Local Political Governance for Sustainability in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

In his report to the Club of Rome, Pauli (2010) acknowledged that promoting sustainable development required the application of innovation and entrepreneurship. In a local political context, the role of elected members is critical to the adaptation of new approaches to resolve both scientific and social issues, at the local level. This paper draws on data from completed doctoral research that explored the views of New Zealand elected members with respect to their role in progressing urban sustainability. The New Zealand elected member role is compared with its counterpart in other western, liberal, democratic countries (Drage, 2008; Leach & Wilson, 2000; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Newnham & Winston, 1997; Webster, 2009). Elected members from five of New Zealand's urban local authorities were surveyed on perceptions of their role and their councils' progress towards urban sustainability, as described by the purpose of the Local Government Act 2002. The findings highlighted potential for a broader role than was evidenced for New Zealand elected members, one which encompasses cross-sector collaboration and multi-level governance (Webster 2010). In common with Pauli (2010), this paper emphasizes the criticality of entrepreneurship and innovation in progressing sustainable development.

Key words: Local government, governance, Māori, New Zealand, councillor, role

Introduction

In his Report to the Club of Rome, Gunter Pauli (2010, p. 70) emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship, creativity and seeing the whole system, to the success of his 100 innovations inspired by nature (Pauli, 2010, p. 261), for finding solutions to scientific and social issues, and progressing sustainable development. He noted the resistance of natural systems to change (Pauli, 2010, p. 69), a characteristic noted in public policy theory (Evans, Joas, Sundback, & Theobald, 2005; Newnham & Winston, 1997). This paper draws on data from completed doctoral research that explored the views of New Zealand elected members with respect to their role in progressing urban sustainability. The importance of entrepreneurship and innovation to progressing sustainable development, highlighted by Pauli, is a key theme of this research.

New Zealand local government has its beginnings in the provincial legislatures that were part of the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 (Cheyne, 2006, p. 285). The local government system had evolved to comprise 85 local authorities. Known as councils, they were collectively a significant contributor to the national economy (Department of Internal Affairs, 2008, p. 6). From 1974 to 2002, the rules, processes, and functions of local government were determined by the Local Government Act 1974 and its various amendments. The enactment of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) introduced radical reform in how councils were to deliver for their communities. The 2002 legislation was, at the time of its passing, an enabling statute expressed the aspiration for community participation in local governance, and progress towards sustainable development. The Act required local government to promote local decision-making, involve communities, and provide appropriately for Māori participation in decision-making. Further, the Act included principles to guide elected members in fulfilling their role.

This paper draws on doctoral research which focused on the roles of elected members in Aotearoa New Zealand, post enactment of the LGA 2002. It presents a broad review of literature and scholarship, a documentary analysis of selected planning documents from five of New Zealand's urban local authorities, and a survey of elected members that explored perceptions of their role and their local authorities' progress towards urban sustainability. The New Zealand elected member role is compared with its counterpart in...
other western, liberal, democratic countries. Influences on the elected member role, including the relationship between politicians and the executive, and national forms of democracy are discussed.

The modernisation of local governance and the elected member role

European researchers (Berg & Rao, 2005; Dentes & Rose, 2005; Evans et al., 2005) concur that the elected member role has been undergoing rapid change as a result of the modernisation agenda in local government, which began in the 1970s. The trend evidenced a shift from 'top down' process-driven local government to a more 'bottom-up' and community-centred form of local governance, which involves complex networks of agencies (Evans et al., 2005, p.12; Kooiman, 2003, p.3; Rhodes, 2007, p.7).

There has been a move away from the 'electoral chain of command' model of local democracy, described by Dearlove (Dearlove, 1973; Dentes & Rose, 2005, pp.255-256), where the council was central to the decision making process. Communities, both geographic and of interest, were increasingly observed to be significant decision makers in the local government arena. This was particularly apparent in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark (Berg & Rao, 2005, p.10). Local governments in Switzerland, Sweden, the US, France and Belgium, were observed to have been relatively immune to this trend.

Local government reforms had been dominated by moves towards decentralization, the establishment of an intermediate tier of government (Goldsmith, 2005, p. 234) and the amalgamation of municipalities to create new regions. Voluntary cooperation and a highly complex system of shared responsibilities were evolving, accompanied by a decline in administrative oversight by central governments. The UK and New Zealand, both unitary states, were undergoing almost constant change from the mid-1980s. In New Zealand, a pioneer in many reforms, local body amalgamation and the abolition of special purpose bodies was evident (Goldsmith, 2005, pp. 237-238).

