabilities: A Framework for Analyzing Peasant Viability, Rural Livelihoods and Poverty,” *World Development* 27, no. 12 (1999): 2021–44, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(99\)00104-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(99)00104-7).

¹⁹ Mathie and Cunningham, “Who Is Driving Development? Reflections on the Transformative Potential of Asset-Based Community Development.”

²⁰ Mathie and Cunningham; A. Read, “Asset-Based Economic Development: Building Small and Rural Communities. A Briefing Paper from the ICMA Center for Sustainable Communities.” (Washington, DC, 2012).

²¹ T. Fuller, D. Guy, & Pletsch, “Asset Mapping: A Handbook.”

presence of public and private institutions.²² Another method for identifying local assets is the storytelling approach, which relies on collecting community stories to catalogue accounts that highlight community identity and pride.²³

The 2014 asset mapping study used a framework based on multiple forms of community capital, a widely used model for understanding community economic development and the impacts of projects and policies.²⁴ The community capital framework expands on the traditional economic concept of capital but applies this thinking to other community resources and assets.²⁵ In this vein, all kinds of community assets can be considered as stocks that can be managed in the long-term to deliver sustainable flows of benefits to the community.²⁶ In their seminal article, Emery and Flora (2006) discuss how community development can be enhanced by “identifying community capitals and strategically increasing capitals stocks”.²⁷ This capital-based view of community development requires a holistic consideration of economic, social, ecological, cultural, and institutional factors affecting a community’s sustainability. With a full understanding of the dynamics between these capitals, strategic investment in different forms of community capital can result in a ‘spiraling up’ effect whereby improvements of one capital mutually reinforce other capitals in synergistic ways.²⁸ Thus, changes in one form of capital can lead to unexpected changes in other forms of capital that can advance the overall sustainability of a community or region.²⁹

In the identification of local development assets, many communities have devised indicators to measure the state of these capital stocks and understand how they are changing over time.³⁰ Sustainability indicators (SIs) are thus another method for not only identifying local assets, but also evaluating their state and monitoring their quality over time.³¹ SIs have been used by many communities and regions around the world to assess the state of local development assets as well as evaluate the impact of specific policy interventions in communities and regions.³² There is a need to strike a balance

²² Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the inside out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*.

²³ K. White and K. Lynch, “Asset Mapping Topic Summary” (St. John’s, NL, 2012).

²⁴ M. Roseland, *Toward Sustainable Communities: Solutions for Citizens and Their Governments* (New Society Publishers, 2012).

²⁵ D.W. Pearce & G. Atkinson, “Capital Theory and the Measurement of Sustainable Development,” *Ecol. Econ.* 8 (1993): 103; Ismail Serageldin, *Sustainability and the Wealth of Nations*, 1996.

²⁶ Pearce & Atkinson, “Capital Theory and the Measurement of Sustainable Development.”

²⁷ Emery and Flora, “Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework”, p. 19.

²⁸ Emery and Flora.

²⁹ Roseland, *Toward Sustainable Communities: Solutions for Citizens and Their Governments*.

³⁰ F.L.P. Hermans, W.M.F. Haarmann, & J.F.L.M.M. Dagevos, “Evaluation of Stakeholder Participation in Monitoring Regional Sustainable Development,” *Regional Environmental Change* 11, no. 4 (2011): 805–15, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-011-0216-y>.

³¹ Bell and Morse, *Sustainability Indicators: Measuring the Immeasurable?*

³² S. Moreno Pires and T. Fidélis, “Local Sustainability Indicators in Portugal: Assessing Implementation and Use in Governance Contexts,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 86 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.08.002>; Kees Zoeteman, Hans Mommaas, and John Dagevos, “Are Larger Cities More Sustainable? Lessons from Integrated Sustainability Monitoring

between top-down and bottom-up forces in the design and use of SIs: various indicators often make use of official statistical data from the Census or similar sources, but must still reflect residents' perceptions of their community's conditions.³³ There is a similar tension within SIs between the measurement of tangible and intangible local assets, in which communities seeking to understand fuzzy aspects such as heritage or sense of place must use creative measures to represent these aspects of community life. Furthermore, SIs must consider both how to measure local trends accurately while effectively conveying the importance of those trends to different audiences in the community and externally.³⁴

In many ways asset mapping, and similar approaches such as SIs, are a balancing act between measuring local assets and communicating the value of those assets to residents, policy-makers, and other actors. The latter implies that storytelling could be an important part of any local asset mapping initiative. Stories are powerful heuristic devices that can be used to facilitate the understanding of complex information or influence the attitudes of societal actors. According to van Hulst (2012), “[telling] stories is not just listing events. Through the specific way in which stories represent that what has happened, they emplot the past”.³⁵ Public policy research has also considered the power of stories in policy discourse through the Narrative Policy Framework, which has been used to identify common narrative elements in policy debates such as the setting, characters (victims, villains, heroes), plot, and the moral – the lesson that is offered from a particular policy intervention that could be potentially applied in other contexts³⁶. Similarly, community planning and development often draw on common archetypes to tell a community's story – the hero's tale, the rags to riches story, the tale of the Golden Age lost³⁷. The widespread appeal of these archetypes allows actors to access subconscious images within the minds of the public. These kinds of archetypes are also used by external actors, whether government agencies, private investors, or otherwise, to justify their support of communities – or lack thereof.

in 403 Dutch Municipalities,” *Environmental Development* 17 (2016): 57–72, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2015.08.003>.

³³ E.D.G. Fraser et al., “Bottom up and Top down: Analysis of Participatory Processes for Sustainability Indicator Identification as a Pathway to Community Empowerment and Sustainable Environmental Management,” *Journal of Environmental Management* 78, no. 2 (2006): 114–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2005.04.009>.

³⁴ J. Lyytimäki, H. Gudmundsson, and C.H. Sørensen, “Russian Dolls and Chinese Whispers: Two Perspectives on the Unintended Effects of Sustainability Indicator Communication,” *Sustainable Development*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.530>.

³⁵ M. van Hulst, “Storytelling, a Model of and a Model for Planning,” *Planning Theory* 11, no. 3 (2012): p. 300, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095212440425>.

³⁶ M.D. Jones, M.K. McBeth, and Elizabeth A. Shanahan, “Introducing the Narrative Policy Framework,” in *The Science of Stories: Applications of the Narrative Policy Framework in Public Policy Analysis*, ed. Michael D. Jones, Elizabeth A. Shanahan, and Mark K. McBeth (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 1–26.

³⁷ L. Sandercock, “Out of the Closet: The Importance of Stories and Storytelling in Planning Practice,” in *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning*, ed. Bruce Stiftel and Vanessa Watson (New York: Routledge, 2005), 299–321.

Narratives about Sustainability in Rural NL

In the context of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, community and regional economic development must be approached from an understanding of the narratives told about rural communities. These narratives consist both of community stories, which often form an integral part of the identity and sense of place of rural NL communities, and the stories told about rural regions. Much of the prevailing discourse within the province tends to focus on the challenges facing rural regions, such as demographic decline and unemployment. Influential voices such as the media and academic research tend to perpetuate this narrative of decline.³⁸ For example, the Tip of the Northern Peninsula region has become almost synonymous with trends like population decline and unemployment in provincial discourses³⁹. At the same time, other rural regions have received attention for their success with revitalizing local economies and attracting new residents and investment. Regions such as the Bonavista Peninsula, Fogo Island, and Gros Morne National Park are praised by media, researchers, and government alike for these trends.⁴⁰ These disparate experiences point to two prevailing narratives about rural NL that describe different regions – one of decline and one of growth and renewal.

Within this context of rural narratives, asset mapping has the potential to help rural NL regions tell their own stories about their communities while identifying new opportunities for regional economic development. The “glass half-full” mindset of ABCD is highly compatible with a storytelling approach to asset mapping, especially considering the ability for stories to reveal often overlooked community assets. In the rural NL context, the contrasting narratives of decline – in the case of regions often characterized by their challenges – and narratives of renewal in more prosperous – highlight a need to understand how rural regions not experiencing this kind of growth can build on their local assets in new development. Some rural communities and regions have done various forms of asset mapping, but the outcomes of these initiatives and how they can most effectively implemented have not been identified.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of this study is to understand the role that asset mapping plays in regional development and governance in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It aims to glean the experience of asset mapping initiatives in different rural regions to understand how regional stakeholders have used these tools to promote regional assets and

³⁸ T. Roberts, “Last Year Was the Worst Year in History for Births in Newfoundland and Labrador,” *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/births-low-population-1.4980724>; A. Simms & J. Ward, “Regional Population Projections for Newfoundland and Labrador 2016-2036,” no. September (2017): 1–131, http://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/PopulationProject/Population_Projections_for_NL.pdf.

³⁹ Roberts, 2016; Simms & Ward, 2017.

