



**Publication to the symposium:
Citizens' Participation in Local Public Policy Making:
European Experiences in Global Perspectives**

The Hague, 8-10 November 2004

PREFACE

Representative democracy is at stake. The main question is if it will remain credible as the system to solve our local, national and international problems in the 21st century, especially when it comes to finding a balance between different interests and to protecting minority rights in our globalising world. Will democracy gain sufficient confidence worldwide to fulfil the expectations? Will the impressive democratic reform in all former Central and Eastern European countries prove sustainable? Will the Afghan and Iraqi people succeed in building democratic countries, after many years of dictatorship, war and deeply rooted corruption? Will representative democracy as the model for society appeal to the millions of poor people in undemocratic countries in the world?

I believe in representative democracy.

I believe in responsible citizens who choose their own leaders to take well balanced decisions; in political leaders who are accountable to their constituency; in governments that act in the interests of their citizens; that invest in the development of their communities and societies. But we must accept, these things are often very difficult to realise.

Local government is the delivery room for a representative democracy. That is the level where direction is given to the community and where young people learn rules and values. That is where politicians learn to represent their voters and the meaning of leadership. It is also the place where the government is most visible to its citizens; where citizens should be enabled to participate in the decisions that affect their daily lives; where public services are delivered and solutions for problems and conflicts of interest in the community are found. Local governments consolidate, renew and reinvent the meaning of representative democracy every day. In every country, a strong local government is crucial for representative democracy and therefore for sustainable development.

Citizens' participation in governance is an important pillar for sustainable development. The transformation of governance processes into more participatory and inclusive forms is now widely recognised as beneficial. Good Local governance demands transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs.

VNG International works with local politicians, civil servants, and (organisations of) citizens. The colleague-to-colleague approach has been especially effective in this sensitive policy area: to see its citizens as 'clients' demands an attitude change that can be demanding. VNG International strives to support municipalities in obtaining a better perspective on the needs of their citizens and to develop the local governments' attitude and tools to improve citizens' participation in local decision making process.

Therefore, I am enthusiastic about increasing the knowledge about citizens' participation worldwide by organising a symposium on "Citizen's Participation in Local Public Policy Making: European Experiences in Global Perspectives", in which the central question will be "what are the recent successful experiences and developments in European citizens participation and how can we learn from them?", for the Open

Research Centre for Local Human Resources and Local Public Policy Development (LORC) at the Ryukoko University.

You can imagine that I am proud to hereby present you the pre-symposium publication. It gives you an insight in recent developments and thoughts in the field of citizens' participation. It introduces you to critical issues and questions in the study of local governance and citizens' participation in Europe. I would like to thank the initiators of LORC for their initiative, their efforts and their co-operation in realizing this symposium and I would like to wish you all some fruitful days here in The Hague.

Peter Knip
Director, VNG International
The Hague, October 2004

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GUIDE TO THE PARTICIPANTS

This publication consists of two parts, one part concerning contents illustrated by diverse articles according to the policy, the models and practice of citizens' participation. Why citizens' participation is renewed (environment of citizens' participation)? How citizens' participation is renewed (the process)? And what are the outcomes of renewed citizens' participation (instruments & effects)? Dr. Cezary Trutkowski introduced the articles and other readings in the introduction to this publication on "Citizens' Participation in Local Public Policy Making: European Experiences in Global Perspectives". The articles published here are a short version of the original documents. The full articles will be sent to you upon request as well as the following articles which we can suggest for further reading, here below.

The second part is a publication of logistical aspects concerning the symposium. In this part you can expect the latest programme, a short summary about the speakers, a description of VNG International, our contact details and the information about the hotel, restaurant etc.

We tried our best to contact all the authors about the publication right of their articles. Where we didn't reach the authors, and need a confirmation of publishing parts of the publication, we would like them to contact us. In this publication the full articles are not published. The publication is not printed and only distributed in a select group of interested people.

Further suggested reading:

1 – Why citizens' participation is renewed (environment)

Giovanni di Stasi, Speech "Strengthening local democracy and democratic participation in a changing world" (Oslo 2004).

Nick Raynsford MP, Speech "Strengthening local democracy and democratic participation in a changing world" (Oslo 2004).

Pekka Kettunen And Markku Kiviniemi, *Democracy under Transition. The Fragmentation of Nation State and Citizen Participation* (ECPR Workshop Paper, Copenhagen 2000)

Daemen, H.H.F.M. and L. Schaap (eds.), *Citizen and City. Development in fifteen local democracies in Europe* (Delft 2000) –Chapter 10 (other chap's during Symp.)

2 – How citizens' participation is renewed (process)

Prof. Gerard Stoker, *Experiences of Member States with Policies for the Strengthening of Participation at Local Level* (Council of Europe 2004, provisional)

John Loughlin, "Conclusions: The Transformation of Regional and Local Democracy in Western Europe", in: Idem, *Subnational Democracy in the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities* (2004).

On the Participation of Citizens in Local Public Life (Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states) and

Vivien Lowndes, Lawrence Pratchett and Gerry Stoker, "Trends In Public Participation: Part 1 – Local Government Perspectives",

Vivien Lowndes, Lawrence Pratchett and Gerry Stoker, "Trends In Public Participation: Part 1 – Civil Society Perspectives",

3 – Outcomes of renewed citizens' participation (instruments & effect)

Hugo Swinnen, Speech "Citizens' Participation in Cities: an Exiting Story of Tensions. Some Conclusions from Ten Years of Study on Citizens and Their City's Policy Making" (Utrecht 2003)

Innovation In City Government – Key Lessons from a Transnational Assessment in Demos (Demos Policy Briefing 4, 2003).

Citizens. Innovation. Local Governance. A 21st century approach. Report and Guidelines from the Demos Project (Edinburgh 2004)

PART I – ANALYSING RECENT EUROPEAN TRENDS IN LOCAL CITIZENS’ PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

Cezary Trutkowski

1.1 Problem analysis: changes in the society and government that call for new CP policies

The observed changes in today’s large scale, complex, differentiated, and reflexive societies cause immense difficulties for the governments and challenge their bureaucratic models of management. The crisis of governability of the nation-state is paralleled by the crisis of its legitimation. This leads many scholars to the conclusion that democracy in the developed countries is apparently under transition, and this transition has many paradoxical features. Formal democratic institutions are undermined but at the same time citizens become more and more autonomous, reflexive and strongly interested in ‘making a difference’ not only in their lifeworlds but also in wider, worldly contexts. We are witnessing participatory ideals emerging once again both on the level of debates on policy and as an issue raised by the citizens themselves. Whether these new expectations can be met or not, depend on our capability to articulate all contextual changes which are most challenging for our understanding of what democracy mean today. These changes are summarised in the table below.

Macro level trends	Micro level trends (changes ‘from below’)
<p>1. Crisis of legitimization of nation-state Decrease in authority of the main parties Diminishing confidence in government, including local government Decline in turnout in local and national elections, disillusionment and apathy of citizens Growing gap between decision system on the national level and the lifeworld of citizens</p> <p>2. Crisis of governability of nation-state Decentralisation and privatisation of decision-making: delegation of state responsibilities to corporations, NGOs and individuals Marketisation: market pressures on non-political solutions to collective problems Losing functional capacity</p> <p>3. Proliferation of risk</p>	<p>1. Value shift: alternate behaviour and more critical attitudes among citizens Mark Warren (2002) cites Ronald Inglehart, who writes in the summary of the <i>World Values Survey</i>, that while support for democracy ideals is strong, “authority figures and hierarchical institutions are subject to more searching scrutiny than they once were (...) elite-directed forms of participation such as voting are stagnant or declining, elite-challenging forms of participation are becoming more widespread”(Warren 2002,681).</p> <p>2. New segmentations in the society, due to structure of unemployment, demographic changes</p> <p>3. Pluralization of ‘life-worlds’</p>

4. Complexity of contemporary societies combined with knowledge deficiencies on the side of the officials	The above developments cause rise of so-called 'issue politics', which means that much more capacities for collective action emerge in new, pluralistic sectors of political and social life, but at the same time areas of possible conflict are multiplied and political responsibility for 'commonalities' is undermined.
5. Globalization: multiplication of channels of communication and influence	
6. Rising of global civil society?	

Kettunen and Kiviniemi (2000) use the term fragmentation to describe the changes in political field and political action: "The concept of fragmentation refers to a differentiations without corresponding forces of integration. This porous situation probably generates both feelings of powerlessness in relation to the 'centre' and simultaneously feelings of a 'new autonomy' and independence" (21). Individual and collective actors become oriented towards new centres of social integration and both researchers and policy makers have to be responsive to these emergent centres, taking into account the new possible integrative resources which are found outside the fields of politics and administration.

It seems that the nation-state is not such an integrative resource any more and efforts undertaken to democratize nation-state institutions would be not enough to overcome the crisis of governability on the state level. We should instead look for *new centres of collective decision-making*. The developments described above force us to ask some general questions, which also permeate all the articles presented.

- If in many developed democracies nation-state becomes less and less significant as mobilizing force and hierarchical political parties tend to lose control over their electorates, than what kind of political and social actors actually get collective things done instead?
- If bureaucratic model of management is less and less efficient (in government, business, NGO sector alike) what forms of organization can replace this model?
- On what conditions can new and old actors of political field cope with one another?
- Who is in charge of defining framework of such co-operation?
- Should we replace representative democracy with participatory democracy or rather work on balancing them?
- What particular kinds of participation can increase the amount of the social capital, understood in terms of social networks, generalized trust, norms of reciprocity and solidarity?
- How to deal with the cases of "uncivil participation": social groups and networks which are closed or semi-closed, competing with each other, whose existence does not increase social capital but causes distrust in a community?

While talking about changes in power balance and looking for new sites of collective decision making, we should remember about the paradoxical fact that the declining state still seems to be irreplaceable. The

nation-state function in many roles: on one side, it maintains the prevalent institutional model but at the same time may be responsible for fostering changes, factor of change in fact. As John Loughlin underlies, “countries remain basically faithful to their state and national state traditions of political and administrative culture. But second, these traditions undergo continual change and adaptation”

Decline of nation-state in the first place means **increased freedom for localities**. But, as Kettunen and Kiviniemi rightly observe in the Finnish case, it is not an option applied by all local governments: “An obvious result of the reforms is consequently the differentiation of the communes. The cut-backs of state subsidies to local governments and the growing importance of locally collected taxes, business incomes and service fees indicate that there are both ‘winning’ local governments, which are favoured by a dynamic development and have the ability to use strategically the increased opportunities, and ‘losing’ ones, which suffer from lack of incomes and have no use for the New Public Management or other new models.”(Kettunen & Kivaniemi 2000,10)

1.2 How new forms of citizen participation are being implemented?

There are many different premises of what citizens’ participation may mean in contemporary conditions, which are hidden behind the official statements and recommendations issued by the European bodies. The main premise of the Council of Europe policy is realistic: local representative democracy is strategic necessity, as a factor of stability and at the same time ‘moral’ necessity, as common European heritage. Thus, it cannot be replaced but rather supplemented by more direct, flexible and *ad hoc* methods of participation. Role of state institution is maintained: state bodies should try hard to cope with the decline of trust people have in elected institutions and try to maintain legitimacy of decision making. Particularly, state powers should *improve the legal framework for participation and ensuring that national legislation and regulations enable local and regional authorities to employ a wide range of participation instruments* in conformity with EU documents. One serious question seems to emerge in this context, whether citizens’ participation strongly need recognition of in political circles, as we are suggested or, in other words, do citizens’ activities need official certification? In the official recommendation of the Council of Europe citizens are sometimes patronized and treated mainly as “recipients of reforms” and involvement of them in governance is sometimes equated to yet another *service delivery*.

Notwithstanding the premises, we cannot belittle the immense role of the European Union, which has been an important factor in the process of reconfiguration of central-local relations in its member states. The EU in its regional programs is framing policy for the promotion of citizens’ participation at local level and restructuring central-regional/local relationships. The European Commission encourage participatory trends through the criteria necessary to receive programme funding (e.g. promoting the principle of partnership) Strong impulses on the side of European funding programs fuel so-called ‘competitive regionalism’. The EU policy promotes interregional associations and attempts to reform institutional forms and working procedures within regional and local government itself.

The most visible effect of these policies is structural reorganization, which means **strengthening the executives** of regional and local governments rather than representative bodies to provide strong, visible and effective leadership and reducing the bureaucratic features of local government.

Loughlin and Swinnen enumerate the following steps and measures to encourage and reinforce citizens' participation in local public life, which have been tried in different countries:

- Prior appraisal of legislation by the public
- "Citizens' budget" - involving public in budgetary and financial planning
- Supporting structures capable of assisting local people and their efforts to participate in shaping local community life
- Involving individuals or interest groups in decision-making through user-boards
- More specific approach to certain groups, who are excluded from local public life Inclusion is possible through various forms of consultative forums (for the disabled, women, low-income, foreigners, etc.)
- Recognition of the potential that children and young people represent
- Improving citizenship education
- Transparency and communication policy
- Measures to make voting more convenient

Most common of the adopted measures, according to the report entitled *Experiences of Member States with Policies for the Strengthening of Participation at Local Level. Analysis of the Replies to the Questionnaire* are the following: making the voting procedures more convenient, dividing decision-making process into stages, transparency, creation of sub-municipal bodies, improving education on citizenship.

To the above-enumerated measures we should add the recommendations indicated in the documents of the Council of Europe:

- Direct public participation is crucial in management of local affairs
- New information and communication technologies should be tools for increasing chances of participation
- More deliberative forms of decision-making (forums, round tables, opinion polls, user surveys)
- Devices for involving citizens in management of services
- Giving them more influence over local planning and over strategic decisions
- Developing systematic feed-back mechanisms
- Recognition of the spirit of volunteering that already exists in many local communities

The main question which should be risen here is about **rules of the game**. Many of the authors suggest that EU-promoted measures undertaken to promote civic-mindedness are not 'the only game in the town', because there is an extremely important factor of the persistent organizational culture, deeply immersed in mentalities, which can be opposite to these measures. As Kettunen & Kivaniemi remark: "Groups and individuals within communities both inherit and develop their 'definitions of situation' (...) these definitions of situation include definitions of the purpose of the game (cooperation, competition) and definitions of the rules."

For example, 'thick social trust' within many networks and groups may cause awareness of belonging but at the same time may not accord with civic-mindedness.

Hopefully, the Council of Europe Recommendation on Citizens' Participation stresses that rigid solutions should be avoided and space should be made for experimentation with regard to local specificities, *giving priority to empowerment rather than to laying down rules*

1.3 Experiences with new CP projects/policies and chances for implementing them elsewhere.

Studies show a variety of trends and developments in both citizens' political behaviour and local self-government reforms in the member states of the Council of Europe. In most cases the leading role of local authorities in promoting citizens' participation is underlined: success of any local democratic participation policy depends on the commitment of these authorities but the authors vary in their answers to the following question: How the local government should define itself as an actor of change: by taking special measures or rather stepping back?

Researchers of Verwey-Jonker Institute stress the multiformity of citizens' participation but according to them whether more active participation occur or not depend upon how the role of citizen is defined. Citizen may be defined as a consumer making choices about the kinds of services which will mean simply consuming products and services or as an active producer of them. The researchers stress that it is local government that should be the principal actor of change and should dispose of competency to support positive change in role definitions and rules of the game. Local government can create space for horizontal participation and empower people by providing resources in material and non-material sense (e.g a yearly budget for grants to citizens' groups). They proceed with distinguishing three main fields of tension which may occur during the process of reform implantation:

- tension between citizens' own space (*horizontal participation*) and frameworks set by local government (*vertical participation*)
- tension between representative and participatory democracy
- tension between two 'codes', one of bureaucratic environments and one of citizens.

The main conclusion is that basic rules which should be implemented to motivate and support citizens for participating are the following:

1. Multiformity and space
2. Clarity and transparency
3. Coherence and responsiveness

Now we will focus on DEMOS project, aimed at developing innovations in citizen participation in local government. DEMOS project shows perfectly that there is no one proper answer to the issue of increased citizen participation. **Experience** may be most powerful learning tool, and the only obstacle to institutionalizing *learning-by-doing* is set of bureaucratic attitudes and prejudices of officials.

One thing which is doubtful to great extent is whether *new elected bodies* should be set up at sub-municipal level –DEMOS projects indicate that too much of institutionalising and professionalization of the process of citizen participation should be avoided.

Key lesson from the DEMOS is that citizens should not be necessarily defined as '**recipients of reform**'. On the contrary, authorities should be responsive to their own input (such responsiveness can be forced by devolving government and localising services).

Another important lesson is **need for strong leadership** of mayor or another leader who is critical to overcome deep-rooted attitudes of officers.

DEMOS bring the suggestion that representative democracy and the participatory democracy can be balanced for better governance.

For any innovation to develop successfully, **cross-party consensus** around its implementation is needed and also special efforts have to be undertaken to mobilize all officers committed to the programme, no matter what ranking in hierarchy.

1.4 Conclusion

Any top-down (recommended) or bottom-up (experience-learned) CP models that local governments have in disposal are constrained by the scarcity of resources and *longue durée* of a specific organizational culture, which is especially the case of Eastern European countries. Local governments in this region still need greater decision-making powers. Much depend on the particular culture and level of social capital. As Loughlin remarks: "Some societies are better able to use such techniques than others. In some cases, there is a long-standing tradition of associationalism and active involvement in local affairs. In others, the regional and local society might be more marked by clientelistic forms of relationship or may have been devastated by serious industrial decline or economic collapse". Local traditions and local 'models of belonging' remain strong as do religious traditions such as Catholicism

The 'home place' of the civil society is not so-called third sector (institutionalized NGOs) as much as local community, "a part of citizens' lifeworld". (Kettunen & Kivaniemi 2000,12) Regional and local authorities respond in many different ways to the external challenges of globalization and Europeanization (which ranges from enthusiasm and responsiveness to attentisme).

To enter new spaces of freedom which have opened due to alternative organisational forms and channels of influence both citizens and local governments need opportunities, which should be equally distributed. Mark Warren (2002) suggest eight guidelines to progress democracy in the changing political landscape:

1. Democracy ought to follow politics, not political institutions
2. Opportunities for democratic participation in formal political institutions may be limited, but opportunities in society and economy are not

3. Political association based on territory limits the scope of participation; association based on issues does not
4. Issue- and sector-based devolution provide targets of opportunity for democratic participation
5. State should be reflexive, using law to structure democratic processes
6. Democratizing society democratizes the state.
7. Even progressive democracy is subject to the division of labour.
8. Democratic equality is complex equality

1. STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

Council of Europe (CoE) Ministerial Conference

Nick Raynsford MP
Minister for Local and Regional Government, UK
(Oslo, 30 September 2004)

Good afternoon.

I am delighted to be participating – if only virtually – in the conference today because the issues you are discussing are of fundamental importance to the future of local communities everywhere. I am only sorry that because of the clash of dates with our Labour Party Conference in the UK, I am not able to join you in Oslo.

In all our states, effective, democratic, local government is the key to building sustainable and successful local communities – places where people want to live and work. It is local government that can make a real difference to people's everyday experiences – to the street or village in which they live, to the services they receive on their doorstep, to the parks and spaces they relax in, to the environment they work in, and so on. Moreover if local democracy works and people have trust and confidence that it will deliver what they need, then their belief and confidence in democratic governance at all levels is strengthened.

But the institutions and processes that served people well in the past will not necessarily continue to do so unless they are regularly reviewed and, where necessary, reformed and modernised to reflect the rapidly changing world we live in and the different challenges we face.

People's expectations of local government are certainly both changing and rising. Across Europe people are expecting continuing improvements in the local services they receive. They want their local communities to become more prosperous, healthier and more tolerant. They want a safer, cleaner, greener environment in their local area. And often it is to local government that people are looking to deliver these improvements.

At the same time, patterns of participation in local government are changing too. Already people are less willing to limit their role to voting once every three or four years and leaving it to their elected representatives to deliver everything they want in the meantime. Life nowadays moves on too quickly for that. New technology allows us all to keep in touch constantly and communicate our views much more easily than ever before.

People increasingly expect to be involved and consulted between elections on issues that affect their community. It is important that they have their say and make their input to decisions that affect them. New technologies make it possible to meet these aspirations. Equally, new technologies can facilitate the process of voting. Using such techniques in elections can improve access, choice and opportunity – making it easier for people to participate in elections.

Improving citizens' participation in local government – both at and between elections – is a key theme for us in the UK. Since 2000 we have been piloting new approaches to voting to offer electors the opportunity and choice to take part in an election in a way that better suits their lifestyle today. People often live in one place but work in another, and their children's schools may be somewhere else again. Requiring people to vote in person and only in the place where they live is not necessarily convenient. So it is sensible to pilot alternative options.

I am pleased to say that the evidence from these pilots is that it is possible to achieve significant improvements in the levels of participation. For example, in June this year participation rates in the European Parliamentary elections – which have traditionally been very low in the UK – were double the 1999 level in our four pilot regions. And in many local council elections we are also seeing a reversal of long-term trends of declining participation where pilots of new ways of voting have been held.