Scholarship focusing on the elected member role is relatively recent. Observations from Australia (Bain cited in Newnham & Winston, 1997), the US, Europe (Leach & Wilson, 2000; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002) and New Zealand (Drage, 2004, 2008; Webster, 2009) identified similarities in the way elected members' focused on tasks and their allocation.

In 1997, Bains (cited in Newnham & Winston, 1997, p. 109) identified three dimensions to the role of local government elected members in Victoria, Australia: (1) community representation and participation, (2) the development of community resources, and (3) ensuring effectiveness in service delivery. Within these dimensions the primary responsibility of the elected members was defined as representation. Policy making was second, and review of performance third. The representative role was centered on the process of communication between the electors and local government. The policy role comprised identifying community needs, setting objectives, establishing priorities between conflicting claims, and allocating resources. Australian elected members were found to be dependent on receiving useful information and coordinated advice from local authority staff. The review role focused on the objectives, policies, plans and programs approved by the council.

Bains (cited in Newnham & Winston, 1997, p. 110) recognized that these roles would exist in an ideal world, but were not clearly defined in practice. He sought to understand the ideal relationship in a corporate approach to local government - management and administration undertaken by a manager or chief executive officer (CEO), with elected members fulfilling representation, policy making and performance review functions. At different times the elected members were observed to act as representatives, delegates, communicators and mediators (Newnham & Winston, 1997, p. 111). In an external capacity they acted as a link between the council and other bodies. An overlap between elected members and the council executive around policy formulation was observed to be strength (Newnham & Winston, 1997, p. 111).

The UK elected member role was observed to comprise four key leadership tasks (also presented as officer roles): maintaining cohesiveness; developing strategic and policy direction; external relationships; and task accomplishment. The role of maintaining cohesiveness was specific to the party political nature of UK local government. The relationships between elected members and officers were recognized for their potential to be both a powerful force and a threat to organizational cohesiveness. Consistent rules governing the responsibilities of elected members and officers ameliorated this risk (Leach & Wilson, 2000, p. 167).

Strategy was described in terms of three elements: (1) the core values, culture and mission statement of a local authority; (2) the strategic vision setting out the agenda, problems, issues or objectives; and (3) the strategic responses, or the reactive element of strategy. Corporate strategy was seen to work against party interests, particularly in the lead-up to an election when political statements of aspiration could be an advantage or a danger. Strategic policy would be supported until it threatened expenditure in traditional
areas. Leach and Wilson (2000, pp. 7587) observed that blending political and strategic direction was a key challenge.

The external relations task emphasized the multiplicity of actors involved in delivering services, e.g. public-private partnerships and non-elected local agencies. UK local government reform had begun in the 1970s. Hence, the external role was well-understood by 2006, when Leach and Wilson undertook their study. Notwithstanding this, work alongside private sector organizations was reportedly still a challenge for elected members (Leach & Wilson, 2000, p. 89). Other aspects of the external relations role focused on the media, the national networks of local government, and local economic and community interests (Leach & Wilson, 2000, p. 90). National organizations such as the Local Government Association were seen to influence both the modernization process and personal careers. This linked political leaders to the national government, and opportunities for future parliamentary electoral success (Leach & Wilson, 2000, pp. 90-99).

The importance of networks of economic and community interest was highlighted through greater interaction between local authorities, local economic players and community interests (Leach & Wilson, 2000, pp. 90-99). Elected members were increasingly observed taking lead roles on tertiary education commissions, council-controlled organizations and joint ventures. The role of representing the local authority had grown in prominence as the structure of local government had become more fragmented. Leach and Wilson (2000, pp. 104-107) argued that interagency work was a necessary condition of progress and required specific leadership skills in negotiation and networking. The disproportionate amount of time required was found to have adverse consequences for the elected member representative role.

Despite the distinction between elected member and officer roles around strategy and implementation, task accomplishment continued to be important to elected members. Leach and Wilson (2000, pp. 110-111) argued that the degree to which this caused strategy to deviate from its original course was influenced by the political sensitivity of officers, and the level of trust between officers and elected members.

Mouritzen and Svara (2002, p. xv) explored the similarities and differences between local governments across 14 western democracies in Europe and the US. Case studies included examples of representative democracy, layman rule, political leadership and professionalism. In Mouritzen and Svara's survey, elected members' roles were perceived by chief executives to contribute in two key areas: first, the 'governmental roles' of governor, stabilizer and administrator; and second, the 'linkage roles' of representing citizens, the electorate and groups in government processes (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002, p. 176). Within the governmental roles, the governor decided major policy principles and had a vision of how the municipality would develop in the long term. The stabilizer would create stability for the organization and formulate clear goals. The administrator would lay down rules and routines and make decisions concerning special cases. The linkage roles described how the elected member, as ambassador, would represent the municipality to the outside world, defend the authority's decisions and policies externally, and be a spokesperson for the media. The representative would be informed about citizens' views, implement programs on which they had been elected, and be a spokesperson for local groups and individuals, and their political party (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002, p. 176).