⁴⁰ J. Adey, “What Can Fogo Teach Us about Revitalizing Rural Economies and Culture?,” *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, March 17, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/newfoundland-economy-rural-fogo-island-1.4983566>; E. Riche, “Saving Bonavista’s Architectural Treasures, One Building at a Time,” *Macleans’s*, March 21, 2015, <https://www.macleans.ca/society/the-baron-of-bonavista/>.

instigate economic development opportunities. The study conceives of asset mapping broadly, considering a range of asset mapping tools and frameworks that can be employed. Although many kinds of asset mapping can be done at the sectoral level (e.g. natural resource assessment or local business directories), this study has focused on more holistic initiatives that consider a range of economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors in their respective regions. Building on the 2014 asset mapping study done on the west coast and southern Labrador, this study seeks to follow through on the recommendations advanced by that study's final report. Specifically, this study seeks to meet the following objectives:

Objectives

1. Identify past and present asset mapping initiatives carried out in rural NL communities and regions
2. Determine how these initiatives came about: which groups introduced them, how the local community was engaged, the role of other actors (e.g. government, university, foundations), what frameworks were employed (including the use of software to collect and display the resulting asset inventories)
3. Assess whether any lasting outcomes resulted from the identified asset mapping initiatives, such as playing a role in local governance, contributing to economic development, etc.
4. Identify the factors that enabled or inhibited these initiatives from making a positive impact on regional economic development and sustainability

Deliverables

Within this report, the following deliverables are presented which correspond to the objectives identified above:

1. Inventory of community and regional asset mapping initiatives in rural NL (including history, actors involved, and related regional development and sustainability outcomes)
2. Set of contributing factors to help predict outcomes of future asset mapping initiatives for local economic development
3. Recommendations for future regional asset mapping initiatives based on assessment

METHODS

This study carried out a province-wide scan of rural asset mapping initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador. This methodology focused on gaining an understanding of how these initiatives came about and what outcomes they had while maintaining a province-wide scope and situating the experiences from each initiative in the larger context of regional development and governance. To that end, the study employed a form of inquiry known as 'step zero' analysis, a means of assessing governance tools to understand underlying factors that affect their implementation.⁴¹ Step zero analysis was

⁴¹ R. Chuenpagdee & S. Jentoft, "Step Zero for Fisheries Co-Management: What Precedes Implementation," *Marine Policy* 31, no. 6 (November 1, 2007): 657–68,

developed for evaluating fisheries governance tools and understanding how pre-implementation processes like how a given tool is introduced and in what manner affect their ultimate uptake.⁴² In step zero analysis, stakeholder perceptions are examined regarding how a prospective intervention is to be introduced into the community, which actors are perceived to be behind the idea, what their interactions with other stakeholders are like, how they engage other community members in developing the idea for the intervention, and similar factors.⁴³

To conduct this step zero assessment, the study compiled documents about each of the initiatives included and completed a desk review, followed by semi-structured interviews with key regional stakeholders to gain in-depth understanding of the initiatives. This review began with a basic analysis of the socio-economic circumstances of each region, focusing on the scale of the initiative (single community, regional, etc.), relationship with defined administrative regions (e.g. municipalities, Rural Secretariat regions, RED Boards, etc.), consideration of the local economic structure, and other relevant factors.

The study initially identified eight to ten initiatives that have occurred in different rural regions around various types of asset mapping. Asset mapping initiatives were defined broadly, considering any project that has been undertaken at the single community or sub-provincial regional level that has sought to identify and measure assets relevant to sustainability and/or well-being. Initially, the scan also considered initiatives that focused on a single sector or type of asset, but tried to assess to what extent those assets were considered in a holistic manner relative to community well-being. At this stage, more informal initiatives were also considered parallel to more formalized asset mapping projects or studies. The initial scan also considered initiatives driven both by local-level actors at the community or regional level and projects initiated by provincial or national-level actors with seemingly little participation from local stakeholders. After this initial scan, the following asset mapping initiatives were identified:

- Cultural Heritage Resources Inventory: 2011-2015
 - Branch (2011)
 - Tilting (2014-2015)
- Clarenville-Bonavista sustainability indicators project: 2013-2016
- Western Newfoundland-Southern Labrador Asset Mapping Study (4 sub-regions): 2014
 - Bonne Bay sub-region: Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint (2011), STAR program asset inventory (2016)
 - Northern Peninsula sub-region: Network Weaving study (2011)
- Killick Coast Collaborative Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (towns of Flatrock, Pouch Cove, Bauline): 2008-present)

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2007.03.013>; Ratana Chuenpagdee et al., "Marine Protected Areas: Re-Thinking Their Inception," *Marine Policy* 39, no. 1 (2013): 234–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2012.10.016>.

⁴² R. Chuenpagdee & Svein Jentoft, "Step Zero for Fisheries Co-Management: What Precedes Implementation," *Marine Policy* 31, no. 6 (2007): 657–68, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2007.03.013>.

⁴³ Chuenpagdee & Jentoft, "Step Zero for Fisheries Co-Management: What Precedes Implementation," November 1, 2007.

- Western Newfoundland Model Forest Indicators (Corner Brook/Gros Morne region): 1998-2004
- Trepassey asset mapping project: current

Although these initiatives showed a wide variation in factors such as the types of assets examined and the scale of the initiative, the study chose to focus on a subset of these that could provide the greatest insight into the step zero factors described above. The capacity of the research team was also limited within the project timeframe. Therefore, the Western Newfoundland Model Forest project and the Trepassey asset mapping project were excluded because the Model Forest project was single-sector in focus, even though it did consider a wide range of community socio-economic issues, while the Trepassey initiative was very informal and focused on a single community. In the regions where more than one initiatives were identified, one initiative was chosen to examine in-depth while other initiatives were examined on a more cursory level.

Once these rural SI initiatives have been identified, local stakeholders were conducted in each of the sites where these initiatives were carried out and requested to participate in semi-structured interviews. Individuals were selected who were involved in these initiatives while they were active, as well as other key stakeholders who did not play a significant role in these initiatives. In each region, three to five semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted either in-person during visits to the regions where these initiatives took place, or over telephone if necessary. Interviews will be recorded with audio recording and transcribed afterwards. These interviews sought to identify both the motivations driving the creation of these projects from their key local proponents and the perceptions of these initiatives by key stakeholders in the community or region.

They also inquired about the asset mapping frameworks used during the initiative and whether the project used software to analyze the data or display the results. This examination will also consider how actors external to the region were involved in the initiative, such as university researchers, provincial and federal government representatives, non-profit organizations, private businesses, or international agencies. The analysis also examined how these initiatives were communicated to community members outside of the team driving them, with an emphasis on how key initiators garnered support for these initiatives and to what extent they received support from a wide range of community stakeholders.

With respect to outcomes, the interview analysis sought to determine what the primary outputs of the initiatives were, how these outputs were disseminated to the wider public, and what ultimate impacts were achieved from this effort. Outcomes were defined broadly, ranging from direct use of the resulting database or reports in decision-making, to learning and reflection among those involved, to the strengthening of community pride and identity. Within this question of impacts, the assessment will also consider how local residents who were not involved in the initiative perceived it, whether they felt that it was relevant for local development and governance, and to what extent members of the community were engaged in the initiative during various stages. Finally, the end of the initiatives will be examined, including why each initiative concluded, what supported or stymied its success during its lifetime, and whether any lasting outcomes were realized or any work has been done to follow up on the project.

The methods of this study were carried out according to the following timeline:

- Preliminary identification of rural asset mapping initiatives (January 2019)
- Desk review of initiatives based on publicly available documents (January-February)
- Research ethics application and clearance (February)
- Interviews with key stakeholders in each region, travel (March)
- Analysis of interview findings (March)

FINDINGS

This section details the findings from both the document review and interview stages of the project. It begins with a brief overview of each of the five case study regions examined and the asset mapping projects that were carried out there. In most of these regions, more than one initiative has been conducted in recent years that used some kind of asset mapping tools that fit the broad conceptualization of asset mapping used in this study. However, for the scope of this study only one asset mapping initiative was examined in-depth in each region. Nonetheless, materials from related initiatives were reviewed and interviewees were asked about them if they participated directly in them. After the regional background, interview findings are discussed pertaining to a number of factors related to the step zero analysis, including the key initiators of each project, the motivations for carrying out the project, the level at which each initiative engaged community members, the key outcomes of each initiative, and identified potential for building on the original initiative with some kind of follow-up project.

Background on Study Regions and Asset Mapping Initiatives

The study examined asset mapping initiatives in five rural regions across the island portion of the province. These regions were selected to represent a range of regional geographies and socio-economic circumstances, ranging from very urban-adjacent to remote Northern locations. There have been asset mapping initiatives in each of these five regions, ranging to highly formalized regional planning processes to informal community-based initiatives. In several of the regions, there have been multiple initiatives carried out in recent years that have asset mapping elements. However, in each region one initiative was chosen for the most in-depth analysis, with any other initiatives which occurred before or after approached more as complementary to the main initiative. Below are brief descriptions of the five study regions.

Tip of the Great Northern Peninsula

Regional Overview

The Tip of the Great Northern Peninsula region has a regional population of 11,315 residents, spanning from River of Ponds on the western side of the peninsula to south of Englee on the east side.⁴⁴ The boundaries of the region examined for this project are

⁴⁴ “St. Anthony-Port Aux Choix Rural Secretariat Region Profiles,” Community Accounts, 2018, https://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbWy0nI_.

analogous with the former St. Anthony-Port Aux Choix Rural Secretariat region, with a land mass of 10,471.53 km². The population density of the region is 1.08 residents per km², making it the most sparsely populated region examined in this study. The nearest urban area is Corner Brook, which is between 285 and 475 km south. The key sectors in the region are healthcare and social assistance, which employs 16.1% of the regional workforce, manufacturing, which employs 13.4%, and natural resources, 12.5%.⁴⁵ Fish harvesting and processing remain important sectors in the region, as well as forestry and tourism.⁴⁶ Between 2011 and 2016, the regional population declined by 7.6%, and the median age is 52.⁴⁷ The unemployment rate of the region is 37.3%.⁴⁸ The boundaries of the region are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Map of the Great Northern Peninsula Region.⁴⁹



⁴⁵ “St. Anthony-Port Aux Choix Rural Secretariat Region Profiles.”

⁴⁶ L. Butters et al., “Our Way Forward: Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity for Regional Development” (Corner Brook, NL, 2016), http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/?page_id=462.

⁴⁷ “St. Anthony-Port Aux Choix Rural Secretariat Region Profiles.”

⁴⁸ Community Accounts, “Newfoundland and Labrador: Health Practices,” 2017, http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/table.asp?_=0bfAjlydpaWrnbSTh5-FvJudurVmhYOHelpsvZyxnr-aaHMyNBX.

