



## Relating the Planners' Roles to the Theories of Planning: Insights from the City and Municipal Planners in Three Philippine Local Government Units

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### Abstract

This research examines the applicability of various theories and models that have framed urban planning to the Philippine local planning context. These theories and models of planning are tagged as “good-to-know” instead of “must-have” knowledge items due to their abstract presentation in planning courses. However, this study argues differently, as it utilized these theories and models as a series of lenses to analyze and characterize the roles undertaken by local planners. This qualitative research provides insights into the prevailing model of local planning by analyzing the narratives of local planners in three Local Government Units (LGUs) in the Philippines. This research identifies eight general roles that local planners perform: (1) information and knowledge management, (2) comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning and programming, (3) sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion, (4) project development and management, (5) policy research, (6) zoning administration and development regulation, (7) monitoring and evaluation, and (8) public information and advocacy. Findings reveal that these roles, taken collectively, extend beyond the traditional confines of a single planning theory or model, as they demonstrate the manifestations of multiple theoretical paradigms. The long-term and comprehensive focus in preparing outputs reflects rational comprehensive planning, while the planners' involvement in policy and plan implementation aligns with systems planning. Additionally, the prominence of sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion functions highlights the integration of communicative planning approaches, even within a scope of work that resembles systems planning. These intersections illustrate the adaptive and multi-dimensional nature of local planning practice, shaped by institutional mandates and local needs. With these narratives, this study offers educators localized scenarios that can be used to introduce planning theories as a topic with practical applications. These roles can also be utilized to reflect on the competencies required by local planners and the organizational improvements needed for Local Planning and Development Offices (LPDOs).

*Keywords:* local planning, local planners' roles, planning theories, planning education

### 1. Introduction

This study explores the intersection between planning theories and the lived experiences of local planners, particularly within the Philippine context. This study examines the different theories and models of planning. In 1973, Andreas Faludi provided one of the earliest and most valuable categorizations to differentiate theories of planning from theories in planning. The different theories in planning cover the theories that provide methodologies and techniques in specific planning dimensions, such as land use planning, transportation management, and urban design (Friedmann, 2003). Theories that tackle the desirable urban form that predominates the “blueprint” era of

planning can also be categorized under this. They are often classified as substantive theories as they reflect the knowledge relevant to the content of planning (Olesen, 2018).

On the other hand, theories of planning reveal the commonalities among different theories and models, and are therefore referred to as meta-theories. The theories of planning describe the prevailing goals of planning and its role in society. They also represent the emerging roles and processes employed by planners to achieve these goals. These meta-theories are sometimes considered as schools of thought or different ways of thinking in planning (Connell, 2010; Hudson et al., 1979). For brevity, when planning theories and models

appear in the succeeding parts of this paper, the authors refer to the theories of planning.

Of the two, many students and practitioners fail to recognize the importance of the theories of planning. Among the reasons identified in the literature is that planning theories are discussed to shadow scholarly behavior rather than professional practice. Considering these concerns, a Denmark-based professor, Kristian Olesen (2018, p. 304), promotes that planning theories and models should be introduced as a “variety of planner roles.” This way, planning theories can be seen as lenses on how students and budding practitioners can perceive the complexities of planning and understand how things usually work. Relating the planners’ roles and planning theories can provide a framework on how planners “would understand a problem or act in a certain situation” (Olesen, 2018, p. 308). Eventually, this approach can induce students to reflect on the type of planner they would like to become.

While Olesen (2018) presented general approaches to how the different planning theories and models can be introduced as planners’ roles, it would be better if there were recorded Philippine-based scenarios that educators could use in their planning theory courses. As Bahrainy and Fallah Manshadi (2017) emphasized, developed and developing countries have differing contexts, and the roles played and competencies required of planners may also vary. This suggests the need for localized pedagogical information to discuss planners’ roles vis-à-vis planning theories.

This study responds to that need by contextualizing planning theories through the narratives of selected Filipino city and municipal planners. Drawing on Serote’s (2024) assertion that the applicability, implementation, and interplay of various planning guidelines released by national government agencies (NGAs) are most visible at the local level, this research adopts local planning practice as a case study for theorizing the role of planners.

Notably, the experiences and roles of planners do not occur by chance, but instead usually result from operationalizing planning-related policies and guidelines, with LGUs acting as the alter ego of the national government by law. Hence, this study also provides insights into the planning theories that these planning policies have unconsciously promoted, despite some of them not being explicitly anchored in specific theoretical frameworks. Presenting a picture of the range of roles undertaken by local planners provides an opportunity to reflect on whether these guidelines also place an overwhelming number of planning-related expectations beyond the LGUs’ capacity.

Additionally, clarifying the roles of local planners has ultimately helped the authors pursue a competency research that has identified the requisite knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics (KSPs) aligned with the critical tasks undertaken by planners. As stressed by Megahed et al. (2019), the prevailing planning model provides a context that guides in determining what planners need to know.

Overall, the study presents local planning roles and experiences that can be utilized in teaching and understanding planning theories, contemplating how practitioners operationalize guidelines, and identifying the competencies that planners should possess. This paper is structured into five parts to realize this goal: (1) the introduction presenting the rationale of the study, (2) the review of related literature presenting the initial roster of local planners’ roles from planning laws and guidelines and a reading of the different planning theories, (3) methodology indicating the procedures employed by the researchers to achieve the intents of this research, (4) results and discussions analyzing the interface of local planners’ narratives and the planning theories and models, and (5) conclusion and recommendations providing a recapitulation of the essential findings and the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 The Initial List of Local Planners’ Roles

Two key laws serve as bases for determining the local planners’ functions: the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA No. 7160), which defines the mandates of LPDOs and the Environmental Planning[1] Act of 2013 (RA No. 10587), which outlines the professional scope of environmental planning. While the first ties the planner’s identity to their position in the LGU, the second grants wider planning roles based on licensure. This expansive scope of practice in RA No. 10587 can be fully actualized by a free-floating professional not tied to the bureaucratic limitations of a government institution, such as an LGU. Hence, when analyzing RA No. 10587, this study focuses only on the practice of environmental planning that directly relates to the LPDO mandates and LGU requirements. Other planning outputs expected of LGUs based on succeeding laws and planning guidelines are also presented in the subsequent subsections.

#### 2.1.1 The Local Government Code (LGC) and the Rationalized Local Planning System (RPS)

The LGC serves as the overarching framework for local governance in the Philippines. It outlines the powers and duties of the Local Planning and Development Coordinator (LPDC), who is the head of the LPDO. The LGC provisions on the local planners’ roles and the planning outputs expected of city and municipal governments inspired the rationalization of the local planning system by Serote (2008).

In particular, Serote (2008) advocated for integrating sectoral planning requirements into the mandatory comprehensive plans, specifically the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP). CLUP should integrate comprehensive and sectoral strategies to achieve the desired spatial framework for managing the LGU’s land and water resources. Meanwhile, the CDP presents the programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) that address the priority problems and needs of the LGU across

development sectors. Through this RPS principle, there should be a reduction in the number of plans to be formulated by LGUs. The RPS also promotes “taming” the planning process by transitioning from a “traditional technocratic form into one that accommodates the imperatives of multi-stakeholder participation and consultation” (Serote, 2008, p. i). Reconfiguring the planning outputs and process likewise led to clarifying the roles of local planners stipulated in the LGC.

Serote (2024, p. 54) grouped the LPDO functions based on the LGC into five broad categories: “(1) information management, (2) comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning, (3) investment programming, (4) public participation promotion, and (5) secretariat services to the Local Development Council (LDC)[2].” He also placed a premium on public information and advocacy, as Serote (2024) promoted the creation of a Public Information and Advocacy Service Unit that would educate the public on critical planning issues, policies, and concepts.

Under the information management role, the LPDO is engaged in building and maintaining a planning database containing data from the LDC sectoral committees and project monitoring and evaluation activities. Meanwhile, comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning involves the preparation, updating, or revision of CLUP and CDP. Meanwhile, investment programming involves preparing investment programs that outline the priority PPAs that can be implemented within a certain period, considering the LGU's resources. Related to this is the engagement of planners in drafting or reviewing necessary legislative measures for investment promotion for consideration of the *Sanggunian*, or the local legislative body.

Public participation promotion involves organizing and coordinating public consultations, seminars, workshops, and other modalities to engage the stakeholders in the planning process. Lastly, secretariat services involve “keeping minutes and records, setting agenda and related matters about the activities of LDC” (Serote, 2024, p. 34).