These roles generally aligned with Bains (cited in Newnham & Winston, 1997, p. 109) concept of the 'ideal politician'. Politicians were expected to define the authority's mission and establish policy direction, be informed about citizens' views and link them to local government, and not be administrators (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002, p. 176). The representative role was about being responsive, knowledgeable about citizens' views, acting on promises, and being a spokesperson for political parties, individuals and groups. The trustee role was described as basing political decisions on independent judgment, and balancing election promises with the good of the city. The delegate role was described as basing actions on election promises, what the party stands for, and as spokesperson for groups and individuals (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002, pp. 180-195).

The New Zealand situation pre Local Government Act 2002

Drage (2004, p. 242) described New Zealand elected members as four types: representatives, governors, leaders, and politicians. The types were not mutually exclusive with many elected members describing their role in terms of more than one type.

The 'representatives' prioritized representing their constituents by distributing information to encourage submissions on an annual plan, consultation with residents associations and nurturing

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2 The U.D.E.T.E. Leadership Study was undertaken between 1997 and 1999 and surveyed local government CEOs from France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, US, Denmark, Great Britain, Sweden, Belgium, The Netherlands, Australia, Finland, Iceland, Norway (Mouritzen & Svara, 2002).
community contacts. Typically the representatives saw themselves as an interface between the council and the community. The 'governors' identified governance and policy development as the key aspects of their role. This included monitoring and creating policy, and setting priorities. The role of the governor was likened to being on a board of directors, and the city as a business. The 'leaders' viewed strong advocacy for the city as a key role. Few elected members described their role in terms of its political dimensions. Those who did were experienced and saw their role as making political decisions. The importance of a separation between governance and management was generally acknowledged (Drage, 2004, p. 187).

According to Drage (2004, p. 192), elected members also described themselves in terms of the delegate and trustee models of political representation, and as case workers and policy makers. While many elected members saw their role as more than one model, Drage observed that the majority primarily viewed their role as that of policy maker.

Table 1 summarizes the case studies of the elected member role in New Zealand and other western, liberal, democracies, and shows the predominance of the representative (both trustee and delegate) and governance (policymaking and decision-making) roles.

Table 1. Elected member role perceptions for New Zealand, Australia, UK and Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional form</td>
<td>Council-manager</td>
<td>Councilmanager</td>
<td>Committee -leader</td>
<td>Strong mayor/ collective leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation roles and tasks</td>
<td>Representative - trustee/delegate/caseworker/policymaker</td>
<td>Key-task - Community representation and participation</td>
<td>Party political representation</td>
<td>Linkage roles - ambassador - representative - trustee/delegate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance and policy</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Policymaker</td>
<td>Developing strategic policy direction</td>
<td>Governmental roles - governor - stabilizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management roles</td>
<td>Efforts to impose separate roles model</td>
<td>Key tasks - Developing of community resources Effective service delivery</td>
<td>Task accomplishment</td>
<td>- administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and external relationship roles</td>
<td>Leader - Politician</td>
<td>Maintaining cohesiveness External relationships</td>
<td>- ambassador</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review roles</td>
<td>Review of performance</td>
<td></td>
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</table>


New Zealand Local Government Act 2002

The new Local Government Act was passed into law by the New Zealand Labor-Alliance Coalition Government in 2002. It provided “a strong mandate for local government to promote community wellbeing, empower communities to participate in local government decision-making and encourage a whole-of-government collaboration in service delivery” (Memon & Thomas, 2006, p. 135). The new Act was conceived as a way for the government to introduce a 'Third Way-style' of engagement and participation between local and central government and civil society. Borrie et al. (2004, p. 1) argued that the LGA 2002 sought to strengthen local democracy and promote the sustainable well-being of communities. According to Memon and Thomas the LGA 2002 signaled a shift in New Zealand, from 'government' to 'governance'.

In its 2002 form, the Act described a broad and intergenerational purpose for local government to enable democratic local decision-making, and promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future. The distinction of cultural well-being was one way in which the New Zealand approach was unique. It encompassed “shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors and identities reflected through language, stories, experiences, visual and performing arts,
ceremonies and heritage” (Local Government New Zealand, 2003, p. 15). It reflected the multicultural nature of New Zealand, the obligations inherent in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and New Zealand’s heritage as a colonized nation with diverse communities. Obligations were placed on territorial authorities and regional councils with respect to the participation of Māori and recognition of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Alongside these provisions, councils were required to identify their communities’ aspirations, known as community outcomes, for the present and the future, and prepare a ten-year plan (called the Long-term Council Community Plan). Although the elected member role is not defined within the LGA, section 39 provided a set of principles that sought to clarify the governance aspects of the role. It sought effective, open and transparent processes, separation of the regulatory and nonregulatory roles, clarity in the relationship between elected members and management, and the requirement to be a good employer (Local Government New Zealand, 2003, p. 17).