⁴⁹ Maps provided by Myron King, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University.

Asset Mapping Initiatives in the Region

The primary initiative that was examined in both the Tip of the Northern Peninsula and the Gros Morne region was the 2014 ACOA asset mapping study which precipitated this project. Considering the large geographic region that this study included in its asset identification work, examining a follow-up initiative was most feasible at a sub-regional scale. The 2014 study broke down the western region by the former RED Boards, which had split the tip of the Northern Peninsula into two separate regions: the Nordic RED Board and the Red Ochre RED Board (pictured in Figure 1 on page 7). As mentioned before, the asset identification was facilitated by a framework that examined various forms of community capital, including natural, socio-cultural, built, economic, human, and political-institutional capital.⁵⁰

Another project that was examined in this region which had an asset mapping component was a study carried out in 2011 to map social networks that were relevant for regional development.⁵¹ This study was carried out by researchers at Grenfell Campus of Memorial University in partnership with an initiative called the Regional Collaboration Pilot, which had been convened by the provincial government at the time to coordinate regional development initiatives and encourage collaborative partnerships between regional stakeholders.⁵² This study was not as explicitly focused on asset mapping as the 2014 ACOA study, but it did consider regional dynamics such as social capital and the strength of relationships between regional organizations.⁵³ The project used Smart Network Analyzer software to conduct the social network analysis.⁵⁴ A website was created to disseminate the project to regional stakeholders and other audiences, which is found at <https://networkweavinggnp.wordpress.com/>

Bonne Bay Region

Regional Overview

The Bonne Bay region encompasses the boundaries of Gros Morne National Park and the enclave communities within it. These communities have a total population of 3,335 residents. The region has a land area of 1,816.23 km² and a population density of 1.84 residents per km². The nearest urban area is Corner Brook, which is between 124 and 167 km south. The primary sectors in the regional economy are healthcare and social assistance, which employs 15.8%, construction, which employs 13.3%, and accommodation and food services, which employs 12.2%. These figures reflect the centrality of tourism in the regional economy, as well as the location of regional services such as the hospital in Norris Point. Between 2011 and 2016, the regional population

⁵⁰ Parill, E. White, K., Vodden, K., Walsh, J., & Wood, "Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Humber-Northern Peninsula-Southern Labrador Region."

⁵¹ A. Tucker et al., "Network Weaving for Regional Development on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula Project Report," no. July (2011).

⁵² Tucker et al.

⁵³ Tucker et al.

⁵⁴ Tucker et al.

declined by 5.1%, and the median age is 53. The regional unemployment rate is 38.0%. The Bonne Bay region is depicted in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Map of the Bonne Bay region.



Asset Mapping Initiatives in the Region

The first initiative in the Gros Morne region that pertained to asset mapping was the Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint. This initiative was carried out by the Gros Morne Cooperating Association (GMCA), a major regional development actor in the area with many initiatives underway in tourism, the arts, and other areas. The Blueprint consisted mainly of a strategic plan which GMCA hired Ginder Consulting to compile, with the overarching goal of making Gros Morne just as well known for its cultural assets as its natural assets.⁵⁵ Within the Blueprint, a wide range of strategies were recommended to enhance the region's cultural offerings, primarily from a tourism perspective but also to make the region more appealing for prospective new residents in the arts and culture sector.⁵⁶

The second asset mapping initiative carried out in the region was, once again, the 2014 ACOA study. This initiative was also the primary asset mapping project that was

⁵⁵ Ginder Consulting, "Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint."

⁵⁶ Ginder Consulting.

examined in the region during the study. Like on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula, the regional boundaries were dictated by the former RED Board zone, in this case the Red Ochre RED Board⁵⁷, which also extended much farther up the Northern Peninsula including communities with very different socio-economic characteristics than the Gros Morne enclave communities. Considering these regional dynamics, this study chose the National Park boundaries as the geographic region in which to examine the 2014 study. No specialized software was used to compile the asset inventory, apart from standard Microsoft Office programs.

A third initiative that is examined in this study is an asset inventory that was compiled as part of the Strategic Tourism for Areas and Regions pilot project in the Gros Morne region. This initiative was undertaken to inform a strategic tourism plan that was compiled for the region, which GMCA commissioned to the consulting firms Tourism Synergy and Broad Reach Strategies.⁵⁸ The regional asset inventory examined the tourism assets in each of the Gros Morne enclave communities across a wide range of sectors and categories.⁵⁹

Clarenville-Bonavista Region

Regional Overview

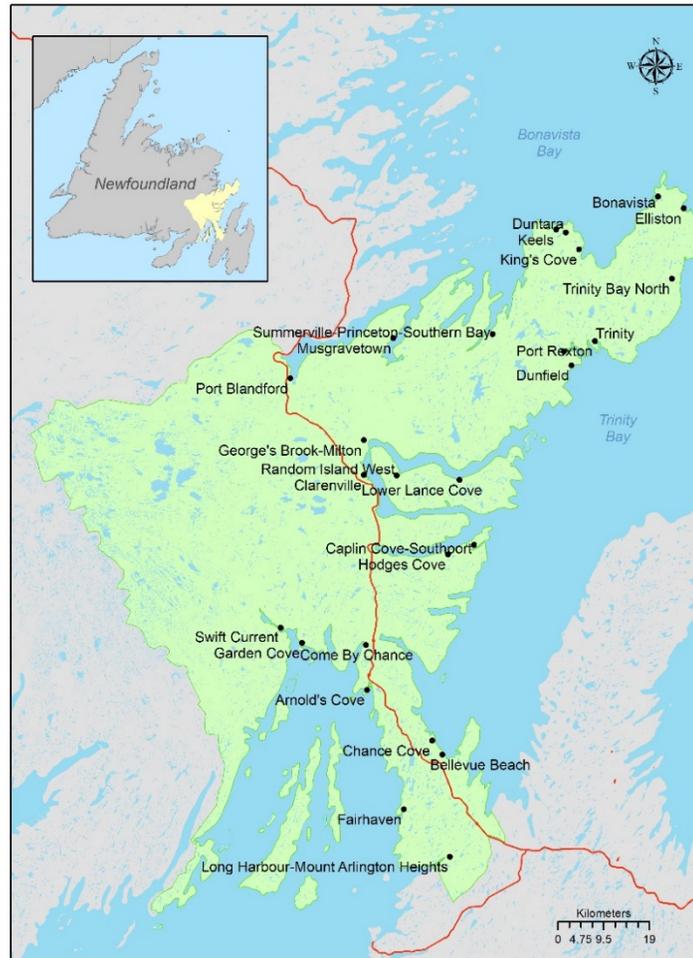
The former Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat region is located on the Bonavista Peninsula and the Isthmus of Avalon. The region has distinct sub-regions, including the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula, the Clarenville area, and the Isthmus communities. However, the asset mapping project examined in this study was conducted at the level of the Rural Secretariat region. Thus, this project examines that larger regional boundary, but with an acknowledgment that regional development initiatives tend to occur more at the level of these sub-regions, especially on the tip of the peninsula. This region has a population of 27,425 residents spread across a land mass of 7,601.56 km², with a population density of 3.61 residents per km². The nearest urban centre is St. John's, which is between 102 and 310 km to the southeast. The major sectors in the region are construction, which employs 15.1% of the workforce, retail trade, which employs 13.9%, and healthcare and social assistance, which employs 13.3%. Once again, at the sub-regional level the economic structure varies, with the tip of the peninsula having a much stronger reliance on fisheries and tourism, for example. These economic figures reflect the importance of the regional hub of Clarenville, where the majority of the region's retail businesses and public services are located. The regional population has declined by 2.9%, and the median age is 51. The unemployment rate of the region is 21.0%. The former Clarenville-Bonavista region is depicted in Figure 5 below.

⁵⁷ Parill, E. White, K., Vodden, K., Walsh, J., & Wood, "Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Humber-Northern Peninsula-Southern Labrador Region."

⁵⁸ Tourism Synergy and Broad Reach Strategies, "Executive Summary: Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan," 2016, <http://grosbornecoop.com/star/>.

⁵⁹ Tourism Synergy and Broad Reach Strategies.

Figure 5: Map of the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat region.



Asset Mapping Initiatives in the Region

The initiative that occurred in the Clarenville-Bonavista region was a regional sustainability indicators (SI) project carried out in collaboration between the Regional Council of the former Rural Secretariat and researchers from Grenfell Campus of Memorial University. This project occurred in three phases: the first phase was primarily a literature review of different approaches for conducting rural SI initiatives and the design of a preliminary sustainability assessment framework for the region⁶⁰; the second phase consisted of finalizing this framework and collecting data to measure the identified indicators using secondary data and a survey of residents⁶¹; the third phase designed a regional sustainability Report Card to disseminate the results of the assessment to

⁶⁰ Holisko, S., Parrill, E., White, K., & Vodden, K. "Assessing the Factors Impacting the Sustainability of the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat Region" (Corner Brook, NL, 2014).

⁶¹ Holisko, S. & Vodden, K. "Assessing the Factors Impacting the Sustainability of the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat Region: Phase Two Final Report" (Corner Brook, NL, 2015).

regional residents and policy audiences⁶². The Clarenville-Bonavista indicators project developed a grassroots sustainability indicator framework based on priorities expressed by the Regional Council and results of the resident survey.⁶³ The final dissemination of this framework also drew on techniques from regional sustainability assessment frameworks from around the world.⁶⁴ Although no specialized software was used to create the Report Card, it did borrow from data visualization tools from the Telos Brabant Centre for Sustainable Development, an institute in the Netherlands that conducts regional sustainability assessments.⁶⁵ The project lasted from 2014-2016, concluding upon the dismantling of the Rural Secretariat in March 2016.

