

ABSTRACT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM
THE PROSPECTS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN JAMAICA

Eris Dawn Schoburgh

Although the need to reform the system of local government in Jamaica has a number of historical antecedents, the inclusion of community empowerment as a specified objective is an attempt to redress the growing disconnection between the community and governance structures. It is indicative of the new direction in social investment strategies that emphasize the notion of shared responsibility. This dissertation examines the extent to which the proposed reforms can facilitate the empowerment of local communities. It challenges the assumptions that underpin the reform process and contends that community empowerment is fundamentally a process of enhancing citizenship. Giving effect to citizenship has two clear indicators: (a) adopting innovative methods that will establish a basis for transforming Jamaica's political culture and (b) introducing economic measures that will uplift the lives of ordinary citizens. The enhancement of citizenship is not merely a function of local government and as such the reform programme will result in a reorganization of structures and administrative functions rather than a substantive change in the relationship between this level of government and the community.

Keywords: Eris Dawn Schoburgh; local government; community empowerment.