The sustainable development purpose of local government in New Zealand was a catalyst for elected members to reconsider their role. This meant considering their role in how their local authority promoted sustainable development.

Exploring the views of New Zealand elected members

Desk research highlighted that in many western liberal democracies, the local government sector had undergone radical change since the 1980s, as globalization, urbanization, Europeanization and awareness of the need for sustainable development spread. The literature review focused on emerging trends in local governance, sustainable development progress and urban sustainability, the multiple roles of elected members, and social and institutional capacity for local governance.

Recent relevant research included the DISCUS (Developing Institutional and Social Capacity for Urban Sustainability) research (Evans, Joas, Sundback, & Theobald, 2005); Comparing Local Governance: Trends and Developments (Denters & Rose, 2005); and from New Zealand, The councilor role: Local government representation in a shifting political environment (Drage, 2008). Working definitions were established for urban sustainability and local governance (Webster, 2009).

Clearly, the changes in New Zealand local governance were not isolated, but were consistent with emerging international public management trends. In 2005, few sources were identified for this research that directly addressed governance in a sustainability context. By 2006, as councils completed their first long term plan, changes in policy and practice were becoming evident across the New Zealand local government sector.

The New Zealand case studies

Five case study councils were selected for their predominantly urban population, their focus on urban sustainability, and a tendency towards innovation in local government policy and practice. A significant Māori population, Māori representation or governance structures, and an ethnically diverse population were further criteria. The criteria reflected some of the demographic changes that were occurring at the local level of New Zealand society, and some of the compelling pressures faced by urban territorial authorities.

The case study territorial authorities were: Auckland City Council, Tauranga City Council, Rotorua District Council, Porirua City Council and Christchurch City Council. In characteristics, they represented a range across the criteria. Porirua was the smallest of the councils (population 50,600) and the most youthful. Rotorua was next (population 65,901), the most rural and had the highest proportion of Māori in the district (36 per cent) and the highest proportion of Māori elected representatives (21 per cent). At the other end of the scale, Auckland City Council had a population of over 400,000, was the most urban and most ethnically diverse case study. Christchurch was next with population of 348,435 and was the least diverse in terms of ethnicity. Tauranga, the last of the case studies had a population of 103,635, and had the second highest Māori population at 17 per cent.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics and documents examined for the five case studies.

3 These were broad guiding principles, rather than prescribing a definitive role.
4 Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territorial authority/contact</th>
<th>Territorial Authority characteristics</th>
<th>Documents reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland City</td>
<td>Population 404,658</td>
<td>LTCCP 2006-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main urban area², approx. 7.8%</td>
<td>Council agendas and minutes, community development initiatives, regional council planning documents, Long-term framework for Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Māori, 13% Pacific, 24% Asian, focus on engagement and participation of diverse communities and urban sustainability, 1 Pacific councilor</td>
<td>NZ Sustainable Development, Program of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tauranga City</td>
<td>Population 103,635</td>
<td>LTCCP 2006-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main urban area, focus on Smart growth and public management, approx. 17% identified as Māori, 2% Pacific, 3% Asian</td>
<td>Council agendas and minutes, Smart growth, environmental programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotorua District Council</td>
<td>Population 65,901</td>
<td>LTCCP 2006-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main urban area, approx. 36% identified as Māori, 5% Pacific, 4% Asian urban /rural mix, 3 Māori councilors</td>
<td>Council agendas and minutes, environmental initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Environment Waikato and Environment BOP regional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porirua City</td>
<td>Population 50,600</td>
<td>LTCCP 2006-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main urban area, approx. 21% Māori, 26% Pacific, 5% Asian, 2 Māori and 2 Pacific councilors</td>
<td>Council agendas and minutes, environmental initiatives, Greater Wellington regional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch City</td>
<td>Population 348,435</td>
<td>LTCCP 2006-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main urban area, approx. 8% identified as Māori, 3% Pacific, 8% Asian</td>
<td>Council agendas and minutes, Environment Canterbury regional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in ‘Future Path Canterbury’ - regional collaboration for community outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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1. Population information is based on the 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2009) and can be viewed online at [http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/C9A86DBD-5B34-402D-8947-7F705104026B/0/RegionalSummaryTablesTerritorialAuthority.xls](http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/C9A86DBD-5B34-402D-8947-7F705104026B/0/RegionalSummaryTablesTerritorialAuthority.xls)