Cape Shore/Placentia Region

Regional Overview

The Cape Shore region examined in this study encompasses the former Zone 18 RED Board region on the southwest Avalon Peninsula, including the Placentia area and the Cape Shore communities. The regional population is 6,190 residents across a land area of 2,941.72 km², with a population density of 2.10 residents per km². The closest urban area is St. John's, which is between 130 and 162 km to the northeast. The main sectors in the region are construction, employing 17% of the regional population, healthcare and social assistance, employing 11.8%, and retail trade, employing 11.1%. The regional service hub of Placentia contributes heavily to these sectors, while fisheries and agriculture are also important sectors in the region, as well as tourism. The Cape Shore communities are well known for the unique Irish culture that has been preserved through traditional practices such as song and dance.⁶⁶ The regional population has declined by 5.1% between 2011 and 2016, and the median age is 55. These downward trends are juxtaposed to the region's proximity to St. John's and nearby major employers such as the Vale nickel processing plant in Long Harbour and the Bull Arm Site. The unemployment rate in the region is 23.0%. The former Zone 18 region is portrayed in Figure 6 below.

⁶² Lowery, B. & Vodden, K. "Moving towards Sustainability in the Clarenville-Bonavista-Isthmus Region: A Report Card for Regional Sustainability and Community Mobilization." (Corner Brook, NL, 2016).

⁶³ Holisko, S. & Vodden, K. "Assessing the Factors Impacting the Sustainability of the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat Region: Phase Two Final Report."

⁶⁴ Lowery, B. & Vodden, K. "Moving towards Sustainability in the Clarenville-Bonavista-Isthmus Region: A Report Card for Regional Sustainability and Community Mobilization."

⁶⁵ "About the Telos Brabant Centre," Telos Brabant Centre for Sustainable Development, accessed March 26, 2019, <http://telos.nl/english/default.aspx>.

⁶⁶ "Intangible Cultural Heritage: Branch," Memorial University Department of Folklore, 2011, <https://www.mun.ca/ich/inventory/profiles/branch/index.php>.

Figure 6: Map of the Cape Shore region.



Asset Mapping Initiatives in the Region

A number of initiatives have been carried out over the past few decades centred around highlighting the unique cultural assets of the Cape Shore. The earliest of these was a project led by Irish journalist Aidan O’Hara in the 1970s called “A Grand Time”, which documented the region’s distinct cultural heritage through the recording of interviews, songs, dances, and other cultural practices.⁶⁷ This work is housed by the Irish Traditional Music Archive and also led to the documentary film, *The Forgotten Irish*.⁶⁸ A more recent effort to inventory this Irish cultural heritage was conducted through the Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory, a subset of the Digital Archives Initiative led by Memorial

⁶⁷ “A Grand Time: The Songs, Music, and Dance of Newfoundland’s Cape Shore,” Irish Traditional Music Archive, 2018, <https://www.itma.ie/latest/news/a-grand-time-the-songs-music-and-dance-of-newfoundlands-cape-shore>.

⁶⁸ “The Forgotten Irish in Newfoundland,” Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 1981, <https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1378-radharc/355628-the-forgotten-irish/>.

University.⁶⁹ An extensive inventory of cultural practices and sites from the community of Branch were archived in this initiative.

However, the primary initiative that is examined in this study is a project called the Cultural Heritage Resources (CHR) Inventory, which was a collaboration between the Town of Branch, the Avalon Gateway RED Board (Zone 18), Memorial University researchers, and the NL Department of Finance.⁷⁰ The project focused on the Branch, a community of 230 residents on the St. Mary’s Bay shore of the southwest Avalon. This initiative was introduced as a pilot project for inventorying cultural assets with the intention for integrating these assets into the System of Community Accounts of Newfoundland and Labrador (www.communityaccounts.ca). The framework used to identify cultural assets in Branch was adapted from a Municipal Cultural Planning Toolkit produced by the Province of Ontario, which outlined different categories of cultural heritage that could be catalogued at the community level.⁷¹ The framework used in the CHR project is pictured below in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Cultural Heritage Mapping Framework used in Branch.⁷²



⁶⁹ “Intangible Cultural Heritage: Branch.”

⁷⁰ “Project Charter: Creating the Branch Culture and Heritage Account” (Placentia, NL, 2011).

⁷¹ A. St. Croix, “Final Report On a Proposal To Provide Training And Oversight For The Implementation Of a Cultural And Heritage Resources Inventory And Website” (St. John’s, NL, 2015).

⁷² Source: St. Croix, 2015.

The CHR project was carried out in 2011, with an interest in carrying out similar cultural asset mapping in the other Zone 18 communities.⁷³ After the project concluded, a similar initiative was carried out in the community of Tilting on Fogo Island using the same framework and similar methods.⁷⁴ A website was created in both the cases of Branch of Tilting (although it is no longer live), which used GIS tools to map the cultural heritage assets of the community while displaying text, audio, and video content related to these stories.

Tip of the Killick Coast

Regional Overview

The municipalities of Bauline, Pouch Cove, and Flatrock are located on the Killick Coast region of the northeast Avalon Peninsula. These municipalities have a combined population of 4,205 residents on a land mass of 96.54 km², with a population density of 43.56 residents per km², making it the most densely populated region examined in this study by far. The region is on the outskirts of the St. John's metropolitan area, located just 26 km from St. John's. The main sectors are construction, employing 14.2% of the workforce, healthcare and social assistance, employing 13.9%, and retail trade, employing 13.4%. The region is experiencing significant population growth, having grown by 13.2% between 2011 and 2016. This trend also sets it apart from the other study regions examined in this study, which are all experiencing population decline at various levels. The region also has a relatively young median age of 40, and a low unemployment rate of 12.2%. The region encompassing these three municipalities is portrayed in Figure 8 below.

⁷³ A. St. Croix, "Branch Culture and Heritage Account: A Prototype for the NL System of Community Accounts - Interim Report" (St. John's, NL, 2012).

⁷⁴ St. Croix, "Final Report On a Proposal To Provide Training And Oversight For The Implementation Of a Cultural And Heritage Resources Inventory And Website."

Figure 8: Map of the Killick Coast region.



Asset Mapping Initiatives in the Region

The initiative that was examined in this region is the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) that was conducted jointly by the three municipalities. The ICSP process was a national policy instrument that incentivized municipalities to prepare a sustainability plan in order to become eligible to receive revenue from the federal gas tax.⁷⁵ In NL, municipalities had the option to prepare their ICSPs collaboratively with neighbouring towns, and the three municipalities on the tip of the Killick Coast opted to prepare a collaborative ICSP.⁷⁶ Additionally, the municipalities participated in a program being carried out by Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador that guided municipalities through a sustainability self-assessment process that directly informed the ICSP.⁷⁷ Both of these components of the ICSP used a framework provided by the federal

⁷⁵ T. Beed, “Sustaining Our Communities: Understanding Integrated Community Sustainability Plans in Atlantic Canada” (Halifax, NS, 2014), http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/_pdf/multiple_plans/tbeed_2014.pdf.

⁷⁶ “Collaborative ICSP: Bauline, Flatrock, Pouch Cove,” 2010, <https://static.municipalnl.ca/2016/07/icsp-bauline-flatrock-pouch-cove.pdf>.

⁷⁷ K. Vodden, R. Lane, & C. Pollett, “Seeking Sustainability through Self-Assessment and Regional Cooperation in Newfoundland and Labrador,” in *Sustainability Planning and Collaboration in Rural Canada: Taking the Next Steps*, ed. L. Hallstrom et al. (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press, 2016), 321–46.

government based on four pillars of sustainability, including environmental, cultural, social, and economic sustainability; interestingly, in NL many municipalities opted to add a fifth pillar – governance sustainability – to reflect the importance of considering the capacity of municipalities and the need for coordinated support from senior levels of government.⁷⁸ The ICSP was adopted in 2010, and the three municipalities formed an ICSP committee with equal representation from all three towns including each mayor, a municipal staff person, and a community member from each town.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Beed, “Sustaining Our Communities: Understanding Integrated Community Sustainability Plans in Atlantic Canada.”

⁷⁹ “ICSP Committee Overview,” Town of Bauline, 2017, <http://townofbauline.ca/council/icsp-committee/>.

Table 1: Overview of Socio-economic Trends in Case Study Regions.⁸⁰

Region	Population (2016)	Land Area (km ²)	Population Density (residents/km ²)	Nearest City	Key Sectors	Population change, 5-year	Median Age	Unemployment Rate	Regional Boundaries of Initiative
Tip of Northern Peninsula	11,315	10471.53	1.08	Corner Brook (285 - 475 km)	Healthcare & social assistance: 16.1%; Manufacturing: 13.4%; Natural resources: 12.5%	-7.6%	52	37.3%	Rural Secretariat region
Gros Morne	3,335	1816.23	1.84	Corner Brook (124-167 km)	Healthcare & social assistance: 15.8%; Construction: 13.3%; Accommodation & food services: 12.2%	-5.1%	53	38.0%	National Park boundaries
Bonavista Peninsula	27,425	7601.56	3.61	St. John's (102-310 km)	Construction: 15.1%; Retail trade: 13.9%; Healthcare & social assistance: 13.3%	-2.9%	51	21.0%	Rural Secretariat region
Cape Shore	6,190	2941.72	2.10	St. John's (130-162 km)	Construction: 17.0%; Healthcare & social assistance: 11.8%; Retail trade: 11.1%	-5.1%	55	23.0%	Regional Economic Development Board
Killick Coast	4,205	96.54	43.56	St. John's (26 km)	Construction: 14.2%; Healthcare & social assistance: 13.9%; Retail trade: 13.4%	13.2%	40	12.2%	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan region

⁸⁰ Source: Community Accounts, 2019.