Although the LPDOs are primarily engaged in the preparation, updating, or revision of the CLUP and CDP only, they are also involved (either as the lead or support office) in drafting other legally mandated plans. According to the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) (2017), there are over 30 of these plans (See Table 1). Local planners should then coordinate with other offices and committees that prepare these thematic plans to mainstream, interface, or integrate their sectoral thrusts into the comprehensive plans.

Table 1 NGA-mandated/prescribed sectoral and thematic plans

NGA-mandated plans [Plan for...]	Other sectoral/thematic plans [Plan for...]
1. Protection of Children	1. Nutrition Action
2. Aquatics and Fisheries Management	2. Information and Communication Technology

NGA-mandated plans [Plan for...]	Other sectoral/thematic plans [Plan for...]
3. Culture and the Arts	3. Housing (Local Shelter Plan)
4. Anti-Poverty Reduction	4. Elderly
5. Local Coconut Development	5. Health and Family Planning
6. DRRM	6. Coastal Management
7. Food Security	7. Information Strategy and Management
8. Forest Management	8. People's Plan
9. Gender and Development	9. Business Plan/Strategy
10. Integrated Area Community Public Safety	10. Capacity Development Agenda/Human Resource Management Development Plan
11. Entrepreneurship Development	11. Transportation Management
12. Sustainable Area Development	
13. Local Tourism Development	
14. Small and Medium Enterprise Development	
15. Strategic Agriculture and Fisheries Development Zones	
16. Solid Waste Management	
17. Watershed Management	
18. Ancestral Domains Sustainable Development and Protection	
19. Persons with Disability	
20. Forest Land Use	
21. Local Climate Change Action	
22. Peace and Order Public Safety	

Source: In DILG, 2017, p. 6.

The functions identified by Serote (2008, 2024) serve as the initial roster of the roles played by the local planners working in the LPDO. The current study examined whether or not the list covers the whole extent of local planners' work. For example, the roster of functions and powers does not include zoning and development regulations. The Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) (2014) indicates in the CLUP guidebook that the zoning officer or the LPDC shall be responsible for evaluating applications for locational clearance of development projects and development permits for subdivision and condominium projects. Even international competency studies, such as those by Ozawa and Seltzer (1999) and Miller (2019), have identified the ability to read and interpret the application of zoning regulations as one of the competencies valued by planners.

### 2.1.2 The Environmental Planning Act

RA No. 10587 aims to regulate the practice of environmental planning by administering licensure examinations and other regulatory measures that will advance professional growth, capacity development, and social responsibility among planners.

The law can also provide further guidance on the current powers, functions, and duties of local planners. Relating the scope of practice of environmental planners (EnPs) in RA No. 10587 to the LGC, some planning roles may also be undertaken by local planners, but are not articulated in RA No. 7160. For instance, RA No. 10587 indicates that EnPs may provide professional services for the planning and development of *barangays* and site planning for a particular need or special purpose.

In terms of the development of *barangays*, local planners can be engaged in capacity building relative to the crafting of the Barangay Development Plan (BDP) of their component *barangays*. When it comes to site development, local planners may also be the ones spearheading the preparation of master plans for area development projects (e.g., housing projects) of their LGU. In relation to these activities, local planners may conduct feasibility studies, environmental assessments (e.g., EIA reports), and institutional assessment studies (e.g., financial strategies for implementing the Local Shelter Plan). In essence, since some local planners are authorized to perform these roles because of their professional eligibility, their Local Chief Executive (LCE) may assign these functions to them.

## 2.2 A Reading of Planning Theories and Models

### 2.2.1 The Primary Theories of Planning

The differences between the primary theories of planning are summarized in Appendix A. The parameters used in the characterization include the ideals of planning, planners' roles, planning process, methods and techniques, and planning goals. In particular, the authors used the description of the planners' roles for each theory and model of planning to analyze the narratives of local planners.

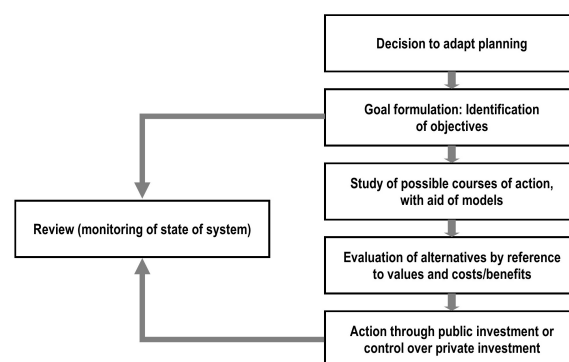
As shown in Appendix A, as planning paradigms take different forms, the roles of planners also change. From superior experts in rational comprehensive, systems, incremental, and mixed-scanning planning paradigms, planners are now considered facilitators as the planning process becomes more interactive and collaborative.

Even the concerns of planners have expanded sharply from their initial roots of creating a master plan of urban form. Planning is now considered a social management process that prompts planners to deal with different human and urban activities as well. Several planning scholars observed that the term "spatial" is now being used in its broadest sense with the advent of systems thinking in planning. The notions of economic space (e.g., analysis of costs) and psychological space (e.g., analysis of people's perceptions), for instance, become more prevalent as planning includes the examination of the interaction of the different parts or factors present in the urban and regional system (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019).

In recent years, the increasing focus on sustainable development has also prompted planners to address broader societal concerns. For instance, in the

"Principles of New Urban Planning" anchored on sustainable development and promoted by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, planners are encouraged to integrate "spatial, social, economic, environmental, and cultural elements of an urban environment into the development process" (Setiawan, 2014, p. 259).

There are also planning theories/models that require planners to participate in the implementation of the selected planning or policy alternatives, which were previously considered outside the bounds of planning based on the rational comprehensive and incremental planning traditions. An example is McLoughlin's systems model in Figure 1, where actions through public investment, control over private investment, and monitoring and evaluation of their impacts are also considered part of the planning realm.



Source: In Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2019, p. 312

Figure 1. Brian McLoughlin's concept of planning

The range of methods and techniques used in planning is also not constrained to design methods and quantitative analyses inherent to the early planning theories. Planning now involves forums, dialogue, community consultations, and even storytelling. As pointed out by Judith Innes (1995, p. 183), planners are now "deeply embedded in the fabric of community, politics, and public decision-making." In the current planning environment, the idea that planners are value-neutral technicians seems to be more unrealistic than when it was conceptualized by rational thinkers several decades ago.

### 2.2.2 Other Planning Theories/Models

Newer planning models have evolved in recent years. However, they can be considered as variants or developments of the primary planning theories, such as the advocacy and communicative planning paradigms. In these models, the planner's role remains that of a facilitator or an advocate for a particular cause or sector. For instance, some neoliberal planners utilize planning to advance the interests of the private sector, particularly the capitalists. There is also the transformative model, where planning focuses on communicating and working with marginalized groups. Unlike advocacy planning, which calls for "rival plans," transformative planning focuses less on creating documents and more on actual

planning alternatives for the weakest segment of society. There are also the agonistic planners who promote dialogue and consultations, but instead of aiming for a consensus, they welcome conflict and disagreements. This way, planning can serve as a platform for surfacing an idea that will prevail over others (Olesen, 2018).

Additionally, there are also scholars who advocate the combination of planning theories and models. Diller et al. (2018, p. 244) pointed out that “analytical-rational planning methods can be implemented in a more or less communicative fashion.” In their study, Diller et al. (2018) asked students to assess if site planning methods are more rational, more communicative, or more creative. They found that these methods, generally used in German site planning, cannot be unambiguously assigned to one dimension. Even the traditionally “rational” approaches, such as the value benefit analysis, can now be designed in a communicative or collaborative manner.

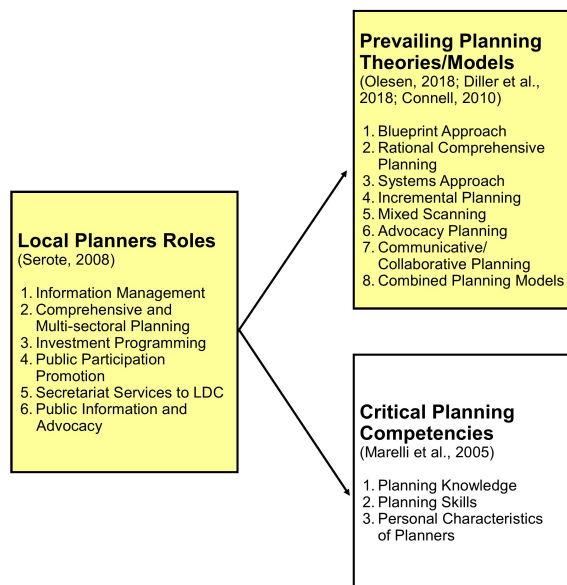
### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Overview of the Competency Modeling Process

The authors documented the roles of planners not merely to relate them to planning theories, but as part of a broader two-phase competency modeling research. Competency modeling aims to identify both what planners do (i.e., their job roles) and what they need to know (i.e., their competencies). These insights are particularly relevant to the Philippine planning profession, which stands to benefit from a strengthened shared understanding of its scope and practice. Presenting an overview of the whole competency modeling process in this section provides essential context for the selection of informants and the methods of data collection and analysis discussed in this paper.