We have also been working with local government and others to increase citizens' participation and involvement with their councils between elections. Councils are now using new ways of consulting and seeking people's views – such as conducting indicative referendums, setting up citizens' panels and giving people the opportunity to express their opinions by email or text. Another aspect we are developing is civic education so people have a better understanding of the role of local government and how they can participate.

For much of what we are achieving in the UK on participation we are drawing on the work of the Council of Europe. This work is centred on the Council of Europe's Recommendation on the Participation of Citizens in Local Public Life, published in 2001. I know Norway chaired the group which developed that and we from the UK were pleased to contribute to it. The conference today will be a valuable opportunity to take stock of the progress we have made across Europe since 2001 and to identify new measures for the future reflecting the needs, technological developments, and aspirations of our citizens for the second half of this decade.

We too in the UK are seeking to develop further what we have achieved over the last seven years. In England we are aiming to build up a shared ten-year vision for local government through discussion with people who have a close interest in the future of our local communities. This will build on the many strengths of local government but also recognise that there are areas for improvement and change. We need to be open to change to meet the expectations of our future citizens, and we will look with interest at the experience of others across Europe in this field.

In short, the aim of us all is to strengthen local democracy by increasing citizens' participation in a number of different ways. Through this we will build up, at local level, trust and engagement between citizens and those they elect to take decisions for their local community. Local government everywhere will be better able to provide the strong local leadership and the high quality local services that people will continue to expect of it.

I would like to send you my best wishes for a successful and productive conference.

2. DEMOCRACY UNDER TRANSITION: THE FRAGMENTATION OF NATION STATE AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Pekka Kettunen Markku Kiviniemi

2.1 Introduction

The paper analyses the current status and trends of citizen-state relations and discusses implications of new aspects on these relations. The empirical focus is on recent changes of the politico-administrative system and of social action in the context of civil society. The empirical reference relates mostly to the Finnish society in the 1990's.

From a methodological perspective, the analysis of changes and new movements should not ignore the persisting stable features in the politico-administrative system. While there are certain new forms of political participation from below, this does not necessarily make great transitions within prevailing systems. In this paper the new features are interpreted as a gradual fragmentation of politics and political action. The concept of fragmentation contains both old and new aspects in the making of politics. The concept is applied here with a 'diagnostic eye' looking at empirical observations.

The paper elaborates the gradual fragmentation of the Finnish political system. This is argued by using empirical findings from different aspects and fields of the political process. We witness several differences as compared with the historical legacy, the traditional universalism of the Scandinavian welfare state. We refer to the long-term processes from the origins of the parliamentary system to the growth of a relatively centralized nation-state with strong national political parties towards a more dispersed political arena of the 1990's.

There are both macro level trends and micro features "from below". The first refers to the weakening of the nation state and to political and social dynamics partly overtaken by the EU-region dialogue. Micro-level changes refer to the altered behaviour and perceptions of the citizens.

Changes are occurring both "automatically" as a side product of socio-economic development and deliberately in the current liberal atmosphere. Contextual changes, indirectly affecting politics, tend to create new segmentations in the society. These changes include: continuous urbanisation and spatial centralization; unemployment, particularly long-time unemployment; shifts within the structure and quality of the labour market; demographic changes, e.g. the ageing of the population.

Deliberate reforms affecting democratic participation are usually initiated and launched by political actors. Citizens, as "recipients of reforms", may react to reforms in different ways. Recent examples include:

diminished power and authority of the main parties and declined turnout in local and national elections; decentralisation of national decision-making; gradual progress of privatisation; marketisation in terms of increasing possibilities for free choice by demand and competition by supply.

In sum, the welfare state and traditional political institutions based on political representation seem to be in turmoil. The welfare state has never been totally centralized or equalitarian. Anyway, income differences and poverty have radically decreased with the development of the welfare state. Take child care as an example: still in the 1960's it was common for wealthy families to hire a servant. Now everyone brings her child to public day care, where the fees are relatively even. It seems that the universal structure of public services is becoming more diffused (Sosiaalibarometri 2000). It may be too early to argue the universal welfare state to be obsolete. Here we point to the embryonic trends and new challenges facing the universal model. Examples which are challenging the traditional idea of universalism include various new forms of participation and dialogue, new local fora and actor groups, teledemocracy, and the strengthening of issue politics.

Embryonic forms of new activities may indicate the weakening of the strong statecentred project of the welfare state. Alternatively, it may prove to be a proxy of real changes. The perception of a dichotomy between the collective decision-making system and the more individual, social decision-making in smaller units may become blurred when local governments decentralize more tasks to village committees and local zealots and individual issues are solved by those involved *ad hoc* - also morally, not merely by the virtue of an elected mandate.

The issue at stake is whether these new, dispersed qualities of democratic participation in some way contradict with, or perhaps complement, the prevalent institutional model. In this connection the qualitative difference between established, poweroriented corporatist movements and temporary, autonomy-oriented pluralist movements might be a useful starting-point. The question remains whether the dynamic pictures of reality from below are actually ignoring to describe the continuing dominant power relations from above. In other words, does the fragmented nature of the civil society and the politico-administrative system require new forms of democracy? The recent examples encompass teledemocracy and additional new dialogues between the governments and citizens (Khan 1999), decentralisation (Burns et al. 1997) and various forms of governance (Kooiman 1993). The evidence of real changes is however lacking.

The second section of the paper focuses on the changes of the politico-administrative system, and particularly on changes which may affect political participation. The cases comprise of reforms on regional and local administrations connected with recent trends in political participation.

The third section moves on to take a closer look at the civil society. This section begins with a conceptual framework aiming to define the place of civil society in the lifeworld of citizens. The changing relations between the civil society and the politicoadministrative system are illustrated by analysing the role of citizens' associations and the qualities of local communities. Recent changes in channels of influence are identified. The theme of fragmentation is observed also in civil society in terms of a variety of membership types in communities.

The last section sums up the findings and relates them to the ongoing debate on democracy. Two broad questions can be raised: how much fragmentation of institutional democracy has already taken place, and how much fragmentation these institutions can tolerate without losing their functional capacity?

2.2 Structural changes of the politico-administrative system

The Scandinavian welfare state is grounded on universal national principles and predominantly on public institutions (Esping-Andersen 1990, Kosonen 1998). The national institutions, the parliament, the government and various ministries are strong policy makers. The regions and local governments, though having several functions, are more or less implementors of national welfare policies. In Eastonian terms, we may also argue that the input side of the welfare state is based on the value of homogeneity; i.e. most of the political parties have nation-wide organisations and the consensual culture aims at finding comprehensive and widely approved solutions to societal problems (Milner 1994). Consequently, the scope of policies has until present been relatively broad in Scandinavia in comparison with other types of welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990).

These institutional premises have guaranteed relatively stable political conditions, produced welfare for the majority of citizens (Rothstein 1994; Sipilä 1997), and have also, we may argue, represented an ideal democratic model in a global context. These politico-administrative structures seem currently, however, to be in a process of fragmentation.

Probably it is too early to delineate this development in a coherent way and to distinct between relevant and irrelevant phenomena. The cases in the following comprise mainly of structural changes which transfer tasks and responsibilities from the central government to lower levels. Recently the scope of national politics has also been narrowed by the membership in the EU (Finland and Sweden in 1995) and the increasing role of international markets. These changes, however, also meet counterforces, which we will discuss here. We begin by analysing the political structures, i.e. parties and elections, and thereafter move over to the administrative structures.

2.2.1 Political structures

Political parties play a key role in transforming individual preferences into collective decisions. ... In the case of Finland differs somewhat from the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish developments as the main parties of the development in the 1960's and 1970's number three, i.e. Social democrats, the agrarian Centre party, and the Communitst. ... The party structure in Finland has been relatively stable. ... The real change, however, is in the contents of politics rather than in the institutional forms. ... It may be that the citizens do not hold the same values and attitudes as before, and why should they. Parties and political institutions are no longer respected, and what is important, trusted upon as before. One important factor in the development is certainly the media.

Perhaps we should conceive the decline of party politics in an alternative way. In other words, politics at present does not offer passionate debates on the good society, but more and more professional and technical arguments difficult to follow for an average citizen. There are several factors which may explain the change.

Firstly, it seems that the period of growth for the welfare state is over.

Secondly, the EU can be claimed to affect in a negative way to participatory democracy.

Thirdly, the relation between politics and economy is also under transition.

To sum up the preceding observations, we may argue that the forms of political participation and decision making have transformed to some degree during the 1990's. Politics, particularly at the national level, is becoming more professional and technical. In the aftermath of the radical devaluation in 1991, some debaters criticised the argumentation put forward by the Government and the Bank of Finland in favour of the devaluation for being based on inevitabilities, i.e. arguing that there was no choice. A far leap from the Scandinavian Welfare Model.

2.2.2 The administrative structures

Politics is about collective solutions, and these solutions do not necessarily need to be in the form of public services. In reality, however, the Nordic Welfare States are characteristically public service oriented systems (Sipilä 1997). ... As the previous delineation indicates, more and more responsibility is handed over to private companies, associations and individuals themselves. A prominent feature of this development is decentralization.

The balance of power is, however, gradually changing and in the current period (2000-2006) the regional structures have been modified moderately (Kettunen 1999b). On the other hand, there are still strong expectations that the state directed practice would go on.

At the local level the changes have also been remarkable. As in other Scandinavian countries, Finnish local governments were also in the late 1980's encouraged to rearrange their service structures (so-called free municipality experiment, (Baldersheim and Ståhlberg 1994). In the following years a majority of the Finnish local governments changed their administrative structures, in most cases building larger units, and integrating smaller boards into larger ones. The free commune experiment was seen as an opportunity to streamline the local government structures, and thus one of the inventions was simply to cut down the number of boards. The result was probably more effective structures. However, one may ask whether the eagerness to diminish the number of seats in elected boards actually went too far and diminished the space for political decision making.

After the free commune experiment, the next reforms have been the new local government act of 1995 and the reform of the state subsidy system in 1993 (amended in 1997).

The increased freedom is an option not applied by all the 450 local governments.

Currently it is too early to argue that there would be both traditional and businesskind-of-local governments. In reality it seems that although external solutions may, in principle, be more cost effective than the in-house production, the political and administrative constraints affect these choices.

We should not exaggerate the pace of development. It is more likely an embryonic development and the parliament can always turn back the stream.

In sum, compared with the earlier times, the citizens at present seem to have a bigger say in the local politico-administrative sphere. Although the traditional arenas, the assembly and the boards, have declined in importance, the new emphasis on alternative organisational forms, quality and responsiveness has opened up new channels. Free-choice and responsiveness to feedback are the catch words in order to satisfy the preferences of the citizens. On the other hand, not all the local governments share this enthusiasm nor have the required resources. The growth of the cities in the Southern Finland, at the expense of the East and North with constantly high figures of unemployment, indicates that the opportunities of the citizens are not equally distributed.

2.3 Fragmentation of civil society

Changes of the politico-administrative system and its functioning are often argued to relate to changes in the “environment”, in the “civil society”. The relations between the political system and the civil society are, however, far from clear. The ambiguities go back to different conceptualisations of the civil society (see e.g. articles in *Toward a Global Civil Society* 1995). This chapter proceeds 1) to characterize the nature of the civil society in conceptual terms, 2) to identify certain divergencies in its primary qualities and 3) to reflect on recent changes observed in empirical studies.

2.3.1 3.1. Conceptions of civil society

Micheletti (1995) contrasts civil society with mass society. Characteristics of a civil society include citizens' rights and real opportunities for free association and group action as well as for free expression of opinions. In a mass society these opportunities are either limited or lacking. According to Micheletti the civil society is a kind of filter between people and the politico-administrative system (1995, 5-6). Siisiäinen (1999, 125) writes that “associations are ‘filters’ which convert the communication of (social) movements into such form that the political, legal and economic subsystems can process it or, in practice, some part of it”. Thus, the civil society fills the space between individual citizens and the formal political and administrative organizations.

...

Citizenship refers to a membership in a community. Participation, then, refers to an active membership. Including all kind of activism introduces a broad conception of participation. People's activism can manifest itself in different economic, political, social and cultural contexts. These may be overlapping and entangled with each other or specific and unique. For individuals, active participation is a potential resource. It can bear more or less motivation and commitment to common affairs. For the community,

active participation contributes to the social capital: it may increase mutual trust, reciprocity and social networking within the community (Putnam 1993).

2.3.2 Divergencies of civil society

The number of citizens' associations is often used to indicate the basic activation level of the civil society. Schematically, it is possible to elaborate different profiles of participation in a community. A simple way is to proceed by distinguishing 1) the spheres and 2) the activeness - passiveness of participation. The most active citizens are active in all spheres of participation. The most passive citizens, marginal members in the community, are passive in all spheres. In the middle, there are political activists, business activists, and cultural activists who are not participating all-around. This kind of typology could be elaborated further in empirical studies. The point is to include all kind of membership activism into the conceptual framework of participation.

...

Taken together, these three dimensions can be referred as two "ideal types" of civil societies: integrated and fragmented. In integrated civil societies, people orient themselves primarily towards cooperation, they act in horizontal ways, and social structures as well as communication are mostly open. In fragmented civil societies, on the contrary, people orient themselves primarily towards competition, act in hierarchical ways, social structures and communication being relatively closed. It is perhaps possible to recognise in these characteristics the differences between Northern and Southern Italy identified by Putnam.

Table 1. A Three-Dimensional Typology of Civil Societies.

	Orientation	Social structure	Communication
Integrated civil societies	Cooperative	Horizontal	Open
Fragmented civil societies	Competitive	Vertical	Closed

The patterns of integrated and fragmented civil societies include both structural and cultural aspects as well as typical ways of action. The difference is not so much a question of mechanical or organic solidarity (Durkheim) but rather a difference between communities with and without common solidarity. Groups and individuals within communities both inherit and develop their "definitions of situation". If living in a community is compared with a "game" (Crozier and Friedberg 1977), then, these definitions of situation include definitions of the purpose of the game (cooperation, competition) and definitions of the rules of the game (horizontality-verticality, openness-closedness in social roles).

Could the distinction into integrated and fragmented civil societies be related to the characteristics of the politico-administrative system? The political and administrative development is often regarded to have origins in the socio-cultural environment, i.e. in civil society. The simplest way to propose a relation can be based on the mutual embeddedness of political, administrative, social and cultural aspects. This would imply that integration in civil societies tends to produce integration in politics and administration. Correspondingly, fragmentation in civil societies tends to yield fragmentation in politics and administration.

2.3.3 Empirical studies of civil societies

How does the proposition about a symmetrical relationship between the civil society and the politico-administrative system hold for empirical observations? Today, there are not enough reliable observations on the nature of citizens' associations and networks. Anyway, analysts like Putnam and Micheletti regard citizens' associations to be a core element in civil societies. On the other hand, the majority of practical politicians in Finland would not agree on that view. Local politicians do not esteem citizens' associations as important for municipal decision-making (Niiranen and Kinnunen 1997). Neither do they regard these associations to represent local communities in a just way. Naturally, political trustees are representatives of political parties giving the priority to these parties as representatives of the local population.

...

A central distinction used by Micheletti is between pluralist and corporatist associations. Pluralist associations are independent from each other and from the politico-administrative system - they are based on the powers of their members. Corporatist associations are connected to their institutional environment, to other associations and to the politico-administrative system which implies that they tend to be more hierarchical and to orient themselves toward elites in society. Thus, pluralist associations are more open and horizontal than corporatist associations.

Now, pluralist and corporatist associations can be compared with the concepts of integrated and fragmented civil societies. Evidently pluralist associations share more qualities of integrated societies (openness, horizontality) than corporatist associations (more closed, hierarchical). In relation to cooperative and competitive orientation the situation is not so clear. In their independence, the pluralist associations may often be relatively isolated and weak. They try to create their own autonomous spheres of action. Thus, their positive results occur mainly in particular local issues which mostly complement the results of institutional public decision making. Paradoxically, even if the corporatist associations are competitive by purpose, their leaders often act in cooperative manners using bargaining and negotiations as channels to power structures. Because corporatist associations act mostly as interest groups they strive for power channels and tend to stabilize them at the top level (Ruostetsaari 1992).

The new action groups with their "situational politics" tend to have a temporary character in comparison with corporatist associations and their power linkages. ... The quality of the civil society could, of course, change in different aspects. The studies seem, however, to point on more stability than change. ... As to the active - passive dimension of the civil society, the number of "marginal citizens" seems to be decreasing. ... According to the evaluation by local decision-makers, the most powerful citizens' associations in the 1990s have been corporatist associations (trade unions, employers' associations) and sports associations.

Pluralist and corporatist elements in civil society can be tentatively defined in relation to the three qualitative dimensions. This is more a heuristic exercise than a reliable result of empirical research.

Table 2. Pluralist and corporatist elements in civil societies.

	Orientation	Social structure	Communication
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Pluralist elements	Autonomous spheres	Horizontal	Open
Corporatist elements	Competitive, elites seek for consensus	Vertical	Closed

The difference between the ideal model of integrated civil society and the empirical model seems to concentrate on the dimension cooperative - competitive. The pluralist associations are not so much cooperative in practice as the ideal model supposes. The corporatist associations, even if they are basically competitive at the grass roots level, have institutional ways to cooperate at the elite level. This refers to bargaining and negotiating systems which were created mainly in the “golden era” of the welfare state, in the 1960s and 1970s. In terms of human generations, most elite members of the 1990s have been socialized by these systems during the “golden era”. The shadow of previous decades is often long.

New possibilities opened by the rapid diffusion of information and communication technology (ICT) have not, so far, made any great changes in the decision-making system from the perspective of citizens. ... A general trend in the 1990's seems to be a slow fragmentation of the field of associations.

2.4 Conclusions

The concept of fragmentation refers to a differentiation without corresponding forces of integration. Fragmentation may appear in terms of structures, cultures and patterns of action. It proceeds into a direction in which groups of actors are more distanced from the main integrating systems and also from each other. This porous situation probably generates both feelings of powerlessness in relation to the “centre” and simultaneously feelings of a “new autonomy” and independence.

Tendencies towards fragmentation should not be regarded as a total transformation but instead as a gradual transition. From the perspective of participation, there are different groups of citizens (Niiranen 1997). One part of citizens still relies on traditional representative democracy and on related channels of influence. Another group of citizens relies more on alternative ways of participation (local committees, voluntary associations, single-issue groups) and orients not so much towards the politico-administrative system but rather towards creating room for more autonomous action. A third group is the most distanced and marginal in terms of traditional participation and tends to a privatism in primary groups. Under a broad concept of activism, even this third group may participate in the growing field of leisure associations (sports, culture etc).

From the citizens' perspective, the politico-administrative system still remains the dominant institution. The traditional national parties still occupy the power seats, the state institutions launch the national policies, a consensual political style prevails and decisions are taken under an instrumentally argued political and administrative culture. The “new truth” which works as the main criterion for instrumental policies is the international economy. National policy themes are salient in the mass media. They are not, however, close to citizens since the main task of the nation state seems to be to succeed in the international markets. In this situation, it is only natural that citizens look around to find their own arenas of action in the local lifeworld.

The growing gap between the national decision system and the lifeworld of citizens is a main factor behind fragmentation tendencies. While a big part of national themes have become remote to citizens a dispersion and plurality of specific orientations gains ground. The result is evidently a decline in unity. Evidence for that can be found in the differentiation of political discourse supported by “issue politics” and decentralised structures. The growing heterogeneity of social problems by geographic area, by labour market status and by age group adds fuel to fragmentation tendencies. This is reflected in the civil society as a differentiation and multiplication of associations which mostly tend to act within specific and limited issues.

The systemic integration by consensual elites is continuing in a loosened form. However, this integration reaches quite well the local politico-administrative level. Decentralisation has given new powers to local governments but this has not led to any new political forces in the local decision making. The new local powers seem to be mostly in the hands of local elites as ramifications of national political parties and interest groups. The new trends from below, as local action groups, new partnerships and tele-democracy, are so far mainly peripheral and particular political actors and fora. However, these local groups have significant achievements for the quality of life within the “local world”.

By the beginning of the new century, there seems to be combination of a integrated elite taking care of political decision making and a fragmented civil society characterised by a differentiation of preferences and by particular local results. Thus, in spite of new tendencies towards fragmentation, the classical formula ‘*divide et impera*’ continues with certain new variations. In the late 1960's and the 1970's, a “governance by corporatist income policy” was a dominant diagnosis by political scientists. In the early 1990's, a “governance by cutting expenditures” was introduced accompanied by the rhetoric of economic necessities. The present scene can be described as a “governance by macroeconomic imperatives” introduced by the discourse of the European integration. Fragmentation in civil society does not necessarily lead to fragmentation in the politico-administrative system.

While the gap between the national political agenda and citizens’ lifeworld continues, the commitment of citizens to national politics is weakening. This may well increase tendencies towards fragmentation. More and more people will conclude that the nation state is not responding to their demands but rather to some external voices. The number of those citizens who take distance from the state and politics may increase - they try to find a new independence from the public domain. Certainly a great number of citizens, however, remain dependent on the public policies. The pressures from these groups are more and more turning towards local governments bearing the responsibilities for public services. This is leading towards a “new localism” with growing differences between different regions and municipalities. In spite of the official cohesion policies, a severe incoherence may watch in the near future.