Project Initiators

Among the initiatives examined, there was an overwhelming influence of organizations external to the region in initiating the asset mapping initiatives. These external initiators were predominantly university researchers and provincial or federal government agencies, who often introduced the initiatives to local stakeholders. Regional organizations were also very often initiators of the asset mapping projects. For example, in the Branch CHR project the primary initiators were the Avalon Gateway RED Board (Zone 18), the NL Statistics Agency – which worked with the RED Board on integrating the project into the System of Community Accounts – and the Town of Branch. Anne St. Croix, a consultant working with Destination St. John's (the Destination Marketing Organization for the Avalon Peninsula at the time), was also a major initiator. According to one local initiator, "I think the RED Board and Community Accounts and Anne [St. Croix] were the drivers" (Personal communication, March 14th, 2019).

In other cases, regional organizations played a less prominent role, with researchers and government agencies serving as the main initiators. In the 2014 ACOA asset mapping study, according to one of the researchers who worked on the project:

"Well...ACOA and Kelly [Vodden] were the instigators. And I guess they probably, Kelly has...her background is in rural sustainability, rural resilience, and I guess she and [ACOA] were chatting about research ideas..."

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

In other cases, the impetus for the initiative seemed to come clearly from regional actors. In the case of the Clarenville-Bonavista sustainability indicators project, the Regional Council of the Rural Secretariat were the primary instigators, and they later involved university researchers. This volunteer council consisted of seven community members from across the region, most of whom were prominent community leaders working on various community development initiatives; the Council was supported by a full-time regional planner (at the time Colin Holloway). According to one of the former Regional Council members:

"It was just coming out of conversations that we were having around the table, and us wanting to dig in a little bit deeper of what was going on. And Colin [Holloway], I guess, knowing Kelly from other circles, and just getting her involved to kind of lead us through a little bit of a process, and getting in on that. I think that's where it came from".

Personal communication, March 18th, 2019.

The Killick Coast collaborative ICSP also appeared to originate mainly from local actors. There had been some collaboration between the three participating municipalities previously, and the initiators for the project were mainly council members and staff.

Ultimately, a combination of community and regional actors convened with external groups from the provincial or federal level in the creation of each of the initiatives. With some initiatives, like the Clarenville-Bonavista and Killick Coast projects, the impetus came largely from local actors, while others like the 2014 ACOA asset mapping study were initiated mostly by researchers and government agencies. The Branch CHR project represents somewhat of a middle ground, considering the strong role of the RED Board and the municipality in introducing the project alongside the NL Statistics Agency and MUN researchers.

Motivations for Project

In speaking to the initiators of each project and other local stakeholders involved, a wide range of motivations and intended outcomes were revealed. With some initiatives, the motivation was largely to catalogue what assets the community or region had, in part because those assets were not well recognized as potentially important for economic development. In other cases, there was interest in understanding rapid change going on in the region. A common thread across the initiatives was an emphasis on identifying a practical use for the asset mapping tool in regional economic development. One stakeholder from the Tip of the Northern Peninsula envisioned an online portal that could be designed from the 2014 asset mapping study:

“I think it would be awesome if you could go into one portal, one website, and it’s all there. Including the geological mapping assets that have been done. The Province has pretty well got the entire province done region by region when it comes to basic rock formations and...the way it was formed, and fault lines and folds, and you know, that might seem like it’s only of interest to someone doing mining, but it could be of interest to someone in construction who’s looking for a gravel pit. It could be of interest to telling a story in a museum...Somebody could pick it up and go to that point, and go have a look”.

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

This comment reflects intentional consideration of the end use for the asset inventory that was created during the 2014 study. Creating an online tool of some kind was a prevalent theme in this region, especially to inform the siting of industrial development and other projects. Other initiators, for example in the case of Branch, simply wished for the community’s assets to be recognized as valuable for economic development:

“I was trying to tell the story: ‘Look people, just look at how much...is here. What can we do? Why, why are these assets and resources not being put to use?’ They’re very valuable. And...there should be something happening around the use of these resources”

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

A strong theme from the Branch project was that the community’s vibrant cultural assets must be more effectively mobilized as economic assets. This endeavor was understood

both in terms of their potential to be harnessed to a greater extent in tourism and other activities, as well as the need to preserve the community's unique Irish culture for its own sake. Another stakeholder expressed that:

"I was hoping it would be...some sort of a place where people could go online to find out...I guess to be a life-long record of language and religious practices and all of those things from architecture...the natural heritage as well as the built and social".

Personal communication, March 26th, 2019.

In other regions, the motivation was less about communicating the value of local assets and more understanding how those assets were responding to social and economic changes. There was also an interest in highlighting new opportunities for either public or private investment. One stakeholder from the Bonne Bay region shared that:

"...my understanding was that we could use it as a way to understand changing conditions within communities, differing conditions from community to community – how can we use this to identify opportunities for rural communities to move forward?...and this is what I was thinking ACOA was about, you know – how can we then think about how we can invest money into a community or a region in certain areas, you know, to get the biggest bang out of their bucks?"

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

The focus on understanding changing community and regional conditions and communicating these factors to funders highlighted another intentional consideration of the end use of the asset mapping tool. This observation was similar to that of Northern Peninsula stakeholders who saw asset mapping as a way to argue for the siting of industry in certain communities. The theme of understanding changing conditions was also reflected in discussions with initiators of the Clarenville-Bonavista indicators project:

"I think we were trying to capture that period in time, and there was so much happening, and we wanted to figure out how we could capture it so that we could kind of...figure out where we were going and trying to collect what was happening. It seemed like it was a lot of things happening but nobody was capturing it".

Personal communication, March 18th, 2019.

One distinct feature of the Killick Coast ICSP was the presence of a financial incentive to carry out the project via the federal gas tax offered to municipalities. Stakeholders involved in this plan indicated that the gas tax incentive was a strong motivator to prepare the ICSP in the beginning, but afterwards the communities saw many other benefits to collaborating through the ICSP implementation process.

"Originally when it came out, in order to get gas tax funding, municipalities had to have an ICSP plan, which is what this is...Must municipalities took that and put it on the shelf, and anyone that came

in...”Yeah! Here’s my plan. Give me my gas tax”, and that was it. We were one of the few regions that actually...bought into it and we met every single month by the RED Board out on O’Leary Avenue”

Personal communication, March 20th, 2019.

Level of Community Engagement

The five projects examined engaged with community and regional stakeholders to varying degrees, with some projects using very participatory methods and others being relatively more top-down. To an extent, the level of community engagement was a result of how the project was introduced, depending on whether the main initiators were located in the region or from external agencies. For example, with the Clarenville-Bonavista indicators project, the origination of the initiative within the Regional Council meant a strong desire for Council members to reflect the concerns and priorities of their own communities. The subsequent engagement of regional residents through a survey of 299 residents and focus groups across the region also helped to ensure that the project engaged local residents as much as possible.⁸¹ In the 2014 ACOA asset mapping study, several rounds of public input were also incorporated into the project, including focus groups in each sub-region and subsequent sharing of draft asset inventories for public comment. One stakeholder on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula recalled that:

“We had a little sub-group discussion here regarding this particular sub-area. We had a bunch of people in talking about what was identified in the communities. And after she had the report put together, we were all given a copy to scrutinize and provide feedback, ‘Does this seem reasonable? Anything left out? Anything here that’s not accurate?’ So forth. So there was at least two different layers of involvement, input, and evaluation”.

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

Nonetheless, there was a sense from regional stakeholders involved that the project was primarily driven by the university research team that carried out the project. The same stakeholder on the GNP concluded that there was “...more a sense it was university-driven, yeah. We were a primary source of information for the university, yeah. And that was it” (Personal communication, March 7th, 2019). Considering the large scope of the project in terms of the geographic region that it examined, the capacity of the research team to engage residents in each region was most likely limited.

In contrast, the Branch CHR project seemed to follow a more participatory process despite the strong presence of initiators from external organizations. One factor in this more participatory approach was strong buy-in from the municipality: “...really in Branch, the Town Council was right on with it, you know. They understood it from the beginning” (Personal communication, March 26th, 2019). This buy-in is admittedly easier to secure

⁸¹ Holisko, S. & Vodden, K. “Assessing the Factors Impacting the Sustainability of the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat Region: Phase Two Final Report.”

within the scope of a single community, although there was purportedly interest from other Zone 18 municipalities in doing similar cultural asset mapping.⁸² Within Branch, the project team employed creative methods to encourage community members to participate in the main engagement session where asset identification took place:

“...the question was simple: ‘what in your community would you like to preserve?’ And we did just sticky notes, you know...And there was 75 people on a Sunday afternoon, which was, you know, towns of Branch’s size, was unheard of...”

Personal communication, March 26th, 2019.

These alternative methods reflect a common sentiment among interviewees that community engagement must be done differently than it is generally done in research or public engagement efforts in rural regions. Instead of more formalized workshops with PowerPoint presentations and focus group discussions that are characteristic of researcher or government-led engagement, some stakeholders recommended breaking from that standard format and seeking more creative ways to engage residents:

“Workshops are only workshops. Let the people figure that out. There’s smart people in there, you know...don’t set it up as a workshop, you know, because then the framework is already there if you’re giving a workshop...people have to be imaginative”

Personal communication, March 26th, 2019.

In the case of the Killick Coast Collaborative ICSP, the committee that was formed created a platform for more meaningful engagement between the municipalities and residents. One of the former members of the committee reflected on how it allowed councilmembers, municipal staff, and residents to share different perspectives on common issues facing the region:

“It was funny to see a problem, and then see an elected official looking at it from one point of view, because it’s gotta be popular...staff, we’re looking at it from an operational or funding point of view, and then the residents were looking at it as end users. So when we were talking about garbage collection, like we’re looking at money, the council is looking at something different, and residents are looking at something completely different...It was probably one of the first times I’ve sat around a committee table that you do get a 360 viewpoint on one situation”

Personal communication, March 20th, 2019.

⁸² “Project Charter: Creating the Branch Culture and Heritage Account.”

