

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY: THE CHANGING ROLES OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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Kia ora

Welcome to the first in a series of newsletters to update you on progress with my doctoral research project. You are receiving this because somewhere along the way you have given your time and expertise. You may have been a participant, an academic advisor, a colleague or directed me towards an important reference or person. A project of this nature takes some time and this one is no exception. This newsletter will highlight the progress I have made to date and the next steps. It is a little longer than future ones will be. Your interest and contribution are appreciated. Thank you.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

My research set out to understand how the roles of councillors were changing in the context of sustainable development and the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002. Through my work in local government it is clear to me that the role of local elected members is critical if New Zealand is to progress towards a more sustainable future. This research project is building on research that has been conducted in Europe, Canada and the United Kingdom to further understanding of governance for sustainability at the local level. To my knowledge it is one of the first research projects in New Zealand that is focusing on the roles of elected members since the 2002 reforms.

SOME KEY POINTS ABOUT THE LGA 2002

❖ The purpose of the LGA is:

to provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities... (LGA section 3)

❖ The Act describes a new purpose for local government namely:

to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of its communities; and

to enable democratic local decision-making and has the effect of broadening the role of local government in New Zealand (LGA section 10) .

- ❖ Special provisions for consultation and decision-making have changed the role of local government elected members from a representative to one that seeks a more participative style of leadership.
- ❖ Section 81 requires local authorities to provide for Maori involvement in decision making and to consider how it may foster the development of Maori capacity to participate.
- ❖ Local authorities are required to engage with their communities to identify what the community aspires for, now and in the future (called community outcomes).
- ❖ Each local authority is required to develop a 10-year strategic plan (called a Long-Term Council Community Plan - LTCCP) and to identify how the council will contribute to the achievement of community outcomes. The LTCCP is to be reviewed and reported on at least every three years.

In summary, the LGA 2002 reflects a shift from the old way that elected members approached their roles and responsibilities to one where a more collaborative style of community governance and leadership is sought. Elected members now have a role to play in effective governance for sustainability that follows the principle of subsidiarity i.e. decision-making at the lowest practical level¹, that of the communities they represent.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

My research explores how local government elected members in New Zealand may influence progress towards sustainable development. The approach taken is four-fold:

1. A review of literature relating to sustainability and local governance in Western local democracies. This has included research undertaken in Canada, Australia, America, the united Kingdom, Western Europe and Scandinavia.
2. For the next two parts of my research I chose to study five of New Zealand's most populous urban centres. The territorial authorities for their predominantly urban population with significant Maori and other ethnically diverse communities. The case studies are: Auckland City, Rotorua District, Tauranga City, Porirua City and Christchurch City. I explored the governance role of each council's elected members by analysing the Long-Term Council Community Plan 2006-16 (LTCCP) and related documents.
3. I invited elected members from the five urban territorial authorities to complete a self-selection questionnaire exploring their awareness and understanding of sustainability and their perception of the progress being made by their local authority.

¹ McKinlay, P. (2000). *Understanding community governance (Presentation to the Local Government New Zealand Conference 1999)*. Retrieved August 13, 2004, from <http://www.mdl.co.nz/readingroom>

4. Section 82 of the LGA 2002 highlights the significant place of Maori in New Zealand. Through interviews I am exploring a range of Māori world views as they relate to Māori and Pakeha governance and sustainability and Māori practices that could progress urban sustainability². This part of my research includes a wide literature review of Maori world views and experiences, Maori knowledge and the ethics of Maori research, and Maori submissions to the 2007 New Zealand Rates Inquiry.

PROGRESS

THESIS TIME LINE

The following table highlights the key tasks completed and to be undertaken since my research began in 2005. I hope to complete this work and submit my thesis late this year or early 2008. The shaded tasks show the work done to date.

2005	2006	2007	2008
Research scoped	Transfer to AUT University	Case study overviews	Elected member questionnaire findings recorded and analysed
Literature review started	Literature review ongoing	LTCCPs analysed	Maori interviews to be completed
Consultation and networking	Methodology confirmed	Elected member questionnaire piloted, confirmed and administered	Maori views to be written up
Research Seminar - Massey University	AUT Ethics Committee Approval	Maori interviews commenced	Chapter notes to be revised
Introduction drafted	Literature review chapters drafted	Methodology chapters drafted	First draft to be completed
		Completed beginners paper in Te Reo: Te Tauihu	Thesis to be submitted.

DATA COLLECTION

Elected member questionnaire

The following table shows the response to the self-selection questionnaire by elected members from my case study local authorities.

		Gender	Method of response

² Advice on Māori protocol is sought from a Māori advisor in the informal capacity of 'awhi' (in this context awhi refers to a mentor and guide).

Local Authority	Total number respondents	Gender		Method of response		
Auckland City Authority	6	4	2	6	-	-
Rotorua	7	3	4	4	2	1
Tauranga	6	1	5	5	1	-
Porirua	9	6	3	7	2	-
Christchurch	2	1	1	2	-	-

The results of this survey are being analysed using the Minitab statistical analysis software and thematic analysis to gauge elected members understanding and awareness of sustainability and views on their council's progress.

Interviews with Maori

As indicated on the timeline I have begun the interviews with Maori data collection but still have a number to complete. I hope to do this by the end of March. This table shows the range of views that I am seeking and the key activities. The participants their tribal links range from Whanau-A-Apanui and Te Rarawa in the north to Ngai Tahu in the south. They have participated in both Maori and Pakeha governance roles and reflect a broad range of views.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES: JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2008

The research objectives for the next six months are:

- ❖ Complete analysis of the elected member questionnaire
- ❖ Complete Maori interviews, transcribe the interviews and confirm content with the participants.
- ❖ Write up findings of the Maori research
- ❖ Revise chapter notes and begin preparation of the first draft of the thesis.

If you have any questions or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact either myself or one of my supervisors. Again, thank you for your help and support to date. Your thoughts and feedback are most welcome.



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