Competency modeling is the process of developing a competency model or framework (CM) that identifies the knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics (KSPs) essential for the performance of specific job roles (Marrelli et al., 2005). Being a job role-dependent process, competency modeling involves a comprehensive documentation of the roles and responsibilities of the LPDO, which, in this research, also serves the additional purpose of uncovering the operational manifestations of planning theories and models in local practice.

Identifying the roles undertaken by planners aligns with the recommendations of Epley et al. (2017) and Campion et al. (2011) that developing competencies should begin with analyzing the desired outcomes before determining the requisite KSPs. The initial roles and competencies can be sourced from secondary literature and interviews with select experts and practitioners. Then, surveys with more practitioners can be done later to validate the long list of specific KSPs and finalize the CM. This multi-stage process has been effectively employed for various CMs, as seen in the output of Epley et al. (2017) for camp counselors and Shi et al. (2019) for public health physicians.



Source: Authors' construct

Figure 2. The overall framework of the competency study

For this paper, the authors present the findings from only the role ideation phase, which encompasses insights from literature review, interviews, and personal correspondence with local planners. On the other hand, the planning theories and models in Appendix A were used to analyze and characterize these recorded roles. Specifically, the concepts and themes from the secondary literature used to analyze the findings from the role ideation process are highlighted in yellow in Figure 2. The highlighted portions also reflect the dimensions of the competency modeling process that are extensively covered in this paper.

#### 3.2 Review of Secondary Literature

To gain a general understanding of local planners' roles, this study examined existing policies and guidelines in planning practice, consulting with CMs from related disciplines, and reviewed international and local competency studies. The roles and KSPs from this literature review served as the pre-determined codes when performing the concept-driven thematic analysis. The broader planning roles and general competencies were the pre-determined themes used to analyze the interview and personal correspondence transcripts.

#### 3.3 Interviews with Local Planners

##### 3.3.1 Selecting the LGUs

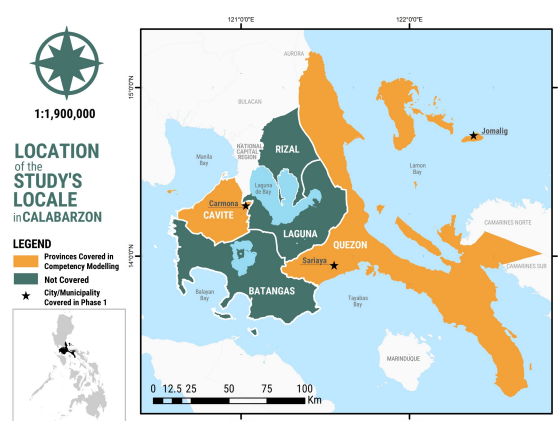
The findings of Greenlee et al. (2015) guided the selection of the provinces engaged in the competency research. Their findings pointed out that the valuation of select competencies varies among localities with huge losses, neutral, and large increases in their decadal population growth rates. For instance, they found that evaluation, grantsmanship, and data analysis skills were valued more in municipalities with a decreasing population than in other localities.

The competency modeling study had to reflect the possible variation in terms of the cited local government characteristics. Hence, the provinces selected for the study were Cavite and Quezon, which are from the same region but have different decadal average annual population growth rates (AAPGR) based on 2010 and 2020 data. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recorded a decadal AAPGR of 3.46% in Cavite. This provincial AAPGR was the highest in the region and the third highest nationwide during that period (PSA, 2021). On the contrary, Quezon only recorded a 1.14% AAPGR, the lowest in the region and the only provincial AAPGR lower than the national average of 1.67% (PSA, 2021).

### 3.3.2 The Planners during the Role Ideation Stage

The initial set of local planners included in the role and competency ideation stage was also selected from the two provinces. Marrelli et al. (2005) recommended the inclusion of a criterion sample composed of informants known to have exemplary performance. Hence, the planners from the City Government of Carmona in Cavite served as the first informants. The LGU received the *Gawad Husay sa Pagpapalano Award* from the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD, formerly HLURB) in 2021 and 2022 for its exemplary performance of urban planning functions. The city has an approved CLUP and a CDP that passed the inter-agency CDP-Technical Assessment Committee review. The LPDO spearheaded the formulation of these plans without the assistance of external consultants. The city also consistently received a high LDC Functionality rating from the DILG. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) also commended them for having the Best Local Project Monitoring Committee (LPMC) from 2018 to 2020. Carmona's LPDC also served as the President of the regional league of local planners. Regarding the LGU characteristics, Carmona was a built-up-dominated city with an AAPGR that was more than twice the national average at 3.54% in 2020.

To ensure a variety of informants, planners from LGUs with contrasting spatial and institutional conditions were also consulted. Here, the population trajectory and the dominant land cover were considered when selecting the other localities. The other LGUs engaged in the roles and competency ideation stage are the municipalities of Jomalig and Sariaya in Quezon Province. A predominantly forested municipality, Jomalig had less than 1% built-up coverage based on the data from Esri in 2020 (Karra et al., 2021). Jomalig also had the smallest population (7,667 residents) in the Calabarzon region, had no urban population, and had a 2010-2020 AAPGR below the national average. On the other hand, Sariaya had more built-up coverage (27.17%) and a decadal AAPGR that was a little lower than the national average (i.e., 1.54% or 0.13% lower than the national record) (PSA, 2021; Karra et al., 2021). Figure 3 presents the location of the study's locale.



Source: Author's Construct, with shapefiles from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA)

Figure 3. Location of the study's locale

In terms of institutional arrangements, the LPDOs of Jomalig and Sariaya also performed zoning administration functions, as they did not have separate offices for these purposes. Meanwhile, the Carmona has separate offices for planning and zoning administration. To consider this variation, the authors consulted both the LPDO and the Zoning Administration Office (ZAO) of Carmona. Additionally, Carmona has also recently created a separate department for housing and urban development initiatives.

For clarity, the transcripts presented in this paper were translated into English. In analyzing the data, the KII transcripts from Carmona and findings from the reviewed literature were examined to create the initial list of planners' roles. The LPDCs of Jomalig and Sariaya also shared their roles through interviews and email exchanges, which were also integrated into the list from Carmona. Only the LPDCs of the two LGUs were consulted, as they were primarily engaged in the actual planning work. Their other LPDO staff focus more on administrative and support functions. The list of informants is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. List of the study's informants

Code	LGU	Primary Role/s
LPDC 1	Carmona	Supervisory, Comprehensive, and Sectoral Planning
LPDC 2 (former)	Jomalig	Supervisory, Comprehensive and Sectoral Planning, Financial Planning, Zoning Administration
LPDC 3	Sariaya	Supervisory, Comprehensive and Sectoral Planning, Project Management, Zoning Administration
LPDC 4 (current)	Jomalig	Supervisory, Comprehensive and Sectoral Planning, Financial Planning, Zoning Administration
Planner 1	Carmona	Project Management, Comprehensive and Sectoral Planning
Planner 2	Carmona	Information and Knowledge Management
Planner 3	Carmona	Sectoral Planning
Planner 4	Carmona	GIS-based Analysis and Mapping
Planner 5	Carmona	Technical Writing, Project Development
Z Officer 1	Carmona	Supervisory, Zoning Administration
Z Officer 2	Carmona	Zoning Administration

Source: Authors' study

The roles were eventually presented to and vetted by the local planners as part of the presentation of the proposed competency model/framework.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

##### 4.1 The Prevailing Planning Roles

Primarily based on the review of secondary literature and planners' narratives, the local planners' roles are grouped into eight categories – (1) information and knowledge management, (2) comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning and programming, (3) sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion, (4) *project development and management*, (5) *policy research*, (6) *zoning administration and development regulation*, (7) *monitoring and evaluation*, and (8) public information and advocacy.

The *italicized* items represent the new themes added from the initial groupings of Serote (2024), indicating that planners remained involved in plan implementation functions. Meanwhile, investment programming is subsumed under comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning, as local planners and planning guidelines suggest that the formulation of investment programs should be taken as a part or extension of the development planning process.

Additionally, the “secretariat services to the LDC” theme was expanded, which supports Serote’s (2024) recommendation to establish a sectoral coordination and people participation division, as well as a public information and advocacy service unit, within the LPDO. It was evident from the transcripts that the LPDOs provide not just secretariat support but also coordination and technical assistance to the LDC and many other planning and advisory bodies in the LGU.