3. CITIZEN AND CITY. DEVELOPMENT IN FIFTEEN LOCAL DEMOCRACIES IN EUROPE. CHAPTER 10 - REFLECTIONS

**Harry Daemen
Linze Schaap**
(Delft, 2000)

3.1 Introduction

In the first chapter we formulated some questions. The main question was 'to what extent do the developments in local democracy differ between countries and how can those differences, if any, be explained?' We suggested two possible answers:

- Either the same trends are taking place in almost all western democracies, whatever their history, political system, culture and structure, size, et cetera.
- Or major differences exist between countries, probably due to the same factors.

In the eight 'country chapters', the results of the research in fifteen different cities were presented. In this last chapter, we will attempt to make an analysis, in order to answer the main research question. Our aim is not to make an encompassing overview but rather to illustrate problems, solutions and trends. Firstly, an overview will be presented of the problems local authorities are faced with with respect to citizen participation. The problem definitions will be discussed in combination with the strategies municipalities apply in order to deal with them. Secondly, we will deal with the trends and the results of the participation policies of the local authorities that have been studied in this project, that is, in as far as we know the results. Thirdly, questions for further research will be formulated. After all, this is an exploratory study.

3.2 Problem definitions

In the cities we studied several problems with local democracy and with the relationships between the citizenry and local authorities were found.

1. Declining electoral turnout
2. Distance, a legitimacy problem
3. Insufficient information, ineffective problem solving
4. Revitalising local government and democracy
5. Representation or general will versus civil society

3.3 Strategies

What strategies do municipalities apply in order to enhance citizen participation? As it was the case with the different ways our respondents defined the problems in the relations between local authority and citizens, again there are similarities and dissimilarities, between countries and also between cities in one and the same country.

3.3.1 Representative democracy emphasised

The first observation concerns representative democracy, which is the traditional way of decision-making in western-style democracies.

3.3.2 Addition to representation: traditional means

One of the additions to the traditional representative model we came across is consultation, that is, asking opinions without transferring any decision-making powers. Another addition to the representation in the municipal council is direct election of the mayor.

3.3.3 Addition to representation: new methods

All countries invest in new instruments and new ways to improve the relations between citizens and local government. The first method can be summarised by the concept of New Public Management. ...The second method is what we would call interactive policy-making (see chapter one of this book): by this we mean that citizens are seen not only as voters or customers, but rather as co-producers of policies. ...

3.3.4 The role of the local civil service

In some of the countries we studied, the role of the local administration, i.e. the local civil service, is changing. The local administration is getting a more prominent position in developing strategies in neighbourhoods in, for example, Stockholm, the Irish cities and Antwerp. ...

3.4 Problems

Of course the strategies we described above are not implemented without some difficulties and as yet unsolved problems and setbacks. These problems and setbacks can be grouped under the following headings:

- tensions in the bureaucracy
- the role of representative politics
- participation of the citizens
- the scope of decision making
- results

...

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude this section about results, we can state that it is too early to list the results of democratic renewal in a systematic way. With respect to substantial results, we observe mainly the hope of better, more precise and widely supported policies. As for the process itself, we suggest that attention be focused on re-integrating the citizen, finding a new balance between representative and participatory democracy and between problem-oriented contacts with civil servants and more political contact (of an advisory or even decision-making nature) with local authorities.

We have seen that our respondents, proud as they may be of their work, are well aware of the many obstacles and unsolved questions. These obstacles and questions actually dominated the interviews. This may reflect our research interests, but it is also an indicator of the enormous amount of yet undecided issues and dilemmas. Above, we explored some of these issues: tensions within the bureaucracy; questions about the proper role of representative politics; the remaining low level of citizen participation and its implications; and, finally, the substantial relevance of decision-making in the new democratic forums.

3.6 Trends

Reading the previous chapters, one sometimes gets the idea that all is going well: enthusiastic civil servants and politicians are telling eagerly about their experiments. The results are expressed in different ways. In some cities, the effects on society were frequently mentioned. ...Other cities focus more on citizens as individuals. ... In some cases (Helsinki, Hämeenlinna, Genk) the satisfaction of citizens was mentioned. ...Another advantage of increased citizen participation in local governance that was mentioned in almost all cities is the expected improvement of the quality of public policies. ...However, maybe the most interesting observation is the enthusiasm of those working on projects of renewal.

3.6.1 General trends

As for general trends, one observation is inevitable. Throughout Europe, the tool kit of New Public Management is being widely used. ...A second general trend worth mentioning is that experiments with democratic renewal seem to be taking place throughout Western Europe. ...A last general trend we would like to mention is the impact of communitarian ideas, or at least of approaches in which the role of 'social capital' and 'civil society' is recognised. ...

3.6.2 Differences

Obviously, differences can also be observed. We would like to pay attention to a few of these.

- Local autonomy: A question that was constantly on our minds concerned the degree of autonomy of the cities we investigated.
- The role of representative politics: The role of representative politics seems to be changing. Not in a drastic way: in all the cities we studied, the representative system remains the backbone of local democracy. Also, in most of the cities instruments for enriching representative democracy

(such as hearings, surveys, information centres, neighbourhood-visits and the like) are being tested.

The role of civil servants: Civil servants turn out to be strong actors in the processes of (democratic) renewal throughout Europe.

3.7 Further research is needed

...Let us suggest some research questions. Firstly, we are convinced that a realistic appraisal of the empirical side of local autonomy is very much needed. ...

The second set of research questions we would like to suggest concerns the concept of state tradition. ...

A third set of questions refers to the new participatory strategies. ...

Since many of our respondents appeared to use elements of the 'communitarian' approach in their reasoning, it might be useful to look at the quality of civil society in modern European cities. This is our fourth suggestion for further research. ...

Obviously, more questions can be raised. We will refrain from this, trusting that the four questions mentioned above, are stimulating enough to continue the comparative study of local governance in Europe. Only by persevering we will be able to remedy the lack of systematic knowledge about European local government and local democracy.

(The whole article will be presented to you as part of the book, which you receive on the first day of the seminar)

4. REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND NEW CHALLENGES

REPORT BY PROF. GERARD STOKER ON PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL

PROFESSOR GERARD STOKER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER (U.K.) WAS REQUESTED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE (CDLR) TO WRITE A REPORT ON PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL. THIS REPORT IS A PART OF THE WORK THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS UNDERTAKEN TO FOLLOW UP ON RECOMMENDATION (2001)19 ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE.

IN 2004 THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL (LR-DP) HAS FOCUSED ITS ATTENTION ON THE EXPERIENCES OF MEMBER STATES WITH POLICIES FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL, AND IN PARTICULAR ON THE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE PURSUANT TO RECOMMENDATION (2001)19¹.

THIS DOCUMENT² CONTAINS THE INITIAL REPORT BY PROFESSOR STOKER AND WILL BE REVISED AND ENLARGED TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE COMMENTS MADE BY THE LR-DP COMMITTEE AT ITS MEETING ON 20 - 21 SEPTEMBER AND THE RESULTS AND INPUTS COMING FROM THIS MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A commitment to providing enhanced public participation lies at the heart of the "Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life" [Rec(2001)19]. The aim is to see consultation and participation embedded into the culture of all municipalities in all member states. This paper sets out to explore progress made against the ambitions and objectives laid out in that policy statement. It also identifies some of the challenges that remain to be met if a more participative political culture and practice is to be established at the local and regional level of government.

It is worth rehearsing the arguments that were used to justify what appears to be now quite a widely supported policy approach, namely the involvement, to a greater degree than before, of citizens in the process of decision-making. Why is participation an attractive policy option? One answer is that there is intrinsic value in participation. It is good that people as citizens are actively involved in decision making in

¹ An analysis of these experiences appears in document LR-DP(2004)13, "*Experiences of Member states with policies for the strengthening of participation at local level*", also available as a conference document.

² The document has been issued by the Council of Europe as LR-DP (2004)14 in September 2004.

their communities. To be a full citizen means to be involved in the decisions that affect yourself and your neighbours. Some argue further that governments at all levels should seek active citizen endorsement rather than acquiescence to their policies and programmes. Good governance is not just a matter of delivering good outcomes. At least as important is the manner it is done, and involving citizens on an active basis is desirable. It gives a positive perspective on what democracy should be like as living practice in the twenty first century.

Other arguments emphasize the knock-on benefits of participation. These consequential arguments come in a range of shapes and forms. Participation can be seen as the tool to deliver accountability. A point stressed by the UK's Prime Minister Blair (1998:14) when he argued that:

"It may be asking too much to expect local government to get people shouting from the rooftops. But it is not too much to expect most people to care enough to vote or to know who to praise or blame for what is going in their locality".

Participation is also crucial in helping to sustain the legitimacy of decisions. It could be argued that local municipalities would not be able to act as effective community leaders if they lacked a base of popular support. Another argument for finding new ways to engage with people is that government needs to listen and learn to design better policies and services.

How would you know that your public services are meeting people's needs unless you had asked them in a coordinated and sustained way? Effective channels of communication are also essential to achieving many wider social and economic outcomes of concern to local public bodies. For example, to launch a waste recycling scheme or change vehicle driving habits requires an intensive dialogue and high levels of trust between the public and authorities. More generally there is a need to rebuild public confidence in political institutions and the most powerful way to do that is to seek active citizen endorsement of the policies and practices of public bodies.

The challenge is to find ways of engaging people on their own terms. Voting could be made easier and more meaningful. Consent beyond the ballot box could be obtained through various methods of public consultation and deliberation. New information and communication technologies may offer a range of further opportunities to get people's participation in a way that is flexible, attractive to them and not too time-consuming. The barriers confronting the participation of particular groups also need to be addressed. We need to make sure that more participation means opportunity to influence for all rather than just the organized few.

The ambitions and thinking captured in the Recommendation of the Council of Ministers [Rec(2001)19] remain as compelling today as when they were made. The health of our democratic cultures and practices varies considerable across Europe but in all countries finding better ways of engaging a full range and variety citizens in local decision-making remains an attractive and enhancing goal. The commitment to encouraging participation remains a welcome and appropriate response to the circumstances of our complex and changing societies.

Five general themes are touched on in this paper:

- The scale and range of activities undertaken by member states provide evidence that the commitment to extending opportunities for participation has been more than mere window-dressing for governments;
- The factors affecting why people participate are now even more clearly understood. Specific policy measures to address these factors will need to be developed still further;
- There may be some evidence that the nature of participation is changing and consideration of those changes will need to be taken into account in future policy;
- It is difficult to judge the impact of attempts to stimulate participation. But better quality evaluation of these interventions is essential if they are to be measured and justified on consequential grounds. Policy makers may like to consider ways of improving evaluation and joint learning both within countries and across countries;
- Extending the opportunities for people to participate needs to be accompanied by a more searching investigation of and challenge to the popular political culture in many European countries that leads to a disengagement from politics. Policy makers may want to examine to what extent such a debate is necessary and how such a debate about political culture could be launched.

4.2 Evidence of progress since 2001

The responses to the survey sent out in mid-2004 and reported in the draft report “Experiences of Member States with policies for the Strengthening of Participation at the local level” [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev.] make interesting reading. It shows that it is very difficult to generalise about the experiences of different European countries in terms of participation. Although a majority of countries saw a downward trend in turnout in voting in local elections, a considerable proportion of the remainder saw a slight upward trend in their local electorates’ willingness to vote.

Some of those that saw upturns appear to be in the process of recovering from periods of very low turnout. The United Kingdom, for example, saw a turnout of 32.8% in 2002 climb to 41% in 2004 but remains at the foot of the European league table of average turnout in local elections. Where increases in turnout have occurred it may well reflect a specific commitment on the part of governments to adopt positive measures to encourage turnout. Making voting an easier and more accessible has become an important part of the practice of many member states.

Broadly if Belgium, where voting is compulsory, is taken out of the equation, it is the southern Europeans and Nordic countries that almost all had turnout above 60% on average and central, eastern and western parts of Europe that have had the lower turnouts, below 60%. The explanation for these diverse trends is too complex to be addressed with any certainty. Even where turnout is traditionally high there are some signs of concern. Sweden has seen turnout fall from 84.4% in 1994 to 77.9% in 2002 and Belgium has

seen the number of valid votes cast in the region of Bruxelles drop by over ten points to 83.46% between 1982 and 2000.

Participation extends beyond the ballot box and here the responses to the questionnaire show that this is a message that many member states have taken to heart. Although it is only a few cases possible to see a direct connection between the Recommendation (2001)¹⁹ and action within a country it is clear that both before and after the drafting of the recommendation a large majority of member states appear have been and remained in tune with its thinking.

Four fifths of member states have a policy programme designed to promote citizens' participation in local civic life and most of those have adopted approaches that allow for a variety of non-electoral forms of engagement. Over half of member countries have policies that address the participation of women as local citizens and also recognise the role that young people can play in decision-making [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev. Table 4].

What is noticeable as a more negative trend is that only a quarter of member states appear to have any monitoring system in place to check the performance of participation schemes and the developing understanding of the reasons for non-participation [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev. Table 4]. We shall return to the importance of these issues later in the paper.

Looking at the general measures adopted by member states to promote participation [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev., Table 5] it is clear that considerable progress has been made. School citizen education schemes, access to information and opportunities for neighbourhood participation all figure very strongly in the practice of member states. Only when it comes to development of more integrated approaches to the delivery of public services and the involvement of local people do the member states become considerably more circumspect and uncertain about the level of progress made.

In respect of specific measures to promote electoral participation [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev., Table 6] it is clear naturally enough that the propensity to introduce measures in this area varies according to the level of turnout that has been experienced. A country such as the United Kingdom that has experienced consistent low turnout has adopted a wider range of measures than a country such as France that has had generally higher turnout. Nevertheless there is plenty of evidence that the majority of member states take the encouragement of voting and the ease of access of all groups in society to this basic democratic right very seriously and are willing to adopt measures as appropriate to maintain or improve turnout.

In terms of specific measures aimed at facilitating non-electoral forms of participation again there is evidence of extensive intervention and initiative by member states [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev., Table 7]. However the extent and depth of implementation does appear to be more shallow and varied than that with respect to electoral participation. Some member states do appear more willing to promote a wide variety of forms of participation and new ways of getting people involved at the local level than others. The United Kingdom and Norway, for example appear to encourage non-electoral local participation in a considerable range of ways. Other countries are prepared to try some schemes but are more reluctant to adopt others

in part because the decision is considered as one more appropriately taken by local representative bodies themselves rather than the central government level. Finding ways to engage people in the decision making process appears to be an issue that many member states give active consideration to options and opportunities but the practice of delivery is patchy and by no means universal.

When it comes to recognising that some groups may need more support or specific opportunities if they are to be engaged in local participation the picture of progress is again positive but patchy with clear scope for further initiative and development [see LR-DP (2004) 13 rev., Table 8]. Many less of the measures presented in this section of the questionnaire appear to have been adopted by member states. Only fifth to a quarter of member states appeared to have any systematic monitoring of which groups in society participated in local decision making and which did not. Only a few countries had set targets in respect of these issues. However others were actively developing initiatives in these areas. Moreover two thirds of member states had or were actively considering setting up means whereby young people could participate through associations or youth councils of some sort. Measures to enable women to be involved in political life were also either undertaken or under investigation in many member states.

Overall the questionnaire reveals that the ambitions set out in Rec. (2001)¹⁹ are shared by most member states. The specific measures adopted by member states may not always reflect the direct impact of the recommendation but do show that its thinking and approach is quite widely shared. What is clear is that there remains considerable work to be done in spreading new opportunities and good practice.

4.3 An enhanced understanding of the problem

To aid the process of further effective implementation it is worth reconsidering the reasons why getting people to participate can be such a challenging task. This section of the report offers a framework for identifying the factors that underlie participation. By understanding these diverse factors it may be possible to develop more appropriate forms of intervention.

Social science research identifies a number of factors as to why people participate in local civic life. People participate when they can, people participate when they have the resources necessary to organise, mobilize and make their argument. People participate when they think they are part of something, they like to participate because the arena of participation is central to their sense of identity and their lifestyle; they participate when they are enabled and encouraged by an infrastructure of good civic organisations that provided different pathways to participation. People participate when they are directly mobilized or asked for their opinion. Finally people participate when they experience the system which they are seeking to influence as responsive.

Participation is institutionally framed. Activity levels rise where people can participate, like to participate, are enabled to do so, are asked to get involved, and also responded to. These five factors are captured in the C.L.E.A.R model of factors driving participation that is outlined in Table 1.

It is worth considering each of the factors in a little more detail. Broadly, the higher the socio-economic status of the residents of a locality, the more likely they can engage in participation. The 'can do' factor rests on the argument that, having the skills, competences and confidence to engage in political participation is a significant factor in stimulating participation. There is plenty of evidence to support the impact of the 'can do' factor through socio-economic effects, defined in terms of people's income, skills and time. Almost all systematic studies of participation regard these factors as central to explaining why people participate.

The 'like to' factor, in contrast, rests upon a sense of attachment to the political entity where participation is at stake and relates to the debate about social capital. Evidence from many studies confirms that where people feel a sense of togetherness or shared commitment they are more willing to participate. People's positive psychological disposition towards the object of participation can make a difference.

Some studies of social capital favour a more organisational or social network understanding of its impact. The crucial thing is not that people feel a sense of belonging or attachment they argue it is rather that they have access to networks that enable them to participate. Where organisations in civil society (non-governmental organisations, charities, the voluntary sector, not-for –profits) that co-ordinate or promote participation are strong then participation is also likely to be strong. For example, what some areas lack in informal neighbourliness they gain in the organisation and number of their local civic institutions.

People's readiness to participate is also, unsurprisingly perhaps, affected by whether they are 'asked to' engage. Mobilisation can come from a range of sources but much of the evidence focuses on the positive role that can potentially be played by a political and/or management leadership within a municipality. The sense that their opinions are wanted or even a direct approach to provide their opinion or take action can be the crucial catalyst in encouraging participation.

This observation leads us to the final element of the model. For people to participate they have to believe that they are going to be listened to and, if not always agreed with, at least in a position to see that their view have been taken into account. In the language of the CLEAR model they have to be 'responded to'. Research using focus groups reveals the importance of this factor. As Lowndes et al (2001b) and her colleagues conclude:

"Succinctly stated in their own words, citizens' core criteria were: (a) 'Has anything happened?' (b) 'Has it been worth the money?' and (c) 'Have they carried on talking to the public?'"

Consultation works, then, when it is sensitive to the environment in which it operates and is seen to have delivered some shift in the frame of decision-making.

Getting people to participate is not a simple task. There are blocks that stem from lack of capacity to participate or a lack of engagement with political organisations or issues. Long term measures can address these blocks, but building community capacity or a sense of citizenship are not challenges from which policy makers can expect easy or quick results. Deep-seated structural factors are clearly at work in

shaping people's resources and attitudes. But the behaviour of local politicians and managers is also important – and here change is more straight-forwardly in the hands of policy makers. If we ask people to participate in a committed and consistent manner and respond effectively to their participative inputs, they are far more likely to engage.

The factors affecting why people participate are now even more clearly understood. Specific policy measures to address these factors will need to be developed still further. Table 1 below that outlines the C.L.E.A.R framework of factors driving participation identifies some of the policy measures that may be appropriate in responding to and addressing that factor. Member states may find the C.L.E.A.R framework a useful diagnostic tool.

Table 2.1: Factors promoting participation: it's CLEAR

Factor affecting participation	How it works	Associated Policy Target
Can do	The individual resources that people have to mobilise and organise (speaking, writing and technical skills, as well as confidence to use them) make a difference in their capacity to participate	Capacity Building: specific support measures or targeted development
Like to	To commit to participation requires a sense of involvement with the public entity that it the focus of engagement	Sense of community, civic engagement, social capital and citizenship
Enabled to	The civic infrastructure of groups and umbrella organisations makes a difference because it creates or blocks an opportunity structure for participation	To build the civic infrastructure so that there are groups and organisations around to channel and facilitate participation
Asked to	Mobilising people into participation by asking for their input can make a big difference	Public participation schemes that are diverse, engaging and reflexive
Responded to	When asked people say they will participate if they are listened to, not necessarily agreed with, but able to see a response	A public policy system that can show a capacity to respond

4.4 The changing nature of local participation?

One research finding that has emerged is that there is some evidence that the nature of participation is changing and consideration of those changes will need to be taken into account in future policy. The strongest evidence for a shift in the pattern of participation comes from a recent extensive survey of

participation trends in the UK (see Pattie et al, 2004; Whiteley 2004). The survey tried to measure the forms of participation engaged in by British citizens. The results are presented in Table 3.1 below. What emerges is that by far the most common forms of participation in terms of those actually undertaken in the past twelve months or those that a citizen would consider undertaking fall into the category of individualistic actions rather than collective actions. Researchers (Whiteley, 2004) associated with the Citizens Audit have argued that this pattern of participation in part reflects the fact that collective action is harder to do because it requires by definition more organisation and in part because in the UK, at least, the institutions of collective organisation, such as trade unions and political parties, have declined in their capacity to support collective action. The various contact forms of participation could be either individualistic or collectivist in character. The implication that the researchers draw from their study of participation is that participation in the UK is developing a more individualistic, consumer style rather than of the more traditional activist and collective form.

