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Report from The Democratic Audit of Sweden 1996

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Olof Petersson et al.
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Contents

The Democratic Audit of Sweden 1996

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Foreword

SNS – the Swedish Centre for Business and Policy Studies – seeks to contribute to the social and economic development in Sweden by providing facts and analyses on a scientific basis. For more than two decades, SNS has published an annual report on the state of the Swedisch economy produced by 4–5 academic economists in the SNS Economic Policy Group.

Since 1995, SNS has entrusted a group of independent political scientists with the similar task of producing annual studies of the political system in Sweden, and assessing the state of Swedish democracy. Such attempts at assessments of democracy have previously been introduced in other countries, one example being the Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom.

In 1995, the first report produced by the SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden, was published (in Sweden) under the title *Democracy As Dialogue*. It contained critical observations on shortcomings regarding the formation of public opinion, tolerance, the division of responsibilities in society, and government performance.

The report published by the SNS Democratic Audit in 1996 focused on problems of democratic leadership. As the problems discussed therein are also relevant to other democracies, a slightly amended version of that report is now published in English. The hope is that in so doing SNS will contribute to an enlightened public debate across national boundaries about the problems and potentials of democracy.

The report of the SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden is a teamwork, where all members of the research group contribute to each chapter. The report makes extensive use of previous research results by members of the group and by other political scientists. However, previously unpublished data and analyses also appear in this report.

The SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden is financed by research grants from the Sven and Dagmar Salén Foundation, as well as from a number of corporate subscribers to SNS. The Democratic Audit research team has a reference group consisting of repre-

sentatives from these corporate subscribers in the private and public sectors..

The work of the SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden is carried out under conditions of complete academic freedom. As in all SNS publications, the authors are solely responsible for the judgements and recommendations made in the report.

Stockholm, June 1997

Hans Tson Söderström
Executive Director of SNS

1 The State of Democracy

The tidal wave of euphoria that followed the events of 1989 ebbed swiftly away. Although democracy triumphed across all of Europe, the actual political situation of the aftermath has turned out to be both more cumbersome and rather more humdrum than those initial bright expectations led people to believe. A growing sense of the gravity of the situation has taken hold in the established democracies of western Europe. The political system lacks the capacity to solve major economic and social problems. Democracy is beset by a crisis of confidence and a widening gulf between the voters and their representatives. Politics is turning into a gladiatorial combat with the people playing the role of powerless and cynical spectators. It is no accident that just as in the inter-war years there is talk both of the triumph and the crisis of democracy.

The failings of the political system can also be discerned in Sweden. Whereas during the heyday of the welfare state the politician was considered the great hero of society, today there are many signs that the political system not only solves major social problems it also creates them.

Realistically speaking, Swedish politics will be faced with many major challenges over the coming years. The problem of unemployment cannot be solved quickly. The goal of full employment can only be achieved if the structure of the labour market, private industry and the public sector is changed profoundly. There is a risk that the social infrastructure will collapse if the welfare system is not made sustainable. Demographic changes are placing greater demands on the pension system and the organisation of health care and social services. Ecological considerations and economic demands have to be balanced in any future system of energy.

More pessimistic scenarios involve much harsher demands

being placed on the political system. An economic downturn could drastically change the whole nature of fiscal policy. The outlook for politics and economics would be much worse were the budget deficit and the national debt to start growing again. New postponements would hardly be possible. In such situations Sweden would run the risk of an acute crisis of confidence.

The current functioning of the political system will have a decisive impact on the way society develops over the next few years. The question is whether democratic government can manage to deal with these difficult tasks. Are the institutions and the decision-making traditions robust enough to function even in an unfavourable financial climate? Can the public accept and contribute to a process of adaptation? Are our political leaders capable of leading the country?

These questions apply to all the countries of Europe, not just to Sweden. Different countries have tried to tackle the problems in various ways and as a result there is a wealth of historical experience to draw on. The Swedish model provides one example of the ways in which the problems of a developed welfare state can be solved. The experience of Swedish democracy is mixed. In certain respects Sweden can serve as an unsuccessful experiment in active state policy. In other respects Sweden is a positive example of striving to build a society based on welfare, democracy and justice.

Measuring Democracy

Democracy is not a finished system, but rather a form of government that has to be continually reassessed and reformed. The strength of democracy is its openness to testing and discussion. A lively debate about democracy is a sign of a healthy political system.

This report is based on a systematic examination of Swedish democracy carried out by a group of independent political scientists. An annual evaluation of the state of Swedish democracy has been carried out since 1995.[1] The reports do not simply provide a

[1] The first two reports are by Rothstein, Esaiasson, Hermansson, Micheletti & Petersson (1995) and by Petersson, Hermansson, Micheletti & Westholm (1996).

description of the current state of Swedish politics, they are also intended to convey important lessons about the way in which a democratic audit can be formulated in theory and be carried out in practice.[2]

Despite the great diversity of views on the meaning of democracy, there is a significant measure of agreement about its fundamental values.

The common experience of the countries that introduced democracy makes clear that a number of circumstances constitute the necessary conditions for a democratic form of government (Dahl 1982). The legislative assembly must be appointed by free and universal elections. General elections should take place at fairly regular intervals, correct voting procedures must be observed and there should be no element of compulsion. No adult should, in principle, be excluded from the franchise nor from being a candidate for political office. Everyone should enjoy the right to free expression and to put forward critical views about those in power. The public should have the right to seek alternative sources of information. The freedom of organisation, in particular the right to form political parties, must be safeguarded.

These minimum requirements are generally accepted by everyone nowadays. They form the democratic framework which unites different political viewpoints. These threshold values are generally met in all the democracies. As definitions they are not particularly useful for our purposes. There can be no doubt that Sweden qualifies as a democracy in this minimal sense.

Our interest relates to the quality of democracy. A number of criteria for good democratic government can be put together on the basis of the debate on democracy. These form an ideal type which is both an abstraction and a norm for comparison. The ideal can therefore be used as a scale and a yardstick for evaluating the democratic standards of a country.

This democratic audit is based upon an ideal of popular, consti-

[2] The nearest equivalent in other countries is the Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom, which monitors democracy and political freedom in Britain through a series of reports at regular intervals. The UK Democratic Audit is sponsored by the Rowntree Trust and is based at the Human Rights Centre, University of Essex.

tutional and effective government. The people must be free to govern themselves under comparable forms. The legal system has to satisfy certain fundamental requirements which are respected by the administrative authorities and enjoy public legitimacy. Finally the political system must have the capacity to carry out its decisions.

Our ideal of democracy is based, in consequence, on not one but several requirements. This is our contribution to the academic debate with those who argue that democracy depends on a single criterion. Democracy is not simply popular government—the political system has also to meet requirements to do with constitutional and effective government. Democracy does not only involve the formal observation of constitutional norms and procedures—the political system must also be actually controlled by the people and be effective. Democracy does not only mean effective government—the need for effective leadership also has to be weighed against the need for popular consent and for legal objectivity.

Formulating the ideal of democracy in terms of a number of fundamental values reveals a complex problem which constitutes the inescapable predicament of democracy. These different criteria may come into conflict with one another. It can even be proved theoretically that it is impossible to construct an entirely perfect form of government. Dilemmas are an inherent part of democracy. In a democracy these problems of balancing conflicting demands cannot be left to experts or outsiders. Ultimately it is only the people and their elected representatives who through public debate and dialogue can find practical solutions which satisfy the fundamental requirements of democracy.

The public debate on democracy can, however, be made more manageable if a concrete form is given to the fundamental values which have been formulated here in general terms. This study of Swedish politics carried out by the Democratic Audit is based on just such a process of specification. The three main categories were divided into a total of thirteen different indicators. In order to examine the actual workings of democracy, two methods were mainly used.

First, contemporary Sweden was assessed against the demo-

cratic ideal. For the sake of comparability the observations were graded along a five-point scale. Second, the current form of government was contrasted with the situation a few decades ago. This made it possible to judge whether the democratic system had deteriorated or improved.

The debate on the ideal of democracy developed by the Democratic Audit, clearly shows that no definition can escape objections of some kind. A discussion of some of the criticisms raised after the publication of the 1995 report provides us with the opportunity to develop and clarify our concept of democracy.

One of the arguments put forward was that our definition is too broad. Largely as a result of introducing requirements for constitutional and effective government, we were deemed to have gone outside the rather restricted boundaries of the conventional definition of democracy. In one respect we agree with this criticism; we even went so far as to declare that we had deliberately extended the definition of democracy. The reason being, as already mentioned, that we are not satisfied with minimal requirements such as universal suffrage. The aim of the concept we use is to measure the quality of democracy in a state which satisfies the fundamental and necessary conditions to be considered a democracy. However, we disagree with those who argue that we have introduced policy issues into the ideal of democracy. In accordance with the dominant notion in political science we define democracy as a procedure. Our ideal is intended to measure how well the democratic process works.

A further objection is that our definition is too narrow. We are accused of having excluded critical aspects of the political system. The great problem for Swedish democracy, some would argue, is that the political sphere has become too encompassing. The unrestricted growth of politics has not only paralysed market forces and hindered the functioning of civil society but also led to democracy becoming ungovernable. There are others, however, who maintain that the political sphere has become too narrow. The elected representatives of the people are on the retreat in the face of the financial markets, internationalisation and the pressures to reduce expenditure. These two types of criticism are put forward from opposing political viewpoints although they have in com-

mon the view that our ideal of democracy is flawed in some essential way. On this point the critics are both wrong and right. The issue of the size of the public sector falls outside our ideal of democracy. In our view it is a great advantage, both for research in the political sciences and for the general debate, that one of the major conflicts of domestic politics is not to be mixed up in the concept of democracy. This allows democracy a better chance of becoming a general framework for good government; it is an advantage if political opponents can agree on the fundamental rules of politics. It is, however, also our view that the issue of the size of the public sector can acquire an indirect and essential illumination through our assessment of democracy. The issue is not how large the public sector should be but how decisions relating to the public sector are made. Once again it is not the contents but the process that we focus on in our audits.

The aim of the 1995 Democratic Audit of Sweden was both to compare contemporary Sweden with the ideal of democracy and to chart the way in which democracy has changed during the last few years. Ideally the empirical basis for our assessment should come from exactly the same time period. In reality comparable and available empirical findings were lacking in many cases. The conclusions have to be based on available data from various sources, which in some cases derive from different calendar years.

What follows below is a survey of the various criteria for democracy, what last year's audit revealed and what has happened over the last twelve months which could involve the need to re-evaluate the assessments already made. The report was written in late March 1996.

Popular Government

"All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people." This is the sentence in the Instrument of Government (the Swedish Constitution) which formulates the idea of popular sovereignty so fundamental to a democratic polity. As a result democracy makes particular demands on the political decision-making process (Dahl, 1979). The public must be able to control the political

agenda, i.e. they must ultimately be able to determine which issues should be subject to political decision-making. The public should be able to form their own views on these issues; this could be formulated as a requirement for enlightened understanding. The public must be able to participate effectively in the decision-making process. Electoral campaigns, voluntary organisations and local self-government are particularly important means for the public to exert influence. Democracy also requires decision-making equality: all citizens should have the same right to participate in the making of decisions which affect the common future. Finally every member of the public must tolerate the right of other citizens to hold views that differ from their own.

Control of the Agenda

In a representative democracy it is a minimal requirement that parliament should have the deciding say over its own agenda. According to the 1995 audit the Swedish political reality was far from the ideal. As a result of Sweden's membership of the European Union a significant part of the parliamentary agenda has come under the control of Swedish and European bureaucrats.

In 1996 the judgement has to be equally critical in relation to the power over the parliamentary agenda as exercised by the EU and the Commission in particular. Neither the public nor parliament have been able to gain control over the process which precedes decision-making by the EU. Usually the *Riksdag* (the Swedish parliament) enters the decision-making process at a very late stage.

The Riksdag has set up an EU-advisory committee (*EU-nämnden*) made up of representatives for all the political parties. The government is required to consult with the committee on ways in which negotiations with the Commission should be carried out prior to decisions which the government deems to be significant and on other issues which the committee selects.

The EU-committee has not come up with effective forms for the exercise of parliamentary influence over EU-decisions. Responsibility for this state of affairs has to be shared by parliament, the government and the EU. Parliament has not made use of the

opportunities for strengthening the power of parliamentary committees over EU-issues and has not accorded the EU-committee the same status as its Danish counterpart. The government has not always provided the EU-committee with an adequate basis for decision-making and all too frequently ministers have failed to attend the meetings of the committee. The decision-making process of the European Union is not designed to provide national parliaments with real opportunities to assess the impact of its various directives; pressure of time often makes this impossible (Hegeland & Mattsson 1995). The members of the EU-committee are not provided with adequate information about the ways in which EU-proposals will affect Swedish regulations, what the economic consequences will be for Sweden and what position the government proposes to adopt (Svendsen 1996).

The capacity of parliament and the political parties to take the political initiative has been greatly reduced. Instead it is the government which has set up special bodies to develop political initiatives. Delegations of this kind made up, for example, of representatives of industry, science and the arts are linked to particular ministries and are charged with wide-ranging and loosely specified mandates to formulate proposals and create debate. The risk here is that the debate will be impoverished if opinion-formers are confined to government bodies which are closed to public scrutiny. The responsibilities of the members of the delegations remain unclear. There is also a danger that the power of initiative of the political parties and parliament is blocked by the reference of particular matters to the delegations. Elected representatives have a major responsibility for ensuring that the public debate is provided with the constructive, well-informed and creative direction it lacks at present.

The last twelve months have revealed the major shortcomings of the political parties as leaders of opinion. Neither the government nor the opposition has satisfied the requirements of democracy for a forward-looking and stimulating debate about prospects for the future.

Enlightened Understanding: the Public Sphere

Popular government is realised through the free formation of opinion. Democracy is a method for solving conflicts through dialogue. The democratic ideal requires that the political views of the public are based on enlightened understanding. Dialogue is the lifeblood of democracy. Democracy requires a functioning public sphere.

Last year's audit made clear that Sweden suffers from evident shortcomings in this respect. It is true that in one particular respect the mass media have earned good marks. Committed journalists have discovered and made public improper conduct on the part of local politicians and officials.

However, an overall judgement would have to be negative. The working practices of the mass media and the world-view of journalists are frequently in direct conflict with the democratic ideal. The tendency of the mass media towards oversimplification, dramatisation and an obsession with personalities works against informed understanding by failing to satisfy its requirements for context and general principles, for taking the long-term view and for demonstrating the ability to balance different interests. The judgement of the 1996 audit is even more critical than the 1995 one.

One of the most publicised events during the last twelve months was the resignation of deputy prime minister Mona Sahlin. The background was the newspaper revelations that Sahlin had used her official credit card for private purchases which she later paid for with her own money. A judicial hearing subsequently made clear that she had done nothing illegal. In one respect the mass media deserve praise. They carried out their responsibilities to investigate those in power and to put undisclosed facts before the public. If, however, the entire sequence of events is taken into consideration then the actions of the mass media have to be severely criticised. Journalistic methods suggested that the improprieties were greater than they actually were; the lack of a sense of proportion was very noticeable. The vast majority of the public, for whom the mass media are the only source of information, had great difficulty in creating a multifaceted and objective picture of the actual circumstances. Insinuations, accu-

sations and a lack of objectivity turned the media into a partisan popular court. The tabloids allowed their obsession with personality to become a form of bullying. As a result of the mass media scrutiny of Mona Sahlin, our assessment of the Swedish mass media is that it did not lead to an enlightened public debate.

One of the major problems facing the European Union is the lack of popular identification with its institutions and ideals. In order for democracy to function on a European scale an effective supranational forum is required for continuing political debate. The task is to create a dialogue across national boundaries.

It is in this regard that the experience of the last twelve months has been very dissatisfying. The election to the European Parliament in September 1995 made clear the difficulties involved in creating a broadly-based and well-informed political debate with a European perspective. Matters relating to the European Parliament failed to gain adequate coverage.

A new opportunity soon appeared for a constructive dialogue about the future of Europe. The summit conference on the future of the EU was to be prepared in a totally different way from the Maastricht conference. The governments had learnt the lessons of the mistakes made at Maastricht and said their aim this time was to strive to achieve full disclosure and to permit public scrutiny. Much of the material for discussion was also made accessible. Another good idea was that a reflection group would be set up to think in slightly freer ways, before the politicians and the governments took over with the usual negotiating and decision-making machinery. The final report of the think tank issued in December 1995 showed that the expectations had not been met. The report is lacking in an overarching vision and is weighed down by detailed and incompatible demands on the part of the various member states. The think tank was on the wrong track from the moment its members were appointed. As it turned out its membership was not composed of independent free thinkers but of representatives who were far too close to their governments. The final report was a mere record of national standpoints which did not add to the debate (Weidenfeld 1996).

Through their European correspondents the mass media have maintained continuous coverage of the preparations leading up

to the conference of heads of government. This has frequently taken place at their own initiative. A public committee was specially commissioned to stimulate debate on this matter in Sweden. Its published contributions have not improved debate on European issues. Another report by the government to parliament in December 1995 was very scantily worded on the subject which would be at the heart of the summit conference, namely the political architecture of the Europe of the future. What was lacking was any attempt at co-ordinating the institutional issues.

Sweden missed her chance of contributing as a new and vital member to the European debate with a provisional utopia in which the ideal of popular, constitutional and effective government could be realised in the Europe of tomorrow.