##### 4.1.1 Information and Knowledge Management

*“You cannot formulate a plan if you do not know the problem.”* [LPDC 1]

*“We consolidate the data from the different sectors, which will be used as the basis for planning.”* [LPDC 2]

For local planners, uncovering a development issue is considered one of the initial steps in any planning work. Local planners should then collect, process, and analyze data and information about the local situation to uncover the development issues and craft appropriate strategies to address them. These will also be used by the planning team, LDC, other advisory/legislative bodies, and LGU offices as guides in their decision-making.

In the three LGUs, the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) survey remains the prime data source for planning, program implementation, and impact monitoring. It involves a technology-based collection of household data on various aspects of poverty, such as health and sanitation conditions, access to utilities, housing characteristics, educational attainment, and income sources. The LPDO spearheads

the implementation of this survey, particularly in the hiring and training of enumerators, as well as the consolidation, processing, and analysis of data.

The local planners also emphasized the importance of utilizing available secondary data for planning, including population data from the PSA, remote sensing data, geodata from NAMRIA, and reports from other departments within the LGU, the provincial government, and NGAs.

Local planners also emphasized the importance of combining primary and secondary data to gain a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon. For instance, in Carmona, the LPDO combined the narratives of the elderly with secondary land use and hazard data to come up with a more realistic and contextualized climate and disaster risk assessment (CDRA). The LGU utilized this not only for the CLUP but also for its Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (LDRRMP). They conducted this in 2010, prior to the issuance of the HLURB’s Supplemental Guidelines on Mainstreaming Climate Change and Disaster Risks in the CLUP.

*“You cannot formulate a plan if you do not have a background or situation analysis. So, I instructed my staff and enumerators to go to barangays and ask the elderly or anyone there about the disasters that occurred in the past. When did they happen? What happened? They were able to capture the eruption of the volcano. We discovered that, during that time, everyone was affected by ash. In other areas, flooding occurred before. We were able to record them through these interviews. Since we already have the data, we can now start. We then combined the information from the land use map, slope map, and hazard map.”* [LPDC 1]

Local planners also utilize various techniques and tools to analyze data to discover patterns, forecast scenarios, and develop new knowledge. In the three municipalities, their LPDO is primarily responsible for analyzing the locality’s human population in terms of its size and structure to create projections. They also collect and analyze voluminous data about the past and current condition of the LGU in terms of the five development sectors (i.e., social, economic, infrastructure/physical, environment and natural resources, and institutional sectors).

In Carmona, the LPDO maximized the use of REDAS (Rapid Earthquake Damage Assessment System), a software developed by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology to simulate earthquake hazards such as ground shaking, liquefaction, and landslides. In Sariaya, the LPDC utilized GIS-based modeling to forecast the possible impact of natural hazards in their municipality.

*“What I did was modeling. I input certain situations. For example, if the wind speed is like this, how far can the sea waves reach? But you still need to have good data. If you don’t have good data, the output will suffer.”* [LPDC 3]

As shared by the LPDO of Carmona, the multi-sectoral data collected by their office are then

consolidated in a planning database/report. Here, time-series data from the city/municipal level were compared with that of the larger (i.e., provincial/regional) and smaller spatial units (i.e., *barangays*), depending on data availability. Based on these consolidated data, the LPDO develops an Ecological Profile, a comprehensive backgrounder of the LGU regarding the five development sectors. These planning profiles and databases are also shared with other LGU offices and planning bodies to aid in decision-making. LPDC 4 of Jomalig noted that while the LPDO currently spearheads the establishment of these databases, the planning head intends to mobilize other LGU offices (e.g., Social Welfare and Development Office for social sector data) for the eventual updating of sectoral data.

It is evident that local planners are not just involved in gathering and analyzing data. They also explore trends and generate new intelligence (e.g., future scenarios, primary development needs, primary locations requiring assistance) that can identify the major decision areas for planning. Planners also package this processed information into shareable planning outputs. Considering this, the “information management” function of Serote (2024) is being suggested to be renamed as “information and knowledge management.”

#### 4.1.2 Comprehensive and Multi-sectoral Planning and Programming

The LPDO facilitates the multi-stakeholder formulation of integrated and harmonized comprehensive and sectoral plans. Besides the CLUP and CDP, which are the mandated comprehensive plans expected of city and municipal governments, the LPDO also facilitates the planning process for the formulation of select sectoral plans. In Carmona, the LPDO usually leads in developing plans and strategies related to housing, gender and development, transportation and traffic management, peace and order, and rehabilitation and recovery from public emergencies. In Sariaya, the LPDO previously facilitated the drafting of environmental management plans, such as the Ecological Solid Waste Management Plan.

While the LPDO may not be the primary unit in charge of preparing other sectoral plans and strategies, they are often part of the sectoral TWG or committee created for that purpose. For LPDC 3, the LPDO staff are always there to provide data and ensure that these sectoral plans and strategies are harmonized. The LPDO also ensures that sectoral plans and strategies are aligned with the long-term vision and development thrusts of the local government.

*“The M[L]PDC’s focus is more on plan integration. We integrate and harmonize plans such that they are geared toward one direction. That’s why we are also involved in the planning activities of other offices. For example, the M[L]PDO has a Shelter Plan, then the Engineering Office is planning to construct a new terminal that is very distant from the housing site. We will say that it should be located here because of our proposed housing project to ensure walkability.” [LPDC 3]*

While the goal of RPS to reduce the planning documents of LGUs is yet to be realized, it is noticeable that local planners find ways to anchor their sectoral and thematic plans to the overall vision and goals stipulated in their CLUP and CDP.

As part of comprehensive development planning, the LPDO also assists the LDC in crafting the three-year Local Development Investment Program (LDIP) and its annual component, the Annual Investment Program (AIP). These programming documents contain brief information on the prioritized and harmonized PPAs that the LGU should pick for funding. Investment programming identifies the financing approach for how these priority interventions will be funded using its annual budget and other special fund generation schemes.

Considering the strong relationship between CDP and LDIP, this study proposes that the investment programming role, initially separated in Serote’s (2024) local planner roles typologies, be subsumed under comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning. This integration also supports the LPDO structure proposed by Serote (2024), wherein planning and programming functions are suggested to be undertaken by one division.

Supporting the proposal are data from the DILG, which indicate that there are LGUs that integrate their LDIP as part of the CDP. In the subsequent interviews with subject matter experts as part of the competency modeling process, the requisite knowledge and skills needed for investment programming closely resemble those required for development planning. Even sectoral planning guidelines call for matching solutions with the available resources that an LGU has.

Associating investment programming with development planning in the planner roles typologies will also help address the non-linkage between CDP and the LGU’s annual budget. There are times when the LGU relies solely on its investment program as the primary basis for budgeting. In Jomalig, they have an AIP that lists the priority PPAs, which are not necessarily derived from a CDP and directed towards a long-term vision. Because of this, one of Jomalig’s priorities for 2025 is to prepare a CDP that identifies long-term goals, from which they can identify small interventions that, when combined, create the big reforms needed for their citizens. This development planning approach is particularly applicable for low-income LGUs like Jomalig, which require more time and resources to implement large-scale projects. For instance, while they cannot establish a centralized Materials Recovery Facility in one year, small yearly projects and purchases can be implemented, leading to an operational facility within the CDP’s timeframe.

Additionally, there are cases where the Executive-Legislative Agenda (ELA), which presents the converging priorities of the executive and legislative departments of the LGU, becomes the basis for investment programming and budgeting. In its 2019 clarificatory guidelines, the DILG emphasized, however, that the ELA’s priorities should remain anchored on the

development goals, objectives, and strategies embodied in a local situation-based CDP. These local scenarios and guidelines further justify the need to integrate investment programming under the comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning role.

#### 4.1.3 Sectoral Coordination and Public Participation Promotion

In relation to comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning, the LPDO in the three municipalities provides a venue for the different LGU offices and external stakeholders to participate in local governance. Representatives of national government agencies, provincial and barangay LGUs, CSOs, interest groups, academe, and international organizations are given opportunities to participate in city/municipal governance.

*"In the LDC, we engaged many CSO representatives. We have more than the minimum ¼ requirement. We added representatives from the children, PWD, elderly, industries, and women. We involved many CSO representatives to lessen our burden. During the LDC meetings, we were already able to gauge their needs and opinions."* [LPDC 1]

The LPDOs head and supervise the secretariat of the LDC. In this regard, the LPDOs organize and coordinate the activities of the Council. They prepare and keep the activity proceedings and recommend the meeting agenda to the Mayor or LCE, who serves as the LDC Chairperson. The LPDOs also organize multi-disciplinary teams/committees that can help the LDC and the *Sanggunian* craft, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of plans and policies. In Carmona, Jomalig, and Sariaya, functional committees per development sector are also present in their LDC.

