

## **District Councils: Political Development and Community Building**

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### **Abstract**

When the concept of district board elections was first introduced by the British administration in 1980, it was related to preparation for the future of Hong Kong and the promotion of democracy in the territory.

Elections of district boards provided opportunities for political participation as they led to the introduction of universal suffrage. Political activists were encouraged to stand as elected district board members who were given resources and status to establish their respective district networks and political bases. Groups of like-minded district board members might join forces to form political parties.

With the introduction of Legislative Council elections in 1985, media attention for district boards sharply declined. But they remain important political bases for political parties who rely heavily on their district council members/candidates to maintain and expand their electoral networks. For the pro-democracy groups, the resources at the disposal of their district board members are important assets.

Though district councils have not been significant in building residents' identifications at the district level, they have been able to offer many services and contribute to community building. Theoretically, more resources for the district councils and the Home Affairs Branch can help to strengthen various types of grassroots organizations which in turn can enhance community building and ties between the government and the community.