Effective Participation: Election Campaigns

In a representative democracy it is elections that constitute the primary means for calling those in power to account. In last year's report Sweden received a relatively good mark in this regard. The most recent parliamentary elections had shown that Swedish voters were able both to exert control over those in office and to express their preferences. The elections worked relatively well as an exchange of opinions between the voters and their representatives. The elections of 1991 and 1994 were notable for increased objectivity and greater seriousness. The voters reacted critically against political bickering and sensationalist reporting. The parties and the news media were able to correct the mistakes they had made. The referendum on membership of the European Union in 1994 worked better than expected.

This bright picture has subsequently developed significantly gloomier shades. The European parliamentary elections in September 1995 could not even meet the low standards set for a satisfactory electoral campaign. The assessment of this particular aspect of democracy has therefore to be revised in a negative direction.

The low level of voter turn-out at 41.4 per cent is very worrying. The lower the level of voter turn-out, the more uncertain becomes the representativeness of those elected. Such a low turn-

out also indicates that the European elections lack legitimacy with segments of the public. Interpreting non-voting is always problematic, but in this case the traditional models of explanation used by political sociology would appear to be inadequate. On this occasion apathy was not only an expression of lack of interest and inadequate information, but also a conscious decision to indicate a rejection both of the European Union and the political parties.

The post-election debate turned for the most part on how the blame was to be distributed. Whose fault was it? Was it the voters who failed in their civic responsibility to cast their ballots? Or was it the politicians who could not or would not make clear why the election was so important? In our view none of these explanations captures the whole truth.

The way politicians shaped their campaigns helped turn the election into a second referendum. The voters used the election to have a second turn at expressing their opinion on EU-membership. This was hardly the right occasion, however. The issue of Sweden's continued membership belongs in a parliamentary election. The elections to the European parliament should mainly be concerned with which policy Sweden should pursue in the EU while we are a member country.

Both the parties and the mass media devoted less attention and resources to the European election than to domestic elections. The election was made more difficult by what was, in technical terms, a poorly constructed system of voting for individual candidates (Gilljam 1996). The subsequent impression is that many people failed to take the election seriously. Confidence in representative democracy can hardly have been strengthened as a result of the 1995 elections to the European parliament.

Effective Participation: Voluntary Associations

Had this evaluation been carried out a few decades ago, Swedish democracy would have been given a higher rating on at least one point. The large-scale social movements, study-circles and political parties with a broad social basis had made Sweden rich in social capital (Putnam 1993). Active participation in associational

life creates confidence and trust between members of the public. The voluntary organisations serve as a school in democracy.

The 1995 audit showed that Sweden still satisfies this requirement relatively well. The broad level of participation in study-circles is a bright spot. Attempts to form new parties and associations also show that despite everything there is a desire for organised social engagement. The trend as a whole was a negative one, however. The classical social movements and the major interest organisations are only weakly supported by the public (Häll 1994). For many people membership is simply a formality. Fewer and fewer members participate actively in the internal life of the organisations. A considerable number of associations and parties are having great difficulty in recruiting new activists.

The study of the elections of 1994 showed that confidence in parties and politicians had continued to decrease (Gilljam & Holmberg 1995). There is nothing to suggest that anything has occurred recently to cause this conclusion to be re-evaluated.

The statistics on membership and new recruitment are still a cause for concern. The established organisations continue to have problems of legitimacy. But here too there are some bright spots. The parties and the organisations are becoming increasingly aware of these problems and several attempts are being made to discover new ways of working (e.g. SIF 1995). The non-profit sector also shows signs of vitality and of a striving towards renewal (Amnå 1995). New associations are being formed and established organisations are discovering new ways of working. The major social problems of today, such as unemployment, discrimination and marginalisation, have provided the voluntary organisations with great challenges. Several interest organisations have begun to work actively with European issues and international problems to do with emergency relief and help for refugees.

Effective Participation: Local Self-Government

Local (municipal) and regional councils are not simply a part of the apparatus of the state-administrative bodies with the power to levy taxes and exercise authority. Local and regional authorities should also serve to embody government of the people by

the people. Sweden has ratified a European convention on local government which says that the right of citizens to participate in the running of public affairs is one of the democratic principles shared by all the member states of the Council of Europe and which declares that it is at local level that this principle can be put into practice most directly.

In certain respects the conditions under which local government functions have improved markedly. The municipalities have been awarded broader areas of competence. The latest Local Government Act and the current system of state support grants mean that the state refrains from issuing detailed regulations and restricts itself to the issue of framework directives. It is then the individual municipality's task to find the practical solutions which best suit local conditions.

Studies suggest that elections to municipal councils show relatively high levels of vitality. In general voters are well-informed and interested in local issues. More and more voters are making up their own minds on issues to do with local politics. In contrast elections to the county councils are faring less well and hardly fulfil the requirement to serve as an effective instrument for maintaining political accountability.

The role of the elected councillor in the municipalities and county councils is often a difficult and thankless one. Even if the formal scope of local government has grown in recent years, the economic realities have made it subject to harsh limitations. Local politicians have to bear the responsibility while often being powerless to fulfil the expectations and demands of the voters. The problems of local government at the municipal level are, however, to a certain extent of its own making. The revelations about the abuse of power in Motala, Gävle and other municipalities have done great damage and diminished further the reputation of politicians.

When municipal and county councils are to be evaluated as means for effective public participation, the major problem today is the diminishing public support for politicians and their consequent loss of legitimacy. The amalgamation of municipalities and the expansion of the public sector brought with it the centralisation and professionalisation of politics. Local government poli-

tics has become increasingly dominated by professional politicians. In 1995 the Democratic Audit of Sweden argued in favour of giving citizens greater opportunity to participate in local government. Schools, nurseries, care centres and other municipal institutions could be run by citizens elected on a non-partisan basis. As a result a greater number of members of the public would gain direct experience of discharging a significant civic duty while being made accountable to their electors.

Danish experience shows that schools can gain greatly from boards of school governors which include parental representatives. Gradually Sweden, too, is starting to test this model. The issue of what form of government is suitable for schools focuses attention on some of the most difficult dilemmas facing democracy. Teachers, pupils, parents and local councillors all have well-founded interests in being able to influence the running of schools. The attempt to increase the influence of pupils and parents must nevertheless be counted a positive development if it becomes a means of strengthening the responsibility of the public for matters of common concern while respecting the fact that other groups, too, may have legitimate claims to make on taking part in the running of schools.

Currently there are any number of attempts being made to increase public involvement at the local level. Of particular interest here are the very local development groups in rural areas which make up the core of what is known as sub-municipal politics (The Swedish Association of Local Authorities 1991). It is, however, too soon to assess the impact of these groups on the development of local government.

Decision-Making Equality

Democracy means that all citizens and social groups should have the same right to participate in the political community. The systematic under-representation of various social groups is a serious flaw in the democracies of today.

The assessment carried out by the Democratic Audit of Sweden last year revealed that neither the current conditions nor the developmental trends were unambiguous. In one vital respect

Sweden has come close to the ideal. The participation of women in leading political bodies is today equal to or almost equal to that of men. After the elections of 1994 the proportion of women in the Cabinet was 50 per cent, 48 per cent in county councils, 41 per cent on municipal councils and 40 per cent in parliament.

A recently published study of women in Nordic politics confirms that the similarities between female and male politicians are far greater than their differences (Karvonen & Selle 1995). In general women have had to fit into what is a traditionally male dominated political world. Nevertheless politics has been changed to some extent. Women politicians have ensured that women's issues have been placed firmly on the political agenda. It turns out that the efforts of men in this regard have been highly marginal. Women have had to fight a more or less lone battle for this broadening of the political debate. Women have been forced in consequence to hold down two jobs in politics as well as in society in general. They have to be both competent "male" politicians and do all the work to make sure that "women's" issues are not neglected.

If the perspective is widened to cover other parts of political life and society, then the status of women becomes decidedly more problematic. In most decision-making situations women are still very much a minority. In many areas men have been able to retain their monopoly on power. Changes in recent years have however favoured the representation of women (see chapter 3 for further information).

While it is true that a certain rejuvenation of parliament took place as a result of the 1994 elections, younger men and women are usually under-represented in the decision-making bodies of society. Pensioners, too, are under-represented on occasion. The decision-makers are normally middle-aged men.

Democracy's ideal of equality is particularly poorly realised in relation to immigrants. Members of society who immigrated or have foreign parents have frequently found it difficult to gain entry to the established institutions of the country. The signs of apathy and powerlessness are very unsettling. For twenty years foreign nationals have had the right to vote in local and regional elections on condition they have been resident in the country for

at least three years. Fewer and fewer foreign nationals are bothering to make use of their right to vote. Their participation in elections had sunk to 40 per cent by 1994. The consequences are serious for those individuals who are excluded, but also for society as a whole which loses out on an important element of renewal.

Citizen Tolerance

In 1994 the Democratic Audit carried out an interview study to measure the degree of toleration among Swedes.[3] The general idea is the same as in the classical American study (Stouffer 1955). Swedish democracy is based on the idea that the citizen is accorded a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Many of these are laid down in detail in the constitution, while others are regulated by international treaties and conventions which Sweden has adopted or ratified. The Democratic Audit selected a number of important rights and freedoms, turned them into interview questions and studied the level of support they had among Swedes today. The questions and the rates of response are shown in table 1.1.

The study revealed that the Swedish population had a particularly intolerant attitude toward Muslim immigrants, homosexuals, atheist teachers and extreme political orientations. One third wanted to bring back the death penalty.

Many of the interview questions focus attention on difficult dilemmas and even a democratic and tolerant-minded person should be prepared to allow other interests worthy of protection to outweigh the right to freedom of expression and freedom of organisation. However, even if there is no absolute yardstick there are still limitations. From the point of view of democracy and toleration the conclusion is worrying. Several of the rights and freedoms that were studied, which could hardly be considered peripheral in a democratic and constitutional state, are supported

[3] The measurement formed part of an interview survey about society, opinion and the mass media (the SOM-study), which was carried out by the University of Gothenburg at the end of 1994. An interview form was sent out to a representative sample of individuals in the age-group 15–80 resident in Sweden, including both Swedish and foreign nationals. A total of 1.702 individuals responded to the survey; the response rate was 66.5 per cent.

Table 1.1 Views on the Rights and Freedoms of the Individual

Do you consider that the following should be permitted in Sweden? (percentage of yes answers)	Yes, should be permitted	No, should not be permitted	Percentage Sum	No response
Corporal punishment as a method of bringing up children	9	**91**	100	2
Trade union strikes	**83**	17	100	5
Research into genetic technology and inherited predispositions	**72**	28	100	6
The death penalty for murder	33	**67**	100	4
The right of immigrants to vote in local elections	**66**	34	100	4
Homosexual teachers in schools	**57**	43	100	4
The building of mosques by Muslims	**52**	48	100	4
Atheist teachers of religious instruction	**47**	53	100	7
Pornographic films on television	**42**	58	100	3
Parties of the extreme left	**36**	64	100	6
Parties of the extreme right	**33**	67	100	6
The right of local and government civil servants to remain anonymous when revealing confidential matters to journalists	**26**	74	100	4
The deportation of immigrants with Swedish citizenship who have committed serious criminal offences	75	**25**	100	3
The use of concealed microphones by the police in the fight against crime	85	**15**	100	3
Racist organisations	**10**	90	100	3

Figures in bold highlight "tolerant" responses.
Source: Rothstein, Esaiasson, Hermansson, Micheletti & Petersson (1995)

by a bare fifty per cent of the population and many others met with considerable resistance. The Swedish people would have to be described as intolerant rather than tolerant.

The lack of data collected both previously and subsequently makes it impossible to judge whether intolerance is growing or decreasing. During the last twelve months xenophobia has attracted great interest in public discussion.

Swedish tolerance has been put to the test in those municipalities where Muslim communities have chosen to erect mosques. Experience hitherto has revealed large variations. In certain places the construction of mosques has led to spiteful examples of racist violence. In other municipalities Muslims have been able to build their places of worship without conflict and even in har-

mony with others. The behaviour of the local council has clearly had a major role to play in this regard and points to the importance of active political leadership (Karlsson and Svanberg 1995). Intolerance is not a constant force and it can be kept in check through information and dialogue.

Constitutional Government

In a democracy the power of the state is subject to limitations. These limitations are justified by reference to minorities and the rights and freedoms of the individual. The Swedish Instrument of Government declares that public power is exercised under the rule of law. How meaningful such limitations are is a matter of dispute (Petersson 1996). The laws and rights which regulate the democratic process itself are naturally compatible with the ideals of democracy. There are, however, many rights which do not, strictly speaking, relate to the political process. The rights of minorities and the protection of the integrity of the individual set limits on the decision-making powers of the popular majority. This opens the way for conflict between the sovereignty of the people and the principles of the democratic state. Constitutional democracy presupposes that it is possible to find practical solutions which meet the requirements both of the rule of law and of government by the people.

In order for a state to qualify as a polity operating under constitutionalism, there are at least three requirements which have to be met. First, the individual citizen must enjoy a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Second, the exercise of public power must observe the principle of due process. Third, the power of the state must be organised according to popular and constitutional government.

Rights and Freedoms

Nowadays the rights of Swedish citizens are covered by the fairly detailed form of protection laid down in the United Nations Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and the

second chapter of the Instrument of Government. The Democratic Audit found that the trend here had also been in a positive direction, as the rights guaranteed by the constitution had been extended in recent years. The judicial review of administrative decisions made by the government has meant that the courts have been given greater opportunities to test to what extent political decisions are in accord with fundamental rights and freedoms. There is no reason to revise last year's relatively positive evaluation of this indicator of constitutional government.

Rule of Law

The principle of due process means that the individual citizen cannot be discriminated against or be treated arbitrarily. Every member of the public must have access to effective means for the assertion of their rights.

Even if there are no simple indicators it is still possible to develop measurements and key indices for the rights of the individual. The National Courts Administration (Domstolsverket) made an attempt along these lines (1995). One of the indices involves the frequency of appeals from the district court to the appeals court. The relatively low rate is interpreted as meaning that the general public accepts the verdict of the court of first instance. The second measurement relates to the rate of reversal, when a higher court reverses the verdict of a lower court. The reduction in the rate of reversal is taken to indicate that independent courts arrive at the same verdict to a greater extent than before. We are fully aware that these two indicators are ambivalent and hard to interpret.

A number of reports point to alarming shortcomings. A newspaper revealed that fourteen out of twenty-four public employment offices were prepared to deselect immigrants among those looking for work. This discrimination is in contravention both of legislation and the administrative regulations of these public agency units. Another example of the failure of due process is that decisions relating to social support payments depend in large measure on the particular official who deals with the case (Hydén et al. 1995).

A comprehensive evaluation of the current state of the rule of law would have to rely on a more complete and recurrent examination of the courts and administrative bodies. It is a major shortcoming that the judicial system and the administrative authorities have no accurate methods to make it possible to follow systematically any changes in the application of due process.

Separation of Powers

The aspect of Swedish constitutional government which was subject to most criticism was the separation of powers. The fundamental principle here is that potential abuses of power can be neutralised by the fact that the powers of the state are both separated and made subject to regulation. Two problems are particularly prominent in relation to the separation of powers in Sweden: the power of scrutiny and local self-government.

The scandals and affairs of recent years are a sign of considerable flaws in relation to the power of scrutiny. Improprieties are allowed to pass unpunished or revealed too late. The auditors appointed by the municipalities have not worked as they should. Muck-raking journalists have been forced to carry out the responsibilities of politicians and officials. The mass media are no replacement for the rule of law, however.

In a constitutional state, it is the independent status of the courts which constitutes the ultimate guarantee for effective judicial scrutiny. The Swedish courts appear to be relatively weak in comparison with many other democracies. The lack of adequate autonomy of the judicial system is particular important in a period of Europeanisation and internationalisation. Swedish judicial traditions are facing challenges from other legal systems. Currently we lack an informed constitutional debate about the relationship between the law and politics in a modern democracy.

The idea of local self-government raises the question of the separation of powers between the state and the municipalities. The relationship between central and local government was long considered to be a practical matter of the distribution of labour within the public sector. However, the principle of local self-government requires a far clearer demarcation between the

rights and duties of the state and those of the municipalities.

The state has often tried to meet the demands of voters by passing legislation with ambitious aims. The task of enacting these laws has then been passed to the municipalities without their being given the necessary resources. After appeals by residents of the municipalities, the verdict of the courts has been that the municipalities have failed to fulfil their obligations. The criticism of the municipalities against this judicial control is ultimately a criticism of the content of the legislation. If the state places impossible burdens on the municipalities, what is threatened is confidence in the laws of the state and as a result in the whole judicial system and the idea of constitutional government. The task facing the legislator is thus to ensure that there is a realistic measure of agreement between the duties and resources of the municipalities.

The state justifies its intervention in the affairs of the municipalities with reference to the rights of the individual. The municipalities cannot simply reject these claims by referring to the principle of local self-government. It is only the municipalities themselves that can show that the fully justified requirements of individual rights and the rule of law can be satisfied within the framework of local government.

The municipalities are running an intensive media campaign against the power of the state and the courts. They have, however, remained considerably more subdued in relation to forward-looking and constructive suggestions about how the municipalities could take over a larger part of the responsibility for guaranteeing the fundamental values of constitutional government. The relative importance of the state can be reduced in financial and personal terms through the process of decentralisation. It is, however, far from clear to what extent constitutional government can be decentralised. The constitutional state has to be complemented by powerful constitutional local government.