Besides the LDC, the LPDOs in Jomalig and Sariaya also organize and convene the Local Finance Committee (LFC). Composed of the LPDC, Local Treasurer, and Local Budget Officer, the committee generates the medium-term (3-6 years) forecasts for the LGU's financial resources from internal (e.g., locally sourced revenue) and external sources (e.g., National Tax Allotment from the national government). The LFC also prepares the Local Resource Mobilization Program (LRMP) and Financing Plan for the implementation of PPAs in the LDIP (DILG, 2017). For the former LPDC of Jomalig, preparing the financing plan is very difficult, which can be attributed to the limited resources in their fifth-income class municipality.

Although various guidelines indicate that a collaborative approach should be the norm in planning and budgeting, some local planners are still having difficulty stirring the participation of the different stakeholders in these activities. LPDC 3 mentioned that he had even encountered difficulty in encouraging his fellow LGU officers to participate actively in planning workshops.

*"The difficult part is convincing the stakeholders to participate. Some are very willing. Others are very hesitant, especially my co-department heads. They have this connotation that planning is only LPDO's work. What they don't realize is their participation is what will help develop a plan."* [LPDC 3]

Another major concern was managing the competing views and interests of stakeholders engaged in planning. During LDC meetings and CDP workshops, for instance, LPDC 3 mentioned that some Punong Barangays would question the selection of project sites and beneficiaries.

*"You will be asked by the community leader, why don't we get a feeding program unlike them? I will just respond, the incidence of malnutrition in your community is low."* [LPDC 3]

In Carmona, the LPDO also encountered resistance from developers and land speculators in its most recent land use plan revision. They considered an area agricultural, prompting opposition from the lawyers of a developer present at a public consultation workshop. The LPDC mentioned that in cases like this, planners are expected to support their response with a legal basis and a strong rationale for why the LGU's proposed spatial framework appears as it does.

#### 4.1.4 Project Development and Management

Transforming the project briefs from the investment program into detailed project proposals and budget requests will be the role of the implementing units. The concerned LGU Departments/Offices shall also be responsible for the procurement of the "goods, services, equipment, civil works, and consulting services required for the implementation of PPAs" (Department of Budget and Management, 2023, p. 173). Nevertheless, there are instances when the LPDO also plays vital roles in project development and management. Specifically, they are often engaged in crafting formal funding requests, as pointed out by Planner 1.

*"When it comes to preparing proposals and feasibility studies, the Planning Office is usually involved, if not the lead office."* [Planner 1]

LPDOs in Carmona and Sariaya experienced preparing proposals for various program windows of the national government, including the Assistance to Municipalities and Performance Challenge Fund of the DILG, as well as the Philippine Rural Development Project of the Department of Agriculture. Additionally, they have experience with financing agreements, such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP). For big-ticket projects, such as the Agricultural Trading Center in Sariaya, the LPDO also took the lead in preparing the feasibility study.

The LPDCs in Carmona and Sariaya also served as project managers for the development of a site for a particular purpose. The LPDC of Carmona served as

the project manager for the development of a commercial center that housed an integrated terminal and public market. The LPDC of Sariaya served as the project manager for the development of their new government center. As project managers, they led in the mobilization and management of resources to efficiently achieve their targets within the expected timeframe. They were also engaged in providing detailed guidance on the site's overall theme, including the appropriate placements of its components. The LPDC of Sariaya narrated his experience in planning their new government center, wherein the LPDO played a key role in site planning.

*"For example, in developing our new government center, the M[L]PDO prepared the site development plan...The M[L]PDC's focus is on the overall look, the relationships of every component, including their interactions with the neighboring area. Where will the runoff go? We also consider the basic human needs; for example, where are we going to get the water supply? How far is it from a waste treatment facility?...The overall theme is Art Deco. You will then consult the architect to come up with art deco-designed buildings. As they say, the planner is the conductor. Architect, the design should be like this. Engineer, the structures should be able to withstand a magnitude seven earthquake. MENRO, we should be planting endemic plant species. Also, engineer, we should place solar-powered streetlights. We create the total theme of the site and the location where the utilities should be placed. In selecting the site, it should abide by the Zoning Ordinance; hence, the project actually starts with the planner."* [LPDC 3]

Based on the narratives from Carmona and Sariaya, local planners are being involved in project development and management, particularly concerning area development or site planning. Although this is not explicitly provided under the LPDO functions in RA No. 7160, this role can be considered within the scope of environmental planning practice under RA No. 10587.

On the other hand, while LPDC 4 has no experience yet in project management similar to the other LPDCs, she emphasized that some planners hold key positions in the LGU's Bids and Awards Committee (BAC). She mentioned that the former LPDC used to be the BAC Chair, and now she acts as the Vice Chair. Here, project management competencies will be helpful in evaluating bid proposals in relation to project requirements.

#### 4.1.5 Policy Research

In addition to assisting in ZO formulation and preparing measures for attracting private investments identified by Serote (2024), this study presents different scenarios in which LPDO plays a crucial role in policy formulation and analysis. As LPDC 3 underscored, the strategies in local plans should be translated into policies (ordinances of the Sanggunian or executive issuances of the Mayor) to ensure their effective implementation.

*"Plans can only be implemented if there are implementing tools, and policies are the usual implementing tools. If the plan is not translated into a policy, it will not be implemented. For instance, no matter how beautiful your CLUP is, if it did not end up as a Zoning Ordinance, it will not have power; you cannot implement it."* [LPDC 3]

As the secretariat of the LDC, LPDOs assist the Council and its sectoral committees in crafting policy recommendations that will advance its sectoral goals. For instance, the LPDO in the consulted LGUs had assisted the LDC and the *Sanggunian* in preparing incentive schemes to promote development in a specific area of their locality. However, Carmona has a different story recently, where development controls are given more attention.

Since Carmona is experiencing rapid urbanization, the LGU's *Sanggunian* usually asks its local planners and zoning officers for their technical advice on proposed development controls. In Carmona, the LPDO and ZAO jointly proposed to the *Sanggunian* for the imposition of a moratorium on issuing business permits for new car washes and water refilling stations due to the frequent water shortage experienced by the city. They also suggested that the *Sanggunian* impose a moratorium on new warehousing and low-cost housing, as similar developments have consumed a bulk of the already limited buildable area in the city. Additionally, previous low-cost housing projects led to massive in-migration, placing a significant strain on the city's public utilities and social services.

In Sariaya, the LPDO assisted the *Sanggunian* in developing more science- and evidence-based policies related to traffic management. In 2019, they recommended to the *Sanggunian* the most effective traffic routes that will be contained in their Traffic Code.

*"If we want a science-based Traffic Code, I recommended to our Councilor [Sanggunian Member] that we perform analysis and simulations first. At the outset, we cannot say that if we prohibit tricycles there, traffic congestion will no longer occur."* [LPDC 3]

There were also instances in which local planners dealt with unconventional policy concerns. In Sariaya, for example, the *Sanggunian* asked them how to regulate the frequency of radiotelephones. An establishment in the municipality operated with very sensitive information and asked the *Sanggunian* to act on it. Since there were some spatial concerns, the *Sanggunian* asked for the LPDO's advice on the matter.

#### 4.1.6 Zoning Administration and Development Regulation

In Sariaya and Jomalig, the implementation or enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance and other development regulations falls under the responsibilities of the LPDO, with their LPDCs serving as concurrent Zoning Administrators. On the other hand, the

overwhelming number of locational clearance and development permit applications in Carmona prompted the city government to create a ZAO separate from LPDO.

The LPDO or ZAO acts on all applications for locational clearance and development permits. The locational clearance indicates that a project is allowed under the ZO and other local development regulations. In the three LGUs, the clearance is also a prerequisite for business permitting and licensing. Requirements for locational clearance also vary depending on the type of project. For instance, in Carmona, the ZAO requires industrial business establishments to submit an Environmental Clearance Certificate or a Certificate of Non-coverage, along with a narrative description of waste disposal and anti-pollution measures, in addition to the usual requirements such as a vicinity map and a site development plan. In Sariaya, the LPDC admitted that they are strict when it comes to parking space requirements for commercial establishments. Without adequate parking spaces, managing traffic will be more difficult, as Sariaya's main road is already busy, being part of the Pan-Philippine Highway System. In Jomalig, zoning administration plays a crucial role in ensuring that establishments align with the LGU's efforts for environmental conservation.