Outcomes of Project

Interviewees mostly indicated that the main outcomes of the projects were their primary research outputs they created. In most cases, the outputs consisted of the asset inventory or sustainability assessment that the project set out to create. To a lesser extent, some stakeholders identified outcomes that reached beyond the initiative's direct work, such as playing some sort of role in regional development or governance. For example, one of the key initiators in the Branch CHR project expressed that:

"I think the key success from the asset mapping is...a cultural heritage account for the Newfoundland System of Community Accounts, that was actually created. And it's there if people want to continue with it".

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

A strong feature of this project was the direct linkage to Community Accounts, given that this community data portal is maintained by the provincial government and there was considerable interest by the NL Statistics Agency at the time in expanding its database to include cultural assets like the ones identified in Branch.⁸³ Stakeholders involved in the 2014 ACOA study on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula expressed a similar sentiment about the value of the primary asset mapping output itself. One stakeholder who works in local economic development expressed that:

"I found myself scanning through the copies of the [spreadsheets] and the mapping that Kelly gave us, and looking for things in different areas that might be of use to clients. To pass on information to them. Even that mapping inventory was a pretty good asset to have and be able to use".

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

A very common theme across almost all initiatives examined is a frustration that more effort was not put into ensuring that there was a clear end use for the information collected. Although the Network Weaving study conducted on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula was not examined in the same depth in this study as the 2014 ACOA project, a reaction from one local stakeholder on this project's outcomes are revealing:

"...they have an enormous amount of information...just from the mapping. But, like, I don't see that it was used afterwards, right...I mean, it should have been...I mean, if you have all the organizations in place and you have all the partners, and the networks formed, there should have been something to bring them closer instead of still working all outside the circle...That's what I think we had been hoping".

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

⁸³ St. Croix, "Branch Culture and Heritage Account: A Prototype for the NL System of Community Accounts - Interim Report."

Given this project's focus on demonstrating the strengths of community development networks across the region and highlighting where gaps in collaboration were occurring⁸⁴, community members involved may have expected some practical application for the social network analysis conducted. One stakeholder from the Bonne Bay region expressed a similar frustration about the outcomes of the 2014 ACOA study:

"...the goals of the project were to collect the information and to make it available to ACOA for planning. But I didn't see the Part B. Part A – the benefits are the data was collected, it's extensive, it required a lot of community support and involvement, a lot of online research as well, of course. And, you know, I assumed that there was gonna be projects put forward...to look at certain regions and say 'so here are the assets in this region. Let's plan a project that's gonna use those assets around...'. But...that's where it fell short."

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

Part of this frustration most likely stems from the nature of funded community-based research. Funding is generally provided on a one-off basis, and there are no requirements for researchers to return to communities and regions where a project was carried out later to try to apply the findings to practical development priorities. When research engagements do manage to achieve greater continuity with the regions that they partner with, there is more likely to be a sense that the project achieved its intended outcomes. For example, local stakeholders involved in the Clarenville-Bonavista indicators project generally felt that the initiative achieved its goals of assessing changes in the region:

"I think it captured what we were trying to get, give us that sense. And when we did the Report Card, we wanted to be able to take that Report Card and then look at it like...a year or two out and see where, you know...this is where it was, so it's a picture in time of where this area is, and then we're gonna look at it again say in two years and see what has moved".

Personal communication, March 18th, 2019.

At the same time, another frustration was expressed in the Clarenville-Bonavista project about the role of political shifts in the demise of the initiative. One stakeholder reflected on the dissolution of the Rural Secretariat in 2016, which effectively put an end to the regional indicators project:

"Well actually, the reason it stopped was there was a change of government. That was the reason. It was, I mean, there was no other reason...the demise of Council happened through a phone call a couple of hours before the Budget came out, I believe it was. You know, so it

⁸⁴ Tucker et al., "Network Weaving for Regional Development on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula Project Report."

wasn't a phase-out, or a peter out type of thing, it's just over with, you know...Politics drives everything in Newfoundland, right...when there's a change in government, there's a change in policy, there's a change in any groups that's on the go. That's just been the nature of things, right"

Personal communication, March 19th, 2019.

This theme of political shifts threatening the longevity of the asset mapping initiatives – and of regional development initiatives in general – was quite prevalent. In the Branch CHR project, it was also pronounced because the RED Boards were defunded shortly after the pilot project in Branch was completed. The central role played by the Zone 18 staff in that initiative meant that the withdrawal of federal and provincial funding from the RED Boards sounded a death knell for the project's regional aspirations. One regional stakeholder reflected that:

"I think it kind of died because the RED Board closed. That's my understanding. You know, it was, it's sort of...like when we had the 75 people at the Town Hall in Branch, it was nice to see the community come together and realize that they had a rich culture, but it kind of never got more than that, you know, good feeling thing...And it was just poor timing that the RED Boards closed, and I think if the RED Boards had stayed around, the project would have continued..."

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

This reflection also implied a sense that there was a failure to harness the "good feeling" of gathering community members to celebrate their cultural heritage into a more tangible outcome for community or regional development. Combined with the demise of the RED Boards, which had given the project a more regional scope in its potential impact, the initiative had no foundation to build on that initial energy. Conversely, in the case of the Killick Coast ICSP, there was a sense that those involved were surprised at how far-reaching the outcomes ended up being for cross-community collaboration and regional planning. Admittedly brought together primarily by the financial incentive, the three municipalities later used the ICSP Committee that was formed to launch a wide range of regional development initiatives that helped give the three communities a greater voice regionally and provincially until the disbanding of the Committee in 2017:

"...up until that point, we were very active in...a lot of different avenues, and, I mean, for a town of Bauline, we're the smallest on the North East Avalon, I mean a town of 450 people. Right? And in the Killick Coast, you have Logy Bay, Middle Cove, Portugal Cove, Torbay are pretty substantial committees. You put three of us together, we're now about the same size, right? And so that's the way, I think, our voices were being able to be heard, and we were able to make changes and we dealt with the Provincial Government...on some items and...it's a lot stronger when you go out and you got three mayors on the bottom..."

Personal communication, March 20th, 2019.

Potential for Follow-up

The final factor that was examined from the asset mapping initiatives was to determine what potential regional stakeholders saw for building on the project somehow in future regional development work. Interviewees were asked whether there were any initiatives that are currently underway that could be integrated with further asset mapping work or how future asset mapping could be designed for the greatest regional impact. Within this discussion, emphasis was placed on the need to connect future iterations of asset mapping to practical uses in regional development and governance, including projects that are currently underway in the case study regions. The following section discusses several factors that potential follow-up initiatives should consider for building on the asset mapping projects examined here.

Choosing Appropriate Regional Scale

One of the most critical factors for the success of any regional development initiative, including efforts to build on the asset mapping projects examined in this project, is the need for the initiative to be carried out at the most effective regional scale. The initiatives chosen varied considerably in their scale, ranging from a single municipality (with potential replication at the regional level) to the entire western Newfoundland and southern Labrador region. The latter – the 2014 ACOA asset mapping study – admittedly recognized that the scale of the project was so large that it did not allow for in-depth analysis of the asset base in any one of the sub-regions.⁸⁵ More in-depth examination of the dynamics between regional assets at a more localized scale was recommended to show the interrelated nature of regional sustainability.⁸⁶

Key to the scale question is the consideration of socio-economic and cultural divides between different sub-regions in the larger region. All of the case study regions appeared to have some level of sub-regional divides that could pose barriers to regional collaboration through a future asset mapping initiative of some kind. Many of these sub-regional divides are based in differing rates of economic growth and activity in sectors like tourism. This dynamic was especially strong in the Bonavista Peninsula, Tip of the Northern Peninsula, and Gros Morne, where some communities are perceived to be benefitting from tourism development more than others. One stakeholder on the Bonavista Peninsula remarked that:

“...right now, everyone looks at Bonavista, you know...the focus is Bonavista. But I think it has to be more of a regional, because there’s things happening in Elliston, there’s some things happening in Trinity, there’s some things happening in Port Rexton, but it kind of gets overshadowed by Bonavista because Bonavista’s the bigger community”

Personal communication, March 18th, 2019.

⁸⁵ Parill, E. White, K., Vodden, K., Walsh, J., & Wood, G. “Regional Asset Mapping Initiative: Humber-Northern Peninsula-Southern Labrador Region.”

⁸⁶ Parill, E. White, K., Vodden, K., Walsh, J., & Wood, G.

This comment reflects the disparities in economic growth across the region, characterized by rapid new business creation and in-migration of new residents into the town of Bonavista, which some perceive to be delivering benefits mainly within Bonavista and excluding smaller communities in the region. Another sub-regional divide is the cultural identities that have brought some communities together while excluding others along ethnic or religious lines. On the Cape Shore, this dynamic is especially pronounced since all of these communities are historically Irish and Catholic, an identity that the regional service hub of Placentia does not share:

“...so the Cape Shore were those nine or ten communities along the shore...going into Placentia. But when the government started looking at touring routes for the province, you know, that became a way to get travelers around...they took all the different shores and named them...Because for Placentia to come under the Cape Shore, they would have considered that to have been...not the greatest thing, because they had never seen themselves as part of the Cape Shore...”

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

The above quotation also reflects a clash between the regions that communities identify with along cultural lines, on one hand, and government-designated regions, on the other. Similar observations were made on the Bonavista Peninsula, where stakeholders on the tip of the peninsula felt that their region was dissimilar to the Clarenville area despite being included in the same administrative region. Other regions do not have the same strong cultural divides across sub-regions, but nonetheless struggle with uniting actors across sub-regions. This gap was one of the key findings of the Network Weaving study carried out on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula.⁸⁷ Discussions with regional stakeholders during this project reflected a similar sentiment. One stakeholder reflected on various regional collaboration efforts that have occurred mostly on the west side of the peninsula, suggesting that:

“If we were gonna do something in a smaller scale of regional governance, we would probably look at the St. Barbe, which is north...all the way south to Castor River South. Which like I said includes 26 communities. If we were gonna look at something bigger, we would probably include the Straits with us as well and do right from Eddies Cove to Castor River, and do the whole western side. And then we could even look at something like the Northern Tip”.