Effective Government

It is not self-evident that strong government understood as the effective implementation of political decision-making should be considered part of democracy. In historical terms it is mainly anti-democratic thinkers who are linked to such notions as the cult of action and the demand for strong leaders. However, the experience of Europe in the inter-war years shows that democracy also has to take the need for effective government seriously. Weak governments and an inability to solve the social problems of the population have led to the fall of many a democratic system.

When, in consequence, strong government is made part of our ideal democracy, it is on the obvious condition that the need for effective action may not be met at the cost of popular government and constitutional rule. The effectiveness of democracy is identical with the capacity of the public to realise common goals through collective action under democratic forms of regulation.[4] Effective government requires access to shared resources, decision-making power and control over the implementation of legislative and administrative decisions.

Resource Control

A precondition for an independent decision-making capacity is being in control over an adequate supply of available resources. Resources come in many forms, but for the purposes of evaluating the current state of Swedish politics it is beyond dispute that economic resources are of greatest significance.

Last year's assessment of the economic resources of the political system was as negative as was possible. The level of the national debt meant that Sweden found herself very far from the ideal. The trend was also very clearly negative. The growing national debt served to decrease the scope of government action.

Since these conclusions were presented in the Democratic Audit of Sweden 1995, there have been signs that might lead to a

[4] The individual has to have power over the collective and the collective has to have the power to act. Cf. Hernes & Martinussen 1908; Coleman 1986.

revision in a positive direction. Even though the upturn in the international balance of trade has slowed slightly, the Swedish economy is continuing to develop in a favourable direction in several respects. Parliament has also passed decisions aimed at reducing the balance of payments deficit and slowing the rate of increase in the national debt.

The improvement of the national economic picture lies, however, still in the realm of prognosis rather than reflecting an actual state of affairs. Prudence would therefore require us to put a question mark beside any statement that the resource basis of the political system may have significantly improved.

Decision-Making Capability

For a democracy to work effectively what is required is that politicians make lasting decisions. The Democratic Audit found that the capacity to make decisions in Sweden was relatively positive by comparison with the ideal. In contrast the trend over time was clearly negative. The decision-making power of parliament had decreased. This situation was particularly serious as difficult decisions had to be made. The parties were finding it increasingly difficult to reach agreement across the ideological divides. The ability to reach compromises had diminished.

Sweden is still governed by a minority government and should as a result only be able to receive a poor rating for the effectiveness of its decision-making. Minority governments need, however, not be weak (Strom 1990; Bergman 1995). In reality, decision-making power is determined by the opportunities the government enjoys to conduct a long-term and durable policy with the aid of other parties. During 1995 and 1996 the Social Democrats and the Centre Party have been collaborating on economic policy. Even though it is impossible to predict whether this collaboration will last throughout the electoral term, it remains a fact that the effectiveness of parliamentary decision-making power in Sweden has increased.

The weak budgetary process has in all probability contributed to the worsening of Sweden's financial crisis. Recently, however, a major constitutional change has come into effect. With effect

from 1997 the budgetary year coincides with the calendar year. Simultaneously the budgetary procedure has been transformed. Henceforth parliament makes decisions relating to the budget in two stages. In an introductory framework decision the Riksdag takes a vote on the Government's budget proposals as a whole. Only afterwards does parliament attend to the details. The aim is to strengthen political control of the state's finances. Even though it is too early to assess the impact of this change, the transformation of the budgetary year and the tightening of the budgetary procedure are aimed at improving the decision-making capacity of the political system.

Outcome Control

The effectiveness of democracy is ultimately determined by the implementation of the decisions that are made by parliament. Sweden was once praised for her competent, effective and uncorrupted administrative system (Heckscher 1952). The revelation of improprieties in a number of authorities may indicate a change here although this is hardly where Sweden's weak points are to be found. Although there are no detailed studies, the main impression is that the prevalence of corruption and bribery is a considerably greater problem in many other countries. An increasing number of irregularities have, however, been brought to public attention.

Sweden's problem with flaws in the system of implementation has to do with the large and complex administrative apparatus of the state which cannot be easily monitored. Management by objectives and framework laws appear not to have created any major problems for constitutional government. They have, however, caused problems in terms of governability (Sterzel 1992; Esping 1994). A number of political reforms have led to negative side-effects and unintended consequences. Confidence in the welfare state is undermined when social rights are misused. Politicians have failed to follow up adequately how the reforms they have passed work in practice. It is ultimately the Riksdag which must answer for the existence of a working system of warning signals – in the form of assessment and auditing – for discovering

Table 1.2 Swedish Democracy: Audit Results

	Score for 1995	Score for 1996	Comments
Popular Government			
Control of the Agenda	–	–	Continued bureaucratic control over the EU agenda.
Enlightened Understanding: the Public Sphere	–	– –	Superficial journalism, lack of dialogue. Dearth of political visions for Europe.
Effective Participation: Election Campaigns	+	0	The voters and the parties did not understand each other in the European elections. The parties and the media failed to explain what the elections were about.
Effective Participation: Voluntary Associations	+	+	Participation and involvement in new issues, despite the stagnation of the social movements.
Effective Participation: Local Self-Government	0	0	Low number of individual citizens elected to office, but experimentation with new forms of citizen empowerment. Local government scandals at municipal level.
Decision-Making Equality	+	+	More women, but women, young people and minorities still underrepresented.
Toleration	–	–	Widespread intolerance, trends uncertain.
Constitutional Government			
Rights and Freedoms	+	+	Acceptable levels of protection for the rights of the individual
Rule of Law	+	+	Little interest in systematic evaluations.
Separation of Powers	–	–	Power of supervision remains poor. Local self-government insufficiently precisely defined.
Effective Government			
Resource Control	– –	– –	State finances remain in crisis. Prognosis remains unclear as to the outcome of budgetary solutions
Decision-Making Capability	0	+	Improved capacity to reach compromise. Budgetary constraints.
Outcome Control	+	+	Relative lack of corruption continues as does the existence of competent administrative authorities.

and prosecuting flaws in the execution of public decisions.

A review of the thirteen indicators can be summarised in an overall picture of the current state of Swedish democracy (table 1.2). Two plus signs mean that current conditions lie as close to the norm for democracy as one can plausibly demand. A single plus sign indicates that the reality is fairly close to what is desirable.

Zero represents an acceptable level. A minus sign indicates a more significant departure from the norm and two minus signs indicate that Swedish government performance departs substantially from the democratic norm.[5]

In six instances the assessment is a positive one, in two cases it is acceptable and in five the rating is a negative one. The particularly weak points are the inability of the mass media society to meet the requirement for enlightened understanding and the inadequate control of economic resources on the part of politicians.

The trend during the last twelve months remains unchanged in ten instances. In two areas the trend is a negative one. Both of these relate to popular government: the situation has deteriorated in relation to the public sphere and electoral campaigns. In a single instance the trend has gone in a positive direction. Decision-making capability has improved.

No dramatic changes can be expected during a period as short as a single year. It is nevertheless worth noting that only one instance of improvement could be reported. Two changes have gone in a negative direction. Swedish democracy still suffers from some notable flaws.

[5] When the concept of democracy is split up into a number of different components, the problem that remains is how to set a value on the different parts so as to create a measurement of the whole. Should all the indicators be assessed equally? Is addition the only conceivable mathematical operation? Our response is that there is no obvious answer to this problem. The parts can be assigned different weightings in accordance with different models. In 1995 we chose the easiest way, a simple additive summary. The data is presented in such an exhaustive manner, however, that the reader can experiment with alternative models.

Democracy's Leadership Problem

A problem that appears to surface in several contexts revolves around the issue of democratic leadership. The events of the past year have indicated the need for a more profound debate about what it means to be a leader in a democracy. What is democratic leadership and how does it work in contemporary Sweden? How should a popularly elected politician contribute to the formation of opinion by both listening and leading? What significance does the inadequate level of representativeness of the leadership cadre have? What obligations are entailed in election to office? How can active leadership contribute to increasing respect and toleration for dissenting minorities? How can a democratic leader satisfy the requirements for effective government?

There are many issues that pertain to the demands made on leaders in democracy. The lack of clarity is not unique to Sweden in 1996. On the contrary there are major flaws and lacunae in the theoretical debate in the social sciences as well. While much has been thought and written about leadership in general, and on the subject of political leadership as well, there are rather fewer useful analyses of what democratic leadership means in theory and practice.

The concept of leadership is one that is as popular in the social sciences as it is a matter of dispute. No one can surely overlook the shelf-kilometres of leadership literature. The concepts of leader and leadership are most frequently linked to such phenomena as power, organisation, administration, authority and control.

The discussion can be narrowed down to some extent if it is limited to the concept of political leadership.[6] In terms of the most general formulations political leadership is usually taken to

[6] This literature is also overwhelming in scale and difficult to survey. Much has been thought and written about charismatic leadership, heroic leadership, the leadership of opinion, personal leadership, collective leadership and leadership in crises, negotiations, diplomacy, political parties and parliament. Political leaders have been analysed as holders of office, rational decision-makers and as psychological personality types (Edinger 1990). A particular genre of literature deals with the madness and idiocy of political leaders (Lasswell 1960, Robins 1977).

refer to the ability of individuals to exercise power over a group of people and to be able to make decisions with authoritative effect on society. There is no reason to exclude from the outset any particular aspect of political leadership. Being a political leader means having the power to manage a government organisation; from a historical perspective this would include emperors, kings, princes and others who have come to power by other ways than through free elections and as elected representatives. In modern democracy it is plausible to allow the concept of political leader to include those elected to office in other organisations than the purely governmental. In consequence the major organisations which are run by leaders with a democratic mandate from their members are also included.

A major part of the debate about political leaders draws no distinction between popularly elected leaders and the kind of political leaders whose power is based on a non-democratic foundation. This distinction is, however, of crucial importance for the rest of this presentation. The aim of our discussion is to establish in detail what distinguishes leaders and leadership in a democracy.

Democracy and leadership have frequently been seen as mutual opposites. If democracy is conceived of as an ideal in which power at any given moment is exactly equally distributed, any notion of representative government and leadership must be excluded. The opponents of democracy have also based their arguments on this opposition between democracy and leadership. If every society required powerful elites, the notion of democracy was not only harmful but simply impossible. Elitism was put forward as an alternative to democracy (Struve 1973).

A reflection of this long since fallow debate can be discerned in the current discussion of democracy. A commonly occurring division distinguishes between two opposed doctrines of democracy: elite democracy and participatory democracy. Both of these notions can be criticised, the former because it underestimates the importance of the public and the latter because it underestimates the significance of the leaders.

Elite democracy emphasises the capacity of leaders to take the initiative as well as stressing their effectiveness. The proponents of elite democracy usually start from the position that the people

lack sufficient information to make political decisions. In their view the basic requirement of democracy is considered to have been satisfied if the people have the opportunity to choose between competing elites.

Participatory democracy is based on the idea of every member of the public participating in the making of political decisions themselves. The power of the people lies in the right of co-determination and of direct participation. In their more extreme forms, participatory democrats oppose every form of representation and delegation.

Our own ideal of democracy forms an alternative to these extreme doctrines which for all too long have been able to freeze the debate into a sterile set of polarities.[7] Elite democrats diminish the responsibility of the public in politics. Participatory democrats oppose the idea of representation, the separation of powers and public accountability.

The idea of popular, constitutional and effective government questions the assumption that the relation between the elite and the people should be a zero sum game. It is not the case that powerful leaders have to mean weak citizens and vice versa. On the contrary democracy is a form of polity which at best can combine powerful leaders and a powerful people. Precisely because public power in a popular and constitutional government is subject to restriction and limitation, those elected to office can exercise effective leadership by virtue of their popular mandate.

Democracy is a theory concerning the arbitrary concentration of power. The prerequisites for democratic leadership are a clearly defined division of responsibility and effective methods for exercising public accountability. Any evaluation of the ways in which democratic leadership works, has as a result to start with the general requirements to be satisfied by a democratic polity: popular, constitutional and effective government.

In the following chapters this ideal of democracy is contrasted with the reality of today. Chapter 2 deals with the constitutional conditions. The issue here is which particular requirements

[7] Other political scientists such as Pennock 1979, Scharpf 1972 and Lewin 1970 have also emphasised the unfruitful nature of a polarisation between elite democrats and participatory democrats.

should be made of political leaders in a parliamentary system with proportional representation. Chapter 3 looks at politicians as a group. Here the perspective is broadened by comparing political leaders with other sections of the power elite. The issue is whether there are aspects of the power structure which make it either easier or more difficult to exercise democratic leadership. Chapter 4 considers the ways in which political leadership is practised in the actual processes of decision-making. The spotlight is focused on the interplay between politicians and other political actors. The broader question dealt with is how the requirements of democracy can be maintained in a strongly specialised and sectorised process of decision-making. Chapter 5 concentrates on the individual politician. Names of individual politicians will not be mentioned; we have chosen not to use the biographical model in favour of an examination of the characteristics that most politicians have in common. Even if it were possible to award marks to the failures (and successes) of individual politicians, there are wider problems which cannot be solved solely by the replacement of individuals. This chapter discusses the duties of elected politicians, their responsibilities, competence and working conditions. Finally we summarise the results in chapter 6 which also formulates a few general guidelines for a positive democratic leadership.

2 Constitution and Leadership

Defensive arguments are often used to justify representative democracies. Typically a distinction is drawn between the direct and representative forms of democracy and this conveys the impression that representative democracy is brought about by practical necessity as a substitute for "authentic", direct democracy. The spontaneous, direct expression of the people's opinions is seen as superior to the representative, implicitly indirect, road via leaders and political institutions. Accordingly the representative process can only produce a pale, distorted image of the true will of the people.

The idea of direct democracy is, however, founded on an illusion about the nature of a leaderless democracy. It assumes that the will of the people already exists and is simply waiting to be expressed. What is then ignored is the fact that every reading of popular opinion depends on the method used. Democracy is a process of solving problems, in which the answer is largely dependent on the question. The referendum is a practical form of direct democracy. It also provides an excellent example, as it shows that popular opinion in no way arises automatically or spontaneously, but depends on someone formulating a question in the first place, and then deciding on what alternative forms the answers may take. Even a mass meeting is a power process shaped by those who take the floor, formulate proposals and are persuasive speakers.

What makes institutions differ from each other is therefore not whether they are directly democratic or representative democracies. All democratic institutions are, in fact, representative insofar as there exists within them a minority who, in terms of initiative, articulateness and interpretation, have greater power than the majority. However, the differentiating factor between one institution and another is the way in which the minority

relates to the majority. The decisive element in the relationship between the leadership and the members is accountability. What is meant by accountability here are the rules which lay down the leadership's powers and determine the real opportunities for control. The term "representative democracy" is in its own way less accurate than the notion of "responsible government".

At the heart of representative democracy is the freedom to call those in power to account. Democracy is a way of ensuring peaceful changes of power through debate and the free formation of public opinion. In contrast to other forms of government, democracy is made up of permanent institutions which make it possible for the members to change rulers.

The Rules of Representative Democracies

The basic principles for the political government of nations are normally formulated in a constitutional document. In Sweden this is enshrined in the Instrument of Government, the preamble to which states:

All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people.
Swedish democracy is founded on the free formation of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. It shall be realised through a representative and parliamentary polity and through local self-government.
Public power is exercised under the law.

Power is considered to derive from the people. By voting for political parties the people elect freely and fairly a parliament which in turn selects a government; this is what parliamentary democracy means. It is clear that the writers of the Swedish constitution wanted to emphasise the principle of the sovereignty of the people. Our constitution celebrates the ideal of popular government. The Swedish model of democracy is firmly rooted in Rousseau's political philosophy and the heritage of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, at the end of this paragraph we also find an addition which is typical of modern forms of democratic govern-

ment. Even supreme authority must be bound by law. The notion of the sovereignty of the people has to co-exist with the ideals of the state founded on constitutional government.

An enlightening comparison may be made through a brief reminder of the way democracy is regulated in the United States of America. This constitution contains the same components as the Swedish constitution. It sets out a means for arriving at a functional political majority, while at the same time emphasising the importance of political freedoms and various forms of protection for minorities. Besides these similarities there are also some striking differences. Public power is shared among three different organs of the state—the Congress, the President and the Supreme Court—which serves to provide a system of mutual checks and balances. The most important tenet is not, as in Sweden, that power derives from the people, but that power must be controlled and the people offered protection from the abuse of power.

It is impossible to avoid the observation that political life in the USA revolves around personalities rather than political parties to a much greater extent than in Sweden. Generally speaking American politics is characterised by its very weak party structure, owing partly to the electoral system used. A simplified way of expressing this is that Americans vote for a particular individual, whereas Swedes, in the main, cast their votes for a particular party.

The differences outlined between Swedish and American democracy form two of the most fundamental issues in comparative constitutional studies (Sartori 1994). In order to distinguish more clearly the particular characteristics of Swedish democracy it is necessary to undertake a closer examination of the forms of government which appear as the chief variations in the literature on the subject. Parliamentary government is contrasted with the presidential system as two alternative methods of organising the different branches of government. Majority elections are contrasted with proportional elections as distinct methods of representing the will of the people and influencing the direction of government.

Parliamentary or Presidential Systems

Speaking in general terms reference is often made to the power of the state and to decisions taken by the state. Some reflection may be necessary to understand what the word "state" actually refers to, but under normal circumstances it is clear from the context whether we are talking about parliament, government, some form of administrative authority or a court of law. The division of authority and responsibility among these various organs of power is a fundamental feature of all democratic systems. In line with the notion which can be traced back to the French 18th century philosopher Montesquieu, we differentiate between *legislative* (parliament), *executive* (government and executive agencies) and *judicial* powers. In the case of Sweden and Finland, administrative agencies exist in addition which enjoy an independent position in relation to the government.