It is not clear whether this pattern is repeated elsewhere in Europe. However member states might like to consider the implications of a shift in the focus of participation to a more individualistic form in their own countries. It might indicate that certain forms of engagement were more likely to succeed than others because they went with the grain of a developing citizen culture and practice.

Table 3. 1 Acts of Political Participation and Participation Potential in Britain

	Actual Participation	Potential Participation
Individual Actions	% yes	% yes
Donated money to an organisation	62	75
Voted in a local government election	50	71
Signed a petition	42	76
Boycotted certain products	31	59
Raised funds for an organisation	30	55
Bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	28	49
Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker	22	49
Collective Actions		
Attended a political meeting or rally	5	26
Taken part in a public demonstration	5	34
Formed a group of like minded people	5	23
Taken part in a strike	2	27
Participated in illegal protest activities	2	13
Contact Actions		
Contacted a public official	25	59
Contacted a solicitor or judicial body	20	60
Contacted a politician	13	53

Contacted an organisation	11	50
Contacted the media	9	43

Source: Citizen's Audit of Britain, 2000. (Whiteley, 2004)

4.5 Understanding What Works. The challenge of evaluation

If the argument for participation rests on its intrinsic worth then it needs no justification other than that it is a valued expression of citizenship and good governance. However the argument for participation as we have seen also rests on its impact on service delivery or on the better design of public programmes. Participation it is argued is desirable because it brings benefits and has a positive impact on the way that the governing process works. These claimed consequential benefits need to be measured and evaluated if the case for participation is going to be given further support. Does participation work? If it does work what kind of interventions produce the most effective and desirable impacts? These are important questions but at present there is very little direct evidence to address them. There are a lot of studies of participation initiatives but they tend to be better at showing the processes of a particular initiative rather than its impact. We know for example quite a lot about how to implement a neighbourhood participation scheme but we know considerably less about what sort of impact such schemes have and the difference they make.

A recent paper sets out a path for a research evaluation strategy that could be followed (Stoker and Greasley, 2004). The overall argument is that participation is a policy area that requires a deliberately exploratory approach. It is a policy area that should be guided by a spirit of search and investigation because the aims of enhancing participation and the interventions that will achieve those goals are not immediately obvious. It is a policy that demands a spirit of partnership as well because it is not an area where the will of central government to see change is enough to guarantee that there will be change.

However having made an argument for a spirit of exploration the paper does not suggest then simply to let 'a hundred flowers bloom' without guidelines and guidance. Rather it argues that policy needs to be supported in its development by research that achieves the highest scientific qualities. We need to move beyond descriptive case studies of individual interventions and develop a more systematic understanding. The initial exploratory phase of policy creation should be supported by research drawing on a number of approaches but in particular of the emerging concept of design experiments. These experiments put practitioners alongside researchers in identifying what is it about a particular initiative that appears to make it successful or unsuccessful. In a second phase of work where the focus moves to the more hard-nosed assessment of whether an intervention has made a positive impact again a range of methodologies are recognized as having an important contribution but particular emphasis is given to the potential of randomized control trials to deliver definitive results about 'what works'.

If a research and policy development strategy along the lines proposed in this paper is adopted it will make significant demands on the research community, practitioners and policy makers. The demands on the research community to become confident and competent in new research methodologies will be

considerable. As US National Research Council report on research in education (NRC, 2002, 63) puts it the challenge is disarmingly simple and yet incredibly difficult:

"Debates about method -in many disciplines and fields- have raged for centuries as researchers have battled over the relative merit of the various techniques of their trade. The simple truth is that the method used to conduct scientific research must fit the question posed, and the investigator must competently implement the method".

We also need researchers that are comfortable working alongside policy makers and practitioners. Such a capacity is central to the delivery of both design experiments and randomized controlled trials.

For practitioners there is need to be actively involved in the search for what works rather than wait for it to be handed down on slabs of stone or perhaps more realistically by way of conferences, consultancies, handbooks and websites. Discovering effective practice is a challenge in which practitioners should be actively engaged. But more than that they should care about the 'what works' question and be supportive participants in research. This means getting involved beyond the heroic efforts made by many in completing survey forms. It means allowing the spirit of research to enter their daily work. More pragmatically it means becoming parts of investigative teams alongside researchers and policy makers.

As for policy makers the challenge is to use research not to confirm a pre-ordained direction of travel but as a genuine tool of investigation. The concept of piloting is given considerable lip-service but in the area of civil renewal it has to be a central and delivered feature of policy development. Moreover the challenge is to provide a policy that can steer in defined directions and preclude some unacceptable options but allow scope for local initiative and experiment.

We need not just more participation but also a better public understanding of politics

The explanation for the failings of our political systems is in most instances laid at the door of politicians. Disengagement, the "us" and "them" divide, is down to "them" rather than "us"; they have failed us. In popular debate it is common to lay the explanation for the failings of our system at the door of local political representatives. We criticise our politicians on a number of grounds. They promise much but fail to deliver. They compromise their principles for sake of power. They ignore the facts and evidence about the right thing to do and make decisions for reasons of expediency or outright in order to benefit their cronies and backers. Politicians at best are carelessly muddling through and not tackling the issues of pollution, poverty or ecological decay that confront our world. In the worst cases some politicians seem hell bent on manipulating division, creating simplistic enemies or sowing the seeds of disunity and sectarian divide.

Disenchantment with the political system underlies in part why there have been increased efforts from the political system to reengage citizens. Yet it could be argued that it is not politicians that alone should shoulder the blame for the failings of our political systems. Maybe more citizens should be saying to themselves: "It isn't just their fault it is ours". This paper concludes by arguing that people should be more

engaged on the basis of a realistic understanding of what politics can and cannot do. People give up in politics too quickly in part because they do not appreciate its necessary form and character.

A central insight into the nature of politics that is not fully enough appreciated is that the system is designed to disappoint and requires a degree of loyalty to sustain participation. This offered draws on a powerful and original analysis from Albert Hirschman, an American economist and political scientist. Making choices about what to do in our modern world means having some sort of relationship with organisations. It is not a matter of kinship connections or custom and tradition. Choice can be exercised via “exit”, that is the classic mechanism of the market. Businesses compete for our custom; they develop various products, services and ideas and we keep them on track by exiting those we don't like and entering those we do like. The main alternative way in which choice in the modern world can be exercised, according to Hirschman, is “voice”, by people articulating and arguing for their preferences. This way of operating is the classic mechanism of politics.

Voice is all together a more difficult and complex mechanism than exit. Both involve a commitment to competition, the virtues of a pluralism of options and freedom of thought and action. Exit requires that the barriers to move between organisations are low. You don't have to argue your way out of a shop, you just go. Indeed we spend considerable amount time in policy debates on issues of maintaining appropriate competitive conditions in our economies. In contrast as Hirschman points out for voice to work as a mechanism an additional ingredient is generally required which he labelled loyalty.

Loyalty is something to do with a sense of allegiance or attachment. Loyalist behaviour is also associated with a long-term orientation. A loyalist is a person who is prepared to avoid ‘snapshot’ pictures and operates instead with ‘time exposures’, according to Hirschman. So allegiance and a long-term orientation are the basic ingredients of loyalty. Crucially for Hirschman loyalty does not necessarily involve total commitment or blind faith; it can rest on balanced judgement. It assumes that the organisation has a capacity for doing right and that given time it will correct any failings. There is an element of trust, a confidence in or reliance on the organisation and what it stands for. But this is a calculated trust since it implies a choice and involves taking a risk. If the ‘bet’ fails then the supportive loyalist may seek to exercise influence. But intervention is a matter of judgement and not necessarily an expression of alienation since the supportive loyalist assumes that nothing is perfect.

The key point is that the supportive form of loyalty is central to the operation of politics, without it there is a danger that voice will not have time to grow and make an impact. Loyalty is necessary to give time for voice to emerge, hope that it will make a difference and perseverance when immediate gratification is not necessarily obtained. Loyalty or a sense of attachment gives time for the political system to adjust. Without it the political system loses the capacity to adjust and respond to changing social choices.

It is now becoming clearer why the loss of engagement and attachment to our political systems is a major problem if it becomes a widespread phenomenon. Without such a dampening mechanism such as that captured by the idea of supportive loyalty it is difficult for voice to do its work.

The problem is more complicated than simply finding a way to put loyalty back into the system. As a mechanism for social choice, voice, in its various forms, contains the seeds of its own destruction. Voice can come shaped by a variety of world views and modes of organising, each of which contains the creative spark to mobilise voice but each of which contains a destructive element. Like many medicines the right dose leads to a cure and the wrong dose can have catastrophic effects.

Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas a social anthropologist, it is possible to identify a number of the key ways in which voice is organised. She argues that four ways of social organisation and expression - fatalism, individualism, fellowship and hierarchy - keep on being repeated in our societies. By looking to these various forms of social organisation it is possible to identify a number of broad forms of voice.

Voice in one mode requires a certain cynicism, a certain level of distrust. Without the sceptical questioning of authority it would be difficult for politics in any mass democracy. But too much distrust leads to a fatalism about how hopeless and futile political engagement can be. Don't bother to vote as the government always gets in, as they say.

Voice in another mode draws straightforwardly and honestly on self-interest. People mobilise to protect their interests. Ask any professional politician about how to get people engaged in politics and pack out a public meeting and they will invariably say that all you need to do is propose a waste incinerator near their homes, new parking scheme for their area or something else that is perceived to infringe on their interests and the public will come out in droves. In general self-interest is a vital and important mechanism for stimulating voice. But again pushed to far it can be destructive. The narrow and absolute pursuit of self-interest can undermine a political system that relies on a bit of give-and take and a willingness for people to take a "win some, lose some" attitude.

Voice in a further form can often be observed as an expression of expertise or specialist knowledge. In a fragmented world of high technological complexity voice in the political system often comes from groups that share an allegiance and a sense of shared values and perspective drawn on their special position. They partake in a fellowship and through that fellowship are mobilised into politics. Technocrats, professionals, experts but also users of particular services or people with a shared problem or difficult circumstance are often the propagators of voice. But again that form of voice if pushed too far can lead to problems. The special claims to knowledge may not be fully recognising in the wider political system. The compromises and clumsy solutions that emerge may be seen as based on the misunderstanding of politicians and failing of politics. "We know what is right given our special insight, why didn't they political system respond?" they say. Such a conclusion if drawn too often can be undermining of politics.

Finally voice may come in the form of a plea for order and a fear of disunity. The hierarchist wants there to be a place for shared rules and understandings. The political argument for there to be some over-arching mechanisms to bring us all together notwithstanding our divisions and differences of interest is overwhelming. So that form of voice that calls for unity, for a spirit of nationhood, community or even world solidarity is an important element in making a political system tick. But again it can take a destructive form as well. It can lead to a concern to exclude the other and an over-weening emphasis on homogeneity. In the worst case it can lead to an abhorrence of politics as a cause of disunity and division and a concern to disengage from politics in order to see order restored.

The central thesis is then that voice the central mechanism for making politics work in mass democracies requires an over-arching system loyalty in order for voice to work and a viable dynamic of response to be sustained. That sense of loyalty is in danger of being fatally wounded as people disengage from politics. Their disengagement is, in part, down to the failings of politicians but more than that it is associated with seeds of destruction inherent to each of the main forms of voice practised by the public. If democratic politics is to be sustainable people need to distrust politicians but not too much; they need to express their self-interest but in a way that recognises that immediate and constant gratification is neither viable nor obtainable. They can speak with the voice of special knowledge or expertise but they should recognise the forces that encourage clumsy solutions as much as a part of sustainable system as their specialist perspective. They should call for unity and shared identity but not in away that excludes others or demonises politics as a producer rather than a reflector of division.

So politics needs to be defended against the particular lines of attack associated with each of the forms of voice pushed to the extreme. An over-arching conclusion is that although we can continue to reform and extend people's access to the political system but these reforms to the system need to be accompanied by interventions to improve the understanding of politics and support a culture of engagement that recognises the value but also the limitations of what politics can achieve.

The challenge is to convince people to care for a system that is designed to disappoint, in the sense that people are unlikely ever to get all they want from a process of collective decision-making. Governments and in particular elected politicians may have a role in promoting a better understanding of politics and indeed through their behaviour and performance ensuring a more realistic and honest exchange with citizens about what can be delivered and what can not. The responsibility of various groups from the media through various institutions of civil society to schools to encourage a better understanding of politics and the political system might also be identified. Policy makers may want to examine to what extent a debate about political culture could be launched and who should be the main carriers of that debate.

5. CONCLUSIONS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN WESTERN EUROPE

John Loughlin

5.1 Consequences for Regional and Local Democracy

This book reveals the rich and complex tapestry of democratic theory and practice in the countries of the European Union. Two aspects of this complexity stand out. First, countries remain basically faithful to their state and national state traditions of political and administrative culture. But, second, these traditions undergo continual change and adaptation as a result of factors such as globalization, Europeanization, societal, and technological change. Indeed, the capacity to manage change successfully is one of the main features of many European states. On the other hand, the successful management of change is not spread evenly throughout Europe. Some countries, regions, and localities have been quite successful whereas others have had difficulty in coping with the changes. To some extent this is a result of a competitive regionalism which is producing new disparities within the European Union. This is neither a north—south nor a centre—periphery cleavage. Some countries of southern Europe contain highly successful regions such as Catalonia, Lombardy, and Tuscany. Countries that were previously peripheral, such as the Republic of Ireland, Spain, and Portugal have now become centres of dynamic economic growth. Ireland has been called the ‘Celtic Tiger’ by analogy with the Asian ‘Tiger’ economies. Some countries that were previously powerful economic ‘centres’ now contain regions and cities in decline such as the old industrialized regions of coal mining and steel production in Britain, Belgium, France, and Spain which have experienced great difficulties of adaptation.

What is clear from the studies presented in this book is that the old frameworks for responding to these challenges have shifted. Previously, the nation-state was the framework within which solutions were sought and national governments the principal actors that would supply these solutions. This was the old centre—periphery framework analysed by authors such as Rokkan and Urwin (1983) and Mény and Wright (1985). This framework was relevant and applicable up to about the early 1980s. Since then, both the framework and the role of national actors have changed. First, the framework within which solutions need to be found is no longer the nation-state alone but the European Union, at least as this might be conceived as a policy or public space. Second, there was the wave of privatizations and deregulation which spread across Europe in the 1980s, enhanced by the Single Market project of 1992 and the Maastricht criteria for entry into the single currency. These developments changed the role of the state, or at least of national governments, and its relationship with the private sector. National regional policies, archetypal examples of Keynesian-type state intervention, were either abolished, as in the United Kingdom, or significantly reduced in scale. The emerging regional policy of the European Union, limited in budgetary terms and in its scope, could not hope to compensate for the decline of national regional policies. The most important consequences of these shifts for regional and local democracy is that regions and cities could henceforth no longer rely on national governments for the same amounts of aid that had existed previously. In a real sense, they were on their own. This meant the development of a competitive regionalism on a European and, indeed, world scale. Regions and cities found themselves competing within and across countries both for scarce EU funds and for foreign investors. This meant, at least if they were to be successful, a

profound restructuring of their political and policy-making systems, of their social and economic circumstances, and of their physical environments.

What is striking about the studies presented in this book is that all the member states of the European Union have been affected by these changes. This is clearly true of the United Kingdom which was the 'pioneer' in the adoption of the 'neo-liberal' model under Mrs Thatcher in the 1980s. It is true that we need to relativize the Thatcherite reforms by pointing out public spending actually continued to increase during this period (Pierson 1994). Nevertheless, the Thatcher period did change in a fundamental way many aspects of British public life and relations between the private and public sectors including at the regional and local levels. This was a cultural revolution more than a successful reduction of public expenditure. It was so radical that the new Labour government elected in 1997 was obliged to adopt many of the neoliberal reforms such as privatization, internal markets in public administration, and the principle of competition in public tendering which it recognized were now irreversible. But many other countries were affected both by intensifying European integration and by the neo-liberal wave, which, with the single currency project tended to blend into each other. This was true even of the Scandinavian countries, which had been bastions of rooted social democracy and strong social policies. Denmark's conversion to neoliberalism began even before the arrival to power of Mrs Thatcher. But Sweden, whose social democracy dated back to the 1930s and which had become a 'model' of a certain kind of welfare state, was obliged to do so in the 1980s. France elected a socialist president and a left-wing coalition government in 1981 on a classical social-democratic programme of nationalization and expansion. By 1983, they were forced (by the international environment and their European Community partners) to make a radical shift towards austerity policies. Some countries, such as Ireland, adopted the new approaches willingly and, in conjunction with generous EU structural funds and other factors, have successfully transformed themselves into economic powerhouses. Other countries such as Italy (or at least its southern regions) and Greece, plagued by problems of inefficient and rambling bureaucracies and serious regional problems, have found it more difficult to reform. It was the necessity of meeting the Maastricht single currency criteria that has coerced them into radical restructuring. Italy managed, at the price of far-reaching austerity measures, to be among the first wave of entrants into the single currency zone. Greece failed to meet the criteria but, at the time of writing (2000), has now done so and has applied for membership. What is interesting is that many of these reforms have been carried out by socialist or social-democratic governments who now form a majority of governments in the EU member states, thus signalling a radical transformation in the ideology of such movements. Even Germany, one of the last bastions of the social state and the most resistant to neo-liberalism, has been forced by the financial consequences of unification to seriously examine some of the principles of this state. It is interesting that it is a Social Democrat Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, who is attempting (with some difficulty) to bring about these reforms. Another significant event was the re-election (in March 2000) of Mr Aznar in Spain on a centre-right programme which is not that far removed from the centre-left programmes of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder. The old left—right cleavage is becoming increasingly redundant in this new political environment.

Another striking finding of the present work is the way in which the neoliberal paradigm has worked itself into the operating systems of regional and local governments. First, it provides a framework within which policy-making now occurs at the subnational level. Second, neo—liberal approaches have been introduced directly into regional and local political and administrative systems. Again, there is a wide variation here across Europe but we might remark that the general statement holds true at least to some extent in all countries. Again, it is the United Kingdom which set the pace, mainly by means of a central government hostile to local authorities imposing unwelcome measures such as rate-capping and compulsory competitive tendering on local authorities fundamentally

opposed to these measures. The weak constitutional position of British local government meant that it had little choice but to swallow what central government was forcing down its throat (Scarborough 2000). It is significant that the Blair government has also been forced to accept these developments as irreversible. It is trying to mitigate some of the more savage features of neo-liberalism through programmes such as 'best value'. This does not fundamentally question the neo-liberal principle of competition at their heart but modifies this by allowing the public sector to compete on the same basis as the private sector to run local public services. One finds similar developments across Europe. The Scandinavian 'free commune' experiments can be interpreted in this light as a form of 'liberalization' French decentralization, which was initially about enhancing local democracy and improving public administration, after 1983 became increasingly a way of applying the principles of neo-liberalism. Southern European local governments traditionally marked by clientelistic traditions and high degrees of dependence on the central state followed suit in the 1980s and 1990s. In some cases, it was the European Commission which encouraged these trends through the criteria necessary to receive programme funding (although some of these criteria such as the principle of partnership might be said to go against the neo-liberal approach).

We need to qualify these general remarks with another. What is clear from the studies presented here is that, although significant changes have taken place at the European, national, and subnational levels in all European Union states, this has been somewhat uneven. First, some countries have gone much further than others. The United Kingdom has been the most radical and Germany has been perhaps the least. Furthermore, although all countries have applied the neo-liberal approach, they did so from different starting points and in ways that were closely related to their distinct state traditions. Swedish welfare state provisions were so generous that, even after the austerity measures, they still outstrip what is on offer in countries (such as the United Kingdom or Ireland) which were much less generous. The Netherlands already has a kind of deregulated approach and so its privatization measures were less radical than might have been expected. Furthermore, the Dutch system of strong social compensation was not fundamentally altered. In France, the state still remains the most important actor and many of its Jacobin features have been left untouched even if decentralization has radically altered the position of regions, departments and communes. The French tradition of Colbertism remains strong. When we examine the subnational level, we can also see variations within and across states. Strong federal systems such as are found in Germany, Austria, or Belgium, may allow quite distinct approaches to be adopted within the different regions ranging from neo-liberalism to neocorporatism depending on the coalition of forces present in that region. The same is true of autonomous Spain and, increasingly, of 'devolutionalized' Britain. Regional and local authorities have also responded in quite different ways to the external challenges of globalization and Europeanization. As the chapters on Scandinavia make clear, this ranges from proactive enthusiasm to a kind of indifferent *attentisme*. This phenomenon seems to be general across Europe.

