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COMMUNITY BOARDS - CONTROL OF COMMUNITY OR CONTROL BY COMMUNITY?

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades, there as has been an emergence in western local government systems of small statutory bodies, Parish Councils and Community Councils in Great Britain, Kommeslrands in Sweden, Community Councils in Canada and Community Boards in New Zealand.

It is argued, utilising the work of Coser (1956) and Dahrendorf (1959), that these structures appeared due to attempts to mute the growing conflict over the deficiencies of local government systems. Case studies looking at the western local government system and the situation in Great Britain and New Zealand will outline more particularly what these factors were and how small statutory bodies emerged in response to their existence.

It is argued that because the small statutory bodies were intended to be placatory mechanisms rather than true decision making authorities, their roles and responsibilities were left deliberately vague. It was left to each local parent authority to decide what emphasis to place on the boards' roles and responsibilities, what attention to pay to them, or what status to accord them. It is argued, that this structure lead to conflict between the small statutory bodies who felt that they had been given control over their areas, and their parent authorities who took the approach that the bodies were largely advisory bodies and that control still rested with the local authority itself. Thus, because there was not agreement over the rules of the game as Dahrendorf argued was necessary between the groups involved in the bodies' operation, conflict ensued.

From case studies of the operation of small statutory bodies in Great Britain and New Zealand it is confirmed that problems have arisen due to conflict about roles and responsibilities (external factors) but it is noted that conflict has also arisen from unrelated factors such as party politics, demands for efficiency and cost effectiveness etc (internal factors).

It will be argued however that, community boards are a useful part of the New Zealand local government, and that the conflicts that exist can be remedied. The closing chapter outlines some suggestions as to how this can be achieved.

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