The most interesting cleavage in terms of the separation of powers among the democracies of the world is the method each uses to regulate the relationship between the legislative and executive powers.[1] Sweden is an example of one of the principal variations, *parliamentary government,* in which the appointment of the government and its relative strengths is dependent on the political composition of parliament. The parliamentary system was not formally introduced until the constitutional revisions of 1974. According to the former Instrument of Government which dated from 1809 power was shared between the monarch and parliament. It was the duty of the monarch to rule the country and the government were really only a collection of advisers. In reality the doctrine of parliamentary government has held sway since the summer of 1917 when the then king, Gustav V, was forced to accept the fact that the electoral successes of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties would have to be reflected in the composition of the government. The practise that was then established under the influence of revolutionary trends throughout Europe was to have the force of an earthquake beneath the power base of

[1] Unless otherwise stated this presentation is based on Lijphart 1992 and Sartori 1994.

the royal family and, as such, played a key role in the triumph of democracy in Sweden.

The parliamentary system can also be implemented in non-democratic states. All it implies is that the government must enjoy the support of parliament. This principle had already triumphed in Britain in the 18th century and had had some success in Sweden during the Age of Liberty, i.e. long before the composition of the British Parliament and the Swedish Riksdag was determined by democratic elections. When the parliamentary system is used in a democracy it means that parliamentary elections are ultimately also elections to determine who has the power to govern. Elections provide the people with the opportunity for exercising public accountability for the previous term of office, and also offer the possibility of influencing the direction of politics for the coming period.

There are a number of variations within the overall framework of the parliamentary system (Bergman 1995). In the case of Sweden both the formation of a government and votes of no confidence take place according to a *negative* principle. Parliament appoints prime ministers (and governments) who are not opposed by a majority of MPs. The government (or individual ministers) can stay in office for as long as they are tolerated by a parliamentary majority. Support for the government can be based both on positive votes and on abstentions. Experience has shown that this method promotes the formation of weak governments. The opposite principle, *positive parliamentarism,* requires the government to have the active support of the majority of MPs. In order to strengthen the position of the government, rules to ensure constructive votes of no confidence may be applied, as is the case in Germany. There must be a positive alternative in order to vote a government out of office, i.e. an alternative government which is capable of gaining the active support of a majority of MPs.

In recent years the discussion in Sweden has focused on the rules for the way parliament deals with the budgetary process. A new decision-making method has been introduced. The Riksdag first takes a decision on the framework of the government's budget. When the various provisions are subsequently debated in the parliamentary committees, the Riksdag is bound by its earlier

decision. The purpose is to counteract any tendency towards deficit budgeting. The underlying principle is that unless restrictions are imposed there will always be a tendency to propose expenditure for which no provision has been made. It is too early as yet to evaluate the long-term consequences of this new decision-making method, but the procedure should help to stabilise the parliamentary base of the government.

Although the internal decision-making rules of the Riksdag are important, the nature of the relationship between government and parliament is primarily determined by the number of votes the government can command in parliament. This is in turn determined by the way in which the people have voted and how the voting system converts votes into parliamentary seats. Minority governments may, in a given situation, act as forcefully as one with a majority (Strom 1990). For many years the predecessors of the Left Party served as a loyal and trustworthy support party for various Social Democrat governments. This detail does not change the main thesis: the government will inevitably enjoy a strong position if it commands a parliamentary majority, while the power of parliament will increase if the government is a minority administration. The period of minority parliamentarism in 1920s Sweden was characterised by a great deal of activity in the Riksdag and its committees. At times, the Liberal leader, C.G. Ekman, held the balance of power, but as a rule both he and the other heads of government of the period had to rely on vacillating majorities, i.e. on agreements with the other parties to create temporary decision-making coalitions. Governments were then consistently very weak and the period is sometimes referred to as one of the decline of governmental power. The Riksdag has, however, also been described as a transport company with nowhere to go when governments have had the support of stable majorities.

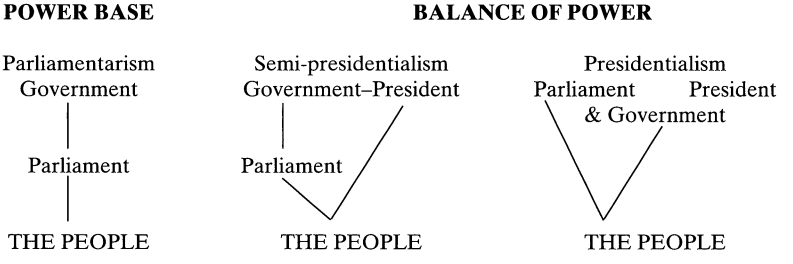
The opposite of the parliamentary system, *the presidential system*, is really quite unusual. It has been applied in the United States of America for a long time, and also in some countries of Latin America, when under democratic rule. The president is head of government, elected directly by the people. The president and congress each have their own independent power base. The

result is a system in which a balance is struck between the powers of these two branches of the state.

Seen in this light a large number of republics cannot be considered as examples of the presidential system. Germany, for example, has a president as head of state, but this says as little about the political structure as the fact that Sweden formally remains a monarchy. The German president is appointed by the *Bundestag* and representatives of the *Länder* in order to carry out a number of symbolic and ceremonial duties. Political power is located in the government and the parliament, whose mutual relationship is regulated in accordance with the principles of parliamentary government, precisely as it is in Sweden.

There exists an intermediate type, which is known as *semi-presidentialism* (figure 2.1). As the term indicates, this is a modified form of the presidential system.[2] The cases in point are Finland, France, and in recent years Russia, countries with popularly elected presidents with strong powers, who are not heads of government.

Figure 2.1 Three Forms of Polity



[2] The term and its interpretation—which were coined by Duverger (1980) to clarify the tenor of the constitution of the French Fifth Republic—have been called into question. According to an alternative interpretation, it is more reasonable to differentiate between two forms of parliamentarism, one purely monistic and the other dualistic (Le Divellec 1996).

According to the political science literature the choice between these various models of government is crucial to the structure of democracy in a nation. Both parliamentarism and presidentialism have fervent supporters. For many years the major bone of contention has been the capacity of the various models to contribute to the *stability of governments* (Shugart & Carey 1992; Linz & Valenzuela 1994). The research position is, however, far from clear. The problem is that the empirical evidence provides a great deal of latitude for speculative conclusions. Pure presidentialism is, on the one hand, represented by an extremely stable country, the United States of America, and on the other by countries in very unstable Latin America. Even the large number of parliamentary democracies encompass a wide range of differences. The variations are wider within each group than between them.

If instead we were to examine the democratic *quality* of the various models it is easier to make precise pronouncements. Parliamentarism and presidentialism alike may serve as superstructures of working methods of government by the people, although accountability and the means whereby the people control those in power will obviously be embodied in different ways. The essential difference would appear to be that it is easier within the parliamentary system to satisfy the requirement for a proper decision-making capacity and hence effective government, whereas the presidential system virtually by definition provides better opportunities for the control of power. This conclusion is based on the observation that the decision-making process is normally simpler in a purely parliamentary system than in a structure where the powers are balanced, and where one of the organs of power may even be free on occasion to veto another. It can be demonstrated scientifically that various forms of constitutional checks and balances tend to stabilise coalition patterns in legislative assemblies (Shepsle & Weingast 1981; Hammond & Miller 1987). All other things being equal, this form of *political stability* is naturally advantageous in terms of the collective ability to act effectively.

As soon as these differences are mentioned, it should also be pointed out that in practice there are hardly ever any opportunities to choose between these models. It is only in very rare cir-

cumstances, e.g. war or revolutions, that a people will avail itself of an opportunity to change the model of its polity. In the short term most democracies tend to be tied down by their own constitutional traditions. In constitutional terms, and particularly from a Swedish perspective, it is interesting that the characteristics of the presidential system may also be found in other, less alien constitutional arrangements. There are three constitutional questions which are relevant in this context.

First, it may be noted that our constitution actually contained a certain measure of checks and balances as recently as only a couple of decades ago. When the bicameral structure was abolished in the partial constitutional reform which came into effect after the 1970 parliamentary elections, an element of resistance to change in our political structure was removed. This element was capable of the precise effect of counter-acting the instability of the political decision-making processes. That Sweden gradually would move towards a model of government in which parliamentary decisions at least in marginal terms may be complemented and balanced by the active institution of referendums appears to be pure speculation. Furthermore, it is far from certain that this balancing mechanism would be an equivalent substitute for the old structure. The bicameral structure was intended to produce a certain measure of resistance to change and hence stability in political decision-making. Referendums can act as a corrective to parliamentary majorities, but it is not always true that they promote stability.

From a Swedish political perspective there are other systems of checks and balances or mechanisms for the separation of powers that should be emphasised. The distinguishing feature of the Swedish model, with its very distinct dividing-lines between the government departments (ministries) and the central administrative agencies, makes the system much less clear-cut than the British parliamentary model. If we wish to safeguard the checks and balances of our political structure, we have to protect the independence of our administrative authorities. This also applies to the structure of local government, which has served in practice the role of a functional division of labour between central and local authorities. The principal merit of the post-war municipal amal-

gamations was to promote effective political action. However, the political developments of the most recent decades may be interpreted as a counteraction, which has meant to some extent that what is gingerly taking shape in Sweden is a new form of the separation of powers between central and local government.

Elections by Majority Voting or Proportional Representation

Democracy finally triumphed in Sweden in the period 1918–1920, when the Riksdag passed a number of laws to guarantee men and women universal and equal suffrage. Most importantly women were recognised as fully-fledged citizens, but men were also affected by the reforms. Universal and equal suffrage had been introduced for men in elections to the second chamber, the lower house of the Riksdag, by 1909, but it was only with the advent ten years later of further suffrage reforms that the graded franchise was abolished in elections to the local authorities.

Voting rules vary a great deal among different democratic countries (LeDuc, Niemi & Norris 1996). The general principles of democracy, however, display a measure of unanimity on one matter: all adult citizens shall have the right to vote and no single vote shall count for more than any other. This embodies in concrete form the democratic ideal of political equality.

Although there is a good deal of clarity about the nature of the suffrage in democracies, this is not the case when it comes to the electoral system employed, i.e. the technique used to transfer the votes of the population into seats in representative assemblies. There are two main systems—majority, or first-past-the-post, elections and proportional representation (Sartori 1994). Sweden employed the majority system until the 1909 electoral reforms, when the Conservatives gave in to the demands of the parties of the left for greater democracy in exchange for an electoral system that would guarantee the various parties a greater measure of proportional representation (Lewin 1992, chapter 3). This particular constitutional reform illustrates clearly the political importance of the constitutional rules. Changing the voting sys-

tem was important in the short term for the Conservatives' continued political influence, but in the long-term the reform contributed to the split among the non-Socialist parties and hence developed into one of the decisive factors in shaping the political landscape of 20th century Sweden. The new electoral system meant that even the Conservatives were provided with a share of the power in modern, democratic Sweden. History is, however, full of ironic events; the price the non-Socialist parties have had to pay for the tactical dexterity of the then leader of the Conservatives, Arvid Lindman, is an electoral system that has secured quasi-permanent Social Democratic control of power.

The design of the electoral system in modern Swedish constitutional politics has chiefly been reduced to a matter for electoral specialists (von Sydow 1989). The only problem which appears to be of some interest to the parties is the element which permits votes to be cast for an individual candidate(SOU 1977:94; SOU 1987:6; SOU 1993:21). However, the structure of the electoral system is currently a most controversial matter in countries with majority voting. In Great Britain the debate is kept alive by the badly squeezed Liberal Party, which consistently advocates the proportional system as a means of improving the democratic quality of political life. It would appear impossible to change the constitution while the two major parties, the Tories and Labour, agree on the need to maintain a system which favours them both. In the United States of America any attempt even to discuss the matter would appear to be totally out of the question. The principle of winner takes all is, of course, an important part of the American system, but the fact is that the alternative method of proportional representation plays a key role in the federal identity of that country. Ever since the federation was formed, the proportional method has been considered fundamental in apportioning the seats in the House of Representatives among the various states (Balinski & Young 1982). Despite this fact Lani Guinier, the black woman law professor, proposed by Clinton for a federal appointment, was the victim of a virtually MacCarthyite backlash when she launched the idea that American minorities might be empowered in political life with the aid of an electoral system similar to that which is applied in a majority of European countries (Guinier 1994).

As is the case with parliamentary government, *the majority electoral system* is strongly associated with British constitutional politics. It is primarily, but not exclusively, applied in Commonwealth countries and in former British colonies. The basic model is simple. The country is divided into constituencies, each of which elects its own representative to parliament. At elections, the candidate who obtains the highest number of votes in the constituency is elected. This first-past-the-post method may be modified in two ways. In some countries, France being the prime example, it is mandatory to obtain a true majority in order to be elected; voting takes place, if necessary, in two ballots, in which only the two candidates with the highest number of votes from the first ballot remain as alternatives in the second. The other possible modification is that each constituency elects more than one representative (with the largest party winning all the seats). This model is used in the American presidential elections, where the winner in one state obtains all the electoral college votes of that state.

The most remarkable quality of the majority electoral system is that differences in the electorate tend to be reinforced when votes cast are transferred into parliamentary seats. Marginal changes in the electorate may have revolutionary effects in the relative strength of the parties in parliament. Both these phenomena embody the fundamental aims of the majority electoral system: to create the basis for majority governments. A less appealing quality is the fact that the allocation of votes of the parties between constituencies can produce different majorities in the electorate and in parliament. This occurs from time to time in British politics when the first choice of the electorate becomes the second largest parliamentary party (e.g. 1951 and February 1974). The American presidential election of 1888 provides another example when the president-elect Benjamin Harrison obtained a majority of the votes of the electoral college despite the support of the electorate for the other candidate, Grover Cleveland.

The basis for the *proportional electoral system* is, as the term indicates, to ensure that the strength of political parties in parliament should accurately reflect the strength of the electorate's

support for each party. Although the size of a parliament will in practice set limits on the degree to which the demand for proportionality may be pushed, proportional electoral systems do as a rule also contain some mechanisms to counteract strict proportionality. Sweden and other countries have set up a minimum threshold against minor parties. Many countries also apply special techniques in apportioning seats which are marginally unfair to minor parties.[3] Dividing a country into constituencies (this occurs everywhere except in the Netherlands and Israel) may, however, favour minor parties with a strong local following; in Sweden, minor parties that do not reach the national threshold must obtain a minimum of 12 per cent of the votes within a single constituency in order to gain representation.

The debate on the effect of various electoral systems on the party structure is of interest, insofar as political science has been able to come up with a distinct and illuminating answer. Majority systems tend to have fewer parties compared to proportional systems. This outcome is not quite as trivial a matter as it might appear, as this applies not only to the representation of parties in parliaments, but also if the allocation of votes among the electorate is taken into account. By way of example, reference can be made to a study of election results during the first half of the 1980s in 48 democracies, in which it is quite clear that the party systems are more concentrated in countries with majority elections when compared to those with proportional systems (Taagepera & Shugart 1989, 82–83).

The explanation for this pattern is clearly that the voters learn to use their votes in a sophisticated way. The French electoral system, where the voter is given to some extent the opportunity first

[3] In Sweden, for example, the modified Saint-Lagüe system is used to allocate the seats within each constituency. The allocation of seats is done step by step on the basis of comparative figures obtained by successively dividing the total, first by 1.4 and thereafter by odd number divisors. This system of adjustment (the first seat is allocated on the basis of the number of votes divided by 1.4, and not the actual number of votes) results in the delayed allocation of the first seat to minor parties, and may even lead to their losing any allocation. The technical sophistication of this method is entirely without effect in terms of the degree of proportionality achieved throughout the nation as a whole, since 39 of Sweden's 349 parliamentary seats are supplementary seats used to correct any deviations from national proportionality.

Table 2.1 Effective Number of Parties in Countries with Different Electoral Systems

In countries with	Electorate	Parliament	N (number of countries)
Majority elections	2.6	1.6	14
Proportional elections	3.8	3.3	34

Comment: The effective number of parties is a figure measuring the degree of concentration according to a formula which takes into consideration the relative size of the parties.

to vote with his "heart" and subsequently, in the second ballot, with his "head", and the peculiar Irish electoral system, which may be said to be based on the same logic although the technique is quite different,[4] may be considered here as the exceptions that prove the rule. In all other cases the principle at work in democracies is that voters should always be aware that votes for certain parties may risk being "wasted", and that this applies all the more in majority electoral systems.

Another effect, which may not be immediately apparent, is that it is easier to improve the social representation of parliaments through proportional electoral systems. The representation of women, for example, is considerably higher in countries that apply proportional methods (LeDuc, Niemi & Norris 1996; *Women in Parliaments 1945–1995*). In consequence the high proportion of women in the parliaments of Sweden and the other Nordic countries is not only explained by the fact that Nordic voters take a more radical view of gender equality. Both electoral systems offer different possibilities for allowing such changes in public opinion to make themselves felt at elections. In both cases it is a matter of admitting more women to "safe" seats, but the chances of being successful vary considerably. In the case of Sweden, the idea that every other name on the ballot paper should be that of a woman has meant that the political parties have nominated one or more women among a group of candidates which

[4] This method, the single transferable vote, was devised in the middle of the 19th century by the Irishman Thomas Hare, among others. The purpose was primarily to produce a technique to provide proportional representation without constituencies; this version was adopted by John Stuart Mill (1861; see also Beitz 1989). The same concept can also be applied within the framework of a majority electoral system (Nurmi 1987; Hermansson 1990).

would otherwise consist of several men. It has not proved necessary to start by ensuring that a woman's name is first on the list. If the system contains a certain amount of incumbents leaving office, it is not even necessary to remove the men who are already in power. In Great Britain this would involve replacing a man as a party's candidate with a woman, which is likely to be a longer and more arduous process.