It is clear that these developments have important consequences for the expression and practice of democracy as the individual chapters of this book have illustrated. Is it possible to draw some general conclusions at this stage? What can be said, in relation to the previous paragraphs, is that the neo-liberal approach, in its original Anglo-Saxon formulation, was not simply about economics but was also away of understanding politics and, in particular, implied particular way of understanding democracy. This approach is dominated by the notion of 'methodological individualism', that is, the idea found in rational choice theory that the individual (whether a person or organization) is the basic unit of political analysis and activity. The implications for democracy are clearest from the British experiments in reforming local government. The attempt was made here to redefine the nature of citizenship. The traditional notion was that the individual was primarily a member of a community

(whether this was defined nationally or locally) and that citizenship meant participating in some way (either directly or through a representative) in running the affairs of this community. The new approach defines the citizen as a 'consumer making choices about the kinds of services he or she wishes to avail of. Again, this notion of the citizen as consumer found an echo in some other countries—notably in Denmark and some Dutch cities—but seems to have been treated with caution in most EU member states. In countries such as Germany, Austria, and those of southern Europe, regional and local traditions remain strong as do religious traditions such as Catholicism which stress the notion of the common good. Even within the United Kingdom, Scotland and Wales and parts of the north of England never fully accepted the Thatcherite programme of democracy as consumerism and this was one of the primary reasons why the British Conservative Party was almost eliminated in these nations and regions at the 1997 General Election. Nevertheless, despite this important qualification the neo-liberal concept of citizen consumer became an important reference point even for these states and some of its features entered into their systems.

5.2 Critiques of Subnational Democracy and Responses

An important feature of this book has been to outline the critiques of regional and local democracy in the EU member states. In all of these states, democratic practice, especially at the regional and local levels, is only an approximation of an elusive ideal which, as we have seen, may be defined in several distinct ways. In all of the member states, there have been critiques of this practice and suggestions for its improvement. Critiques may be made, of course, from several different perspectives, depending on which democratic model the critic espouses. Critiques might even be mutually exclusive. For example, someone who espouses an elitist Schumpeterian model of democracy will criticize the excessive participation of citizens in decision-making on the grounds that this interferes with the smooth running of the system. A believer in participatory democracy, such as a member of the Green movement, will adopt exactly the opposite point of view. A Marshallian advocate of social citizenship and democracy will criticize local government reforms that attempt to apply neo-liberal principles while a Thatcherite will criticize anything that seems to lead to greater bureaucracy. What does seem clear from what has been said above is that European political elites, of both right and left, have now chosen to move beyond the welfare state model that characterized the period from the Second World War until the 1980s. However, the most recent period has seen a majority of centre-left governments come to power who are now trying to mitigate some of the aspects of neo-liberalism through combining them with stronger social measures.

All of the EU states have embarked on major reform efforts that have had an impact on the practice of democracy at the national, regional, and local levels. The kinds of reform may be categorized as follows:

- restructuring central-regional/local relationships;
- reform of the internal mechanisms of regional and local government;
- improving relations between the political system at the regional and local levels and the general public;
- responding to and exploiting the European factor.

It is important to remember that these reforms have occurred over several decades since the Second World War and may have different meanings depending on the period in which they took place. In the period of the '*Trente Glorieuses*', the economies of most European states were in full expansion. There was a strong growth of welfare states marked by centralization redistributive functions, high taxation, and a role for regional and/or local government based on this system of redistribution of

collective and individual goods. Restructuring central—local relations during this period was often based on the necessities of indicative national planning and of creating local governments that were of a sufficient scale to deliver the services that were increasingly demanded by citizens. This meant reducing the large numbers of small local authorities to a smaller number of larger authorities. This happened in many countries but there were exceptions such as France. During this period, the European Community had little relevance for subnational government. Internal reforms were mainly about improving the capacity to manage large-scale welfare programmes through the application of rational utility managerialist approaches such as management by objectives or costbenefit analysis. Relations with the general public were primarily in relation to how efficiently and effectively local authorities provided services. During the neo-liberal period, on the other hand, reformers will understand central—local relations rather differently. Now, the emphasis is on withdrawal of the central state from funding programmes generally whether regional policies or welfare state programmes. ‘Decentralization’ in this period might mean little more than central governments shedding the burden (and blame) for the cutting back of these programmes onto subnational governments. However, the European factor does become important during this phase as EU regional policy and structural action policy become more important. Internal reforms are now often about a new understanding of managerialism—how to manage cutbacks rather than expansion—with the emphasis on efficiency rather than on effectiveness.

5.2.1 Restructuring Central—Regional/Local Relationships

Almost all of the EU member states have embarked on this kind of reform in the last twenty years. In some cases it has meant in fact strengthening the centre at the expense of the regional and local. This was the case in traditional centralized unitary states such the United Kingdom and Ireland. In Britain there has been a tendency towards centralization and the reduction of the role and powers of local government, which goes back over fifty years. The post-war welfare state intensified centralization but so too did the attempts by Conservative Governments between 1979 and 1997 to dismantle the welfare state. Ironically, it was Ireland’s status as an Objective One priority region in EU Structural Fund terms that strengthened the national government through the key position of the Department of Finance in controlling these funds. Within federal states such as Germany and Austria there has also been a tendency towards the centralization of power, particularly in the financial domain, at the federal level.

However, such centralization is not the only tendency in operation. More often, there has been political decentralization, regionalization, and even federalization. The Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have always been decentralized unitary states with a strong welfare state model (the ‘Swedish model’) in which local government played an important role. However, although the ‘Swedish model’ has come under pressure and is being reformed, this has not lessened the importance of local government. On the contrary, the latter seems to have increased in importance. One notable example is the ‘free commune’ experiment in the Scandinavian countries, which reduces central government controls over local authorities. Belgium is a state that has passed through all of the stages from a classical unitary state to becoming a federation, and the process of decentralization and state reform is still continuing. Italy is a regionalized unitary state with special regions, but currently introducing reforms that strengthen the regions and give the state some federalist characteristics. Spain made its transition to democracy by creating the autonomous state, which draws on elements of the Italian system as well as the German system of cooperative federalism. The tendency here is for the autonomous communities to gain more powers (e.g., fiscal) at the expense of the central government. The United Kingdom has recently embarked on a remarkable programme of devolution that is

transforming the relations among its regions and nations as well as with the Republic of Ireland. Even centralized unitary states, such as Ireland and Greece, have begun to introduce some elements of regionalization at least in their systems of public administration. There seems to be a general trend in operation here, but the Portuguese public went against this by voting in a referendum against the setting up of regions in that country, although this may have happened because of party-political struggles rather than any deep-seated opposition to regionalization on the part of the Portuguese people.

These institutional reforms have been carried out for different reasons. Sometimes, they were part of the neo-liberal agenda of the 1980s, which involved shedding responsibilities and tasks from central governments to other levels of administration. Sometimes, they were attempts at modernizing systems of public administration that had become overcentralized, inefficient, and removed from ordinary citizens. However, often they were also genuine attempts at enhancing regional and local democracy by making it easier for citizens to participate in decision-making. It has proved impossible in this book to ascertain fully how successful this has been. This would demand a much larger research project over a longer period of time than was available to the team of experts. Nevertheless, we do feel that these reforms have been worthwhile, and the different experiences across different countries should be studied with care with a view to policy learning across states.

5.2.2 The European Factor

The European Union has been an important factor in the reconfiguration of central—local relations in its member states. This has happened in a number of ways. First, the EU has meant that, with the passing of sovereignty in certain areas from national governments to the European institutions, the nature, role, and functions of the state itself have changed. This has not meant the disappearance of the nation-state, but it does mean that national governments operate alongside both European institutions and regions and local authorities. Thus, regions and local authorities have a more important role in the European policy-making system than hitherto. This higher profile of regions and local authorities has been given expression in the creation of the Committee of the Regions. The European Commission has also, through its funding programmes and initiatives such as INTERREG, encouraged the involvement of subnational authorities in European decision-making and policy areas. This has stimulated individual regions and cities to develop a European interest, even if this is sometimes little more than creating a single desk or the appointment of a European office. Finally, both for reasons of exploiting these opportunities for European funding, and also for promoting the regional interest more generally, regions and local authorities have mobilized their forces by forming trans-European interregional associations. The interests of regions are also represented through the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

The country chapters in this book show that regions and local authorities have responded to these challenges and opportunities of the new Europe in different ways. Some regions have reacted in a proactive manner; others are more attentive; and many, perhaps the majority, are quite passive. Nor is it very clear how Europeanization has affected the quality of democratic practice in the regions and localities of Europe. Very often, 'Europe' is far distant from the average citizen as the results of the Eurobarometer surveys show. European activities often seem to be the preserve of a small cosmopolitan elite and to bypass the average citizen. Indeed, there may be resentment at the amount of money being spent on European activities such as conferences and trips abroad. Nor is it very clear how the Committee of the Regions enhances regional and local democracy, despite Jacques Delors' speech to its inaugural meeting which stressed this aspect of the body. The Committee is often perceived as a distant body with little relevance to the lives of ordinary citizens, is probably not too

exaggerated to say that, in fact, it is practically unknown the vast majority of European citizens. To be sure, this is not totally its own fault as all European institutions, even the big ones such as the Commission, Council of Ministers, and the Parliament have similar problems. Much work still needs to be done in this regard if the Committee is truly to become force for improving the democratic deficit that exists in the EU.

Nevertheless, there exist real opportunities in this area for strengthening regional and local democracy. Europeanization and regionalization should be seen as two sides of the same process, but what needs to be inserted now is element of democratic participation and accountability. First, more regions and local authorities need to become active in the European arena, whether through setting up offices in Brussels or through participation in activities of the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament, or the interregional associations. But, second, these European activities need to be brought to the attention of, and involve more closely, the average citizen. Furthermore, the horizontal learning process across regions and local authorities needs to be strengthened.

5.2.3 Reform of the Internal Mechanisms of Regional and Local Government

There have also been attempts to reform the institutional forms and working procedures within regional and local government itself. The following trends may be noted.

Structural Reorganization

In some countries there is a tendency today to strengthen the executives of regional and local governments rather than the representative assemblies with a view to providing strong, visible, and effective leadership. This has been tried in different ways in different countries. ... There is thus a delicate balance to be struck between fragmentation and excessive internal centralization around a mayor type figure.

'Marketization'

This could be seen as another way of reducing the bureaucratic features of local government and was part of the neo-liberal agenda of the 1980s, as discussed above. It involved attempts to introduce 'market' principles into subnational government and also handing over some services, such as street cleansing, to outside agencies. This approach was applied most fully in the United Kingdom where it was known as compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), but one finds similar attempts in other European countries such as Finland. CCT has been replaced in Britain by the new Labour Government by the concept of 'best value' which retains some of the elements of competition from CCT but does not automatically assume that privately provided services are superior to those of the public sector.

5.3 Relations between the Political System at the Regional and Local Levels and the General Public

In a sense, this is the most crucial indicator of the 'health' of regional and local democracy. The chapters in this book show that in many European countries there is a worrying disaffection from politics, in general, and from regional and local politics, in particular, on the part of European citizens. There are some exceptions to this. ...

One of the primary challenges for enhancing regional and local democracy, therefore, is to examine how citizens might be brought more fully into the political system at these levels. The following methods have been tried in different countries:

- the use of local referendums (the Austrian *Länder*, some German *Länder*, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden);
- petitions (most of the Austrian *Länder*, some of the German *Länder*, Portugal, Sweden);
- involving individuals or interest groups in decision-making through user boards (Denmark, Sweden);
- the citizens' written motion, which, if supported by 2 per cent of the population, must obtain a response from the local authority (Finland);
- prior appraisal of legislation by the public (some of the Austrian *Länder*);
- giving representation to specific categories of citizens through various forms of consultative forums (eg., the disabled, women, low-income, foreigners, etc.) (UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain);
- 'future' and 'scenario' workshops—to enable citizens to participate in planning processes (Germany, the Netherlands);
- multistage dialogue—involving three stages following the schema 'look, appraise, act' which allow citizens to work out solutions to particular problems (e.g., xenophobic violence in Buxtehude in Lower Saxony);
- 'partnership' boards and attempts at 'social integration' (Ireland, Spain);
- citizens' juries or panels (UK, Denmark, Spain, Sweden);
- youth councils (Finland);
- the search for openness and transparency (France);
- opinion polls and consumer surveys (UK, the Netherlands, France, Spain);
- local democracy 'balance sheet' (Sweden);
- electronic democracy and use of the internet (UK, Spain).

It is difficult to assess these experiments. The general picture that emerges from the country chapters in this book is that the use of these techniques has had limited success. Much will depend on the particular culture and levels of socio-economic and political development of the region or locality. ...

A major problem, which occurs in most of the countries covered in this book, is how to reconcile the traditional mechanisms of liberal democratic representation with the election of councillors (through secret ballots) and the representation of specific categories of the population. ... As a final comment, it might be remarked that our political systems derive from the institutions of the liberal-democratic nation-state that emerged in the nineteenth century after the French Revolution, on the basis of the principles of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. These institutions have served us well and are immensely preferable to political systems based on authoritarianism and dictatorship. Nevertheless, the conditions in which they were born have changed beyond recognition.

6. RECOMMENDATION REC(2001)19 OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 December 2001 at the 776th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and to foster their economic and social progress;

Considering that participation of citizens is at the very heart of the idea of democracy and that citizens committed to democratic values, mindful of their civic duties and who become involved in political activity are the lifeblood of any democratic system;

Convinced that local democracy is one of the cornerstones of democracy in European countries and that its reinforcement is a factor of stability;

Noting that local democracy has to operate in a new challenging context resulting not only from structural and functional changes in local government organisation, but also from the radical political, economic and social developments that have occurred in Europe and the process of globalisation;

Aware that public expectations have evolved, that local politics are changing form and that this requires more direct, flexible and ad hoc methods of participation;

Considering that, in certain circumstances, the level of trust people have in their elected institutions has declined and that there is a need for state institutions to re-engage with and respond to the public in new ways to maintain the legitimacy of decision-making;

Recognising that a wide variety of measures are available to promote citizen participation and these can be adapted to the different circumstances of local communities;

Considering that the right of citizens to have their say in major decisions entailing long-term commitments or choices which are difficult to reverse and concern a majority of citizens is one of the democratic principles common to all member states of the Council of Europe;

Considering that this right can be most directly exercised at local level and that, accordingly, steps should be taken to involve citizens more directly in the management of local affairs, while safeguarding the effectiveness and efficiency of such management;

Reaffirming its belief that representative democracy is part of the common heritage of member states and is the basis of the participation of citizens in public life at national, regional and local level;

Considering that dialogue between citizens and local elected representatives is essential for local democracy, as it strengthens the legitimacy of local democratic institutions and the effectiveness of their action;

Considering that, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, local authorities have and must assume a leading role in promoting citizens' participation and that the success of any "local democratic participation policy" depends on the commitment of these authorities;

Having regard to Recommendation No. R (81) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning participation at municipal level and considering that the changes that have taken place since its adoption justify that the latter be replaced by the present Recommendation;

Having regard to Opinion No. 232 (2001) of the Parliamentary Assembly;

Having regard to Opinion 15 (2001) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and to the Congress' texts which are relevant in the field,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

1. frame a policy, involving local and – where applicable – regional authorities, designed to promote citizens' participation in local public life, drawing on the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted as an international treaty on 15 October 1985 and ratified to date by a large majority of Council of Europe member states, as well as on the principles contained in Appendix I to this Recommendation;

2. adopt, within the context of the policy thus defined and taking into account the measures listed in Appendix II to this recommendation, the measures within their power, in particular with a view to improving the legal framework for participation and ensuring that national legislation and regulations enable local and regional authorities to employ a wide range of participation instruments in conformity with paragraph 1 of Recommendation No. R (2000) 14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on local taxation, financial equalisation and grants to local authorities;

3. invite, in an appropriate way, local and regional authorities:

- to subscribe to the principles contained in Appendix I to this recommendation and to undertake the effective implementation of the policy of promoting citizens' participation in local public life;

- to improve local regulations and practical arrangements concerning citizens' participation in local public life, and to take any other measures within their power to promote citizens' participation, with due regard for the measures listed in Appendix II to this recommendation;

4. ensure that this recommendation is translated into the official language or languages of their respective countries and, in ways they consider appropriate, is published and brought to the attention of local and regional authorities;

Decides that this recommendation will replace Recommendation No. R (81) 18 concerning participation at municipal level.

Appendix I

Basic principles of a local democratic participation policy

1. Guarantee the right of citizens to have access to clear, comprehensive information about the various matters of concern to their local community and to have a say in major decisions affecting its future.
2. Seek for new ways to enhance civic-mindedness and to promote a culture of democratic participation shared by communities and local authorities.
3. Develop the awareness of belonging to a community and encourage citizens to accept their responsibility to contribute to the life of their communities.
4. Accord major importance to communication between public authorities and citizens and encourage local leaders to give emphasis to citizens' participation and careful consideration to their demands and expectations, so as to provide an appropriate response to the needs which they express.
5. Adopt a comprehensive approach to the issue of citizens' participation, having regard both to the machinery of representative democracy and to the forms of direct participation in the decision-making process and the management of local affairs.
6. Avoid overly rigid solutions and allow for experimentation, giving priority to empowerment rather than to laying down rules; consequently, provide for a wide range of participation instruments, and the possibility of combining them and adapting the way they are used according to the circumstances.
7. Start from an in-depth assessment of the situation as regards local participation, establish appropriate benchmarks and introduce a monitoring system for tracking any changes therein, in order to identify the causes of any positive or negative trends in citizen participation, and in order to gauge the impact of the mechanisms adopted.
8. Enable the exchange of information between and within countries on best practices in citizen participation, support local authorities' mutual learning about the effectiveness of the various participation methods and ensure that the public is fully informed about the whole range of opportunities available.
9. Pay particular attention to those categories of citizens who have greater difficulty becoming actively involved or who, *de facto*, remain on the sidelines of local public life.
10. Recognise the importance of a fair representation of women in local politics.
11. Recognise the potential that children and young people represent for the sustainable development of local communities and emphasise the role they can play.

12. Recognise and enhance the role played by associations and groups of citizens as key partners in developing and sustaining a culture of participation and as a driving force in the practical application of democratic participation.

13. Enlist the joint effort of the authorities at every territorial level, with each authority being responsible for taking appropriate action within its competence, according to the principle of subsidiarity.

Appendix II

Steps and measures to encourage and reinforce citizens' participation in local public life

A. General steps and measures

1. Ascertain whether, in a complex and increasingly globalised world, the relevance of local action and decision-making is made clear to the public by identifying core roles for local authorities in a changing environment.

2. Give proper emphasis to these roles and ascertain, if necessary, whether the balance of powers exercised at national, regional and local levels is such as to ensure that a sufficient capacity for local action lies with local authorities and elected representatives to provide the necessary stimulus and motivation for civic involvement. In this context, make use of every opportunity for functional decentralisation, for example by delegating more responsibilities with regard to schools, day nurseries and other facilities for children or infants, care facilities for the elderly, hospitals and health centres, sport and recreation centres, theatres, libraries, etc.

3. Improve citizenship education and incorporate into school curricula and training syllabuses the objective of promoting awareness of the responsibilities that are incumbent on each individual in a democratic society, in particular within the local community, whether as an elected representative, local administrator, public servant or ordinary citizen.

4. Encourage local elected representatives and local authorities, by any suitable means including the drafting of codes of conduct, to behave in a manner consistent with the high ethical standards and ensure compliance with these standards.

5. Introduce greater transparency into the way local institutions and authorities operate, and in particular:

i. ensure the public nature of the local decision-making process (publication of agendas of local council and local executive meetings; meetings of the local council and its committees open to the public; question and answer sessions, publication of minutes of meetings and decisions, etc.);

ii. ensure and facilitate access by any citizen to information concerning local affairs (setting up information bureaus, documentation centres, public databases; making use of information technology; simplifying administrative formalities and reducing the cost of obtaining copies of documents, etc.);

iii. provide adequate information on administrative bodies and their organisational structure, and inform citizens who are directly affected by any ongoing proceedings of the progress of these proceedings and the identity of the persons in charge.

6. Implement a fully-fledged communication policy, in order to afford citizens the opportunity to better understand the main issues of concern to the community and the implications of the major political decisions which its bodies are called upon to make, and to inform citizens about the opportunities for, and forms of, participation in local public life.

7. Develop, both in the most populated urban centres and in rural areas, a form of neighbourhood democracy, so as to give citizens more influence over their local environment and municipal activities in the various areas of the municipality. More specifically:

i. set up, at sub-municipal level, bodies, where appropriate elected or composed of elected representatives, which could be given advisory and information functions and possibly delegated executive powers;

ii. set up, at sub-municipal level, administrative offices to facilitate contacts between local authorities and citizens;

iii. adopt, in each area, an integrated approach to the organisation and provision of public services, based on a willingness to listen to citizens and geared to the needs which they express;

iv. encourage local residents to become involved – directly or via neighbourhood associations – in the design and implementation of projects which have a direct bearing on their environment, such as the creation and maintenance of green areas and playgrounds, the fight against crime, the introduction of support/self-help facilities (childcare, care for the elderly, etc.).