Appeals on the Zoning Administrator's grant or denial of Locational Clearance are forwarded to the Local Zoning Board of Appeals (LZBA). Chaired by the LCE, the Board can issue a variance or exception depending on the situation. HLURB (2014) defines variance as a device that grants a property owner relief from certain technical requirements (e.g., building bulk and density regulations, design regulations) of the ZO due to undue hardship in developing the area, resulting from its physical condition (e.g., shape and topography). On the other hand, exceptions may be granted for proposed developments that are beyond the allowable use in the area as long as they adhere to the conditions outlined in the ZO. For example, the LZBA may issue an exception if the proposed development will not adversely affect the welfare of the public and "is in keeping with the general pattern of development in the community" (HLURB, 2014, p. 74). In Carmona, the LPDO serves as the secretariat of the Board, and the LPDC sits in the LZBA.

The LPDO or ZAO also acts on the application for development permits for subdivision and memorial park projects. In the three LGUs, the Zoning Administrators evaluate the site development plan and the other requirements submitted by a developer to provide sound recommendations to the Sanggunian on whether to approve or disapprove the application.

In the three LGUs, the public is also encouraged to consult with the Zoning Administrator/Officer even during the planning stage of a project to avoid alterations during mid- or post-construction.

The zoning administration role does not end after the issuance of locational clearance or development permits. In Sariaya, site inspections are usually done at the pre-, mid-, and post-construction phases of a

project, especially for large-scale ones like subdivision projects. In Carmona, a developer is even required to pay an alteration permit fee if the Zoning Administrator finds discrepancies between the constructed project and the LGU-approved plan.

The LPDCs in Sariaya and Carmona considered zoning administration the most complex role that a local planner has, as it directly impacts people's lives. There are still residents who question the need for regulating the use of a property even if they already own it. There are also instances where personal quarrels got in the way. For example, LPDC 3 received a complaint requesting the disapproval of a locational clearance solely because a person had a personal vendetta against their neighbor.

In Carmona, ZAO sometimes experienced difficulty enforcing ZO and other development controls in situations involving informal settlers. There were also instances when the LGU had to issue closure orders to establishments that continued their operations despite warnings.

*"Mostly, the issue is with illegal [informal] settlers or those constructing something in the wrong place. They are usually difficult to deal with. Despite your plea, they will continue. They are still there."* [Z Officer 2]

#### 4.1.7 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

In the three LGUs, M&E is also deemed one of the primary tasks of the LPDO. Hence, another update in Serote's (2024) grouping of planning functions is segmenting the M&E from the planners' information management roles. Interviews with research participants indicate that they are not only consolidating and analyzing M&E data, but also developing and implementing assessment mechanisms to monitor a program, project, or activity and evaluate its outcomes and impacts. According to the local planners interviewed, their emphasis is usually on the PPAs included in the LGU's investment program and those funded by national and international financing grants. This task requires close coordination with various departments/offices within the LGU, as well as external stakeholders (e.g., funding agencies) who have a stake in the implementation of these interventions.

The three LPDOs also serve as the secretariat of the Local Project Monitoring Committee (LPMC). This local body, traditionally composed of representatives from DILG, NGOs/People's Organizations, and LDC, promotes transparency and accountability in project implementation. The LPMCs are not created to do the project monitoring work for the LGU's departments that primarily implement the PPAs. As provided in the DILG's guidelines for organizing and reconstituting LPMCs, the Committee should collect and process the monitoring reports from the implementers and validate these through monitoring visits and field inspections.

Specifically, the LPDO is responsible for preparing the M&E work program to be undertaken by the LPMC based on the roster of projects and their implementation schedule. The LPDC of Carmona added that during the

LPMC monitoring activities, they also ask project implementers about the problems they encountered. This information greatly helps her team in investment programming, particularly in scheduling PPAs.

The M&E roles undertaken by LPDO highlight that project monitoring consumes a significant portion of their time, which could have been undertaken by the specific offices that implement PPAs. Hence, while the local planners can be considered “good” in project monitoring, the LPDC of Sariaya noted that they still have a lot to do and learn in outcome and impact evaluation, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of social programs.

*“Evaluation in physical planning is easier. How about monitoring other sectors, like the social and institutional sector projects? It’s difficult to say if they are effective.”* [LPDC 3]

In addition to project M&E, local planners also keep track of land use changes in their LGU. From the data on locational clearances, development permits, variance, and exceptions issued by the LGU, they analyze whether the CLUP and ZO are still relevant and being followed.

#### 4.1.8 Public Information and Advocacy

To differentiate this role from sectoral coordination and public participation promotion, public information and advocacy deals with communicating with stakeholders who are not directly involved in the plan formulation process. This is captured in the sharing of Carmona’s LPDO and ZAO.

*“We conduct motorcades to inform the people about the development restrictions we have.”* [Z Officer 2]

In Carmona, the LPDO and ZAO initiate activities to increase people’s awareness of the concepts and contents of their plans and development regulations. In addition to barangay-level consultations during the planning stage, the LPDO and ZAO also organize community-level workshops to inform the barangay officials and their constituents on the salient points of their CLUP and ZO. It is also their way of gathering the community’s feedback on the approved plan, which they consider in the subsequent updating of their plans. For the LPDC of Carmona, these workshops are also good ways to educate the barangay LGUs and the public about local planning. In turn, their participation in future planning activities would be more meaningful.

Carmona’s ZAO is already witnessing the fruits of its public information campaigns. People in their city often go to ZAO or LPDO to inquire about the allowable use of their owned lands or the property they are interested in buying.

*“When someone is buying land, they will consult with ZAO and ask if their proposed development is allowed. At least they are informed in advance. Sometimes, they don’t buy it if the proposal is not allowed.”* [Z Officer 2]

Local planners also perform advocacy work to promote the development agenda of a given planning area. They communicate with decision-makers, local officials, and the public to transform the recommended ideas into concrete actions. As mentioned by the LPDC of Sariaya, a planner should be a good seller of ideas.

*“A planner needs to be a good seller. No matter how good a plan is, if you cannot sell it to decision-makers, it will just remain a plan.”* [LPDC 3]

Another critical advocacy that local planners should take is keeping the LGU on track with its long-term goals. As LPDC 4 stressed, *“A planner must always go back to what is in the plan, and not be swayed too easily by the political leaders or by every request from the people.”*

#### 4.1.9 Intervening Tasks

In addition to the roles mentioned, the LPDOs in Carmona and Sariaya are also engaged in preparing data and documents for the recognition, awards, and incentives programs in which the LGU participates. They took charge of ensuring that the LGU is ready for comprehensive assessment systems, such as the Seal of Good Local Governance of the DILG, as well as for sectoral assessments like the Competitiveness Index and the Child-Friendly Local Government Audit (CFLGA).

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the LPDO in Carmona was also engaged in targeting beneficiaries for amelioration programs. They assisted the Local Social Welfare and Development Office and the DSWD in identifying the beneficiaries of financial support from the government and the private sector.

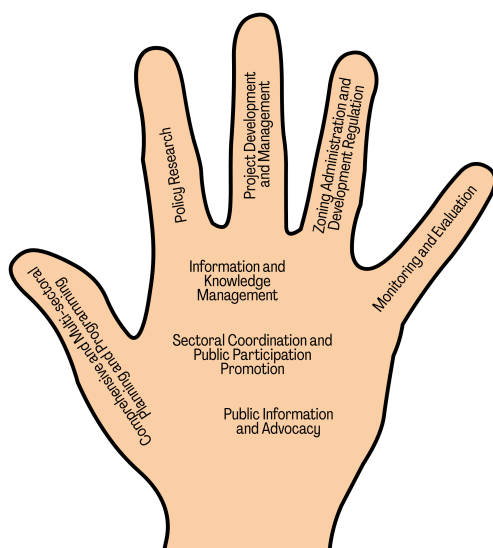
*“We have a lot of roles. Some are intervening roles that are not part of our actual job. For example, in the provision of [social] amelioration, we should not be part of it...But, no, we were, and we reached night and dawn in the office because we have the CBMS data.”* [LPDC 1]

Some local planners are also engaged in human resource management tasks that concern the whole LGU. In Carmona, the LPDC also heads the Committee on Strategic Performance Management System (SPMS), a mechanism meant to assess an employee or office in relation to organizational targets. SPMS serves as the primary basis for the LGU in providing performance-based incentives and promotions to employees. The LPDC believed that since the LPDO was instrumental in setting the vision and targets of the LGU, the implementation of SPMS was placed under their purview.