To what extent, then, does it matter in terms of democracy whether we apply one electoral system or the other? The implementation of the majority electoral system may, according to its foremost proponent, French political scientist Maurice Duverger (1954; 1982), be justified by the fact that it creates the conditions for maximum impact of the will of the people as expressed in the act of voting. In reality the concept contains two linked, but different, components. One side of the coin is that as a rule the reinforcement effect provides the incoming government with a *clear mandate to rule* and that it therefore need not get involved in negotiating with opposition parties in parliament. The will expressed by the majority of the people determines the political direction and not the manoeuvring of party elites in committees. The other side of the coin is that the majority system presents the people with positive opportunities to ensure accountability. As it is clear who rules, it becomes simple for the people to demand accountability at the next elections.

The choice of the electorate hardly ever has the same clear impact when governments are formed within proportional electoral systems. The norm is rather that governments consist of coalitions among several parties, or that the government is forced into making compromises and accommodations with the parliamentary opposition. If the people are to ensure that governments are accountable for their policies, then party elites must provide clear accounts of the types of compromises on which policies are based. One advantage of the proportional system is, however, that several philosophies and interests can be taken into consideration, not only in parliament but also in the government's policies. The type of participation which is arrived at in this system may be summed up as a requirement for opinion representation, which may in turn be regarded as a guarantee of the implementa-

tion of the will of the people (Birgersson & Westerståhl 1989).

The two different types of electoral systems are thus based on two distinct concepts of how best to realise the ideal of government by the people. They correspond to alternative expressions of the concept of equality inherent in democracy (Beitz 1989; Lewin 1996). The two techniques for representation do not, however, say anything about the character of the state founded on constitutional government. It could be claimed that the proportional electoral system accentuates the need for the active exercise of controlling powers, since the checks and balances provided within the framework of the electoral system itself risk being less effective. Similarly the majority electoral system has certain inherent advantages in the power it provides for effective government. Nor can it be said that the proportional method provides politicians with anything for free in this context. In countries like Sweden the parties themselves have to take responsibility for ensuring joint action.

Winner Takes All, or Co-Operation and Balance

The British and Swiss democracies are often depicted as polar opposites (Lijphart 1984). They are frequently used as tools to describe the political structures of other countries. In constitutional terms the two are considered to exemplify the main alternative arrangements.

The Westminster model is based on a combination of parliamentary government and majority elections; it is a coherently designed structure with the aim of providing a clear expression of the will of the majority of the people which then determines government policies. Switzerland, on the other hand, has created a structure of government characterised by a balance of power and co-operation. The parliamentary system is not balanced by strong presidential power, but by the frequent use of referendums. The government, formally appointed but thereafter not controlled by parliament, amounts in practice to a permanent coalition. Co-operation through coalitions and compromises is a fundamental feature of the Swiss form of government.

As with the previous comparisons between Swedish and American democracy, the contrast between British and Swiss democracies is based on two different features: the structuring of state power (parliamentary government or the balance of powers), and the techniques for representation and elections (by majority or proportional systems). If these two divisions are combined, the result is four, rather than two, different democratic models. The United Kingdom and Switzerland may rightly be considered as two extreme cases at opposite ends of the spectrum. Both Sweden and the United States of America may to some extent also be considered to represent two different intermediate structures. However, as is made clear in the figure below, it is not just a matter of two composite structures, but of two distinctly separate models, with opposing characteristics.

Figure 2.2 Four Different Models of Democracies

		FORM OF GOVERNMENT	
		Concentration of power	*Balance of power*
REPRESENTATION	*Majority system*	United Kingdom	USA
	Proportional system	Sweden	Switzerland

None of these four models can in themselves claim to be more democratic than any other. Each works according to its own specific logic and has different advantages and disadvantages in terms of democracy. The Swedish model has two distinct characteristics in this context. Our modern political history bears witness to the fact that the Swedish constitution offers positive opportunities for involving different social groups and interests in political decision-making. It is no coincidence that the number of women in parliament is consistently higher in countries with proportional representation. Similarly it is clear that Sweden has a regulatory apparatus that makes relatively high demands on both the public and its leaders.

One of the major points in the 1995 report of the Democratic Audit of Sweden was that citizens in a democracy are constantly having to make judgements between various values and ideals. A well-functioning democracy is capable of managing this balancing act of satisfying many differing values, but there is no scientific formula which may once and for all indicate how the best judgements are to be made. In general terms we can agree on some basic norms. Representative democracy cannot be reduced to the simple fact of politicians being chosen through elections. A minimal requirement must always be that the political leadership can be held accountable to the public in a meaningful way (Lively 1975, 42–49). In some democracies this is facilitated by the design of the constitution; in Sweden, this responsibility is largely left to the politicians.

The constitutional openness of the Swedish democracy is both a strength and a weakness. The lack of detailed regulatory provisions means that the ultimate responsibility for the future and the vitality of democracy is determined by how well popular government functions. The Swedish people gets the democracy that it deserves at any one time. The problem with this type of structure is that the risk exists that it will rely on a naive and unreflected concept of democratic politics. It is only in a utopia that the people are possessed of an inherent inclination and a spontaneous ability to take responsibility for democracy. The will of the people is always to a certain extent a product of the rules of the political game.

Leadership by Parties or Individuals?

The nature of political leadership is determined by a number of varying circumstances. One set of determining factors relates to the personal qualities and ambitions of individual leaders. It is of greater interest from the viewpoint of political science and of politics in general that political leadership is shaped to a considerable extent by circumstances which are subject to change. In a recent study of political leadership in six democracies—the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the USA, Japan and Italy—it was found that the most significant factor in this context is the constitutional structure (Elgie 1995).

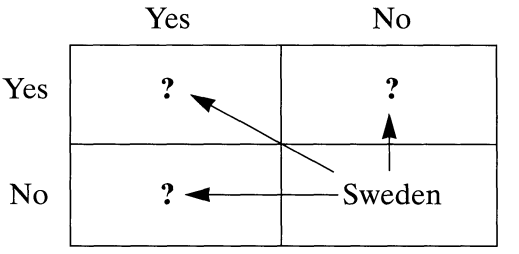
The opportunities for individual leadership are much greater within the presidential system as compared to the parliamentary form of government, since the foremost political leader, the president, has a direct relationship with the voters. Parliamentary democracy is, after all, in practice a form of political government carried out with the help of parties. In order to operate properly it requires the existence of coherent political parties and that different representatives of the same party are able to subordinate themselves to a common party line. This applies in particular to parties in government. Within contemporary parliamentary democracies, however, there is a clear trend towards personalising party politics – a form of presidentialism within the parliamentary system (Peters 1991, 63–64). This trend has been notably reinforced by the efforts of the media. Political parties are increasingly identified by their leaders, rather than by their policies or their philosophy (Gilljam & Holmberg 1995, 195–196).

The very design of the electoral system influences the characteristics of political leadership. In a majority electoral system individual politicians are clearly identified as representatives of their parties. The electoral system is based on a form of personification of politics. One of the most significant consequences is that the voters' choice of party is largely determined by the candidates' personal qualities. The way in which this system operates, as in the United Kingdom for example, fails, however, to provide the electorate with any direct opportunities for making a genuine choice between individuals. The choice of a party is determined by an individual person, but the act of voting does not provide the voters with the opportunity of influencing who should represent the party they have chosen.

In the most common variations on the system of proportional elections, it is the element of voting for parties at parliamentary elections that is emphasised. In formal terms there may exist an element of voting for individuals, since the voters may chose between different candidates from a given party. In practice, it is the party organisations which determine the ranking of the candidates on the ballot paper. The traditional Swedish model may be used as a particularly lucid example. The opportunity to affect the outcome of the election by crossing off the names of individuals

on the ballot paper is an extremely marginal one and the voters' choice of parties is determined only to a minor extent by the personal characteristics of politicians. One or several political parties will be entrusted with the mandate to rule the country and not a few individual strong leaders.

Figure 2.3 Election of Individuals and of Parties Based on the Election of Individual Candidates (cf. Gilljam 1993)



It should now be apparent that in many respects the Swedish model constitutes an extreme case, particularly in terms of the hold exerted by the parties over the choice of individual candidates. The formulation of the party lists has been almost entirely a private matter for the political parties concerned. Even the fact that internal democracy and active membership have been at a low ebb has been deemed irrelevant (see Assarson 1994). In some other countries with proportional representation, such as Finland, there is much greater latitude for the voters to chose between candidates. One of the obvious consequences should be that election campaigns become more exciting since individual candidates have to present a high profile and a greater level of personal commitment.

Proposals to increase the element of voting for individual candidates in Sweden's democratic structure should be considered in this light. The aim of the electoral experiments carried out as part of the 1994 general elections and the design of the 1995 European elections was an attempt to preserve the character of Swedish elections as a choice between parties based mainly on objective

and ideological considerations, while simultaneously providing the electorate with greater opportunities for deciding between various candidates within any one party. The result would be to shift the Swedish political structure horizontally towards the left of figure 2.3 without any change in a vertical direction.

The question must be, however, whether such a sideways movement is at all possible and whether it is even desirable. It appears likely in practice that the greater element of voting for individual candidates must result in increased scope for the personal factor in the choice of party. The risk is that the major change will be a vertical movement (cf. Gilljam 1993; 1996). But even if it were possible to find a structure which provides real opportunities for electing individuals without any side-effects whatsoever on the choice of parties, it is far from certain that this would be the best method of revitalising our parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary democracy is ultimately a form of government that requires cohesion from the political parties. It is the political parties which are in power and the key aspect of voting must therefore be related to the responsibility of the political parties and their continued mandate. There may be good reason to revitalise election campaigns, although the Swedish democratic deficit is primarily to be found elsewhere, but if the political parties are to be strengthened in their pivotal role in the parliamentary democratic structure, general elections must not be turned into popularity contests between individual politicians.

3 The Swedish Power Elite

The emergence of the ideal of constitutional and democratic government in Europe and North America at the time of the Enlightenment implied demands for a radical redistribution of power: from the right of the mighty to the rights of all, from oligarchy to democracy. But the break with the then predominant authoritarian forms of government involved more than a redistribution of this kind. Previously, power had largely been associated with individuals or with personal, usually hereditary, attributes. In lieu of personally based power, constitutional and democratic government introduced a set of abstractions in the form of principles, laws, rules, institutions and public offices. In doing so it lent power a more impersonal and anonymous face. Power no longer rested with someone, but with something.

The Polish-American political scientist, Adam Przeworski, has aptly formulated this difference between democracy and dictatorship. According to Przeworski: democracy is a system of organised uncertainty (1991, 12–13). No single person or group can always expect to have their way. In principle, the rules of democracy give every citizen a chance to win. This, however, does not mean, as is sometimes contended by the opponents of democracy, that the system is chaotic or anarchic. The players of the democratic game are able to gain knowledge about what is possible as well as probable. The difference between authoritarian and democratic government may in fact be expressed in terms of their certain and uncertain elements. In the authoritarian state we know who rules. In constitutional and democratic systems of government we know instead how those in power are elected and the limitations within which they are allowed to rule.

If democracy were only a matter of formal rules there would hardly be any need for investigations of those who at any given time occupy its leading positions. Scarcely, however, had forms of

government based on democratic principles and the rule of law been established in the Western World when confidence in their institutions began to be questioned. Was power not still concentrated in the hands of the few? And did these few not continue to enjoy the same opportunities as before to exercise and cling on to the power they had once made their own? It was in these terms that the notion was formulated that all societies, regardless of their external structures, were doomed to oligarchy.

This thesis was taken furthest by a group of social scientists at the turn of the century known today as the classical elite theoreticians. Among its most famous members were the two Italians Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, the German Robert Michels and the Russian Moisei Ostrogorski. In their work, the theory that democracy was an impossibility was elevated to the same absolute and definitive status as a law of nature.[1]

Few people nowadays take the sweeping conclusions of the classical elite theoreticians at face value. Scepticism towards the answers they provided, however, does not mean that the questions they formulated also deserve to be left to their own deserts. On the contrary, an important challenge to contemporary social science is to provide these questions with more cogently argued answers than previous eras could manage.

Nine Ways of Describing Power Elites

The descriptions by classical elite theoreticians of the power relationships in society were not confined to the elementary assertion that a great deal of power was exercised by a small minority. They also maintained that this minority could not be controlled. Classical elite theory is thus a theory about a *ruling elite.*

In order for the elite to take on this character, it must be ho-

[1] For surveys of the works of the classical elite theoreticians see e.g. Parry 1966, Bottomore 1970 and Albertoni 1986 and 1987. An attempt to formulate an up-to-date and modified elite-theoretical research paradigm can be found in Field & Higley 1980. See Beetham 1977 and Bennett 1978 for a discussion on the relationship between the ideas of the classical elite theoreticians (in particular those of Michels) and Italian fascism.

mogeneous in certain respects. Both in the development of theories on power elites and in empirical research on the subject, attention has come to focus on three particular aspects. The first refers to social background and status. Classical elite theory claims that elites are *exclusive,* i.e. that they have a highly developed capacity to reproduce themselves, to exclude persons with characteristics and experiences which represent the majority of the people, and to ensure for themselves uniquely good material living conditions. The second aspect relates to interaction. The notion in elite theory is that the elite is *cohesive,* that it is bound together by a strong network of informal contacts and personal friendships, and that it largely lacks such links with ordinary people. The third and final aspect concerns values and beliefs. The position of elite theory on this point is that the elite is *concordant,* that it shares an ideology and that this ideology is significantly different from the views and opinions held by the population at large.

Three possible points of departure have thus been outlined for a description of the power elites in a society, or rather six, since the hypothesis of homogeneity in elite theory is in fact a twofold hypothesis. Not only does it claim that the elite is uniform but also that it differs from the rest of the population. Logically, however, these two characteristics need not coincide. It is quite easy to imagine elites that are internally heterogeneous, but nevertheless deviate on average from the population as a whole. The opposite combination is also possible: different elites may be quite homogeneous without deviating from the rest of the population.

Once we allow for variations between different power elites, we also face the question of how the dimensionality of their variations can be described. In the simplest case the differences can be rendered by means of a single yardstick, e.g. a scale from low to high exclusivity. In this case the qualities are overlapping or cumulative. But the pattern may also be characterised by greater complexity, so that the proximity or distance between various elites can no longer be captured with the help of a single dimension.

Nine ways of describing the leaders of society have thus been identified. Power elites may be characterised with respect to social background and status, patterns of interaction and ideology.

Figure 3.1 Nine Ways of Describing Power Elites

	Social background and status	Interaction	Ideology
Representativeness			
Heterogeneity			
Dimensionality			

For each of these characteristics, one may ask how representative and heterogeneous the elites are as well as about the dimensionality of the variations. This gives rise to the matrix shown in figure 3.1. In this chapter our task will be, insofar as it is feasible, to fill the gaps in the matrix with empirical observations regarding the characteristics of the Swedish power elite.

The concepts of power and elites are multifaceted and controversial. It is therefore essential by way of introduction to set out the bases for our description of the Swedish power elite. From the outset it is apparent that Swedish society, in common with other societies, has a power elite in the simple sense that at any given time there is a set of individuals with considerably more influence than the average citizen over decisions of key importance for society. Hence the purpose of our analysis is not to establish the existence of a power elite in this sense but to determine its characteristics.

It is also obvious that the power elite is heterogeneous in at least some respects. First, Sweden is not a one party state. Several parties compete for political power. Second, political power is circumscribed on constitutional and other grounds. Many important decisions are made or influenced by players outside political institutions. When we ask whether the Swedish power elite is characterised by unity or diversity, we do not have in mind the mere existence of this kind of formal division of roles. Rather, our pur-

pose is to assess to what extent and in which respects leaders in various positions differ from one another.

It must be made clear from the beginning that this task can only be begun, never completed. The reasons are both theoretical and practical. There is an immense variety of ways in which to describe the various fields in figure 3.1, even given the limitations mentioned above. The data available as well as the space at our disposal are, however, limited, and a selection must therefore be made.

The empirical data has primarily been culled from the elite survey undertaken by the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden under the title *Svenska ledare* (Swedish Leaders). Some of the results presented in this chapter have previously been published in the main report of the Study of Power and Democracy (SOU 1990:44, 301–357). Other results are based on new analyses and are published here for the first time. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the characteristics of the Swedish power elite relate to the ideal of popular, constitutional and effective government.

The Elite Survey of the Study of Power and Democracy

The survey of the elites by the Study of Power and Democracy was carried out by means of questionnaires sent to leading persons within seven institutionally based spheres: politics, public administration, business, organisations, mass media, science, and culture. In most cases these were further divided into sub-groups (see table 3.1). A threshold was then set for each sub-group. All offices or positions above this level were included. No random sampling was thus undertaken.

