

Relationships between citizens and the new Auckland Council.

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SCPI is exploring and developing a framework and guidelines from a community perspective in response to the question:

What are the opportunities, barriers and complexities in creating positive relationships between citizens and their wide range of community associations and the new Auckland Council and its subsidiary agencies?¹

This requires collection and analysis of:

1. The current situation regarding such relationships in each of the existing Auckland region councils.
2. What is planned by the ATA.
3. Examples of positive relationships in similar situations elsewhere in New Zealand and internationally.
4. Identifying the opportunities, barriers and complexities in creating positive relationships in the new Auckland Council environment.

We are concerned with both formal and informal forms of association. Enabling connections with informal associations includes consideration of the existence and relevance of community meetings places where citizens can exchange views and experiences.

The impetus to streamline and simplify structures that flows from the amalgamation of existing councils systems and structures may lead to the entrenchment of the status of those with privileged access to decision makers. It is critical that easily accessible channels of communications are made available to all citizens of the new Auckland city.

At present it is unclear whether community associations will have direct access to the Auckland Council or whether they will be directed to their Local Board in the case of

¹ Including Council Controlled Organisations, special purpose committees such as the Maori Advisory Group, Ethnic Advisory Group and Social Policy Board.

locality issues, and/or to one of the special purpose committees (Maori, ethnic and social policy). It is also not clear what access citizens and community associations will have to the CCOs such as those concerned with transport and the waterfront development. The ATA web site says: "The Local Boards will feed the views of their local communities into the councillors on the Auckland Council."

Activities which SCPI could include in this project.

1. Preparation of a working paper setting out a framework for citizen and community association access to and participation in activities and policies of the new Auckland Council and its associated agencies.
2. Development of a guidelines document covering communication, access and participation by citizens and their community associations.
3. Participation in workshops on these and associated issues.
4. Input to a national conference on community governance and Council/community relations.

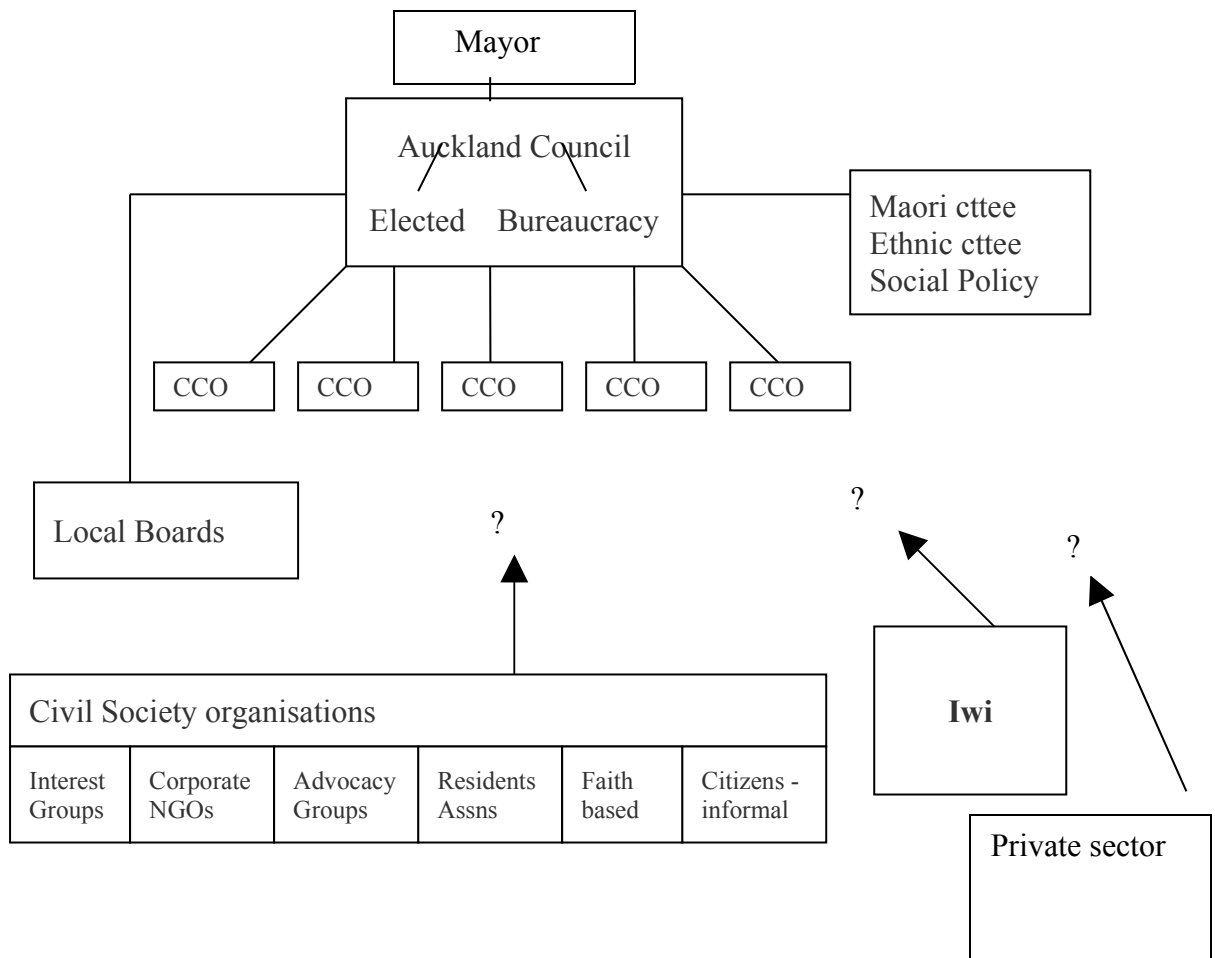
Relationships include both formal and informal relationships including consultation, representation, access, information flows, and advocacy.