2. As defined by Statistics NZ Main urban areas are centred on a city or main urban centre. They have a minimum population of 30,000. Characteristics other than population that contribute to this definition include: strong economic ties, cultural and recreational interaction, serviced from the core for major business and professional activities, an integrated public transport network, significant workplace commuting to and from the central core, and planned development with the next twenty years (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

### Documentary analysis

The long term plan, required of councils under the LGA 2002, was selected as the base document for analysis in each case study local authority. The plan was specifically useful as each council was required to address how their council was progressing the four well beings of sustainable development, over a ten-year horizon. The first long term plans (2006-16) were reviewed by the Office of the Auditor General (2007), who found that while long-term planning was not new for local authorities, it was acknowledged that meeting the prescribed requirements of the LGA 2002 required new and complex processes.

Due to ‘unevenness’ across the content of the 2006-16 LTCCPs (Controller and Auditor-General, 2007, p. 3), it was not always possible to reliably assess the authorities’ approaches to urban sustainability based on the LTCCP alone. Where needed they were augmented by more detailed information sourced from the council web sites, published strategies and plans, and reports.

### Elected member questionnaire development

The questionnaire addressed two key areas of interest:
progress being made towards urban sustainability in the New Zealand local government sector
how the roles of elected representatives in New Zealand's urban local authorities compared with the roles of their counterparts in other liberal, western, democratic nations.

With this focus in mind, section 1 of the questionnaire focused on the elected members' role and their interaction with the development of their councils' long term plan; while section 2 explored the elected members' perceptions of their councils' processes and practices, and how they personally contributed to urban sustainability.

Framework for evaluating progress towards urban sustainability

A framework was developed, against which the case study authorities' progress towards urban sustainability, was evaluated. Drawn from three key sources, it served as a summary of the multitude of published views on urban sustainability: (1) Governing Sustainable Cities, the findings of the DISCUS research (Evans et al., 2005); (2) the Local Government Act 2002 s.14, the principles related to local authorities; and (3) Agenda 21: The Earth's Action Plan (Robinson, 1993). The framework comprised the following ten elements for initiating and managing good governance for sustainable development, identified by Evans, Joas et al:

- Local government as a learning organization e.g. building up knowledge of urban sustainability and the four well-beings and focusing on life-long learning
- Links between in-house departments
- Alliances with external agencies
- Creative policy-making
- Facilitation and leadership
- Communication with civil society
- Environmental awareness as a catalyst
- Vision and strength
- Networking between local authorities
- Multi-level governing (Evans et al., 2005, pp. 118-121).

The LGA principles of openness, transparency, a regard for all views and diversity, opportunities for Māori, sound business practice and prudent stewardship of resources, informed the evaluation framework. It is worth noting that in New Zealand, the LGA and other statutes made many of the evaluation criteria mandatory, or at least provided significant impetus for local authorities to adopt new ways of working. The evaluation framework is summarized in table 3. The processes and practices of the case study local authorities were recorded in order to facilitate a comparison of the spirit in which the LGA requirements had been met, and to highlight the degree of innovation and creativity, recognized as hallmarks of urban sustainability (Webster, 2009). In particular, practices were highlighted that would have been less likely in western local governments prior to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the wide acceptance of Agenda 21 that followed this period.

Table 3 The key criteria for good governance for urban sustainability used in the evaluation framework, by source.
Four broad categories
(supported by LGA 2002 and Agenda 21)
Elements for initiating and managing good governance for sustainable development
(drawn from the DISCUS findings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation and New Public Management</th>
<th>Local government as a learning organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative policy-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental awareness as a catalyst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships and collaboration</td>
<td>Links between departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including Māori participation)</td>
<td>Alliances with external agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking between local authorities Multi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>level governing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement and participation (including Māori participation)</td>
<td>Communication with civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Facilitation and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision and strength.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Webster, 2009, p. 32.

**Research findings**

**Local authority progress towards urban sustainability**

The research evidenced progress towards urban sustainability across all five councils, with varying levels of performance across the variables evaluated (Webster, 2009, p. 186). Mainstreaming of sustainability in the planning process had begun across the five authorities and appeared strongest in the long term plans of Auckland, Porirua and Tauranga, with sustainability thinking demonstrated through their structure and content. Rotorua District Council’s strengths were observed to be in the areas of creative policy and collaborative relationships with Māori and business (Webster, 2009, p. 182).