The number of positions within each sphere and sub-group were determined on the basis of two objectives. One focuses on analytic possibilities. Although no random sampling was undertaken the idea of statistical error is in some ways applicable. The sample was therefore drawn so as to make the different spheres and sub-groups large enough to be distinguishable in the analysis. The other objective was to make the sampling criteria as un

Table 3.1 The Elite Survey of the Study of Power and Democracy: Sample Composition and Response Rates

	No. of positions	Response rate
Politics	**434**	**70**
Cabinet: Member of the Cabinet/under-secretary of state/politically appointed executive	52	63
Parliament: Important position in parliament	289	71
Party organisations: Leading representative of party organisation	93	73
Public administration	**516**	**68**
Ministries: Head of unit or higher	188	60
Central administration: Director general/deputy director-general or equivalent	103	83
County administration: County governor/deputy county governor	25	80
Judicial system: Leading position within the judicial system	97	66
Defence: Head of major unit or administrative authority	53	81
Church of Sweden: Bishop or dean at cathedral	27	74
Business	**606**	**48**
State-owned business: CEO/board chairman of public utility or large, publicly-owned company	119	56
Consumer co-operatives: Leading representative of consumer cooperative	35	69
Agricultural co-operatives: Leading representative of agricultural cooperative	57	75
Private business: CEO/board chairman of large, privately-owned company	395	36
Organisations	**402**	**66**
Trade unions: Leading representative of trade union or confederation of trade unions	103	73
Business organisations: Leading representative of business organisation or confederation of business organisations	124	41
Federation of Local Authorities/County Councils: Leading representative	27	89
Other organisations: Chair of other important organisation	148	77
Media	**185**	**56**
Daily newspapers: Chief editor/editorial director of large daily	91	57
Broadcasting: CEO/board chairman of radio-/TV-channel	48	58
Other printed media: Chief editor of large periodicals	46	50
Science: Head of university/research inst./research council	**128**	**62**
Culture	**275**	**36**
Cultural institutions: Head of large arts institution/arts publisher	73	59
Cultural personalities: Leading personality within literature/theatre/film/art/music	202	27
Total	**2,524**	**58**

equivocal as possible. A relatively clear hierarchy of positions may be distinguished within each sub-group. However, this hierarchy is rarely continuous. The choice is often between including or excluding all positions on a certain level. The number of positions will therefore to some extent depend on where the cut can practically be placed.

There are of course no absolute guidelines for weighing, at the sampling stage, the relative importance of the various spheres and sub-groups. It is very difficult to determine in advance whether politics should be given more positions than business, or if organisations should be accorded more weight than public administration. The presentation of results, however, provides a solution. In most cases the differences between the spheres are reported, so that everyone may decide for themselves to what extent their numerical weight affects the result for the sample as a whole.

As shown in table 3.2 the sample covers a total of 2,524 positions. This figure, however, does not correspond to the same number of persons, since some individuals held more than one of the positions included in the sample. The number of persons is therefore somewhat lower than the number of positions (2,100).

The study is based on the idea that power in modern societies primarily rests with a number of institutionally-based roles. In line with this idea, it is the positions rather than the individuals that make up the primary units of analysis. Individuals who held more than one top position will therefore weigh more heavily than those who only held one.

The field work was undertaken by Statistics Sweden and extended from June 1989 to February 1990. The major part was carried out during the summer of 1989. The response rate amounts to 58.3 per cent of the positions (59.5 per cent based on the number of individuals). The figures are somewhat lower than would normally be expected in surveys of the ordinary population. Compared to elite surveys in other countries, the response rate falls on an intermediate level. As indicated by table 3.1 there are systematic differences in response rates across spheres and subgroups. In many areas the response rate is good or acceptable, but in some cases the amount of nonresponse is considerable. The

sub-groups with the lowest response rate are private business, business organisations and cultural personalities.

The above description of the study design and execution is limited for reasons of space. A more detailed account can be found in SOU 1990:44, 306–317.

Social Background and Status

The results of international research on power elites are unambiguous in two respects: a) the social characteristics of the elite do not reflect those of the population and b) the deviations point in a predictable direction. There is no doubt whatsoever that this also applies to the Swedish power elite. The interesting question is therefore not whether there are differences between elites and the people, or the general direction of these differences, but how large they are.

Table 3.2 provides an answer to this question in respect of nine social characteristics. In a tenth case, movement background, there are no comparable population statistics. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the Swedish power elite should be of interest in this case as well.

At first glance it would appear to be a relative simple task to measure and compare accurately the differences between the elite and the people. This is, however, not quite the case. The same facts may appear in quite a different light depending on which perspective we apply.

One of the very first figures in the table, i.e. the one describing the elite's ability to reproduce itself, offers an excellent example. That proportion of the power elite in which one parent (in practice nearly always the father) held a position in the power elite amounts to seven per cent. Is this a lot or a little?

In terms of percentage points the deviation from the population data is quite modest. Even if the probability of an average citizen having a parent in the power elite is close to zero the difference still only amounts to seven points. Nor can the vast majority of the population whose parents did not belong to the

Table 3.2 The Social Background and Status of the Power Elite Compared with that of the Population

	Elites (percentage)	Population[a] (percentage)	Difference (percentage points)	Over-representation ratio	Under-representation ratio
Parent in the power elite?					
No	93	99.9	–7		1.07
Yes	7	0.1	+7	70 (ca)	1.07
Father's occupation					
Worker/lower-level employee	19	49	–30		2.6
Farmer	11	17	–6		1.5
Small businessman	9	8	+1	1.1	
Middle-level employee	19	12	+7	1.6	
Executive[b]	42	14	+28	3.0	
Of noble birth?					
No	97.6	99.7	–2		1.02
Yes[c]	2.4	0.3	+2	8 (ca)	
Movement background					
Labour	10	—	—	—	—
Mixed	10	—	—	—	—
None	34	—	—	—	—
"Bourgeois"	46	—	—	—	—
Location during formative years					
Country/village	38	59	–21		1.6
Town/city	62	41	+21	1.5	
Age					
18–43 years	10	47	–37		4.7
44–64 years	82	30	+52	2.7	
65 and over	8	23	–15		2.9
Gender					
Woman	14	51	–37		3.6
Man	86	49	+37	1.8	
Immigrant background[d]					
Immigrant	4	9	–5		2.2
Child of immigrant(s)	3	5	–2		1.7
No immigrant background	93	86	+7	1.1	
Education					
Only compulsory education	4	33	–29		8.2
Further education	26	55	–29		2.1
Academic degree	70	12	+58	5.8	
Household income before tax (SEK)					
Half a million or less	9	99.1	–90		11.0
Half a million to one million	49	0.8	+48	60 (ca)	
One million plus	42	0.1	+42	400 (ca)	

[a] The term population refers to Swedish residents aged 18 and over. Sources of population data: Age, gender, income (Statistisk Årsbok 1991); father's occupation, location during formative years, immigrant background, education (the citizen survey of the Study of Power and Democracy in Sweden); noble birth (House of Lords); parent in the power elite (estimate based on demographic data).

[b] Includes leaders of large companies, as well as some self-employed in liberal professions such as doctors and lawyers with their own practice.

[c] Includes women married into the nobility.

[d] Members of the power elite with permanent residence abroad are not included in the percentage base.

power elite be said to be particularly strongly under-represented. *The under-representation ratio,* i.e. the ratio of the population percentage to the power elite percentage for the under-represented category, stops at 1.07 (calculation: 99.95 / 93). If, however, one looks at the ability of this small minority to reproduce its position, a totally different view is obtained. *The over-representation ratio,* i.e. the ratio of the power-elite percentage to the population percentage for the over-represented category, amounts to approximately 70 (calculation: 7 / 0.1). If the two ratios are multiplied an estimate is obtained of how much greater the chances are to get a position in the power elite if one is born into it than if one is not. The answer is approximately 75 times greater (calculation: 1.07×70).

The Swedish nobility provides a further example of the importance of the choice of perspective. Although its privileges were abolished a long time ago and although it only amounts to a fraction of the total power elite (2.4 per cent) the importance of noble birth is still quite apparent. The likelihood of a person from the nobility reaching a position in the power elite is eight times as high as for a commoner.

These observations indicate that the simple difference expressed in percentage points does not always provide a true image of the degree of over-representation and under-representation. Arguably, children of immigrants are under-represented in the power elite to roughly the same degree as those who have spent their formative years in the country or village; the ratios amount to 1.7 and 1.6. However, the difference in percentage points is some 10 times greater in the latter case than in the former. While this figure is of some significance as well, it primarily reflects the numerical weight of the categories involved rather than the degree to which they are under-represented.

Table 3.2 demonstrates that the social gulf between the elite and the population is often considerable. Children of executives are strongly over-represented in the elite, and children of workers and clerical staff are nearly as strongly under-represented. The elderly and, to an even larger degree, the young are very poorly represented. At the time of the survey as much as 82 per cent of the power elite were aged 44–64 years. The proportion of women

amounted to 14 per cent in the 1989 power elite, i.e. less than one third of their share of the population. Some 70 per cent of the elite hold an academic degree. Only 12 per cent of the population at large has an equivalent level of education. Over 40 per cent of the elite reported a 1989 household income before taxes of over SEK one million. Only a few thousandths of the population exceeded this threshold at the same point in time.

It has sometimes been argued that the social movements are of particular importance for the reproduction of the Swedish power elite. This idea is said to apply with particular force to the labour movement, whose strong continuity has allegedly implied the development of a political class. The labour movement is said to form a fairly closed world with a great capacity for internal reproduction (Isaksson 1986).

Although no directly comparative population data are available, the basic proposition is most likely correct. A high level of organisational activity in the home environment probably increases the possibility of gaining access to the power elite. However, this mechanism is hardly unique to the labour movement. Leading members of the Left Party, the Social Democrats and trade union representatives are not distinguished by a higher level of organisational activity in their parents' generation than are other parts of the power elite. Where they do differ is in their movement background which is not narrowly "bourgeois" but more mixed. As can be seen from table 3.2 the movement background of the elite as a whole is predominantly bourgeois.[2]

Our next question is whether the pattern that emerges in table 3.2 is uniform across different elite spheres or if there are systematic variations between them. The answer is both yes and no. As shown in table 3.3 there is uniformity in the sense that all elites deviate from the population in the same direction in all nine areas

[2] The data about movement background in table 3.2 is based on a series of questions about the parents' organisational activities. A dimensional analysis of the answers provides two main dimensions, one of which reflects activities in the labour movement and the other in the "bourgeois movement". In order to be classified as having a movement background of either kind, at least one of the parents must have been an active participant in the movement in question. See SOU 1990:44, 325–329 for a more detailed analysis of the movement background of various power elites.

Table 3.3 Social Background and Status among Different Power Elites (Percentages)

	Politics	Public administration	Business	Organisations	Media	Science	Culture
Descendant of the power elite	5	7	10	2	13	13	4
Father in executive position	28	49	50	32	51	46	52
Of noble birth	2	2	3	2	4	1	5
Movement background: Bourgeois – Labour[a]	31	41	42	28	30	50	39
Grown up in town/city	52	67	57	65	73	64	75
Aged 44–64	75	89	86	74	71	85	70
Male	69	89	99	87	85	93	77
No immigrant background	93	95	95	90	90	95	89
Academic degree	55	91	75	58	50	97	63
Annual income over SEK 1 million[b]	22	34	86	40	31	40	32

[a] Refers to percentage with bourgeois movement background less percentage with background in the labour movement.
[b] Refers to household income before taxes.

where a direct comparison with population data is possible. However, in addition a number of significant differences may be observed.

A far smaller share of political and organisational leaders are recruited from the homes of executives than is the case within other spheres. Both of these elites, along with mass media and culture, are set apart by a lower level of education, a slightly higher percentage of immigrant background, a somewhat less pronounced concentration to the age band 44–64, and a weaker predominance of bourgeois movement background. Both media and culture deviate in an exclusive direction by a relatively high concentration of people from executive homes, of noble birth, and with an urban background. Public administration and science are notable for their high level of education, an exceptionally concentrated age profile, an unusually modest number of persons with an immigrant background and a strong predominance of bourgeois movement background. In other respects, these two spheres normally occupy the middle ground. Business shares a number of characteristics with public administration and science,

and finds its special niche in the exceptionally high level of income and markedly low proportion of women. Politics is the polar opposite in both these respects.

This summary review makes it clear that the variations between different elites do not follow a one-dimensional pattern. Which elite groups may be considered the most or least exclusive depend on the criteria chosen. A closer analysis shows that the pattern may be summarised by means of three dimensions.[3]

The first dimension, which may be called *regulated promotion*, indicates the importance of having arrived with the proper luggage at the correct point on the long march through the institutions of the establishment.[4] The second dimension, *socio-cultural capital*, captures the importance of an urban upper class heritage:[5] verbal ability, cultural interest and a network of contacts. The third and final dimension, *plutocratic patriarchy*, reflects the strong relationship between the male gender, money and financial power.[6]

With the help of these three dimensions it is now possible to summarise differences and similarities between the various spheres of the power elite (figure 3.2). Science, public administration and business are distinguished by relatively strong elements of regulated promotion. Mass media, organisations, culture and politics are less exclusive from this point of view. Socio-

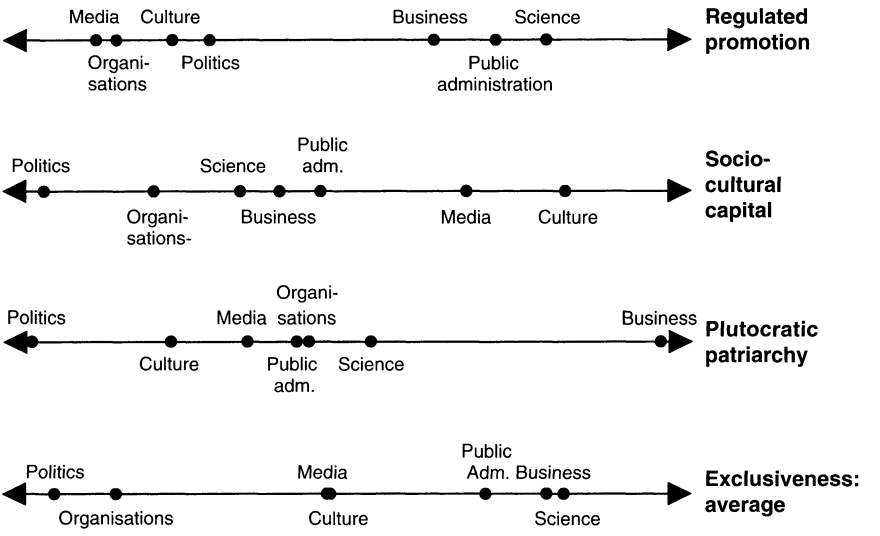
[3] The dimensional analysis took the form of a principal-component analysis of the data in table 3.3 (expressed with one digit's greater precision). The columns of the table made up the variables and the rows the units of analysis. The number of factors was determined by means of Kaijser's criterion. The final solution was arrived at through varimax rotation. Together the three factors account for 85 per cent of the total variance of which 45 can be attributed to the first, 31 to the second and 24 to the third. An additive index was constructed for each factor based on the standardised values of the variables designated below as indicators of each dimension. The factor loading amounts to a minimum of .80 in all these cases. No other loading reaches the same level. The variable that indicates percentage of elite descent cannot unequivocally be assigned to any one factor and was therefore left unused in constructing the indices.

[4] The four indicators are: percentage with an academic degree, in the age range 44–64 years, with no immigrant background, and with a bourgeois movement background, in the latter case after deducting the share with a background in the labour movement.

[5] The three indicators are: percentage whose father was an executive, who is of noble birth, and who grew up in a town or city.

[6] The two indicators are the percentage of males and the percentage of cases where the household income before taxes is more than SEK 1 million.

Figure 3.2 Degree of Exclusiveness among Different Power Elites: Three Dimensions and Average



Note: The anchor values of the three first scales are –1.4 and +1.9. The last stretches from –1.0 to +1.0. The scale values of the different spheres are in all cases computed as the average of the standardised indicator values. The average exclusivity scale may be constructed as either the average of the three dimensions or as the average of the ten basic indicators. The latter method is the one used. The former yields virtually identical results.

cultural capital is of particular importance in recruitment to leading positions in mass media and culture. Politics is the opposite in this regard. Plutocratic patriarchy is most at home in business. Again politics falls at the other end of the scale.

Although several dimensions of social exclusivity can be discerned, it may still be useful from a descriptive point of view to aggregate all indicators into a single average. After so doing, business is found at the most exclusive end of the scale, followed closely by science and public administration. Politics, followed by organisations are the least exclusive spheres. Mass media and culture occupy the middle ground.

The above portrait of the Swedish power elite immediately raises the question of where it stands in international comparison. Answering that question is not easy, primarily because of the shortage of comparative data. Only a few studies of similar breadth have been carried out in other countries. Many are relatively old. Differences in sampling and measurement pose additional problems of comparability.[7]

Despite these difficulties three general conclusions may be drawn.[8] The first is that the Swedish power elite in many important respects resembles its counterparts in other countries. There is nothing to give any firm indication – at least not in terms of the data that is currently available – that the seven elites included in this study are generally either more or less exclusive than is normally the case in other industrialised countries.

The second conclusion is that there is at least one exception to this rule, namely politics. In most areas the Swedish national political elite is less exclusive than in other comparable countries outside the Nordic area. In terms of the percentage of women, level of education, previous occupation, and father's occupation, for example, the distance to the population is less pronounced than is normally the case.

The third conclusion is that the political elite in Sweden also differs more from other sections of the power elite than is usually the case in other countries. In the USA, the UK and France, for example, the social status and background of politicians accord to a greater extent with those of other elites.