B. Steps and measures concerning participation in local elections and the system of representative democracy

1. Conduct audits of the functioning of local electoral systems in order to ascertain whether there are any fundamental flaws or voting arrangements that might discourage particular sections of the population from voting and consider the possibilities of correcting those flaws or arrangements.

2. Endeavour to promote participation in elections. Where necessary, conduct information campaigns to explain how to vote and to encourage people in general to register to vote and to use their vote. Information campaigns targeted at particular sections of the population may also be an appropriate option.

3. Conduct audits of voter registration and electoral turnout in order to determine whether there is any change in the general pattern or whether there are any problems involving particular categories or groups of citizens who show little interest in voting.

4. Consider measures to make voting more convenient given the complexity and demands of modern lifestyles, e.g.:

i. review the way in which polling stations operate (number of polling stations, accessibility, opening hours, etc.);

ii. introduce new voting options, more in line with the aspirations of the citizens of each member states (early voting, postal voting, post office voting, electronic voting, etc.);

iii. introduce specific forms of assistance (for example for disabled or illiterate people) or other special voting arrangements for particular categories of voters (voting by proxy, home voting, hospital voting, voting in barracks or prisons, etc.).

5. Where necessary, in order to better gauge the impact of any measures envisaged, conduct (or allow) pilot schemes to test the new voting arrangements.

6. Examine the procedures for selecting candidates to stand for local elective office and consider, for example:

i. whether voters should be involved in the process of selecting candidates, for instance by introducing the possibility of presenting independent lists or individual candidatures, or by giving voters the option of casting one or more preference votes;

ii. whether voters should be given a stronger influence in the election or appointment of the (heads of the) local executives; this can be achieved by direct elections, binding referendums or other methods.

7. Examine the issues relating to plurality of elective office, so as to adopt measures designed to prevent simultaneous office-holding where it would hinder the proper performance of the relevant duties or would lead to conflicts of interest.

8. Examine the conditions governing the exercise of elective office, in order to determine whether particular aspects of the status of local elected representatives or the practical arrangements for exercising office might hinder involvement in politics. Where appropriate, consider measures designed to remove these obstacles and, in particular, to enable elected representatives to devote the appropriate time to their duties and to relieve them from certain economic constraints.

C. Steps and measures to encourage direct public participation in local decision-making and the management of local affairs

1. Promote dialogue between citizens and local elected representatives and make local authorities aware of the various techniques for communicating with the public, and the wide range of ways in which the public can play a direct part in decision-making. Such awareness could be developed through the publication of guidelines (e.g. in the form of a charter for public participation at local level), the holding of conferences and seminars or the establishment of a well-maintained website so that examples of good practice could be posted and accessed.

2. Develop, through surveys and discussions, an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the various instruments of citizens' participation in decision-making and encourage innovation and experimentation in local authorities' efforts to communicate with the public and involve it more closely in the decision-making process.

3. Make full use, in particular, of:

i. new information and communication technologies, and take steps to ensure that local authorities and other public bodies use (in addition to the traditional and still valuable methods such as formal public notices or official leaflets) the full range of communications facilities available (interactive websites, multi-channel broadcast media, etc.);

ii. more deliberative forms of decision-making, i.e. involving the exchange of information and opinions, for example: public meetings of citizens; citizens' juries and various types of forums, groups, public committees whose function is to advise or make proposals; round tables, opinion polls, user surveys, etc.

4. Introduce or, where necessary, improve the legislation/regulations which enable:

i. petitions/motions, proposals and complaints filed by citizens with the local council or local authorities;

ii. popular initiatives, calling on elected bodies to deal with the matters raised in the initiative in order to provide citizens with a response or initiate the referendum procedure;

iii. consultative or decision-making referendums on matters of local concern, called by local authorities on their own initiative or at the request of the local community;

iv. devices for co-opting citizens to decision-making bodies, including representative bodies;

v. devices for involving citizens in management (user committees, partnership boards, direct management of services by citizens, etc.).

5. Give citizens more influence over local planning and, in a general manner, over strategic and long-term decisions; more specifically:

i. give citizens the opportunity to become involved in the various stages of the decision-making process concerning these decisions, notably by dividing this process into several stages (for example programming, drafting of projects and alternatives, implementation, budgetary and financial planning);

ii. illustrate each phase of the planning process by means of a lucid, intelligible material that is readily accessible to the public, using, if possible, in addition to the traditional methods (maps, scale models, audiovisual material) the other media available through new technologies (CD-Rom, DVD, electronic documentary bases accessible to the public).

6. Develop systematic feed-back mechanisms to involve citizens in the evaluation and the improvement of local management.

7. Ensure that direct participation has a real impact on the decision-making process, that citizens are well informed about the impact of their participation and that they see tangible results. Participation that is purely symbolic or used to simply grant legitimacy to pre-ordained decisions is unlikely to win

public support. However, local authorities must be honest with the public about the limitations of the forms of direct participation on offer, and avoid arousing exaggerated expectations about the possibility of accommodating the various interests involved, particularly when decisions are made between conflicting interests or about rationing resources.

8. Encourage and duly recognise the spirit of volunteering that exists in many local communities, for example through grant schemes or other forms of support and encouragement for non-profit, voluntary and community organisations, citizens' action groups, etc., or through the forging of contracts or agreements between these organisations and local authorities concerning the respective rights, roles and expectations of these parties in their dealings with one another.

D. Specific steps and measures to encourage categories of citizens who, for various reasons, have greater difficulty in participating

1. Collect, on a regular basis, information on the participation of the various categories of citizens and ascertain whether certain ones such as women, young people, underprivileged social groups and certain professional groups are under-represented in the elected bodies and/or play little or no part in electoral or direct forms of participation.

2. Set targets for achieving certain levels of representation and/or participation of the groups of citizens concerned and devise packages of specific measures to increase the opportunities for their participation, for example:

i. introduce, for the groups of citizens concerned, an active communications and information policy including, where appropriate, specific media campaigns to encourage them to participate (consideration will be given to adopting a particular language, media and campaign style geared to the needs of each group);

ii. introduce specific institutional forms of participation, designed, where possible, in consultation with the group or groups of citizens whose involvement is being encouraged (there is a wide range of possibilities for meeting the specific needs of various groups, such as various forms of meetings, conferencing or co-option);

iii. appoint officials specifically responsible for dealing with matters of concern to the excluded groups, passing on their demands for change to the relevant decision-making bodies and reporting back to the groups on the progress made and the response (positive or negative) given to their demands.

3. As regards women in particular:

i. emphasise the importance of a fair representation of women in decision-making bodies and consider any arrangements which might make it easier to combine active political involvement with family and working life;

ii. consider, if legally possible, the introduction of compulsory or recommended quota systems for the minimum number of same-sex candidates who can appear on an electoral list and/or a quota of seats reserved for women on local councils, local executive bodies and the various committees and boards formed by local bodies.

4. As regards young people in particular:

i. develop the school as an important common arena for young people's participation and democratic learning process;

ii. promote "children's council" and "youth council" type initiatives at municipal level, as genuinely useful means of education in local citizenship, in addition to opportunities for dialogue with the youngest members of society;

iii. encourage youth associations and, in particular, promote the development of flexible forms and structures for community involvement, such as youth centres, making full use of young people's capacity to design projects themselves and to implement them;

iv. consider the reduction of the age for voting in or standing for local elections and for participating in local referendums, consultations and popular initiatives;

v. consider the various other types of initiative suggested by the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in 1992.

5. As regards foreigners in particular, encourage their active participation in the life of the local community on a non-discriminatory basis, by complying with the provisions contained in the Council of Europe's Convention on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level of 1992, even when its provisions are not legally binding on states, or, at least, by drawing inspiration from the mechanisms referred to in this Convention.

7. CITIZENS INNOVATION LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A 21ST CENTURY APPROACH

Report and Guidelines from the Demos Project (Edinburgh, 2004)

7.1 Executive Summary: Guidelines for improved citizen participation in local governance

This summary has been written by Michael Carley, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

The Demos project links eight city governments in seven countries with research organisations across Europe in innovation on citizen participation in local government. Demos is responding not only to common concerns about citizen apathy and mistrust of government but also to the many positive opportunities which exist to revitalise local democracy and to include citizens more fully in governance. Demos has been supported through the European Union's Fifth Framework Programme "Cities of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage".

During the project, Demos participants have been refining guidelines for improved citizen participation, based on the learning from intensive local projects in each of the cities. These guidelines are applicable in cities and towns across Europe, and are discussed fully with examples of good practice later in this report. The guidelines are summarised as follows:

Governance is about partnership – To achieve good governance, local governments must work in equal partnership with representatives from business, community and voluntary groups and civil society such as churches and trade unions. This will only work if local government is prepared to share power with other partners. The challenge of creating an open, trusting atmosphere should not be underestimated – it takes time and hard work. Local government faces a particular challenge to both lead, a key role, and yet accept the views of partners in an egalitarian framework in which each partner feels they have an equal role.

Asking citizens is not enough, government must respond to citizen input – Governments must listen, then respond constructively to citizens' needs and aspirations. This is an obvious yet vital conclusion, given how often governments ask for citizens' views and then ignore them. To ignore citizens' views reinforces apathy and cynicism, with citizens let down by processes which treat consultation as "public relations". Instead, local governments have to accept a new relationship, which sees power flow from departments to citizens but then back again to reinforce the strategic or leadership role of government.

Good governance is closer to the people – 'Localisation' – moving control over relevant services out of City Hall and closer to the people, to the urban district or neighbourhood – is a key step in modernising local government. Demos found that the pace of innovation is fastest in cities which have localised service delivery. Localisation "forces" departments to respond to citizen needs and aspirations.

Changing organisational culture is essential – A barrier to localisation is the attitude of government officers loath to share control with citizens. Changing entrenched organisational culture requires strong leadership to bring citizen participation to what Demos calls *the point of no return*. This is when participation is a valued right of citizens which cannot be removed; a means for politicians to enhance political legitimacy and to improve their chances of getting elected; and helps professionals do their job in a constructive, satisfying manner.

District or neighbourhood: who decides? Most cities localise to a 'district' serving between 25,000 – 70,000 people, about right for efficient service management and a good level to bring together administrative boundaries. But a district is not a neighbourhood to local people, and may be too large a spatial unit for local participation. A neighbourhood is smaller, perhaps 3,000 to 10,000 people, with logical boundaries such as a road or railway. Local people identify strongly with their neighbourhood because it has a big influence on quality of life. A key question is who decides the boundaries of neighbourhoods – the citizens or the officers? The best answer is both – working together.

Citizens like a single portal to local government – Citizens dislike going from department to department trying to find someone to take responsibility. Localised governance can give citizens a 'single portal' through which to interact over issues, rather than dealing with different departments. This can be a district office, "one-stop shop" or local manager, or a neighbourhood planning process reinforced by a neighbourhood website. The local office can include other players such as the police, the health service or the transport authority.

Localise services or politics? A big decision is whether localisation means services run more closely to the neighbourhood or local political decision-making. There is no "right" answer, but Demos suggests that local service delivery and involving citizens in local planning is easier to achieve than formal, decentralised political structures. Too often these mean politicians replacing community-led partnerships. They can replicate decisions taken at the council level – causing confusion. Formal local committees also contribute to an "information overload" of paperwork, which puts citizens off participation.

Balance representative and participatory democracy Electoral and participatory democracy should not be in conflict but ought to reinforce one another so that politicians and citizens develop mutual interests. Citizen participation, through a range of modes for groups and individuals, is seldom systematic, but empowers residents and provides feedback on issues and service quality between elections, given that citizens are real 'experts' about their neighbourhoods. For community representatives, it is their *legitimacy* which is important – not their "representativeness". Legitimacy means how well they fulfil their roles.

Reduce the budgeting "time lag" A challenge is reallocating resources to neighbourhood priorities and then reducing the time-lag between neighbourhood participation and real changes in resource allocation. If changes in budgets come only one or two years after participation, citizens lose interest because they haven't see tangible outcomes from participation. Shortening the cycle is a challenge.

Involve citizens early in decisions One of citizens' biggest complaints is that participation is no more than consulting citizens on decisions already taken. This makes citizens cynical about participation. At worst, citizens may object to a policy and try to derail it by, for example, triggering a

right of referendum in Germany, or taking local government to court in Britain. This institutionalises a “culture of objection” to local government policies – the opposite of the consensus-based approach which characterises real partnership. An exciting alternative is to bring citizens into decision-making processes at the beginning of a local policy cycle, when ideas are still at the visioning stage, before political interests and professional input dominate debate.

Less is more – efficient participation Participation should be effective and *efficient*, with citizens getting maximum benefit from a minimum time input. For example, if a concern can be addressed with a telephone call or e-mail, a face-to-face meeting is not needed. This saves resources, which can be spent on worthwhile participation, such as neighbourhood planning. Efficiency means making use of communication technology. Demos cities are exploring options such as interactive websites, internet-based ‘citizens panels’, digital imaging to monitor the neighbourhood, video participation for hard-to-reach groups and drama or ‘local soaps’ to encourage citizen input. Efficiency also ensures that participation doesn’t cost too much.

Build cross-party consensus Developing consensus around localisation is vital if innovative programmes are to weather changes in political control in the city. Citizens want a steady approach to improved governance, not to be held hostage by party politics.

“Hard-to-reach” groups Localised governance, however sophisticated, can fail to reach groups which traditionally don’t get involved. These can be young people, ethnic minority families, people with disabilities and elderly people. Approaches need to be tailored to the requirements of specific groups. What works for young people is unlikely to be relevant to ethnic minority groups and what works for one ethnic group may be inappropriate for another.

Reward learning, even from failure Because there is no easy route to citizen participation, learning from success and failure must be ‘captured’ and used constructively to improve the next round of innovation. This learning-by-doing can be difficult for bureaucratic systems used to “sweeping failure under the carpet”. This needs to be turned around so that failure unlocks new learning about “what works and what doesn’t”. This means changing political culture to make government and its partners a learning network.

Link city governance and research organisations The Demos “action research” model links cities with research organisations to improve participation as it unfolds. This involves politicians and officers, citizens and other players discussing their concerns with the researchers, who provide critical but constructive feedback when it is most useful. It requires openness on the part of cities, and a proactive, involved approach to research. Partnership between city and researcher has proved of real value in improving governance.

Support transnational learning networks Meeting as a network, Demos participants discovered over time, that rather than rely on experts to advise them on better governance, the real learning was in comparing “on the ground” experiences in their cities. In many cases this inspired better practice. There are two prerequisites to learning. First, partners have to be honest about failure as well as success, when the temptation is to promote local achievements in front of international colleagues. Second, learning has to be unlocked systematically. This requires a research and management secretariat to set the agenda, act as facilitator, and feed back learning to the network. A conclusion for European research is that learning networks have real potential to improve local governance. But they

need to have overt goals and be systematically managed, compared to the more common information exchange network.

7.2 Chapter 1. The Demos Project – In Brief

The Demos project links eight city and prefecture governments in seven countries with research organisations across Europe in innovation on citizen participation in local government. Demos is responding not only to common concerns about citizen apathy and mistrust of government but also to the many positive opportunities which exist to revitalise local democracy and to include citizens more fully in governance processes.

The Premise of Demos

A premise of the Demos Project has been that the revitalisation of democracy at the level of the European Union and the nation state should begin locally, in the city, the town and the neighbourhood. Most citizens respond readily to the opportunity for democratic participation at this level because they are “experts of their neighbourhoods” and because local decision-making substantially influences their quality of life and that of their children.

Another premise is that governance for the 21st century is about more than government *per se*: local government acting alone cannot meet the political and management challenges of creating sustainable cities and towns. Sustainability implies commitment of a broad range of actors. Governance therefore is about local government working in partnership with other “stakeholders”: civil society, neighbourhood and community organisations, individual citizens, business and the voluntary sector. Demos has fostered such partnership working.

Demos Support and Membership

The Demos Project has been supported through the European Union’s Fifth Framework Programme “Cities of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage” and ran from February 2002 to June 2004. This report is a summary of the key findings of the project. Demos partners include the city governments of: Edinburgh and Aberdeen, Scotland; Turku, Finland; Utrecht, the Netherlands; Antwerp, Belgium; Krakow, Poland; Solingen, Germany and the Prefecture of Chios, Greece. Research organisations in each country (except Germany), led by Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, make up the rest of the network, with Deutscher Städtetag of Germany, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Eurocities helping with the dissemination of project results.

Innovation in Demos

To promote better governance, and generate learning about this challenge, Demos worked at two levels: local innovation and experimentation in the eight local government areas, and as a transnational learning network.

The local projects

Projects in the seven cities and a prefecture have fostered innovation in citizen participation in a number of categories of experimentation:

- New structures of local governance, particularly at the urban district and neighbourhood level;
- Innovative attempts to include “hard-to-reach” groups in local governance processes including young people, disabled people, the elderly and ethnic minority groups; and

- Innovative mechanisms for participation ranging from use of communications, print and digital technology to neighbourhood drama.

In each city, the city government partner worked closely with a research partner, which provided critical but constructive analysis of on-going innovation and drew conclusions which enabled improvements as the project unfolded. Not every attempt at innovation was successful – given the challenge of participation against a background of traditional “top-down” organisational culture common in local government. Most importantly, as a *learning network*, Demos unlocked as much learning from failure as from the many successes. The project as a whole and the eight city-level projects are described in more detail in chapter 2.

Demos as a transnational learning network

At a pan-European level Demos also turned out to be powerful learning network, as cities and research partners from seven countries compared and contrasted their attempts at fostering citizen participation. There were many commonalities in terms of the challenges facing modernising local governance structures, such as the need in every city to reform the local “organisational culture” of bureaucracies before citizens could genuinely be empowered. A table in Appendix B lists some key concepts addressed in Demos.

But there were also major differences, for example, the degree of devolved control over local government finance in Germany or the Netherlands compared with a high degree of central government control in Britain. Similarly, citizens in cities such as Solingen, Turku and Utrecht have “rights of referenda” to trigger special votes on city council policy – a right unknown to citizens in Britain or Greece.

The learning generated in the transnational network is documented throughout this report. Key guidelines to arise from transnational deliberations are summarised in executive summary and reported in detail in chapter 5, interspaced with “points of inspiration” arising from the case studies.

Much additional documentation on Demos can be found and downloaded for free from the project website, www.demosproject.org. This includes an analysis of good practice from around the world, research papers including a “conceptual framework” of innovation in governance, comparison of national legal and constitutional arrangements for local governance in different countries, information on the individual projects and partners and so on.

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7.3 Chapter 5. Guidelines for citizen participation in local governance – full discussion

This chapter has been written by Michael Carley, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh with the assistance of the entire Demos project group

For the final year of the Demos project, participants have been formulating and refining the guidelines discussed in this chapter, individually as city teams and in a number of day-long discussions in transnational meetings. The guidelines are as follows:

Governance is about partnership

Governance means more than government acting alone. To achieve good governance, local governments must work in equal partnership with representatives from business, community groups, the voluntary sector and players in civil society such as churches and trade unions. This will only work if local government is prepared to share power and authority with other partners. The challenge of creating an open, trusting atmosphere should not be underestimated – it takes time and hard work.

Partnership can be thought of as 'horizontal' integration. Good governance is also about 'vertical' integration where policies and practice at different spatial levels (the neighbourhood, the district, the city and within the context of regional governance) support and reinforce each other. Ideas and actions from both the 'bottom-up' community level and the 'top-down' strategic level have complementary and equally important roles to play in good governance.

Partnership is a learning process for both residents and city personnel including politicians and officials. Experience suggests this learning process can benefit from an explicit "code of conduct" for partnership members. A well written code can help overcome differences in the expectations of different players in the process (open ended, covering a wide range of issues of concern versus fixed agenda, time limited and so on).

Within this context, a willingness to engage in mutual learning and to understand the perspective of others is critical to this process. It is also important to recognise that, like any learning process, partnerships ought to evolve over time. One key area of evolution is that stakeholders move from identification with their own organisation to identification with the consensual objectives of the partnership itself – they take "ownership" of decisions.

Another mark of evolving partnership is that unequal partners become more equal, more knowledgeable and more confident over time; in particular community organisations and representatives can be assisted by local government to develop their capacity to engage in partnership processes. This is local government acting in a community development role, as they do in a number of Demos cities. It also suggests that, of course, local governments as lead agencies in partnership processes will play multiple and complex roles, being for example equal partners, leaders, mediators, regulators and so on at the same time. That these roles are congruent rather than conflicting depends very much on the overall organisational culture of the organisation providing guiding principles for action. Organisational culture is discussed below. Demos cities demonstrate that it is entirely possible for local governments to play these multiple roles, not without any tension with citizens, but in a manner in which the overall relationship or partnership evolves in a positive manner.

Inspiration from Utrecht, Antwerp, Turku and Aberdeen

All four Demos cities have been pioneering local democracy, participation and service delivery at the urban district and neighbourhood level. This learning has informed the guidelines here. Taken together, their initiatives demonstrate that, although there will be failed approaches as well as successes, a steady, systematic approach to innovation, building on what works and discarding what doesn't after incorporating the learning, is a good route to innovation.