A major tension is likely to emerge between the Government's intent to streamline and simplify procedures and structures and the increasing diversity and subsequent complexity within the community.

This complexity within the community is both a reflection of and contributor to a post-modern, 21st century society that is increasingly focussed on networks rather than formal institutional structures.

At the same time the Government, in its planning for the new Auckland Council, appears locked into a 20th century structural paradigm.

Schematic framework



Complexity of the Civil Society Sector

a) Diversity

Each different type of civil society organisation (CSO) noted in the schematic chart includes a wide variety of sectoral groups including the creative arts, sports, business associations, and environmental groups.

b) Maori organisations.

In addition to the separate category of iwi there are a number of other Maori based associations within the broad CSO section including Urban Maori Authorities, urban marae and Maori health and social service providers.

c) Blurred Edges.

There are a growing number of “false”² CSOs some of which may overlap with agencies listed by the ATA in the major regional facilities CCO, such as the Museum of Transport and Technology, as well as business associations including tourism promotion and economic development.

This blurring of the edges between community-based, Council controlled and business oriented associations is expressed in the definitions used. Definitions usually consider the legal structure of an organisation - if it is registered as a charitable trust or an incorporated society then it is placed within the civil society or non-government sector. The 2008 Study of the New Zealand Non-profit Sector considered five structural-operational features. In order to be included in the study organisations had to be: organised, private, not profit-distributing, self-governing and have non-compulsory membership.

d) Some CSOs are more advantaged than others

It is important that the relationship framework and guidelines identify the presence of privilege and elites within the various groups and ensures that open access is made available to community associations directly created and operated by citizens and that reflect their views, experiences and aspirations. These will include both locality issues and regional wide concerns.

Another issues that need to be considered is the willingness of community associations to cooperate with each other in their approach to Council while others may continue to compete with each other.

e) Contracted, funded and sponsored CSOs

As well as the forms of community associations being varied the types of relationships that they currently have and that may be developed in the future are diverse. Some have contractual relationships to deliver specified services or to manage specific facilities; others have a funding or sponsorship relationship.

Others are concerned with monitoring the operation of various Council policies while some groups will simply be concerned with ensuring that the Council receives and listens to local concerns between the three-yearly election cycle.

² That is, they are not community based in that they have not been formed by, and are not controlled by the community although they may have the legal form of a charitable trust. Their mission and values may reflect those of the controlling body (Council, Government or business agency) rather than those of independent citizens.