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[7] The set of similar studies undertaken in other countries include one from Yugoslavia (Barton, Demitch & Kadushin 1973), one from the USA (Alba & Moore 1978; Moore 1979, Barton 1985), one from Australia (Higley, Deacon & Smart 1979) and one from West Germany (Hoffman-Lange 1985; Hoffman-Lange, Neumann & Steinkemper 1985; Hoffman-Lange 1989). A large-scale study on elite recruitment has recently been carried out in Eastern Europe (see Theory and Society, vol. 24, no. 5, October 1995). An international study concentrating on attitudes toward equality is that of Verba et al. 1987. Another cross-national study, focusing primarily on politics and public administration is Aberbach, Putnam & Rockman 1981.

[8] The international observations presented below are to some extent based on data from the works mentioned in the previous footnote. Other primary source materials include Norris & Lovenduski 1995, Norris 1996 and with regard to data on members of the Swedish Riksdag, Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996.

Possibly, the two latter conclusions also apply in part to the leaders of organisations. However, available data do not allow us to assert with certainty that such is the case.

In addition to these observations there is one additional area where the Swedish political elite stands out in international comparison, namely in the proportion of individuals with legal training. In many other countries, a large share of the leading politicians are lawyers. In a comparative study of the UK, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the USA (Aberbach, Putnam & Rockman 1981, 52) the legally trained proportion of the political elite amounted on average to 25 per cent (32 per cent of those with a university education). In the USA the proportion was 46 per cent (51 per cent of those with a university education). Among the Swedish politicians included in our elite survey only 4 per cent had a similar background (7 per cent of those with a university education). In contrast to what is true in many other developed democracies, the legal profession has not been a major gateway to political life in Sweden in the democratic era. (cf. Holmström 1994).

A Rusting Iron Law

"The iron law of andrarchy" is no doubt one of the more apposite expressions to include the epithet "iron" that research into power elites has coined over the years. When the American political scientist Robert Putnam formulated this "law" some two decades ago (Putnam 1976, 33–34), he could look back over half a century of female suffrage without female representation. In the majority of democratically elected parliaments the proportion of women remained at about 5 per cent without showing any signs of increase whatsoever. Statistically speaking. Putnam concluded women constitute the most under-represented group among the world's political elites. Even at that time, however, one exception could be found, namely the Nordic countries. In Putnam's diagram the curve showing the development of female representation in Swedish politics soars alone towards the sky, serving as a gentle reminder that the impossible may perhaps still be possible.

When the elite survey of the Study of Power and Democracy

was carried out in 1989 the representation of women in the Riksdag had risen even higher, from Putnam's record level of 21 per cent to a massive 38 per cent. The results for power elites other than the political were less impressive. Here, the share of women reached no higher than 10 per cent. Even this figure, however, represented a step forward in comparison with previous elite research in other countries. In earlier studies, the share of women in the power elite had hardly reached measurable proportions. None the less, it strengthened the image of the Swedish political elite as a twofold exception, different not only from political elites in other countries but also from other elites in Swedish society. Although there were signs that the iron law of andrarchy had started to corrode, it still remained largely intact.

But what has happened since? As far as political life is concerned the answer is already well known. After a minor setback in the 1991 elections, the representation of women in the Riksdag has continued to rise to a current high of 43 per cent. Half of the members of the Cabinet are women. In both cases the figures are higher than in any other country. Among elites other than the political, however, the terrain is not so well charted. The Democratic Audit has therefore undertaken a follow-up study in order to assess how the position of women has changed in the power elite as a whole.[9]

The 1996 sampling criteria have in general been the same as in 1989. However, a few simplifications have been made in order to save time.[10] The modified criteria have naturally been applied

[9] Ms Lena Lundström, research assistant at the Department of Government at Uppsala University, collected the data on behalf of the Democratic Audit of Sweden.

[10] These simplifications apply to the Riksdag sample (which covers the entire Riksdag rather than certain specific Riksdag positions), the subgroup private business (which covers the 200 largest companies quoted on the stock exchange, instead of privately owned companies over a given size) and the cultural sphere (where the sample of cultural personalities has been deleted). Apart from these simplifications there are two differences between the 1989 and 1996 samples that do not signify any change of principles (table 3.1 and SOU:44, 306–317). One is that the 1996 sample includes the Swedish MEPs and a few higher EU officials appointed by the Swedish government. The other is that the monetary limits for the term large company (cf. SOU 1990:44, 311, note 23) have been corrected for inflation. The turnover criterion has been increased from SEK 2.5 billion in 1989 to SEK 3.5 billion in 1996, the assets criterion from SEK 15 billion in 1989 to SEK 20 billion in 1996 and the criterion for value on the stock-exchange from SEK 1 billion in 1989 to SEK 1.5 billion in 1996.

both to the situation in 1989 as well as in 1996 in order to make the material comparable over time. Apart from a restricted ability to assess developments in the cultural sphere, the simplifications should have but a marginal effect on the results that we present here. It should be observed that nonresponse constitutes no problem in this particular analysis. Since gender can be ascertained without the help of survey data the results are based on all positions selected.

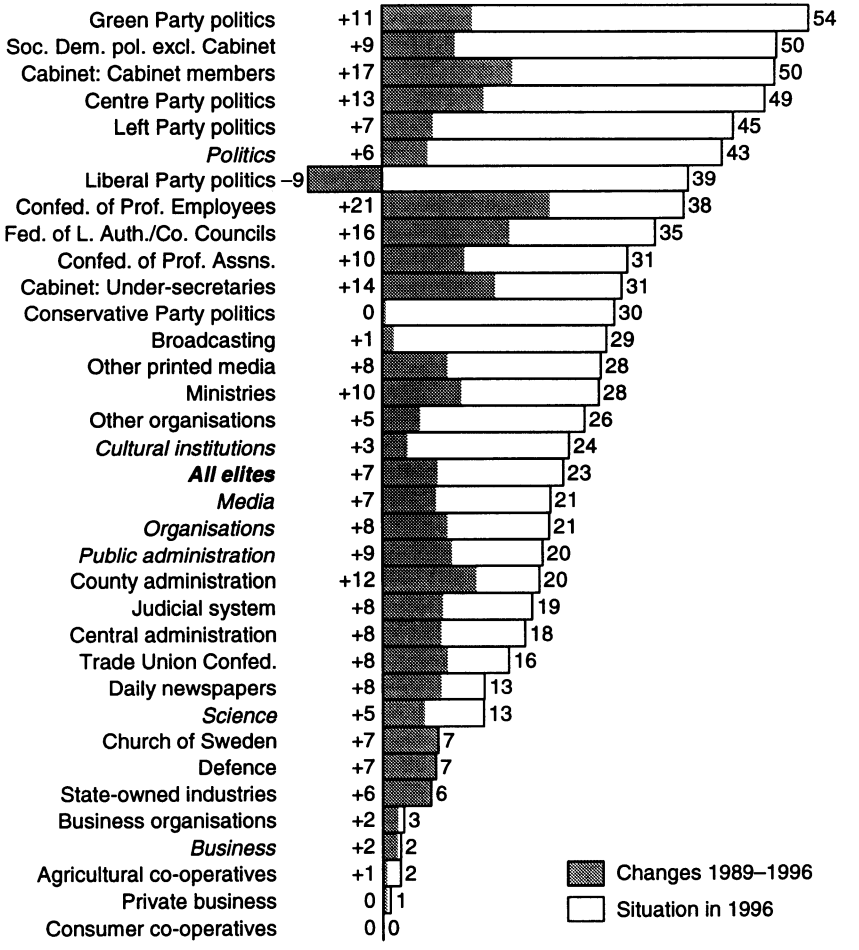
The main results are reported in figure 3.3. The figure not only shows the results for the elite spheres as a whole (bold type), and for the seven institutional spheres (italics) but also for the various sub-groups (normal type). All have been ranked in terms of the proportion of women in 1996.

The principal trend is unambiguous. The proportion of women is increasing not only in politics but in practically all areas. All seven spheres show a more or less marked increase. And even when the material is broken down into sub-groups there are only a few noughts and one single minus sign in the column indicating change. Ironically the only minus sign hits the Liberal Party, one of the parties which first and foremost promoted equality between the sexes. It should be noted that the dip occurs from a high level. In 1989 the Liberal Party had the best female representation in the entire power elite.

Considering the fairly brief interval between the two surveys, the increase is relatively large. The female share of the entire power elite has increased by 7 percentage points in as many years, from 16 per cent in 1989 to 23 per cent in 1996. This means that the growth rate for the elite as a whole has been nearly as high as it was in the political sphere during the "great leap forward" of 1970–1988. The changes are particularly pronounced within organisations and public administration, where the number of women has nearly doubled. A historic breakthrough may be observed in the sphere of public administration, in which two of patriarchy's bastions—the Church and the armed forces—now show signs of the first breaches in the wall, while there are yet no female bishops or generals, one now finds women cathedral deans in the Church of Sweden and women director-generals in the defence sector.

Not surprisingly the smallest change as well as the lowest percentage is found in the business sphere. It is only in state-controlled business now that there is any discernible change at all. Business now deviates as strongly downwards in terms of women leaders as politics deviates upwards.

Figure 3.3 The Position of Women within Different Power Elites: Situation in 1996 and Changes 1989–1996 (in Percentage Points)

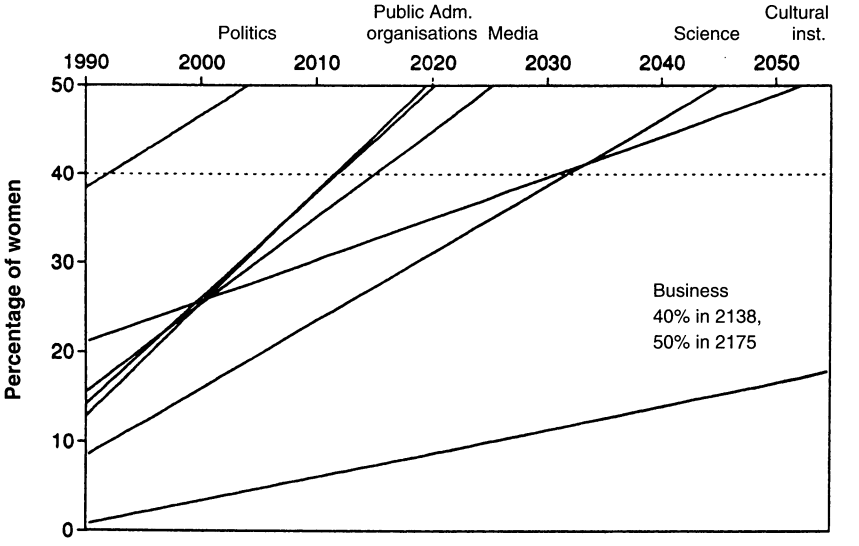


"How Much Longer Do We Have to Wait ..."

Even if the development of female representation in most power elites is rather positive at present, it is of course impossible to make any definite predictions about the future. No victories should be celebrated in advance. Further efforts will surely be needed to ensure that the trend will not stagnate or even go into reverse. With these reservations firmly in mind it may still be worth making an intellectual experiment. If the trend remains constant, how long will we have to wait before reaching the goal of equality between the sexes?

An intellectual experiment of this kind requires some simplifications. We have assumed a linear development up to the 50 per cent level. This assumption is not entirely realistic. Many processes of social change tend to follow the pace of a pendulum swinging from one pole to the other: slow to begin with, then fast in the middle and finally slower towards the end. We have also

Figure 3.4 The Development towards Equality of the Sexes in the Power Elite: An Intellectual Experiment



assumed that the rate of change is homogeneous within spheres which is not entirely in accordance with our data.

The results obtained under these premises are presented in figure 3.4. The political elite has already passed the "barrier of shame", i.e. 40 per cent, and will at the present rate reach full equality during the first years of the 21st century. Public administration and organisations will reach the 40 per cent threshold soon after 2010 and the 50 per cent level around 2020, closely followed by the media. Science and cultural institutions will proceed more slowly, although for partly different reasons. Science starts off from a pretty feeble base and has a relatively stately pace. The cultural institutions start from a better position, but move more slowly. Both can be expected to pass the 40 per cent barrier in the 2030s. Full equality will not be reached until the 2040s for science and 2050s for cultural institutions. The endpoint for the last of the seven spheres, business, falls outside the diagram. If the line is extended way out into the periphery one finds that the 40 per cent level will be reached in the mid-2100s and full equality in two centuries.

Interaction

"All power in Swedish society is exercised through personal contacts." This is how the preamble might read to an attempt at formulating a descriptive constitution for the exercise of power. Like all categorical descriptions, it is of course an exaggeration. But the question is whether it is a gross exaggeration.

Few social scientists would deny the significance of personal contacts in the creation, maintenance and exercise of power. Despite this basic hypothesis, the networks of power do not belong among the territories most intensively charted by the social sciences. One of the main reasons is that the terrain is relatively rough. Problems of measurement and analysis loom comparatively large. It is only during the last two decades that empirical research has seriously started to study the structure of social networks, their origins and effects. Although important work has been done, this remains a field in which the difference between

the number of questions and the number of answers remains unusually great.[11]

One of the most fundamental questions concerns the importance of personal contacts in the exercise of power. One of several ways of answering this question is to pass it on to the power elite itself. In the elite survey of the Study of Power and Democracy, the respondents were asked to indicate the importance of strong and good contacts for achieving results in their field of endeavour.

As shown in table 3.4 there is an almost ear-splitting measure of agreement on this point. More than 80 per cent believe that personal contacts are of decisive or very great importance for having one's way. Practically no one suggests that they are of no importance. The differences between elites in different spheres are as good as non-existent. The impression of unanimity remains even after a break-down into sub-groups. It is really only among the representatives of the judiciary that one can find a slightly less extensive, although still considerable, faith in the importance of personal contacts.

Table 3.4 The Assessment by Power Elites of the Importance of Personal Contacts for Achieving Results in Their Own Fields

	Politics	Public administration	Business	Organisations	Media	Science	Culture	**All elites**
Of decisive importance	41	35	45	41	48	42	41	**41**
Of very great importance	42	47	43	46	34	42	40	**43**
Of rather great importance	14	13	11	12	14	14	13	**13**
Of fairly limited importance	3	3	0	1	4	2	5	**3**
Of no importance	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
Total per cent	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	**100**

Question wording: In your experience, how important are strong and good personal contacts in ensuring that you achieve results in your own fields?

[11] In Swedish political science research, Larsson (1986), Petersson (1989) and Esaiasson & Holmberg (1988 and 1996) belong among those who have paid particular attention to networks of contacts. For a survey of the politically relevant parts of international network research see Knoke 1990.

It may of course not necessarily be true that the subjective image conveyed by the power elite would concur in all respects with the picture obtained by means of more objective methods. Social science research offers a number of examples of variance between the respondents' own judgements and conclusions that may be drawn from other data.

In this case, however, there are a number of reasons to believe that the image presented is essentially correct. First, the survey question on which it is based is limited to the respondents' own experiences. The respondents thus serve as a source only with regard to circumstances they can take stock of themselves, not conditions in the power elite as a whole. One may therefore assume that the respondents have a fairly rich factual base for their judgements. Second, it may be expected that, on this score, the actors to a great extent create their own reality. If a group of individuals hold personal contacts to be very important, they may be expected to act in such ways as to realise their expectations. At the same time the daily lives of the majority of the power elite offer rich opportunities for testing whether the assessment remains correct. Finally, what are as yet very limited attempts at studying the objective relations between contact patterns, participation and influence indicate that relationships of the expected kind actually exist.[12]

Table 3.5 The Share of Working Time Spent on Personal Contacts among Different Power Elites (Average Percentages)

	Politics	Public administration	Business	Organisations	Media	Science	Culture	**All elites**
Contacts with close colleagues	38	44	45	39	48	40	40	**42**
Other contacts	33	30	36	39	28	30	28	**33**
Total	69	73	80	77	75	70	69	**74**

Question wording: Approximately how much of your working time do you spend on contacts with other people (meetings, conversations, telephone calls, letters or other forms of contacts)?

[12] See Knoke 1990 for a review of this research, especially chapters 3–6.

Considering the importance attributed to personal contacts, it comes as no surprise that they occupy a great deal of the working time of the power elites. As shown in table 3.5, three-quarters of the working time is on average set aside for various forms of direct communication with other people. Over 40 per cent of the time is used for contacts with close colleagues, while more than 30 per cent is used for contacts of a more external nature. Once again the differences between spheres are small, although certain variations are discernible.

Having established in this way the general importance and scale of personal contacts among the members of the power elite, it is now time to inquire into the characteristics of the contact patterns. Our attention will primarily focus on the internal interaction of the elite. The elite survey contained a set of questions assessing each respondent's contacts with other members of the power elite. Four types of relations were measured. The first three concerned professional *contacts, coalitions* and *conflicts.* The fourth covered *private interaction.* For each type of relationship the respondent was asked to indicate whether a relationship of the specified kind existed with one or more leaders of a certain kind.[13]

A detailed analysis of the contact pattern would take us too far. However, even the broad overview in table 3.6 provides significant information on the nature of the network. For each of the four types of relationships, the table indicates the percentage having such a relationship with at least one other representative of the power elite in the sphere indicated. In addition, two derived measures are reported: *charge* and *temperature.* Charge is defined as the difference between the coalition and conflict

[13] Leaders were separated into relatively narrow categories. For each kind of relationship, 116 possibilities were available to record the existence of a relationship. The question wording for the four types of relationships was: "Have professional contacts with ..."; "Usually get support from ... with respect to objectives I am working for"; "Usually am opposed by ... with respect to objectives I am working for"; "Sometimes interact privately with ...". In the case of the first relationship the following general advice was provided: "One question refers to professional contacts. By contact is meant personal contact on more than one occasion. It could be a telephone call, a letter, a meeting or other kind of contact. The question concerns all professional activities, but does not cover your private relationships."