Most importantly, they demonstrate that if institutional players, particularly the city council, come to the process with a positive, open attitude, ready for lively discussion and debate with engaged citizens, the benefits of localisation are potentially enormous in better services and reinvigorated democracy. This substantiates an initial hypothesis of the Demos project that better local democracy is a foundation for democratic renewal at all levels. This is a powerful message for cities and towns across Europe.

Asking people their concerns is not enough – bureaucracy needs to respond to citizen input

From the citizens' point-of-view, this Demos finding seems obvious. It is never enough for local governments just to ask citizens for their views or simply to invite participation – governments must first listen to what people have to say, then respond constructively to citizens' needs and aspirations. Not to do so reinforces apathy and cynicism, with citizens feeling let down by political processes which treat consultation as a public relations exercise. Officials shouldn't assume they already have the answer before discussion takes place. And the anonymity of officials needs to be replaced by face-to-face contacts.

To do this, local governments have to accept a new relationship, which sees power flow from old-style city departments to citizens in a decentralised government structure, but then back again to reinforce the strategic level of governance. Decentralising government and localising services has been found by Demos partners to be the best way to 'force' departments to respond to citizen needs and aspirations.

Advice from citizens is a valuable resource for managing the city – like the 'feedback' from customers to a business. A big challenge for formal bureaucracies is to respond constructively to 'spontaneous' advice from citizens without feeling threatened.

Inspiration from Krakow, Chios, Edinburgh and Utrecht

These four cities have made a concerted effort to involve "hard-to-reach" groups in society, particularly young people, disabled people and the elderly. Given the importance of young people to the future of European democracy, and their right to participate, the case studies demonstrate that programmes tailored with young people in mind, and involving them in every stage of development, can pay real benefits in engagement.

Similarly, disabled people with mobility problems and elderly people living in retirement homes are very keen to participate and have a wealth of knowledge to contribute. One interesting message is that it is not technological links they prefer, such as video links to city council meetings, but face-to-face interaction with politicians and officials, at least when difficult issues are on the agenda.

There was much innovation in participation methods directed to "hard-to-reach" groups, such as use of digital imagery as a talking point, magazines and websites by, and for, young people, linkage between politics and sporting events. Efforts at this kind of innovation probably need to be expanded, recognising that "meeting culture" is not for everyone.

Good governance is closer to the people

Demos identifies four main benefits to decentralised local government:

1. It promotes better **service quality**, such as cleaner streets and parks, or better schools;
2. It empowers **neighbourhood management** of issues best addressed locally, such as young people 'hanging about' the local shopping centre;
3. It allows local people to engage in **forward planning** of, for example, land use, location of new shops or transport issues;
4. It creates **opportunities for participatory democracy** and social inclusion, so that people feel involved in, not excluded from, decisions.

The experience of Demos cities is that 'proximity government' or 'localisation' – moving control over services out of City Hall and closer to the people – is a key step in modernising local government. In the Demos project, the pace of innovation is fastest in cities which have a structure of localised service delivery and/or decision-making devolved away from the city-level. The quality of services can be monitored by mutually agreed service contracts or guarantees.

Changing organisational culture is essential

In most cities, the biggest barrier to localisation is the attitude of local government officers loath to share control with citizens. This gives rise to arrogance of officials and chronic failures to be responsive to citizens' views. Strong leadership by the mayor or leader and the city's chief executive is critical to changing this entrenched organisational culture and in bringing citizen participation to what Demos participants call 'the point of no return'.

This is when participation is seen as:

- a valued right of citizens which cannot be removed;
- a good way for politicians to enhance political legitimacy and to improve their chances of getting elected, and
- a way to help professionals and bureaucrats to do their job in a more constructive and satisfying manner.

Organisational culture has to change, both at the top of the bureaucratic structure and amongst middle and lower-ranking officers who need to be enthused about the benefits of citizen participation and supported in changing their attitudes and work patterns. Some degree of flexibility in budgeting processes, to allow a measure of local decisions, can also support processes of organisational change.

Demos participants suggest that a key indicator of a virtuous cycle of change is increasing 'trust in governance'. Put more simply, this is when citizens, politicians and bureaucrats all feel comfortable in each other's company and when they see that not only is joint working not threatening but can produce real results on the ground in better services and planning and a more informed citizenry. Then citizen participation can be seen as being on the way to 'the point of no return'.

Inspiration from Turku, Finland

The "District Partnership" programme of ten neighbourhood governance units in Turku is, on the one hand, official policy but on the other stresses voluntary participation and the need for a "public learning process" which is seen to apply equally to residents and to bureaucrats. Open meetings of up to 150 people find citizens and officers debating in a friendly atmosphere. Emphasis is given to the role of information, and a means of collecting data on daily life in the town which is easily accessible to citizens as well as trained professionals. Another emphasis is on feedback which means residents know that not only will they be heard, but they will see results on their concerns.

Across the country, Finnish people place a high value on voluntary action and new models of residential participation. For example, in the Rentukka programme of local, voluntary environmental work more than 3000 participants devoted their time on 84 sites in a single year.

Bigger district or smaller neighbourhood?

The issue of the spatial level to which it is most appropriate to decentralise is of immediate concern. Most cities decentralise to the 'district' level, with districts serving populations of between 25,000 and 70,000 people, which is about right for efficient, localised service management and planning, possibly from a local town hall or district office. A district is also a good level at which to bring together different administrative boundaries, such as local government, police and health service boundaries in a more coherent framework.

However, a district is not a neighbourhood as local people understand it, and for many people it is still too large a spatial unit as a basis of local participation. A neighbourhood is smaller, perhaps 3,000 to 10,000 people, or even less in a rural village, with logical physical boundaries, such as a road, river or railway line. The neighbourhood is often centred around a shopping street, and can be walked around comfortably. Local people identify strongly with their own neighbourhood because it has a big influence on their quality of life.

A critical question in a decentralised local government structure is who decides the appropriate level of local decentralisation, the citizens or the officers, or better still both working together. Citizens ought to have a say in determining neighbourhood boundaries. Resources are also important; officers will have a gut feeling that lower level decentralisation is more expensive, but that will depend on the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

In many cities, having established district governance, attention is turning to neighbourhood participation, but establishing this as a formal level of government creates the danger of 'professionalising' bottom-up participation. One way around this is to empower neighbourhood action without dictating how it unfolds. A good approach is to create the opportunity for credible community organisations to lead informal participation at the neighbourhood level and then participate formally at the district level.

Citizens like a single portal to local government

A big advantage of localised governance is that it can give citizens a 'single portal' through which to interact with city government over local issues, rather than going from 'pillar to post' in dealing with different departments. This can be done through a district office, local co-ordinators or district/neighbourhood community planning reinforced by a neighbourhood website. This single portal can be extended to include other institutional players such as the police, the health service or the transport authority. The single portal, involving just a few local government officers, or even a single neighbourhood manager, increases the opportunity for the face-to-face discussions with real people, as opposed to anonymous bureaucrats, favoured by citizens.

Inspiration from Aberdeen, Scotland

Aberdeen has learned much from implementation of its statistically representative and virtual citizens panels, using the city council's website. One lesson is that if a technical problem can arise, it certainly will! It is also important to remember that ICT is only a tool, and not a substitute for the need to involve all partners with an interest in the citizens panel in its formulation and management. It is also important to feedback to members of the panel so they feel their participation is worthwhile. Interestingly, preliminary views from its expensive representative panel of 1200 citizens is being mirrored by random views expressed by its much less expensive web-based virtual panel.

At a more general level, Aberdeen takes seriously its community engagement responsibilities. To support neighbourhood action, it developed a "seven step guide", Going Local, that encourages stakeholders in "natural" neighbourhoods to prepare Community Action Plans. Residents, city officers and other agencies, such as the police, came together to define the neighbourhoods and work on the plan. Going Local is produced by the Community Development Section of the city's Chief Executive's Office and available on either CD-Rom or as a booklet.

At the city level, citizens have their own Civic Forum with around 120 representatives from neighbourhoods and community organisations. The Civic Forum in turn elects representatives to take seats on a city-wide partnership and strategy group.

Community representatives work closely with community specialists from the city to ensure that they are confident in analysing documentation and comfortable in speaking up at partnership meetings.

Reducing the budgeting time-lag

One challenge in creating a system of localised governance is getting service providers to reallocate resources away from their own priorities to neighbourhood priorities. Related to this is the need, on the one hand, to reduce the time-lag (or budget cycle) between neighbourhood participation and real changes in resource allocation. Too often in Demos cities, changes in budgets affecting local priorities came only one or two years after a participation event. If this time is too long, citizens lose interest in participation because they can see no tangible outcome.

Shortening the budget cycle, or even adapting it so local community organisations have some say in its time frame, is a real challenge for local government. This is, of course, indicative of a larger issue which concerns the rapidity by which institutional partners respond to any request for a decision or information by citizens. If the decision can't come quickly for good reasons, it is important to keep citizens informed of the real reasons why this is the case. As hard as it might be to believe, honesty is the best policy.

Inspiration from Solingen, Germany

Solingen is implementing an innovative "local balance sheet of democracy" in a regeneration area in the city. The aim is to review and document at regular intervals the quality of citizen participation. The tool helps local government identify and tackle weak points and areas requiring action.

The balance sheet process started with a public opinion poll. This showed that:

- participation is highly relevant and people want more influence, and that
- residents are very interested in planning and development issues.

In reply the city government not only committed itself to participation and monitoring through the balance sheet, but to innovative methods including the use of cultural and art events to reach citizens. Although successful, the greatest challenge is the cost of participation set against a continuing need for more innovation and to reach out to ethnic minority residents in ways which reflect their culture. Overall, the city has learned that citizens are concerned about development issues affecting the city's future.

They want to be involved and acknowledge the city administration's commitment to participation. One positive output is the establishment of two community organisations to coordinate participation in regeneration projects. The balance sheet shows, and the city admits, an outstanding requirement to do more to reach ethnic minority residents. Although the issue of how to meet the cost of doing this remains to be resolved, the balance sheet works to establish an agenda for future action in improving participation processes.

Local service co-ordination or local political accountability?

Perhaps the biggest decision for local government is whether a shift to localisation means service delivery which is run closer to the neighbourhood level (government officers working with citizens locally) or localised political decision-making (formal political structures and budgetary decisions by politicians connected with local committees).

There is no 'right' answer to this question: a system must accord with local political culture and history, and must be expected to evolve over time as learning takes place. This means that constructive review

of local government structure should be seen a positive process. A decentralised structure should not rely on just one perspective, but be developed with both top-down and bottom-up participation by politicians, officers and citizens.

The experience of Demos cities suggests that localised service delivery and involving citizens in local planning and management is easier to achieve than the establishment of local political structures, which can simply replicate decision processes already taken at the full council level. There is additional complexity where devolved local government committees consist only of elected politicians, which is not the same as a local partnership drawing in many relevant stakeholders. Experience shows that where devolved government committees and local partnerships exist there can be real confusion and even tensions over “who does what”. Finally, local government committees seem to generate small mountains of paperwork and politically devolved government can increase paperwork exponentially. The volume of paperwork inhibits, rather than supports, citizen participation.

Overall, most citizens simply want good services and a means for occasional participation, without worrying too much about the political or budgeting structure of the local government which delivers this. This means the emphasis in experimenting with decentralisation should be in delivering effective and efficient services, and providing opportunities for citizen participation. Effectiveness often follows the “subsidiarity principle” which means decentralising to the level which maximises effectiveness. However this also means that some services, such as for strategic planning or economic development, may well be more effective at a higher, centralised level. Similarly, questions of traffic and transport call for regional planning and the citizen is likely to be ill-served if this is decentralised.

Overall, municipal services would seem to be the place to start localisation, with experiments in political decentralisation only following as it appears useful. When the need for local political structures becomes apparent, formal committees of elected politicians which allocate resources need to be balanced by parallel forums which link those politicians with community representatives and set the agenda of local issues for decision-making. It is important that local committees are not seen as ‘closed’ to citizen input, or they will do little good and may antagonise active community organisations.

Inspiration from Antwerp, Belgium

In parallel to its district governance structure, the Urban District Programme in Antwerp reorganised nine districts into 45 neighbourhoods to respond to residents’ visions and aspirations, to involve them directly in urban policy making and to make policy transparent. There are four phases in each district, spanning about three years in total. Phase 1 is to work with residents to understand what service and planning policies and capital investments are necessary to improve quality of life. A set of proposals is drawn up. In Phase 2, priorities are established, resulting in the District Programme which involves negotiation between the city and district administration. Phase 3 is implementation and the final phase is evaluation, which kicks off a new three-year cycle.

Balance representative and participatory democracy

Demos projects reinforce the view that representative democracy of elected local politicians and participatory democracy of active citizenship should not be in conflict but ought to reinforce one another. Politicians and citizens learn over time about their mutual interests in better governance.

Elected democracy is the only systematic, constitutionally-enfranchised, means of participation, and is vital for supporting strong municipal leadership and control over local government finances. However, where voter turnout is low, elected politicians may only represent a small minority of the total citizenry.

Citizen participation, on the other hand, which can be through all types of individual or group action, is not always systemic, but does empower residents and provides valuable feedback on local issues and service quality between elections. Some participation can be systematic, for example one Demos city has a citizens panel of 1400 respondents, selected to reflect a statistically representative sample of the population for regular survey. However, where participation is unsystematic, often the case, it is the legitimacy or credibility of community representatives which is important rather than their strict "representativeness". Legitimacy comes from how well they fulfil their roles. In one Demos city, community boards are appointed to be representative of the age/sex/ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood but are not elected, which causes community representatives to "work even harder" to achieve local legitimacy.

Active participation and strong municipal leadership are both needed, with better participation itself requiring 'strategic direction' to unlock the knowledge resources which citizens bring to democratic processes. These resources reflect the fact that citizens are real 'experts' about their neighbourhoods.

Inspiration from Utrecht, The Netherlands

The City of Utrecht is divided into Districts, each of which has a Community Board, a District Programme and a District Manager. The Community Board is selected from an open recruitment campaign with initial selection intended to give an accurate cross-section of age, sex and ethnic backgrounds in the District. Board members are not allowed to be active in local politics. The Community Board has five functions: to consult on the District Vision for a ten year period, an annual District Consultation event, the District Programme which is a formal planning process, an annual Liveability Budget (250,000 euros) and special urban projects.

As an example of city-wide and district action, Utrecht has pioneering initiatives at both levels. At the city level, they are working toward early citizen involvement in the policy cycle, which not only finds citizens having their views heard before policy is formulated, but also politicians and officials finding that early involvement makes their work easier. In the district there is a successful "neighbourhood soap opera" programme using drama to explore attitudes of citizens and officials in a non-threatening manner.

In addition there is a Right of Initiative in which any group of at least 25 people can develop proposals to improve the local environment (build a new mini-park or add recreational facilities, etc.) and apply for up to 30,000 euros with the condition that residents implement their own ideas.

Involve citizens early in the decision process

One of citizens' biggest complaints is that local government participation is no more than consulting citizens on decisions already taken. This follows what is described as the 'DAD model' of government – "Decide and Defend".

At the very least, this makes citizens suspicious or cynical about participation, which they see merely as a public relations exercise which allows local government to get its own way. At worst, citizens may object strongly to a policy initiative and try to derail it by, for example, triggering a right of referendum in Germany, or taking local government to court in Britain. This institutionalises a 'culture of objection' to local government policies. This is the opposite of the consensus-based approach which ought to characterise partnership.

An exciting alternative is to bring citizens into decision-making processes at the beginning of a local policy cycle, when ideas are still at the visioning stage, before political interests and professional input dominate debate. One Demos partner city is pioneering early involvement in decision-making processes rather than leaving participation as an after-thought once decisions have been made; all of the residents of the city recently voted on options for redeveloping the city centre. This reminds us that citizen involvement is not just about better services but about what the neighbourhood should look like in future, that is strategic planning issues including the balance of economic activities, such as shopping or industry, and transport to and from the neighbourhood, whether by tram, bus, bicycle or car.

There are many advantages to early involvement of citizens in local policy cycles. It reduces the culture of objection, because citizens will find some of their aspirations and concerns reflected in subsequent policies and plans. It also provides a forum within which the city council can demonstrate its leadership role on key issues. This combination of bottom-up citizen input and top-down leadership is an excellent basis for building consensus around local issues and generating an appropriate policy response. It also makes clear and more fruitful the role of politicians and the role of officers at different stages in the policy cycle, freeing their time to allow them to exercise their skills without unfocused public objections. This makes the policy process more effective and efficient. Finally it demonstrates to citizens that local government is serious about their involvement and that citizen participation is worthwhile.

Of course early involvement itself brings new challenges, including how to sustain citizen interest when policy processes only unfold over a few years. Perhaps more important is ensuring that citizens' aspirations and priorities, formulated early at a "visioning" stage remain sound and to the fore in later stages when political, professional and commercial interests may dominate discussions.

Less is more – foster efficient participation

Whatever the structure of local participation, it needs to be effective, allowing the citizen to see real benefit from the time they allocate to interacting with local government, but participation also needs to be efficient. This means that the citizen gets maximum benefit from a minimum time allocation. For example, if the citizen can have a concern addressed with a telephone call or an e-mail, a time consuming face-to-face meeting is not needed. This saves resources, which can be spent on more worthwhile forms of participation, such as long-term neighbourhood planning or a focus on hard-to-reach groups.

Efficiency means re-thinking participation and making best use of communication technology. Demos cities are exploring options such as interactive neighbourhood websites, internet-based 'citizens panels' for policy review, video participation for hard-to-reach groups, use of videoed drama or 'local soaps' to encourage citizen input and digital imaging by citizens groups to monitor their neighbourhood.

It is important when assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of new methods of participation to ensure that enough time has unfolded to allow these methods to be taken fully on board and altered to suit by local community representatives. It is a common complaint of citizens across Demos cities that government (local and central) too often sets the time frame for innovative processes without asking citizens their own views. Sometimes the "capacity building" needed to make innovative participation methods work can occupy much of the first year or two of an innovative process.

Inspiration from Chios, Greece

The intention of the Demos project in Chios was to use innovative technology to reach out to citizens and kindle their interest in governance processes. The technology included use of a static "infokiosk", a mobile information unit traveling around (mainly) rural areas, a website and TV and radio advertisements. Despite this broad coverage of technological innovation, response and engagement of citizens was limited. Analysis by the academic partner suggested that more than technological innovation was required to overcome a deep-seated political tradition of reliance on electoral politics in a highly centralised state.

In keeping with the action research approach, the project was reoriented to a specific target group, young people, with renewed attempts to touch their interests in locations and media they were familiar with, including at schools, popular sporting and music events, and with a focus on specific issues of concern. Considerably more success was achieved with the new approach, including an arrangement for regular meetings between young people and the Chios Town Municipal Council. A clear point of learning is not to rely on technology alone, but to address target audiences on specific issues of concern.

Build cross-party consensus to lock-in innovation

Developing cross-party consensus around projects is vital if innovative decentralisation programmes are to weather political crisis or change in party political control in the city. In two Demos cities which recently changed political control, the fact that innovative programmes continued with little or no disruption was a credit to crossparty commitment. It was also satisfying to citizens concerned with the quality of local services rather than party ideology or city-wide disputes. It is also important to ensure that not only senior but also middle-ranking and junior officers are committed to the programme of innovation. In part, this is about engendering a feeling of partnership amongst a broader network of people, who see the advantages of innovation and become committed to it.

Broaden the base of participation

Formal mechanisms of decentralised governance, however sophisticated, can fail to reach groups which traditionally don't get involved. These can include young people, ethnic minority groups, communities of immigrants and asylum seekers, people with disabilities, elderly people and residents living in the rural areas of larger government units.

Demos cities are demonstrating that much can be achieved in fostering participation, but that innovation only occurs when approaches are tailored to the specific requirements of individual hard-to-reach groups. For example, what works for young people is unlikely to be relevant to ethnic minority groups, what works for one ethnic group may be inappropriate for another, and so on. Devising a successful programme requires close working with representatives of these hard-to-reach groups to devise and experiment with methods of formal and informal participation.

Reward learning and build capacity for citizens and officers

The Demos projects reinforce the view that there is no easy solution to improve citizen participation. What is important is that learning, from both success and failure in everyday participation, must be 'captured' and used constructively to improve the next round of innovation. One advantage of the action research approach used in Demos is that it institutionalises monitoring at the local level and uses experience as a powerful learning tool. This kind of learning-by-doing can be difficult for bureaucratic systems used to 'sweeping failure under the carpet', or finding a scapegoat, often a junior person, for failing initiatives. This view needs to be turned around so that failure which unlocks new learning about "what works and what doesn't" is seen as a valuable resource. In most cities this requires a change in the existing political culture to make the local authority and its partners a learning network.

A key aspect of learning is to enhance the capacity of stakeholders to deliberate on issues, to make use of information, to assess the interests of others and to work towards not only decisions but commitment to implementation. Often called “capacity building”, Demos participants stressed that it was not just for citizens and community representatives but that bureaucrats and politicians also had real need to learn to work within the context of the “messy” environment of citizen participation, and to feel enthusiastic for the process, rather than threatened by it.