Another reason given by local planners for designating these intervening tasks to the LPDO is their involvement in information and knowledge management and sectoral coordination. As shared by LPDC 1: *“It is like a hand, the different offices in the LGU have their specific roles, then, we are at the palm, we hold all the offices and sectors together. We know everything that’s happening in all*

the sectors. We have all the data because we are the ones formulating the multi-sectoral and comprehensive plans. We are like the backbone of the LGU, right?"

Overall, the intervening tasks mentioned by the local planners can still be aligned with the eight general roles of city and municipal planners. To recapitulate, the primary roles of local planners, inspired by the sharing of LPDC 1, are presented as a hand, as illustrated in Figure 4.



Source: Authors' construct; hand graphic sourced from Canva Pro (Pro content license)

Figure 4. The primary local planners' roles

At the palm are information and knowledge management, sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion, and public information and advocacy, which reflect the fundamental principle of ensuring that planning is evidence-based, data-driven, and collaborative. Each finger represents the specific responsibilities of LPDO, including roles in comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning and programming, project development and management, policy research, zoning administration and development regulation, and monitoring and evaluation. It should be construed that each part has equal importance as they create a whole hand that works seamlessly.

#### 4.2 Relating the Local Planners' Roles to Planning Theories

When taken together, the eight roles indicate that the local planning practice in the consulted LGUs cannot be boxed in only one theory or model. As a starting point, the extent of planning roles underscored that local planners are not only engaged in preparing the blueprint of a desirable urban form inherent to the early "blueprint" era of planning. For example, local planners are also involved in providing policy recommendations to decision-makers on various matters concerning land use and development regulation, investment and incentive mechanisms, and the general welfare. They are also engaged in crafting comprehensive and sectoral plans that encompass broader thematic areas beyond the

initial planning concerns, such as land use patterns. These findings support the emergence of the rational comprehensive planning (RCP) paradigm, where planning can be viewed as a general societal management process, rather than just a design process (Allmendinger, 2017).

This RCP paradigm is primarily manifested in the key roles assigned to local planners under LGC, particularly in information and knowledge management, comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning and programming, and policy research. These responsibilities illustrate the long-term planning and programming functions of LPDO, through which planners help shape the strategic direction of their LGU. As LGC prescribes these roles, they form the core mandates of the LPDO.

However, in RCP, implementing a planning alternative is still considered beyond the planning realm (Olesen, 2018). This setup may no longer be the case for the local planners interviewed. They are no longer like rational comprehensive planners who only provide advice or recommendations to decision-makers who will then implement and manage the chosen alternatives. Tasks related to zoning and development regulation, project management, and monitoring and evaluation suggest that they are also engaged in the implementation and evaluation of certain policies and projects. Although some of these activities are not explicitly listed among the primary responsibilities of planners under RA No. 7160, they appear to support the broader management functions of LGUs, which include leading, generating, controlling, and managing resources to achieve their development goals (e.g., desired urban form, banner priorities). And because these goals are articulated in local plans and investment programs, planners eventually become involved in their execution, taking on these functions as ad hoc responsibilities.

From the standpoint of planning theories, these expanded roles reflect the systems model of planning. In this model, an LGU can be considered a system, and planning can be a way to regulate (i.e., control over private investments, mainly captured in CLUP-ZO implementation) and redirect this system (i.e., action through public investments, as primarily featured in CDP). In this context, local planners are not only engaged in defining the problem, analyzing the situation, and identifying and comparing alternatives, but also in developing and implementing solutions. They also play critical roles in implementing and evaluating the impact of the chosen planning alternative on the system (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019; Allmendinger, 2017).

Notably, the systems model also acknowledges that planners are not usually the final decision-makers. This feature is evident in the narratives of local planners, who report that their outputs must be approved or accepted by the *Sanggunian* or development councils. Even as they participate in the plan implementation process, their decision can still be appealed, such as their disapproval of an application for locational clearance, which can be appealed to LZBA.

However, the systems model may not be enough to characterize the local planning practice in the participating LGUs. One of the criticisms of systems planning is that it fails to highlight public participation, as this model remains planner-centric (Olesen, 2018; Allmendinger, 2017). In addition, similar to RCP, the systems approach also requires planners to have superior knowledge and skills, which may be beyond human cognitive limits (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019; Allmendinger, 2017).

High regard given by local planners to collaborative and participatory planning approaches contradicts these aspects of systems planning. Likewise, local planners no longer monopolize the planning process. Existing local planning guidelines in the Philippines encourage the participation of executive and legislative actors within the LGU, as well as CSOs, in the planning process. With this, local planning has evolved into a more interactive process, creating a forum for discourse to facilitate discussion and collaboration among various stakeholders (Connell, 2010; Allmendinger, 2017). Undoubtedly, local planners also now act as communicators and mediators who “facilitate the flow of information among various political and social actors” involved in the planning process (Megahed et al., 2019, p. 4). The multi-stakeholder participation element of the communicative paradigm, in effect, helped address the primary drawback of systems planning regarding the need for planners to have superior knowledge and skills to rationally and comprehensively address wicked societal problems.

In addition, the need for planners to be good sellers of ideas to decision-makers requires them to have a sense of the power dynamics within the LGU. Additionally, the challenge of managing competing views and resistance appears to be a critical part of local planning work. These insights support the proposition made by Innes (1995) that planners should strive to integrate themselves into the fabric of the social and political sphere.

Taken collectively, the roles played by the consulted local planners and depicted in the planners' hand in Figure 4 suggest a “systems planning model implemented in a more or less communicative fashion,” which can be a typology of the combined analytical-rational and communicative approach of Diller et al. (2018).

Moreover, it is worth noting that these expansive roles and manifestations of planning theories and models do not happen by chance. The image of the Filipino local planner as both technician and coordinator dates back to the 1970s, when a more collaborative planning framework was promoted. In 1974, MLGCD called for the organization of the City Planning and Development Board (CPDB) and the City Planning and Development Staff (CPDS). In principle, this structure suggested that the planning office or the local planning officer should not be executing all of the LGU's planning functions alone. The LGC further promotes the collaborative planning process. For example, the LGC considered the LDC as primarily responsible for

the formulation of CDP and investment programs, reinforcing the LPDO's role in sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion.

Similarly, selected systems planning-related functions also stem from actualizing planning guidelines. For instance, Executive Order No. 72 s. 1993[3] provided for the devolution of the roles and responsibilities of the then-HLURB in terms of plan preparation, updating, and implementation (including the issuance of locational clearance) to LGUs. During this time, local planners were among the selected LGU officers who were deputized as zoning officers due to their assumed familiarity with land use planning.

It is essential to note, however, that this analysis primarily focuses on the roles of local planners. A closer examination of the methods and techniques employed by local planners in generating planning outputs could reveal the presence of other planning models. For example, while existing guidelines promote comprehensive and systems planning approaches that ask planners to cover the entire territory of the LGU and all its development sectors, some planners may also function as incrementalists, who prioritize smaller, more manageable goals and strategies. Thus, while the “systems planning model implemented in a more or less communicative fashion” is documented in terms of the roles undertaken by planners, exploring additional planning parameters (as outlined in Appendix A) may reveal further theoretical manifestations in local planning practice.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study presented eight primary roles played by the consulted city and municipal planners: (1) information and knowledge management; (2) comprehensive and multi-sectoral planning and programming; (3) sectoral coordination and stakeholder participation promotion; (4) project development and management; (5) policy research; (6) zoning administration and development regulation; (7) monitoring and evaluation, and (8) public information and advocacy. This finding enriches the five broad categories of LPDO functions previously outlined by Serote (2008, 2024) through the RPS, by highlighting the roles that are either underemphasized or excluded. A key contribution of this study is the recognition of policy research as a primary role, underscoring the local planners' engagement in transforming planning ideas into implementable policies. Moreover, the planners' emphasis on their functions on zoning and development regulation, project development and management, and M&E cannot be overlooked, necessitating their inclusion in the roster of primary roles of consulted LPDOs. These deviations reflect a gap between the RPS's suggested functions and the lived realities of the consulted planners.

The eight roles appear like a cycle, starting with the local planners' roles in gathering, processing, analyzing, storing, and sharing data and information to facilitate strategic planning and decision-making. Based on these data and intelligence, planners facilitate the multi-

stakeholder formulation of integrated and harmonized plans and investment programs on economic, social, physical, environmental, and institutional concerns. They also support developing, mobilizing resources for, and implementing projects, especially those with spatial implications. They also carry out M&E strategies to monitor the progress of these projects. Meanwhile, evaluation for outcomes and impacts is yet to be strengthened in the covered LGUs. The local planners also analyze, draft, and review policy options related to investment promotion and urban development. Concerning these policies, planners also act as zoning administrators who assess proposed development projects in terms of their compliance with related national and local policies. They also check the potential impacts of the proposed projects on the LGU's social and physical environment. In performing these technical roles, the local planners find ways to collaborate with other government actors, CSOs, and interest groups. They also aspire to communicate the LGU's plans and zoning policies to the citizens, which the local planners consider a way to educate the public about planning.