The Porirua plan highlighted integration across the social aspects of urban sustainability, through the connection between village development, environmental restoration and social cohesion. The Christchurch City plan appeared to have mainstreamed a sustainability framework (the Natural Step) and demonstrated a holistic approach.

Significant issues in common across the five territorial authorities were population growth, ethnicity and social issues. Auckland, Tauranga and Porirua were experiencing high population growth. An aging population was a concern in Auckland and Christchurch. Three councils highlighted significant environmental issues: poor air quality in Christchurch; lake water quality in Rotorua; and water scarcity in Porirua. The case study documentary analysis findings are summarized in table 4 at the end of this section.

**Creative policy and innovation**

Strategic integration across the four well-beings through a long-term vision appeared strongest in the plans of Auckland, Tauranga and Porirua. While Rotorua and Christchurch were noted to have taken a more traditional approach towards their plans, they demonstrated strengths in the inclusion of Māori in local governance (Webster, 2009, p. 183).

Vision and mission statements provided for an interesting comparison. Auckland City confirmed their ‘First City of the Pacific’ vision, which was presented as a pyramid representing the city’s goals. The Tauranga mission statement took a distinctly sustainable development approach referencing community engagement, leadership, the four well-beings and a future focus. Rotorua District Council did not frame a vision, but in its mihi committed to contributing to community outcomes. These outcomes were clearly linked to well-being statements that articulated this purpose. The Porirua vision had a strong people focus, and reflected a young city with a youthful population. The Christchurch vision reflected a garden city and an environmental focus.

Community outcomes were expressed in a variety of ways, with all of the case study councils expressing common themes that included healthy, safe and educated communities; economic prosperity with excellent services and facilities; dynamic and happening places with opportunities for fun and recreation; and a city or district that was easy to move around (Webster, 2009, p. 184).
Auckland City incorporated ‘trust in leadership’, ‘faith in the future’, ‘participation’ and ‘working together’. Tauranga specified ‘a great place to grow up’. Rotorua described ‘a community that values its Māori heritage’. Porirua emphasized its village culture. Christchurch City described its education aspirations as ‘a city of lifelong learning’.

**Relationships**

Multi-level governing between local and central government was widely evidenced. Auckland and Porirua were noted to have progressed furthest in this area. In the case of Auckland, this was attributed to the compelling pressures on Auckland as the country's largest and most ethnically diverse urban center, and the prevailing economic and social imperatives for the city to lift its performance on a national scale. Porirua City's close proximity to the capital city of Wellington and government department head offices was likely to have been a significant catalyst for the close collaboration that developed. The Tauranga, Rotorua and Christchurch plans emphasized stakeholder and community collaboration, with private sector and partnership funding models.

Environmental management and restoration were a focus for partnerships in Rotorua, Porirua and Christchurch. The growing awareness of environmental sustainability supported the findings of Evans et al. (2005, p. 22), that is, capacity building within the sphere of environmental policy-making at the local level, was a precursor to capacity building for broader urban sustainability. It was therefore not surprising that as a youthful city, Porirua showed strength in this area.

**Community engagement**

All five long term plans presented a high level of community engagement. Rotorua was noted for its longstanding engagement with Māori, the social sector and business, and Tauranga, for an innovative approach of its community consultation.

**Leadership**

Leadership styles and focus varied across the case studies. Vision and strategy was clearly demonstrated by the structure and innovative presentation of the Auckland, Tauranga and Porirua plans. Auckland City articulated aspirations for city to be a leader regionally and internationally. Tauranga, Rotorua and Porirua demonstrated strengths in regional and local leadership through partnership. Christchurch demonstrated through its adoption of the *Natural step* sustainable development framework that it was ‘walking the talk’. Rotorua District Council demonstrated strong leadership through its long-standing partnership with the indigenous Māori tribe, Te Arawa. This was seen as an exemplary Treaty of Waitangi-based partnership between Māori and local government.