Inspiration from Krakow, Poland

The Demos project in Krakow has focussed specifically on the involvement of young people in municipal life at the neighbourhood and the city level. At the city level, the project developed a booklet on young people’s participation which is also a guide to the resources of the city relevant to their aspirations and interests. As every 18 year old in Poland must attend the city council to register, each in Krakow is given a book when they come. The book is supplemented by a regular magazine for young people called Propellor, which also reaffirms the importance of young people’s place in the adult world of Krakow’s society.

At the neighbourhood level, recognising that public safety is a key local concern, one initiative has fostered better links between schools and the police. A positive by-product has been better links with parents through their children over public safety issues. Another neighbourhood initiative has been to explore the role of a sophisticated “drop-in” centre for young people from disadvantaged households. These run from after school to late evening, providing young people not only with a place to hang out, which they help to run, but opportunities for art and music training, sports, computer use and structured lessons which parallel the regular school curriculum and allow students to catch up where they are falling behind in school. Both peer group therapy and professional counselling are available. The Demos project review shows that these drop-in centres, which are really a “home away from home”, are a successful model for fostering social inclusion of young people from disrupted households – a major challenge in most European cities.

Link city governance and research organisations

The Demos ‘action research’ model links cities with local research organisations to work steadily to improve the quality of citizen participation as it unfolds. This involves politicians and local government officers, citizen representatives and other players discussing their concerns and policies with the research team, who then provide critical but constructive feedback at the time when it is most useful. This requires openness on the part of cities, and a proactive, involved approach to research. This partnership between city and researcher has proved to be an excellent model of learning and of real value to the city partners. In Demos, this learning is replicated in bi-lateral visits and information exchanges between cities, and in valuable transnational interaction, which in turn draws on examples of good practice from around the world (see www.demosproject.org).

Support transnational learning networks

Meeting as a network, Demos participants discovered, over time, that rather than rely on experts to advise them on better governance, the real learning was in comparing and contrasting direct “on the ground” experiences of governance processes in their cities. In many cases the learning unlocked inspired better practice in other partner cities.

But there were two prerequisites to unlocking learning. First, partners had to be genuinely honest about failure as well as success, not always easy when the temptation is to promote local achievements in front of international colleagues. Secondly, learning within the network had to be unlocked in a systematic fashion. This required a research and management secretariat to the

network to set the agenda, act as facilitator and rapporteur, and record learning for feedback to the network.

A conclusion for European research is that learning networks have enormous potential to improve local governance processes. But they need to be more structured, and systematically managed, compared to the more common information exchange network.

PART II – LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

1. PROGRAMME

Day 1: Monday 8th of November 2004:

Location: VNG International, Eliaszaal

Morning:

Arrival Participants at Schiphol Airport; travel by train to The Hague (Den Haag CS; 35 minutes) at own account. Arrival at Den Haag CS; travel to hotel by taxi or tram (20 minutes).

12.00: Lunch for organizers (VNG, LORC and speakers)

12.30: Registration at VNG (Nassaulaan 12, Den Haag, +31 (0) 70 373 8401).

13.00: Welcome

By Peter Knip, Director VNG International

13.10: Opening and introduction

Explanation of the background, significance and objectives of the Symposium by *Professor Tomino*

13.30: Keynote speaker: Recent trends in European citizens' participation at local level

Map out the major European terrains and issues in municipalities and civil society with a coherent perspective by

Dr. Linze Schaap, Senior Lecturer of the Centre for Local Democracy, Dep. of Public Administration (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

14.45: Tea Break

15.00: Brief comments on keynote speech

- *Prof. Hisashi Nakamura, Asian speaker from network of LORC*
- *Dr. Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, African speaker from network of LORC*
- *Simona Pascariu, Partners Foundation Local Development Romania*

15.45: Tea Break

16.00: Plenary Discussion Session: What Works, What Doesn't And Why?

Focus on more practical dimensions and international perspective. These issues and themes will be discussed in more detail in the parallel sessions in the following day.

Discussion leader: Peter Knip

18.00 Scenery tour to restaurant

18.30: Dinner for all participants (Brasserie Surakarta, Prinsestraat 13, Centrum, Den Haag)

Day 2: Tuesday 9th of November 2004:

Location: VNG International, Eliaszaal

09.00: From policy to practice I

First round of 3 parallel sessions with a focus on practical aspects of participatory policy making

1. Policy: Why European municipalities still develop citizens' participation

- *Speaker 1: Nel van Dijk, Director Institute for Public and Politics, the Netherlands*
- *Speaker 2: Dr Cezary Trutkovski, Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Poland*

Chair: Jan de Waard, VNG International

Location: VNG International, F0011 Alexanderhof

2. Models: How European citizens and municipalities develop citizens' participation

- *Speaker 1: Dr. Freek de Meere, Verwey-Jonker Institute, liveability and social integration*
- *Speaker 2: Dr. Elke Löffler, senior research associate, School of Strategy and International Business*

Chair: Ed Figuee, VNG International

Location: VNG International, Van Lanschotzaal

3. Practice: the effects of citizens' participation (case studies)

- *Speaker 1: Mr. Michael Carley, team leader of Demos, European Union*
- *Speaker 2: Simona Pascariu, Partners Foundation Local Development Romania*

Chair: Cecile Meijs, VNG International

Location VNG International, Eliaszaal

11.00: Coffee break

11.15: Second round of parallel workshops on topical issues (same themes)

13.00: Lunch

14.00: Brief presentation of the insights from the morning sessions

By the three morning chairs

14.20: Plenary Discussion on the outcome

15.15: Tea Break

15.45: Presentation toolkit citizenparticipation.com

By Simona Pascariu, Partners Foundation Local Development Romania

16.15: Final conclusions / closing remarks

*Are European trends in citizens' participation useful elsewhere in the world, and how?
By somebody from LORC and Dr. Linze Schaap.*

17.00: farewell speech
by Mr Peter Knip

17.30: reception

Day 3 Wednesday 10th of November 2004:

Excursion to "Citizens' participation in the Netherlands" (09.30 – 15.00)

09.30: Departure from Hotel

10.00: Three Working Visits in The Hague

The role of local government in these projects can be summarised as creating the scope for residents and organisations to influence their own living environment.

Cecile Meijs, municipality Den Haag

1. Vermeerpark

People who live close to the Vermeerveld took the initiative to improve the field, after having had almost ten years of illegal activities taking place on the field such as gambling and drug dealing. Together with the local authorities they drew up a plan to transform the field into a park. In 1997 the Vermeerpark was created. Now, it is a park where children can play, youth can engage sports and where adults can relax. All the parties involved have signed an agreement to maintain the improvements made to the park. In 2003, the Vermeerpark was nominated by Eurocities³ for the European award for projects providing 'a better quality of life for all'.

2. Night prevention

Since 1994, around a hundred local residents regularly join the community police officer in patrolling the streets at night. Clear agreements have been made about procedures, and the night wardens and police are in close contact with each other. The project has produced sound results in the field of crime prevention: social structure has been strengthened, the contact with the police and local authorities has improved and all this benefits the overall safety. Nearly 200 burglars and offenders of acts of violence have been arrested and the number of burglaries in cars and houses was almost reduced to zero. The initiative was rewarded in 2001 with the national Hein Roethof Award by the Minister of Justice.

3. Restructuring Transvaal

In the residential area Transvaal 3,000 houses will be replaced by 1,600, thus creating space for the residents living in this area and providing modern housing possibilities for different target groups. During the transformation process, citizens were actively involved in order to keep the area clean and liveable. Discussions with inhabitants took place on topics like liveability, safety, traffic, public space and services. Already in the planning phase, citizens were asked to give their opinion on the strengths

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Eurocities is a network of European cities that exchange expertise and cooperates on urban issues.

and weaknesses of the area and to think about ideas for improvement. The answers were used to make a profile of the area, which served as the starting point for the urban renewal plans.

12.00: Lunch near *Haagsche Markt*

15.00 End

Day 4 Wednesday 11th of November 2004:

Departure day for those not leaving on Day 3.

2. ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Dr. Linze Schaap is lecturer at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Dep. of Public Administration, since 1993. In 1998 he was first appointment there as a research assistant. In 2000 he founded the Centre for Local Democracy (CLD) at Erasmus University (together with dr H.H.F. Daemen). This Centre aims to studying various issues of local democracy. Recently research reports were published on governance culture at the local level, position and functioning of mayors in Europe and an evaluation of participation enhancement policies of Dutch public administration. Linze Schaap is one of co-authors. The CLD co-operates with many universities in the European Union. His main research areas are: governance, sub-national government, citizen-government relations at the local level. Most of his recent research efforts have an international comparative perspective. Linze Schaap is also active in contract research and in guiding PhD-students. Last but not least, since 1999 he is a member of the provincial council of South-Holland. He studied Juridical Public Administrative Sciences at Groningen University.

Mrs. Nel van Dijk is director of the Dutch Centre for Political Participation (IPP) since September 2003. Until then she was since 1998 director of the LBL, Expertise Centre Age and Society. From 1986 until 1998 she was a member of the European Parliament. During this time she was chair of the Commission for transport and tourism and the Commission of women rights. Her key areas were social affairs, transport and environment, equal treatment, institutional affairs and Central and Eastern Europe. In 1982-1984 she was a member of the Provincial States of Noord-Brabant.

Dr. Cezary Trutkowski now works for the Sociology Department of Warsaw University. He was program director of the Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD), Poland, and director of the Polish Institute for Local Democracy (PILD). FSLD is a non-governmental, non-partisan, non-political, independent and non-commercial organization, supporting the development of local democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia”.

Dr. Freek de Meere is project co-ordinator of the liveability and social integration programme at the Dutch Research Institute Verwey-Jonker. The Verwey-Jonker Institute carries out policy-strategic and evaluative research into social issues. Three perspectives are central in their research: that of citizens, of institutions and of governments. The outcomes of the research can be employed to make adjustments in the policies of organisations and governments. By means of research, the institute seeks to encourage the social participation of citizens and contribute to solving social problems.

Dr. Elke Löffler is currently the Chief Executive of Governance International, a non-profit organisation assisting public and non-profit organisations to implement good governance. She is also a Senior Research Associate at the Bristol Business School (University of the West of England). Previously she was a staff member of the Public Management Service of OECD where she worked on performance and intergovernmental management. Prior to joining the OECD, Dr. Löffler did international comparative research on administrative modernization while at the Research Institute for Public Administration (FÖV) in Germany. She has been a consultant for the World Bank, the OECD's TDS Programme, SIGMA, the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the Federal Ministry of Defense, Civil Protection and Sports in Switzerland. Ms Löffler holds a Ph.D. (with honours) from the German Post-Graduate School of Administrative Sciences of Speyer, a Master of Economics from

Washington University of St. Louis (USA) and Master degrees in Economics and Political Science from the University of Tübingen (Germany).

Dr. Michael Carley is professor of planning and housing in the Centre for Environment and Human Settlements at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland. His research includes organisational development for global, national and local sustainable development; and management of city-regions around the world. He was a member of the Advisory Group of the Sustainable Europe Campaign.

Mrs. Simona Pascariu is program manager of the Partners Foundation for Local Development (FPDL) in Romania. Her key areas of expertise are good governance, public administration and community development, urban and regional development, environment and conflict management. The FPDL Mission is to enhance: the democratic processes of governance, the civil society development, the generation of a new change & conflict management culture in Romania and CEE/SEE Countries, through Capacity Building Programs.

Chair Ed Figuee is key expert of VNG International and (parliamentary) journalist, editor and senior advisor. Mr. Figuee has gained an extensive professional experience in all kind of fields of communication and communication related subjects. He is very experienced in advising local and regional authorities about their communication strategy towards citizens and about their communication, public relations and lobby towards the national government. Furthermore, he produced numerous publications such as columns, articles, reports, short stories and all kinds of copywriting and he is co-writer and co-editor of several books. During his career and international work he developed several training manuals and modules in the field of communication strategy and provided training to trainers and civil servants.

Chair Jan de Waard is key expert of VNG International and senior advisor on Strategy and Policy at the Welfare department of the Municipality of Leeuwarden. Mr. De Waard has an experience of more than twenty years in public administration on the municipal and regional level, both in management and in staff positions. Specialised in: improving the performance of public administration, organisational structures, quality management, policy evaluation, municipal management and public participation. He is well known with the field of municipal welfare and foreign relations. Expertise in project organisation, social research and planning.

Chair Cecile Meijs is key expert of VNG International and since 1997 communication advisor at the Department of Information and Communication of the municipality of The Hague. Ms. Meijs is an experienced communication professional. After working as a journalist for a local radio station, she became head of the information department of the Dutch municipality of Den Helder (60.000 inhabitants), where she was responsible for the development and implementation of the information and communication policy. From 1993 to 1995 Ms. Meijs has been active in The Sudan for several projects by the Dutch Ministry of Development Co-operation. She also trained university students in theories and practices of journalism (news reports, documentary, cinema, entertainment and advertising).

3. VNG INTERNATIONAL

Company Profile VNG International 2004

VNG INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AGENCY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF NETHERLANDS MUNICIPALITIES

Committed to strengthening democratic local government worldwide

VNG International is committed to strengthening democratic local government worldwide. It is a small, dynamic company which manages annually some 50 to 60 projects with a focus on decentralisation and capacity-building of local governments. VNG International supports local governments, their associations and training institutions in developing countries and countries in transition. The work is financed by, among others, the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs, the European Union, the World Bank and United Nations agencies.

VNG International was founded in 1993 to meet a growing number of international requests for the expertise of the Netherlands local governments and their association. In 2001 VNG International became a corporate company, rooted in local government practice and owned completely by VNG.

VNG itself was established in 1912 and is one of the oldest and strongest local government associations in the world with 500 staff and over 90 years of experience.

VNG International is located in VNG's headquarters and employs 38 staff in The Hague and 7 in the international project offices. VNG International mobilises local government expertise through a large network of professionals both in the Netherlands (mostly of VNG and Dutch municipalities) and abroad.

VNG International's approach

For VNG International strengthening democratic local government means working on three interrelated levels:

- on the individual level – training municipal staff and elected representatives;
- on the organisational level – advising and coaching local authorities;
- on the institutional level – adapting financial relations, laws and institutional arrangements.

VNG International considers ownership by the partner as crucial. Therefore VNG International takes into account the partner's needs both in the design of the projects as well as during the implementation. For the same reason VNG International is cautious about employing long-term consultants. In general VNG International's project designs are flexible and usually include short-term process incentives through Technical Assistance, training, study tours and financial support.

In many projects VNG International strengthens local intergovernmental structures, such as associations of municipalities, training institutions, etcetera. These interfaces ensure that a solid local structure remains when VNG International phases out, making project results not only sustainable, but also replicable in other local authorities.

The VNG International approach is characterized by:

- Colleague-to-colleague co-operation
- Institutional linking

Colleague-to-colleague co-operation

Colleague-to-colleague co-operation entails municipal staff and elected representatives exchanging and sharing knowledge with colleagues who have similar tasks and responsibilities. It enables municipal experts from the Netherlands and their counterparts abroad to explore and implement solutions to identified needs within the partner institutions. Partners working with VNG International's colleague-to-colleague approach invest in people and instil confidence through a relationship based on equality.

Rooted in local government itself, VNG International has easy access to the specialised technical know how of municipal staff and to the political experience of Mayors, councillors, and municipal directors. Strengthening local governments often requires this mix of technical and political experience.

Institutional linking

Institutional linking is an important aspect of VNG International's work. In the long-term relationship of an institutional twinning the colleague-to-colleague co-operation gains in depth. As a twinning prolongs, more knowledge about each other is being built up. This generates trust and reciprocity and thereby increases effectiveness.

VNG International works through the institutional linking approach with many other associations of local authorities and training institutions. It also executes several programmes to support institutional twinning by Dutch municipalities. These programmes involve local governments and civic organisations in the Netherlands and their counterparts in developing- and transition countries. More than half of all Netherlands municipalities are active in international cooperation activities through 170 links with developing countries and 240 with Central and Eastern Europe.

Core fields of expertise of VNG International

VNG International's commitment to strengthening local governments world-wide is focused on six core fields:

- **Decentralisation**
- **Municipal Management & Services**
- **Citizen Participation and Information Policy**
- **Ethics and Integrity**
- **Association Capacity Building**
- **Municipal International Co-operation**

The organisation

VNG International is fully owned by the VNG Holding B.V. which in turn is fully owned by VNG, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities. Although a separate legal body, VNG International cherishes its close ties with the association. VNG International provides the secretariat to VNG's permanent policy committee on municipal international cooperation. It has easy access to the VNG membership and the membership recognises VNG International as the international cooperation agency of their association. Its average annual turn-over is € .1 million.

Quality system

VNG International strives to maintain high quality in all aspects of its work. All important work processes have been incorporated into a quality system, for which the ISO 9001 quality certificate was obtained in 1999. In 2002 the quality system was certified for another 3 years on the basis of ISO 9001:2000. VNG International considers feed-back from its clients as a very important basis for further improvements in its performance and therefore, systematically measures the client satisfaction.

Internal organisation

The internal organisation of VNG International is designed to make the best use of the talents of its personnel and to stimulate their initiative. In line with the high level of education of the project staff, they enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the development and implementation of projects, with the backing of the quality system defining a number of internal monitoring mechanisms.

The organisation structure is relatively flat. The staff management structure is composed of two business units: one for Europe and one for Africa, Asia and Latin America. Both are headed by a unit manager, who, together with the director and deputy director, form the management team.

Several instruments encourage the cooperation and exchange of experience within and across the team. The physical organisation of the office also encourages exchange within the team. All project managers and officers have a flexible working place, with cordless telephones and lap top computers. This results in more efficient use of the office space and it fosters stronger team cohesion.

Human resources

VNG International chooses to work with a mix of staff based in The Hague, project staff based in the recipient countries and national and international experts selected on a case-by-case basis according to the needs.

It is VNG International's policy to keep the staff in The Hague as limited as possible. When appropriate, project staff are paid out of project budgets and employed by the counterparts.

VNG International considers this as a way to develop the institutional capacity of the local government partners in the projects.

Network of senior advisors

Most of the expertise needed for the projects is mobilised from a large network of senior advisors, mostly local government practitioners in the Netherlands and abroad. A core group from this network "the pool of experts" have committed themselves to VNG International and its mission. Members of the pool of experts develop new products, write project proposals and may speak on behalf of VNG International.

VNG International statistics

(2003) Number of staff: Staff in The Hague office 38 (holding a university degree: 30), Staff in recipient countries 7, Total of affiliated experts 575, Core group of experts 55, Average annual number of projects 55, Number of expert missions 86, Average annual turn-over € 10.1 mln.

4. CONTACT DETAILS

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Route description place of conference: VNG International
VNG International, Nassaulaan 12, Den Haag
Eliaszaal, Alexanderhof, van Lanschotzaal, Sophialaan 9 Den Haag

Public Transportation: *From Schiphol airport to The Hague Central Station* - Every half an hour there is a direct train from Schiphol Airport platform 5 to The Hague Central Station. *From The Hague Central Station* - bus 4, 5 and 22: get off at stop Alexanderstraat / Mauritskade tram 9 get off at stop Dr. Kuijperstraat. *From railway station Hollands Spoor* - tram 1: get off at stop Alexanderstraat / Mauritskade, tram 9: get off at stop Dr. Kuijperstraat.

Walking: The VNG offices ("the Willemschhof") may be reached by foot from the railway station The Hague Central in about 20 minutes. Follow the path marked by a dotted line on the map.

Car

Coming from Leiden or Haarlem: drive the A44(N44) until the end and upon arrival in The Hague follow the black arrows on the map. *Coming from Amsterdam, Rotterdam or Utrecht:* Follow the Utrechtse Baan in the direction of Den Haag Centrum.

Hotel

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Johan De Wittlaan 30
2517 JR Den Haag
Tel. +31 (0) 70 3525354

Route description: public transport: From The Hague Central Station take bus 4 (stop community museum/Museon, gemeentehuis/ Museam) or tram 17 (stop Dutch Congress Centre) From The Hague Holland Spoor tram 1 (stop Johan de Wittlaan) or tram 10 (stop community museum/Museon, gemeentehuis/ Museam, only on working days)

Restaurant (Monday 8 November 2004)

Brasserie Surakarta

Prinsestraat 13

Den Haag

Tel. +31 (0) 70 3466999

Route description: From VNG International building you walk to the left to the Mauritskade. Across the little bridge you turn right. You keep the water on your right hand and walk further to the Royal stables on your left hand. This is also the end of the water on your right. Here you turn left in the Prinsessewal. This street will continue in the Prinsestraat.

Drinks (Tuesday 9 november 2004)

Steigenberger Kurhaus Hotel

Gevers Deynootplein 30

Den Haag/Scheveningen,

Tel. +31 (0)70 4162636

Route description : From the Central Station The Hague Tram 9 to Scheveningen, tramstop 'Kurhaus' Or bus 22, busstop Kurhaus. From The Hague Holland Spoor Station Tram 1 or 9 to Scheveningen, tramstop 'Kurhaus'.