Given its limited sampling, the findings of this study are not generalizable, but they reinforce theoretical expectations at best. In particular, the concept of RPS introduced by the DILG and Serote in 2008 of harmonizing and "taming" the local planning process is now taking shape. Considering the roles played by the city and municipal planners, local planning in the covered LGUs manifests a systems model "implemented in a more or less communicative fashion" (Diller et al., 2018, p. 244). While the scope of local planning manifests the systems paradigm, the planning process currently being observed by planners also exemplifies what Diller et al. (2018, p. 260) described as the "integration of communicative elements in established rational and analytical approaches."

The findings of this study can assist planning educators and practitioners. The study presents local scenarios to supplement the pedagogical approach proposed by Olesen (2018, p. 302) that involves "teaching planning theory as a variety of planner roles." The documented local planners' roles can also be used by planning educators as a reference for aligning their curricula and course content with the current local planning landscape.

Likewise, local planners can utilize the role typologies presented in this study to clarify or restructure their office's scope of work. Supervising planners can use this set of roles in setting or recalibrating their organizational targets, especially in reconfiguring their organizational structure, hiring new employees, and identifying their training needs.

For instance, this study recommends some equitable work arrangements at the LPDO in relation to other LGU offices. In high-income city governments, separate offices can be created to assume the previous ad hoc functions of LPDOs (e.g., zoning administration, housing, and urban development), as in the case of Carmona. In terms of M&E, LGUs may also devise a workable arrangement where local planners can focus

on long-term outcome and impact evaluation, while giving the implementing offices and the LPMC more roles in short-term project monitoring. For information and knowledge management, while the LPDO can lead the setting up of comprehensive databases, the eventual sectoral data updating can be undertaken by the other LGU offices and planning bodies. Through this setup, the LPDO can focus more on its primary functions and responsibilities as outlined in the LGC, particularly in long-term development planning.

For future research, interfacing the roles of other planning practitioners from other LGUs, the regional and national levels, the private sector, and academe with the planning theories can also help create a better understanding of the urban and regional planning practices in the Philippines. Case in point, some LGUs implement their plan formulation functions by engaging third-party consulting firms. Similarly, implementing urban development projects, as documented in the study, can also be outsourced or contracted out. A study that documents how local planners act in these planning and project implementation modes can create a more comprehensive picture of the local planning landscape. The local planners' roles and the theoretical manifestations in this mode can be compared to the experiences of the consulted planners in this study, who, in contrast, are highly engaged in the planning process.

Beyond the eight roles identified, the authors recommend looking into the emerging role of LGU planners in contributing to the broader planning system. This study has shown how planners consider data and frameworks from higher government levels (i.e., provincial to national) and engage barangay-level stakeholders in facilitating city/municipal planning. However, the role of city and municipal planners in influencing and ensuring that provincial, regional, and even national priorities align with the unique needs and characteristics of their localities remains an area that warrants further investigation. Recognizing this role will situate the local planning practice into the broader multi-level government planning and the need for planners to act as bridges across scales.

In light of this, the integrative role of planners in having a multi-level or multi-scalar understanding of realities from the ground up to the next higher level should also be emphasized. This should prompt the design of interventions that are well harmonized and have synergistic effects for the community and the larger planning area.

Lastly, it is worth noting that this analysis primarily focuses on the roles undertaken by local planners. Closely analyzing the specific process that local planners undergo as they develop a planning output may reveal more theoretical manifestations. Examining whether issuing authorities or national government agencies have a specific theory or model in mind when preparing critical planning guidelines for LGUs can also be a good direction for future research.

## Notes

[1] As provided in RA No. 10587, Environmental Planning is synonymous with urban and regional planning, city planning, town and country planning, and human settlements planning.

[2] As provided in RA No. 7160, the LDC is a multi-sectoral body composed of the Mayor, heads of barangays (the smallest political unit under a city/municipality), the Representative to the lower house of Congress (or his/her representative), and civil society organizations (CSOs). The LDC initiates the formulation of socio-economic development plans and policies, investment programs, and local investment incentives.

[3] The EO provides guidelines for the preparation and implementation of the CLUPs of LGUs pursuant to LGC and other pertinent laws

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*Relating the Planners' Roles to the Theories of Planning: Insights from the City and Municipal Planners in Three Philippine Local Government Units | JURP 2023*

Appendix A. Distinguishing characteristics of the different theories of planning

Parameter	Blueprint Approach	Rational Comprehensive Planning	Systems Approach	Incremental Planning	Mixed Scanning	Advocacy Planning	Communicative/ Collaborative Planning
<b>Ideal of planning</b>	Designing an ideal form of the city (Fainstein, 2005)	Knowing everything (e.g., all the dimensions of the problem and alternatives) to find the best means (Hudson et al., 1979)	Planning is a way to control the system (town, city, region as system) (Connell, 2010; Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019)	“Plan as you go along (disjointed incrementalism)” (Olesen, 2018, p. 319)	Planning can be both comprehensive and incremental to a certain extent (Etzioni, 1967)	Planning is an expression of values (Connell, 2010; Olesen, 2018)	Planning is an interactive and communicative social process (Olesen, 2018; Innes, 1995)
<b>Primary Proponents</b>	Ebenezer Howard, Tony Garnier, etc (Pre-modern era)	Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield	Brian McLoughlin and George Chadwick	Charles Lindblom	Amitai Etzioni	Paul Davidoff	John Forester, Patsy Healey, and Judith Innes
<b>Role of Planner</b>	Expert who prepares the plan alone (Planner-centric expert)	Expert who prepares a plan or develops a policy option alone. Planner takes a value-free, empirical, and objective stand (Connell, 2010; Olesen, 2018)	Planner is engaged in developing and implementing development promotion and control measures and in evaluating their impact on the system (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019)	Coordinator who seeks agreement from various institutions. Planner has lesser command in decision-making (in comparison to RCP) (Olesen, 2018)	Expert who develops plan or policy options alone. Should be objective as much as possible, but incremental decisions may somehow affect the level of analysis (Etzioni, 1967).	Planner is an advocate for the interests of groups (usually the disadvantaged) with values aligned to him/her (Connell, 2010; Olesen, 2018).	Planner is a facilitator and mediator that facilitates collaboration among stakeholders (Olesen, 2018; Allmendinger, 2017)
<b>Planning Process</b>	No theoretical argument on the “ideal” planning process. The output is given more emphasis (Fainstein, 2005)	Comprehensive analysis of a situation through “scientific methods.” Implementation is outside the planning realm (Allmendinger, 2017; Olesen, 2018)	Planning process is about a comprehensive analysis of a situation through “scientific methods” (Allmendinger, 2017)	Successive limited comparisons through consultations, starting from alternatives that differ in small degrees from the current policy or situation (Lindblom, 1959)	Planning involves combining comprehensive and incremental analysis of a situation (Etzioni, 1967).	Questioning the existing plan and making their own that will rival the “official” plan (Olesen, 2018)	Participatory/ collaborative process, primarily involves forum for free and open discourse (Olesen, 2018; Connell, 2010)
<b>Methods and Techniques</b>	Design Method (survey before design) (Yiftachel, 1989).	Methods for plan-making, surveys, spatial analysis, quantitative analysis (Hudson, et al., 1979; Olesen, 2018).	Modeling and other quantitative analysis (Allmendinger, 2017)	“Analysis of current (political) situation, bargaining, negotiating, muddling through” ( Olesen, 2018, p. 309)	Methods used in RCP and incremental planning, but the level of analysis is less comprehensive	Coming up with an alternative plan based on the values of interest groups (Olesen, 2018; Allmendinger, 2017)	Forum, dialogue, storytelling, and consensus-building (Olesen, 2018)
<b>Goals of Planning</b> (What decisions do planners make?)	To develop an urban form featuring an idealized future (Fainstein, 2005)	Studying and addressing issues on “land uses; human activities, patterns, and flows” (focus on physical results) (Connell, 2010, p. 276)	Similar to RCP	Focused on physical goals, but “short-term goals and only a few alternatives” are preferred (Olesen, 2018, p. 310)	Similar to RCP, but may involve long-term and short-term goals	Plan should provide solutions to address power inequalities (Connell, 2010)	Planning is about building trust and relationships for further collaboration (Olesen, 2018)

Source: Author’s analysis and synthesis based on various scholars, such as Olesen, 2018, pp. 309-310, and Connell, 2010, p. 276