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COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT: A NEW APPROACH OR
PARTICIPATION IN DISGUISE?

A Thesis Presented in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN RESOURCE AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

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CONTENTS

page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

FIGURES

TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Justification

Research Design

Thesis Aim

Objectives

Central Questions

Methodology

Limitations to Research Design

Chapter Contents

CHAPTER TWO: THEORIES RELATING TO EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

Definition

Democracy

Participation

Representation and Responsibility

Social Learning Theory

Group Theory

Mass Belief System

Summary

CHAPTER THREE: EMPOWERMENT IN USE

Introduction

Conceptualisation

International Empowerment Strategies

Guiding Principles for Community Empowerment

National Translation-New Zealand

Empowerment Approaches

Cooperative Management Approach

Multistakeholder Process Approach

Business Sector Approaches	57
Urban Programme Empowerment Approaches	61
The Landcare Approach	62
Attributes of Empowerment	64
 CHAPTER FOUR: WHIRITOA BEACH CARE GROUP; AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY	 69
Case Study Location and Community	69
Background to Whiritoa Beach Care Issues	71
Sand extraction	73
Coastal Subdivision	79
Local Authorities, Community and Beach Care	80
Establishment of the Whiritoa Beach Care Group	84
Whiritoa Community Involvement in Beach Care	89
 CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON, CONTRAST AND SYNTHESIS	 94
Chapter Purpose and Structure	94
The Care Approach	94
Attributes Considered Present in the WBCG	96
Conclusion	107
Attributes Considered Absent or Irrelevant to the WBCG	110
Conclusion	111
 CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS	 112
Introduction	112
Central Questions and Recommendations for Local Authorities	113
Recommendation One	114
Recommendation Two	114
Recommendation Three	115
Recommendation Four	116
Recommendation Five	117
Recommendation Six	117
Recommendation Seven	117
Recommendation Eight	117
Suggestions for Future Research	118
 APPENDICES	
REFERENCES	

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a theoretical conceptualisation of a process that links international community empowerment strategies with community empowerment approaches and attributes at various political levels. The thesis has derived a theoretical set of guiding community empowerment attributes from current community empowerment approaches. Guiding attributes may provide a means of understanding of current actions by which community empowerment is being implemented. Guidelines may also be used as criteria for the evaluation of existing community empowerment approaches in terms of more democratic decision making. In addition, guidelines may be used to test the initial idea for the establishment of community empowered groups.

A comparison and contrast of one New Zealand community empowerment programme with the theoretical set of guiding community empowerment attributes is made. The comparison and contrast shows that when a community empowerment approach incorporates and implements the majority of theoretical attributes, it may result in greater community participation, responsibility and more democratic decision making at the community level. Such community cooperation has advantages for local authorities in the management of natural and physical resources.

LIST of FIGURES and MAPS	page
CHAPTER ONE	
<i>Figure One. Research Design</i>	2
CHAPTER TWO	
<i>Figure Two. A Conceptual Relationship Between City Size and Democracy</i>	12
<i>Figure Three. Arnstein's Participation Ladder</i>	18
<i>Figure Four. The Growth Of Habermas' Communicative Action Theory</i>	19
<i>Figure Five .Dewey's Inseparable Human Traits</i>	22
<i>Figure Six. Group Structure Variables in Stable and Unstable States</i>	32
<i>Figure Seven. Group Variable Fluctuations in a Steady State</i>	33
<i>Figure Eight. Leadership Style Changes with Growth Maturity</i>	35
CHAPTER THREE	
<i>Figure Nine. Possible Formulation of Guiding Empowerment Principles, Approaches and Attributes</i>	43
<i>Figure Ten. The Bottom Up Empowerment Cycle</i>	58
<i>Figure Eleven. Alternative Extension Model for Empowerment</i>	64
CHAPTER FOUR	
<i>Figure Twelve. Beach Sediment Sources and Sinks</i>	72
<i>Figure Thirteen. Whiritoa Beach Sand Availability</i>	79
<i>Figure Fourteen. Procedures for Preparing and Changing Regional Policies and Regional and District Plans under the RMA 1991</i>	82
<i>Map One. Whiritoa Beach Community</i>	70

LIST OF TABLES

page

CHAPTER THREE

<i>Table One. International Agencies Community Empowerment Strategies for Sustainable Development</i>	45
<i>Table Two. Possible Guiding Principles for Community Empowerment</i>	47
<i>Table Three. Differing Interpretations of Treaty of Waitangi Principles in New Zealand</i>	50
<i>Table Four. Current Empowerment Approaches In Use</i>	52
<i>Table Five. Examples of Cooperative Management Approaches</i>	54
<i>Table Six. Attributes of Empowerment Approaches</i>	65

CHAPTER FOUR

<i>Table Seven. History of Sand Extraction at Whiritoa Beach</i>	74
<i>Table Eight. Waikato Regional Council Self-Defined Beach Care Council and Community Roles</i>	84
<i>Table Nine. Establishment Process of the Whiritoa Beach Care Group</i>	86

CHAPTER FIVE

<i>Table Ten. WBCG Attributes</i>	95
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CHAPTER SIX

<i>Table Eleven. Theories Relevant to Empowerment and Possible Implications</i>	114
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