**Table 4 Summary of the case study documentary analysis findings.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues and challenges</th>
<th>Growth: Aging population</th>
<th>High immigration</th>
<th>Growth: Increase in families and children</th>
<th>Community safety</th>
<th>Lake water quality</th>
<th>Sustainable growth</th>
<th>Waste management</th>
<th>Water supply</th>
<th>Impacts of urbanization</th>
<th>Growth population</th>
<th>Aging Poor air quality</th>
<th>Increasing ethnic diversity</th>
<th>Decrease in civic engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress towards urban sustainability</td>
<td>30-yr sustainable development vision</td>
<td>Integrated four well-beings</td>
<td>Strong vision for sustainability collaboration and participation</td>
<td>Well-being statements, links outcomes, well-beings and wider influences</td>
<td>Strong environmental focus</td>
<td>People and place-based approach to development</td>
<td>Adopted the Natural Step in 1999</td>
<td>Environmentally focused vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative policy and innovation</td>
<td>Integrated thinking across well-beings, activities and outcomes</td>
<td>New business and governance, approaches, digital strategy strong environmental awareness</td>
<td>Balance across four well-beings</td>
<td>Collaboration Traditional delivery Innovative funding</td>
<td>Environmental and waste initiatives</td>
<td>Emphasis on social and cultural wellbeing – village planning</td>
<td>Focus on environmental sustainability and climate change NPM models</td>
<td>Focus on iwi management plans</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between Maori chiefs and the Crown. It is widely considered to be the founding document and part of New Zealand’s constitution (Palmer & Palmer, 2004). The treaty has been a paramount reference for Māori as to how colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand was to have progressed.

The New Zealand elected member role post Local Government Act 2002

Five years on from the introduction of the LGA 2002, the findings of the elected member research highlighted that the LGA 2002 and the global movement towards sustainable development were impacting on their role. Awareness of the four well-beings of sustainable development was demonstrated by some elected members in the survey. These respondents had chosen to embrace the new thinking that had emerged from the United Nations first Conference on Human Development, and was now enshrined within the LGA 2002. Others were clearly working within a conservative paradigm that reflected the pre-sustainable development view of local government – an emphasis on traditional service delivery such as the ‘three Rs’ – roads, rubbish and rates (Webster, 2009, p. 191).

When presented with different aspects of their role, the greatest number of elected members described their priority role as governance i.e. setting policy direction and decision-making, ahead of other aspects (Webster, 2009, p. 179). This was consistent with the priorities of their Australian and northern hemisphere counterparts.

Representing community, providing leadership, and task accomplishment were next in importance, followed by reviewing performance and maintaining cohesiveness. Consultation was acknowledged by only a few elected members. Political lobbying and influence was the least acknowledged role (Webster, 2009, p. 179). This was attributed to the non-partisan nature of New Zealand local government. While the increasingly complex networks of organizations involved in local governance were
acknowledged, multi-level governing was one of the last aspects of governing for urban sustainability to be adopted by elected members in the sample.

A majority of the elected members serving their second or subsequent terms of office concurred that their role had changed as a result of the LGA 2002 (Webster, 2009, p. 180). They acknowledged the need to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability and the quadruple-bottom line as a goal. Long-term visioning, planning and reporting, and generally being more accountable to the community were seen as priorities. The 'burden and bureaucracy' imposed by the reporting and accountability provisions of the Act was reported by a small number of participants.

The time required to meet legislative, organizational and political tasks posed a challenge for the New Zealand elected members (Webster, 2009, p. 198) as they frequently spent time on aspects of their role that were not their personal priorities. Maintaining cohesiveness was described as important for the 'credibility of council'. Enhancing external relationships was considered by just a few to be 'the way of the future'.

Elected members were presented with a range of long term plan tasks and asked to rank their importance and how well their council was delivering on them. Councils were perceived to be underperforming in the areas of developing vision, and promoting efficient and effective use of resources. Further, underperformance was perceived around the tasks that were newest e.g. collaborating with other councils, engaging the general public and responding to feedback.

Providing opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government was ranked lowest in importance and council effectiveness (Webster, 2009, p. 183). The majority of respondents rated their local authority as moderately or highly effective in this task, an assessment not supported by research undertaken with Māori over the same period (Local Futures, 2005; Local Government Commission, 2008; Shand, Cheyne, & Horsley, 2007). This low ranked task was again new to local authorities (Webster, 2009, p. 198).

In describing obstacles for sustainability elected members' ranked the external aspects of their role lowest i.e. collaboration, engagement with constituents and organizations and the place of Māori in local government. Again, these three elements were relatively new considerations for most of the case study councils and elected members were less familiar with them. Similarly, multi-level governing, identified by Evans Joas et al. (2005, p. 121) as a key element in governance for urban sustainability, did not feature highly for the elected members in the sample. The consistent low scores for opportunities for Māori emphasized, generally, the low priority of the Treaty of Waitangi among non-Māori elected members.

Conclusion

In Aotearoa New Zealand the elected member role was changing in response to the emerging international trends in local governance brought about by globalization, urbanization and the rising international acceptance of sustainable development. Local pressures such as growth, an aging population, increasing diversity, and perceived low levels of voter turnout among young people, were also dominant influences. The need for a more participative style of governance that sought cross-sector, multi-agency and multi-level governance was evolving.