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

At this larger scale of the entire Northern Tip, particular barriers exist due to the sheer size of the region. Additionally, some stakeholders perceive that communities on the east side of the GNP (i.e. from Main Brook to Englee) do not benefit as much from tourism as communities on the west side or around St. Anthony. A similar sentiment is

⁸⁷ Tucker et al., “Network Weaving for Regional Development on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula Project Report.”

expressed on the south side of Bonne Bay and on the Bonavista Bay side of the Bonavista Peninsula. These sub-regional inequities must be considered in any design of future asset mapping work in one or more of the regions, especially if such an initiative is to be integrated into regional governance efforts.

Need for a Regional Champion

Closely related to this issue is the need for any future asset mapping work to be championed by a strong regional organization with potential to carry a follow-up initiative forward. Especially considering that the demise of regional development organizations due to political shifts greatly affected several of the initiatives, there is a need for a stable regional organization to lead future asset mapping work while remaining somewhat independent from shifts such as a change of government. On the Cape Shore, where the defunding of the RED Board was cited as one of the direct causes for the end of the initiative, one stakeholder cautioned that:

“...in order for it to regional, there would have to be a vehicle...there would be nobody to lead or champion it if there wasn't some type of regional organization...you could do it in a small region, like say the Cape Shore, or you could probably find someone to do it in around Placentia, but, you know, to get it done in a larger region, you'd need a regional organization that does...and none of those exist anymore”

Personal communication, March 14th, 2019.

This sentiment reflects that, in the void left by the closure of the RED Board, there is now no regional body with the capacity and regional scope to carry an initiative forward across the region effectively. There may be interest or capacity in Branch to build on the CHR project, but without an organization operating at the regional scale with capacity and legitimacy, this would not become more than a single-community initiative. On the Bonavista Peninsula, there is a similar sense in the wake of the demise of the Rural Secretariat, but there are also many strong cross-community collaborations underway in that region. A few examples are the Bonavista-Trinity Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Cultural Crafts Initiative, Hike Discovery, and the Discovery Aspiring Geopark. Although these initiatives are mainly focused on a narrow set of issues, they are linking communities and sectors in a strong regional network. In the Gros Morne region, the Gros Morne Cooperating Association is a strong regional organization with a diverse set of priorities, which has already done asset mapping work through the STAR process done in that region.⁸⁸ Among the three Killick Coast municipalities, the ICSP Committee represented a strong regional body with direct input from each municipal council, but that committee was disbanded in 2017 due to a loss of interest from two of the three municipalities:

“It was just September of 2017...that was our last report that we submitted to the mayors. And that's when two councils decided that it

⁸⁸ Tourism Synergy and Broad Reach Strategies, “Executive Summary: Gros Morne Region Strategic Tourism Plan.”

wasn't worth it. So that was the end of it. But, I mean, up until that point, we were very active in a lot of different avenues”.

Personal communication, March 20th, 2019.

On the tip of the Northern Peninsula, there a small number of organizations that operate at the scale of the entire region. Two of these organizations – CBDC Nortip and the Viking Trail Tourism Association – engage in different forms of regional development work on a regular basis. CBDC Nortip has participated in numerous research projects and other regional initiatives over the years and serves as a gatekeeper for regional economic development, as reflected in this stakeholder's comment:

“There's not that many non-profit organizations around, and we're one of the very few that span the entire GNP, so if people are at things in this way, eventually they'll probably end up talking to [us]”.

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

Engaging these key regional organizations will be important in future efforts not only to map regional assets but also to integrate that mapping into regional development and governance. Another important consideration is the need to understand whether any similar efforts are underway in one or more regions that could have an asset mapping component built into them as they unfold. Again on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula, a potentially promising initiative is the asset management pilot project that municipalities have been engaged in through Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL). This initiative has brought funding and technical assistance from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for towns to employ new methods to manage municipal infrastructure and other community assets.⁸⁹ One stakeholder explained that:

“...the asset management project that we're doing now is only going to be looking at municipal partners because they're the only ones that's investing into it. Which is still good because it still looks at the main players I guess in the broader region. So, you know, we have 12 municipalities on the northern tip of the peninsula looking at asset management”.

Personal communication, March 7th, 2019.

If interest exists in doing future asset mapping work to build on the 2014 study in the region, the presence of an initiative like this asset management process could be a great advantage for the region. The potential to integrate regional asset mapping into this asset management program would depend on many factors, such as whether a holistic set of assets are being considered in the program or whether it would be possible to engage actors outside of municipal governments in it somehow. Nonetheless, the potential for a meaningful follow-up initiative is greatly heightened compared to pursuing such a project in a region where there are no similar efforts underway.

⁸⁹ “BAM! NL: Building Asset Management in Newfoundland and Labrador,” Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019, <https://municipalnl.ca/engagement/bam-nl/>.

Telling an Authentic Story

Another important element to consider in future phases of regional asset mapping in one of the case study regions or elsewhere in rural NL is how asset mapping can help a community or region tell its story to different audiences. Considering the linkages between storytelling and community planning and policy discussed earlier in this report, asset mapping can act as a vehicle for communities to tell their stories with potentially transformative potential. Especially in light of the disparate narratives in rural NL – with some regions characterized by narratives of decline and others by narratives of growth and prosperity – rural regions are under pressure to demonstrate the value of their local assets to external actors such as investors and government agencies. To that end, asset mapping can serve as a means for communities and regions to tell their own story in a way that reflects both their unique identity and history while communicating the value of local assets. An interesting observation that was made on the Bonavista Peninsula, which ironically is very often characterized by these narratives of growth in provincial discourse, was that other rural communities should avoid trying to copy their approach to telling their communities' story. This stakeholder offered the following caution to other rural communities around the province:

“...don't look at what we're doing – you can look at what we're doing, but don't try to copy it in your area, because it might not fit... you don't have to tell my story. We...I can tell my story. But you have a story. You have a different story. You look at what's different to your community and try to promote it in that way”

Personal communication, March 18th, 2019.

This warning speaks to the need for rural regions to tell an authentic story about their communities in a way that does not attempt to parrot the experience of other regions that are considered successful. Considering the wide range in socio-economic conditions facing the case study regions examined here, illustrated in Table 1, it is imperative for regions often characterized by the decline narrative not to copy what the more celebrated regions have done. Instead, using asset mapping to tell the region's own story by building on its own unique strengths and uniqueness can be a way forward. One potential avenue for building on the Branch initiative in this manner was suggested in reference to the region's ongoing connection to Ireland:

“The strong connection to Ireland that is felt in Branch is a lost opportunity to showcase the old songs, stories and language of the Cape Shore. The door has already been opened here through other research projects and cultural exchanges. With some assistance, I see an expansion of what has already been started. The people of Southeast Ireland are aware of this common culture and would be easily enticed to participate in a more structured program.”

Personal communication, April 10th, 2019.

A similar connection exists on the Tip of the Northern Peninsula to the French roots of many of the region's communities linked to the French Shore history. Sites like the

French Shore Interpretation Centre, the Dark Tickle Company's *Granchen* interpretation site, and the Port Au Choix National Historic Site are telling that story to visitors currently, but there was interest among some regional stakeholders in more coordinated efforts to showcase the region's connections to its French heritage. One stakeholder commented that:

"...the French Shore story isn't told enough, so...we're trying to get that story out there. I mean, there's so much of that history here and because the French left and, well never settled anyway, and this because an Irish and English place...the French history has got forgotten and pushed to one side...so it's certainly something that needs to be highlighted and showcased more because there's a lot there".

Personal communication, March 8th, 2019.

Effort should be taken in each region and elsewhere in rural NL to find ways to convey the unique stories of their communities. Within this endeavour, asset mapping may be an integral tool for communities to discern what makes them unique and craft an authentic story to tell to different audiences. Community and regional storytelling can be done for many reasons, such as preserving the heritage of a community – as seen in the Branch project - tourism product development, or for local planning. These stories are also tightly linked with the sense of region that a given group of communities may identify with and work together with in regional development efforts. Asset mapping has a central role to play in helping communities and regions tell their story both in order to honour their identity and heritage and communicate the uniqueness of that story to audiences such as visitors, investors, and government.

Table 2: Assessment of Factors Contributing to Rural Asset Mapping Initiative Success.