As the LGA 2002 had signaled, local government could no longer expect to resolve these issues without the support of a multitude of actors within civil society. The new role for elected members would reflect aspects of the role of their United Kingdom and European counterparts and focus on fostering the cross-sector, multiagency and multi-level governance needed to respond to increasingly complex local governance issues. The literature and research identified elected members who had chosen to embrace the new thinking. These were the sectors entrepreneurs. Their high degree of innovation and entrepreneurship was positioning local government to leverage the blue economy.

The research further demonstrated the opportunity for New Zealand elected members to embrace the paradigm shift from 'government' to 'governance', and re-orientate their role towards a more collaborative and participative style of engagement with communities, in order to progress urban sustainability. It is not suggested that this new approach displace elected members' governance roles (which focused on setting

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12 The questionnaire sample comprised 30 elected members, evenly spread between female and male participants. By comparison with the New Zealand elected members overall, the questionnaire sample was skewed towards the views of female elected members, those over 60 years of age and Māori elected members. While participants were predominantly New Zealand European, this was less so than amongst the total New Zealand elected member population. The respondents, perhaps not surprisingly, appeared to be predominantly those who were aware of the growing importance of sustainable development (Webster, 2009).

13 The tasks included: Developing a vision for the future, promoting efficient and effective use of resources, engaging the general public, responding to feedback, including public feedback in decision-making, supporting environmental management, collaborating with key stakeholders, communicating urban sustainability, providing opportunities for Māori to contribute, and involving diverse groups (Webster 2008, p. 180-184).

The research further demonstrated the opportunity for New Zealand elected members to embrace the paradigm shift from 'government' to 'governance', and re-orientate their role towards a more collaborative and participative style of engagement with communities, in order to progress urban sustainability. It is not suggested that this new approach displace elected members' governance roles (which focused on setting.
policy direction and decision-making) and representation roles. Rather, it should more clearly define and influence the leadership, public engagement, and political aspects of the elected member role.

Genuine progress towards urban sustainability was evident in the New Zealand urban councils studied. The process of mainstreaming sustainable development into local authority processes and practices had begun. Vision statements and strategy based on the four well-beings and a future focus, were observed to be guiding policy and action in the urban territorial authorities studied. In 2009, much of the progress could be attributed to the LGA 2002.

Investment in environmental management and restoration initiatives was widespread among the case study local authorities. Habitat restoration, heritage protection, waste management and a sustainable approach to water quality, water supply and wastewater practices was observed. This was consistent with the findings of Evans et al. (2005, p. 120), who argued that a high level of environmental awareness served as a catalyst for a deeper understanding of sustainable development.

Community development initiatives progressing social and cultural wellbeing were prominent among the New Zealand local authorities studied. They were driven by the dominant influences within the meso level of local government, and included village planning, recreation and event center development, housing for the elderly, and the provision of museum and library services.

Political and executive leadership was acknowledged as an important fifth aspect of governance for urban sustainability. The Auckland City Council (2006, p. 15) described leadership as having faith in the future, trusting in leadership, participation and listening to the voices of diverse communities, and individuals, groups, business, Māori, local and central government working together. Brokering partnerships and initiating regional strategy were widely acknowledged leadership roles for territorial authorities. These are roles that could be encompassed within a new and broader elected member role.

Multi-level governing was widely practiced across the case studies. However, evidence suggested that this was predominantly driven by the professional executive with a small cadre of charismatic, consensus/facilitator type political leaders (Cheyne, 2004).

It was found that investment was required to increase the knowledge and awareness of staff. Sustainable development had become center-stage in decisionmaking, planning, and community participation. Greater levels of transparency and accountability were widely observed. The focus on collaboration with key stakeholders, recognized internationally as a necessary characteristic of governance for urban sustainability was almost absent among the New Zealand elected members surveyed. Collaboration had not traditionally been a part of the New Zealand elected member role and as such would be new to many elected members, and would have its place in a redefined elected member role.

The case for New Zealand elected members to actively embrace collaboration, engagement and multi-level governance was clear. It was supported by the British and European experience. Senior executives in the New Zealand local government sector had responded to the LGA 2002 guiding principles, and were strengthening collaboration across local authorities, central government, the community, and the volunteer, and business sectors.

These findings align with Gunter Pauli's key message. For local government to leverage the 'Blue Economy' governors need to embrace developing successful partnerships, take account of institutional aggregation, and achieve market viability by garnering consumer, or in this case, citizen support. The governors entrepreneurial thinking would need to galvanize institutions and individuals to adopt fundamentally new or different approaches and take new ideas to realization. Through adopting this approach, communities could be empowered to respond to their own needs (Pauli, 2010, p. 77).
References


Pauli, G. (2010). *The blue economy: 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs*. Taos, New Mexico, USA: Paradigm Publications.