Initiative	Scale of Initiative	Time-frame	Initiating Organization(s)	Framework Used/Use of Software	Motivations for Initiative	Level of Community Engagement	Outcomes of Project	Barriers to Success	Potential for Follow-up
AM - Great Northern Peninsula	Regional development body (REDB)	2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOA • Grenfell Campus researchers 	Community capital framework informed by ABCD	Create initial inventory of regional assets to demonstrate potential for economic development, inform private and public investment	Low	Extensive inventory of regional assets with potential to be displayed visually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of project prevented in-depth analysis of assets at regional level • Sub-regional divides (e.g. north vs. south side of Bonne Bay, east vs. west side of Northern Peninsula) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with regional organizations (e.g. CBDC Nortip, VTТА) • Potential for sub-regional initiative • Integration with MNL asset management program

AM - Bonne Bay	Regional development body (REDB)				Understand changing conditions within and across communities, inform private and public investment				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong regional organizations (Gros Morne Co-operating Society, Parks Canada, etc.) • STAR process asset inventory created in 2016
Initiative	Scale of Initiative	Time-frame	• Initiating Organization(s)	Framework Used/Use of Software	Motivations for Initiative	Level of Community Engagement	Outcomes of Project	• Barriers to Success	• Potential for Follow-up
CHR - Branch	Municipality/ Regional Development Body (REDB)	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone 18 RED Board • Destination St. John's • Memorial University researchers/NL Statistics Agency • Town of Branch 	Cultural heritage framework adapted from Ontario Cultural Planning Toolkit; Creation of website with GIS-based inventory of assets using multimedia tools; plan to link to Community Accounts	Communicate the value of the community's cultural assets and potential for economic development; preserve community heritage	High	Community pride and sense of hope; cataloguing of community's cultural heritage assets; creation of website displaying assets visually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defunding of RED Boards in 2012 • Inability to translate asset inventory into a tangible community development tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-regional initiative in Cape Shore communities • Potential to connect regional cultural asset mapping to similar Irish initiatives

<p>Killick Coast Sustainability Self-Assessment/ICSP</p>	<p>Inter-municipal (3 municipalities)</p>	<p>2010-2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Zone 19 RED Board 	<p>ICSP NL framework (5 pillars of sustainability)</p>	<p>Initial motivation from financial incentive; later interest in using ICSP committee to share resources, information, and advocate for communities</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Creation of ICSP; creation of inter-municipal committee that met for seven years after plan completion; spin-off regional collaborations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disbanding of ICSP Committee in 2017 • Perceived lack of relevance of ICSP implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal cross-community collaborations • Follow-up sustainability assessment to monitor changes in the region
<p>Clarenville-Bonavista Indicators</p>	<p>Regional development body (Rural Secretariat region)</p>	<p>2013-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Council • Grenfell Campus researchers 	<p>Homegrown sustainability indicator framework informed by resident survey and Regional Council discussions; Later stages of project informed visual benchmarking tools</p>	<p>Understanding rapid socio-economic changes in the region; creating baseline assessment of conditions to monitor in the future</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Creation of regional sustainability assessment tool; dissemination to key regional stakeholders and residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disbanding of Rural Secretariat in 2016 • Sub-regional divides (e.g. Clarenville area vs. tip of Bonavista Peninsula) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-assessment of region using indicators to monitor progress • Integration with existing cross-community and cross-sectoral collaborations

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes the main findings of the study and makes recommendations for building on them in future research and engagement. These recommendations are offered to help inform future inquiry into how asset mapping can be integrated into regional development and governance in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Recap of Findings

The analysis of the rural asset mapping initiatives in these five regions revealed a number of important findings for future asset mapping in rural NL. Firstly, it revealed that asset mapping has been employed in a wide variety of community and regional contexts across the province and using a multitude of different frameworks. The range of community and regional contexts also speaks to the differing experiences of rural regions and the disparate narratives told about them. These initiatives were initiated by a range of different actors, including local community leaders, regional development organizations, academic researchers, and provincial and federal government agencies.

At least from the level of analysis possible in the scope of this study, it appears that projects which were initiated with a strong regional champion had greater lasting outcomes in community and regional development than ones driven mostly by external actors. This does not imply that at least some of the initiators in an asset mapping project cannot be external actors, but rather that the external partners must be working hand in hand with a regional champion. In terms of community engagement, initiatives that had greater levels of participation from regional residents and a wide range of stakeholders were generally perceived by interviewees to have resulted in more lasting outcomes. For example, the Bonavista Peninsula indicators project followed a very participatory process throughout the initiative, and was generally perceived by the initiators consulted in the interviews to have had positive outcomes. The Branch CHR project also had a participatory set of methods and was considered to have had positive outcomes, although they were admittedly cut short by external circumstances.

In terms of outcomes, another key finding is the vulnerability of these initiatives to political shifts, as evidenced by the role of the closure of the RED Boards and later the Rural Secretariat in the truncated outcomes of the Bonavista and Branch initiatives. This finding is part of a wider issue in regional development in rural NL, in which regional institutions have come and gone over past four decades, often with the changing winds of partisan politics.⁹⁰ In other regions, other regional organizations exist that are more independent of political shifts which could potentially lead asset mapping initiatives, or in some cases have led such work, as in the case of the Gros Morne Cooperating Association.

Nonetheless, in a number of these regions there is still interest in building on these initiatives to help strengthen regional development, with the stipulation that future asset

⁹⁰ H. Hall, K. Vodden, & R. Greenwood, "From Dysfunctional to Destitute: The Governance of Regional Economic Development in Newfoundland and Labrador," *International Planning Studies*, 2016, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2016.1167585>.

mapping have a clear practical use for the region and be championed by a strong regional organization that is active on the ground. Considering the socio-economic circumstances of the different regions and the rural narratives that characterize them, that use could be different in regions characterized by a decline narrative rather than a narrative of growth and prosperity. In the former, asset mapping may be seen as a means to show, perhaps for the first time, that there are assets in the region that are worth sustaining and help convey the value of those assets to external actors such as government and investors. In regions where the narrative of growth is more prevalent, there may be more value in using asset mapping tools to understanding changing circumstances in communities and manage growth and development in a sustainable manner.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, this report offers a series of recommendations for building on the asset mapping initiatives examined in this study and considering more broadly how asset mapping tools can be integrated into regional development and governance in rural NL. These recommendations are offered both in terms of informing future research and engagement around rural asset mapping and in the broader context of regional economic development in the province.

1. Conduct follow-up asset mapping initiatives in two to three rural regions.

Although the findings of this study paint a portrait of how rural asset mapping projects have been introduced and carried out in the province, the scope of the project did not allow for in-depth analysis of regional dynamics in any one region examined. Instead, the aim was to identify the main factors that surrounded their introduction and development, as well as their outcomes, in a manner that could be compared across regions. However, with a better understanding of these factors in hand, building on any one of these initiatives would be more likely to succeed. Therefore, this study recommends that further asset mapping work be carried out in a number of rural regions to build on the initiatives carried out previously. The selection of these regions should be driven primarily by the level of interest expressed by regional stakeholders, as well as the consideration of disparate experiences of rural regions in the province. Returning to the predominant rural narratives explored in this report, it would be useful to understand how more in-depth asset mapping could be carried out in both regions characterized by the decline narrative and the growth narrative and understand what role it can play in each. In the selection of regions for more in-depth follow-up asset mapping, the lessons learned regarding the potential for follow-up should be applied, considering factors such as whether a strong regional organization is present and at which scale to conduct an initiative.

2. Continue to examine asset mapping within the regional governance context.

The findings from both interviews and the documents produced during these initiatives both point to a strong influence of overarching regional governance

dynamics on regional asset mapping. The history of regional governance in rural NL is inextricable from the prospects for regional economic development, considering the central role that various regional development institutions have played in rural regions. Whether through Regional Development Associations, RED Boards, the Rural Secretariat, or other bodies, rural communities have relied heavily on these institutions for capacity and a regional focus for development projects.⁹¹ The asset mapping initiatives examined here demonstrate this reliance very clearly. With no regional development platform active across rural NL presently, the Province and other levels of government are exploring different models for regional governance. Some of the communities included in this study have led grassroots regional governance efforts, such as those in the Straits of Belle Isle area of the Northern Peninsula. As regional governance models continue to be explored within the province, it will be important to determine how asset mapping can be part of this process. Key questions to consider include how individual communities can conduct their own asset mapping within a larger region-wide scope, whether regional organizations currently exist to carry these initiatives forward (or need to be established), and where the funding for such work would come from.

3. Compare the experiences of rural NL asset mapping initiatives to those of rural regions in similar jurisdictions across Canada and internationally.

Many communities and regions around the world have approached asset mapping in a number of ways. Although every rural region is unique, additional lessons can be learned from examining how regions in other parts of Canada or internationally have measured and mobilized their assets for sustainable development. The experiences of regions like the Kootenays region in BC or in countries facing similar rural development issues as NL in terms of using asset mapping tools in regional development would potentially shed light on how they can best be integrated into governance. Furthermore, the strong element of cultural heritage and historic ties to the origins of some of the regions examined here implies that establishing partnerships with regions in these countries, such as Ireland and France, may be especially beneficial.

4. Explore the development of an asset mapping methodology to be made available to rural NL communities and regions.

The final recommendation is for research and engagement efforts to investigate the potential for a common asset mapping methodology to be developed for use across rural communities and regions of rural NL. Although this study has collected common lessons from some of the initiatives that have been carried out, there would be benefits to designing material that could guide rural communities and regions through asset mapping in a way that integrates the lessons learned from these and other experiences. This methodology should place emphasis on participatory approaches to engaging local residents in a meaningful, with a focus on breaking the mould of standard public engagement techniques in favour of fostering shared ownership of the asset mapping process.

⁹¹ Hall, Vodden, and Greenwood.

To that end, more exhaustive review of asset mapping experiences in rural NL and elsewhere is necessary, especially in terms of the methods that were employed in various stages of the process. Within this effort, factors such as the most appropriate asset identification frameworks, ensuring flexibility for regions with varying socio-economic circumstances, and potential end uses in regional development and governance should be considered.

Conclusion

This report has intended to make a valuable contribution to existing tools and practices for rural regions in NL to enhance their potential for economic development and sustainability. The analysis conducted here has shed light on how rural communities and regions in the province have used asset mapping tools to identify existing and new opportunities for local development and detailed how these initiatives were carried out. By examining factors such as the circumstances of their introduction and design, the aims of each initiative, the extent to which local residents were engaged, and lasting outcomes, the study has identified factors that contributed to these initiatives' ability to play a significant role in regional development. It has also built on the 2014 asset mapping study and other efforts to understand the potential for asset mapping to enhance the development potential of rural regions. It also outlines how the findings of this study could be applied in future work to further understand how asset mapping can be integrated into regional development and governance in the province. In so doing, the present effort has contributed to ongoing discussions of how best to ensure the sustainability of rural NL and offered potential pathways forward to applying effective community development tools to this goal in the province and beyond.

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