Table 3.6 Interactions between and within Different Power Elites (Percentages)

	Politics	Public Adm.	Business	Organ-isations	Media[a]	Science	Culture	Average
Contacts								
Within own sphere	100	99	99	99	98	96	79	**96**
With others on average	80	75	70	76	73	65	53	**70**
Coalitions								
Within own sphere	98	95	88	96	76	81	66	**85**
With others on average	63	59	51	60	36	48	37	**51**
Conflict								
Within own sphere	98	36	19	65	27	13	19	**39**
With others on average	37	25	25	38	21	14	14	**25**
Charge								
Within own sphere	–1	58	68	31	50	68	47	**46**
With others on average	24	34	27	23	15	34	24	**26**
Temperature								
Within own sphere	98	66	53	80	46	47	43	**62**
With others on average	51	42	38	49	28	31	26	**38**
Private interaction								
Within own sphere	92	89	90	72	90	65	60	**79**
With others on average	43	43	44	41	36	36	36	**40**

[a] For technical reasons the media sphere in this instance only covers leading officials of large urban dailies, news agencies, and broadcasting.

measures and may in principle vary between –100 and +100. Positive values indicate that the relationship is mainly positively charged, i.e. that coalitions are more common than conflicts. Negative values indicate the opposite. The temperature, which may vary from 0 to 100, is defined as the sum of the coalition and conflict measures divided by two. A high temperature indicates that the relationship is value-laden, i.e. that there is a high degree of coalition-building and/or conflict. A low temperature indicates that such elements are absent.

For each of the six relationship measures, the table reports the result within each sphere as well as with other spheres on average. The figure 100 in the upper left-hand corner of the table indicates that 100 per cent of the politicians had professional contacts with at least one other leading politician. The figure 80 on the

next line means that similar contacts between politics and each of the other areas were realised in 80 per cent of the cases.[14]

The averages given in the right-hand column indicate that contacts of the kind measured are fairly frequent. To say that each member of the power elite has contacts with every other member would of course be a gross exaggeration. But over 95 per cent have professional contacts with at least one leading representative of the same elite and in 70 per cent of the cases a connection of the same kind is realised between any two spheres. The corresponding figures for personal interaction are somewhat lower, 79 and 40 per cent, but still show very clearly that the conference chamber is not the only meeting ground within the power elite.

In addition the network in general can be said to be both denser and hotter within the various spheres than between them. All four basic types of relationships show higher values in the former case than in the latter. However, the differences are not quite symmetrical. The differences in coalition propensity are greater than those in conflict propensity. This indicates that the relationships within spheres are not only denser and hotter, but also more positively charged than those between spheres. This positive surplus can be expected to increase the ability of the sphere to act—when necessary—in concert with respect to the outside world.

In addition to these general observations some interesting differences between the spheres may also be noted. Politics, for example, reveals both a somewhat denser internal network and a wider range of contacts with other spheres than is usually the case. This is true not only of professional relationships but also of private contacts. It is, however, mainly in two other regards that politics stands out. First, its relations are hotter, both internally and with respect to other spheres. Second, it is the only area in which the charge in internal relations is less positive than in ex-

[14] Relationships within a particular sphere can only be measured in one way, i.e. by asking its representatives, e.g. politicians, about their relationships to other politicians. The relationship between spheres, e.g. between politics and public administration, can be measured in two ways: by asking the politicians about their relationships with the civil servants, and by asking the civil servants about their relationship to the politicians. In the latter case the average of the two measures has been used.

ternal relations. The pattern indicates that politics constitute to a greater degree than other spheres an arena for power struggle, rather than an actor with the ability to act in unison.

The organisational sphere resembles politics more than any other. Here, too, the temperature is fairly high and the charge in internal relations only slightly more positive than in external relations. Business, on the other hand, shows no such characteristics, despite being distinguished by, or at least being supposed to exhibit, strong internal competition. On the contrary, the internal temperature is lower than average and the internal charge is strongly positive. According to the pattern of relationships, business is thus a sphere marked by a relatively large measure of internal harmony and, consequently, a considerable ability to act uniformly towards other parties.

By way of summary, we may conclude that the members of the power elite consider personal contacts to be of great importance and that they devote a large part of their working hours to such contacts. In this respect the differences between various elites are small. A considerable part of the contacts are directed at other representatives of the power elite. In this case as well, there are some common denominators between elites from different areas. The pattern of internal relationships is, for example, denser and more positively charged within than between spheres. This similarity also represents a disparity, insofar as each area demonstrates a relatively distinctive network. There are also considerable differences in the character of these networks. Politics and, to some extent, organisations exhibit fairly hot networks with strong elements of internal conflict. Business is cooler and more harmonious. Finally it may be observed that the pattern of relationships is not one-dimensional. Although no dimensional analysis is reported here, it is certainly not the case that proximity and distance between various elites can be captured by means of a single dimension.

Ideology

The third and final major element in our portrait of the Swedish power elite is its pattern of values and beliefs, its ideology. One way of characterising elites in this respect is to study their positions on a number of political issues. Table 3.7 lists 17 such issues, contrasting the views of the elites and of the population. The views of the elites as well as the population are presented by means of balance indices, i.e. the proportion of positive replies to the proposal listed in the table, less the proportion of negative answers. The measure can in principle vary between –100 and +100. The differences between the elite and the population can therefore range between — 200 (if the elite records a maximum negative response and the population a maximum positive response) and +200 (in the opposite case).

Table 3.7 The Issue Positions of Elites in Comparison with those of the Population (Balance Index)

	Elites	Population[a]	Difference
Introduce a 6-hour working day for all gainfully employed	–41	+28	–69
Admit fewer refugees	–67	–6	–61
Lower taxes on high incomes	+33	–27	+60
Increase financial contributions to immigrants so that they can preserve their own culture	+17	–27	+44
Retain nuclear power, even after the year 2010	+19	–10	+29
Reduce the public sector	+24	–4	+28
Stop private motoring in inner cities	+12	+38	–26
Reduce the differences of income in society	+17	+41	–24
Increase the private share of the health care system	+36	+17	+19
Cut aid to developing countries	–67	–49	–18
Sell state enterprises to private buyers	+19	+5	+14
Cut social allowances	–20	–7	–13
Permit advertising on Swedish TV	+32	+40	–8
Abolish the wage-earners' funds	+28	+24	+4
Seek membership for Sweden in the European Community	+28	+26	+2
Cut defence spending	–23	–23	0
Build more day-care centres	+52	+52	0

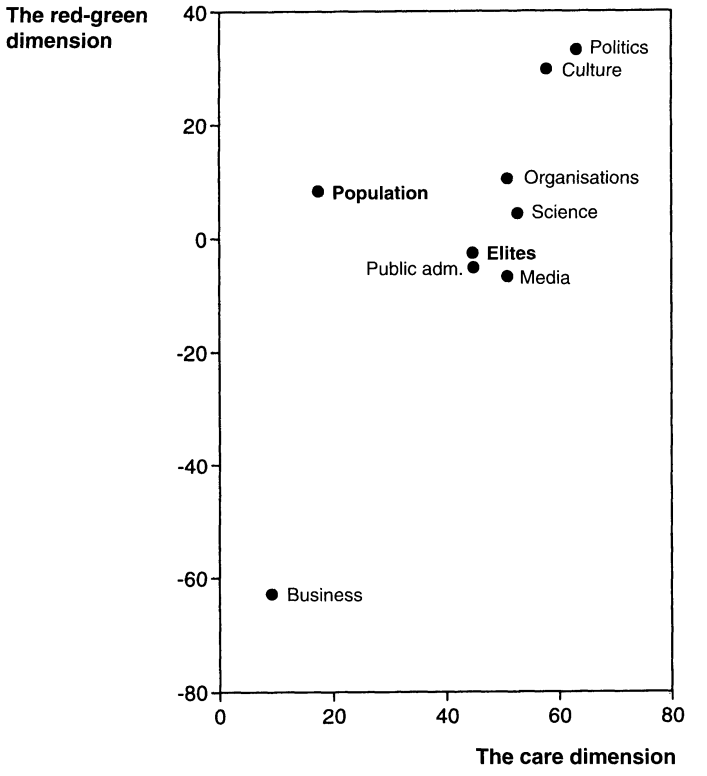
[a]The population data are based on the 1988 Swedish election survey.

As can be seen from the table the differences noted lie far from these extremes. For three of the issues investigated there were nevertheless clearly marked differences between the elite and the population at the time of the study, namely in relation to the proposal to introduce a six-hour working day (population more positive), to admit fewer refugees (population more positive) and to lower taxes on high incomes (elite more positive). All seven power elites fell either to the left or right of the population on all three of these issues. In most matters the differences are smaller and the various spheres are not grouped unanimously on either side of the population. The dividing line between "the people up there" and "the people down there" can usually be drawn in pencil.

The differences that do exist, however, follow a fairly regular pattern. On issues related to care for the least well-off—immigrants, refugees, aid to developing countries, and social security—the elite strikes a more generous tone than the population. In environmental matters the elite is more positive to nuclear power and more negative to measures to limit private motoring. When it comes to proposals aimed at reducing state and other collective influence—such as by cutting down the public sector, privatising the healthcare system, selling nationalised industries, and getting rid of wage-earners' funds—the elite generally takes a more positive view. Commercial television constitutes an exception in this regard. Finally attitudes to tax scales and income differentials indicate that the elite is more negative to measures promoting equality than the population. Note, however, that a cross-national study found the Swedish elite to be more egalitarian-minded than the American or Japanese (Verba et al. 1987). It is also conceivable that the twelve-month interval separating the collection of elite and population data may have influenced the result in this case (see SOU 1990:44 340–341).

A dimensional analysis of the 17 issue items shows that the whole pattern of opinions in the elite sample can be reduced to only two dimensions, or rather one and a half, since the two dimensions are fairly strongly intercorrelated (SOU 1990:44, 342–344). The first, which may be termed *the red-green dimension,* encompasses the attitudes to the twelve questions that deal with state or other public influence, equality, environment,

Figure 3.5 Positions on Two Issue Dimensions for Power Elites and Population (Average Balance Index)



defence and the European Union. The second, which may be designated the *care dimension* reflects opinions on issues related to refugees, immigrants, aid to developing countries, social security and day-care centres.

Figure 3.5 reports the positions of the elites and the population along the two dimensions. The majority of elites demonstrate a softer attitude on care-related issues than the population. The business sphere constitutes the only exception. With respect to the other dimension, the average for the elite as a whole falls somewhat farther away from the red-green end than that of the population, although there is considerable variation between

different elites. The most red-green sphere is politics, followed closely by culture. Business marks the opposite end.

When the material is broken down into sub-groups, the variations between elites grow still larger. The largest differences are often found within, rather than between, the seven spheres. This is particularly true of politics and the organisations, but there are also marked differences within other spheres.

One question that immediately comes to mind when examining the pattern in figure 3.5 is whether it reflects variations in party preferences. Such is largely the case. However, there are also differences along the two issue dimensions that cannot be reduced to a matter of party preference. Politics and culture constitute relatively radical spheres even after controlling for party preference; business and public administration represent more conservative views than the distribution of party preferences would lead us to expect (see SOU 1990:44, 353–355). Elites in various institutional spheres display a distinctive character even when party preferences are taken into account.

The data on elite and population party preferences presented in table 3.8 provides the basis for some further conclusions. If we ignore the political sphere—whose party composition is largely a result of the sampling criteria—three parties are considerably under-represented within the power elite, compared to the position they occupied at the time of the survey in the Riksdag as well as the population. Only 8 per cent of the elite reported preferences for either the Centre Party, the Greens or the Left Party (at that time known as the Left Party Communists) compared to a total of 24 per cent in the Riksdag and 26 per cent in the electorate. By contrast, two other parties, the Liberal Party and the Conservatives, enjoy a very strong position. These two parties account for 52 per cent of the preferences among the elites (excluding the political sphere), compared to 31 per cent in the population at the same point in time. With a slight dramatic license, the political world of the Swedish power elite could be said to amount to a three-party system. The Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Conservatives together account for 90 per cent of the preferences among elites other than the political.

The above analysis no doubt allows the conclusion that there

Table 3.8 Party Preferences among the Power Elite and the Population

	Left Party	Soc.-Dem. Party	Centre Party	Liberal Party	Conser-vative Party	Green Party	Others	Total per cent
Politics	8	37	11	18	17	7	2	100
Public administration	1	48	4	23	22	1	1	100
Business	0	17	7	22	53	0	1	100
Organisations	4	47	6	15	26	1	1	100
Media	4	33	2	43	15	1	2	100
Science	0	47	3	36	14	0	4	100
Culture	8	44	1	21	15	7	4	100
Elites	4	38	6	22	26	3	1	100
Elites excluding politicians	2	38	5	23	29	1	2	100
Population[a]	6	41	12	11	20	7	3	100

[a] The information on population party preferences is based on the polls conducted by Statistics Sweden May 1989 as reported in *Statistiska meddelanden* Be 60 SM 9801, table 17.

are systematic differences between the views of the elite and the population. The differences are, however, rarely dramatic, and the variations between and within various power elites are considerable. With the exception of care-related issues, the elites often come down on different sides to that of the population. It is beyond dispute that the Swedish power elite is characterised by a considerable amount of competing opinions. At the same time there is a notable conformity in ways of thinking. Although there are very divergent ideas about what constitutes a suitable opinion, there is a great deal of unanimity in how opinions should be combined. Almost every issue tends to be subsumed under the bipolar conflict between left and right.

The Power Elite and Democracy

In this chapter we have attempted to describe the character of the Swedish power elite in three basic respects: its social background and status, its patterns of interaction and its ideology. We have, as far as has been possible, striven in each of these three areas to systematise our observations on the basis of three questions. To what extent and in which way does the elite differ from the popula-

tion? How can we describe the character and size of the differences between various elites? To what degree and in which regards do these differences form a general pattern of proximity and distance? Our answer gives rise to a new question: how does the character of the Swedish power elite relate to the ideal of popular, constitutional and effective government?

The first component in this ideal focuses on the quality of popular government. Our description points to clear shortcomings in this area. There is considerable social exclusiveness. Certain opinions and combinations of views held by the population are also poorly represented in the elite.

Nevertheless the final verdict on the quality of popular government must be fairly positive. Those parts of the power elite where demands for social representation are particularly strongly felt, i.e. politics and organisations, are in important respects less exclusive than other elites. We additionally have evidence that the Swedish political elite is more open than is the case in the majority of comparable democratic countries.

Significant progress has also been made in the direction of more openness. The proportion of women in politics is approaching full equality. Our survey of the development of women's representation between 1989 and 1996 shows that considerable progress has been made within other elites as well. The growth rate in the power elite as a whole is now almost as high as it previously was in politics. The rejuvenation of the Riksdag after the elections in 1994 is another step in the right direction.

The pattern of opinions within the elite is also of importance to our conclusion. Although we have examples of poorly represented views, there are undoubtedly strong elements of ideological competition within the elite. The power elite is considerably more heterogeneous and representative in its views than in its social background. And in one of the cases where the views of the elite systematically differ from those of the population, i.e. with respect to care-related issues, it is not at all obvious that the position of the elite should be considered a liability for democracy. Rather, it poses one of the unresolved dilemmas of democratic theory.

If the characteristics of the Swedish power elite are largely to the advantage of popular government, it is far from obvious that

the same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the constitutional aspects of our ideal. Ever since the break-through of democracy there has been a credibility gap between politics—primarily Social Democrat politics—and the judiciary. This gap has manifested itself in a political disinclination to hand over powers of control to the judiciary. As a leading Social Democrat politician succinctly put it: "They are not our people."

The person who uttered these words was entirely right. In Sweden few lawyers become politicians and even fewer become Social Democratic politicians. The law has been and remains a bastion of conservative values. It would most likely have been to the advantage of constitutional government in Sweden if this conflict between politics and the law had not existed and if, in consequence, the judiciary had been able to enjoy broader legitimacy.

Our discussion about constitutional government draws attention to the fact that the heterogeneity within the power elite that constitutes a necessary pre-condition for popular government may be a disadvantage when looked at from other sides of our comprehensive democratic ideal. This consideration is also relevant with respect to the third component of our ideal, effective government.

Although the term consensus has historically been the cornerstone of the image of the Swedish power elite, it has rarely—when present—been based on a homogeneity of opinion or strong social ties. Consensus has been arrived at despite large cleavages, not because of the existence of a basic harmony.

The foundations of the Swedish spirit of consensus were laid at a time when the Swedish power elite was undergoing profound changes. Democracy brought new groups to power in politics. The industrial revolution brought about similar changes in the economy. Neither of the two new elites had enough energy to encroach on each other's territories. They were both too busy with their own projects, i.e. political reforms and industrialisation. As a result, the Swedish power elite came to be characterised by a balance rather than an intertwining of power (Glete 1991).

As long as the Swedish economy continued to grow and as long as Swedish politics was largely a matter of how the surplus could be converted into new social reforms, the model worked quite

well. In a situation where both the economy and politics are facing enormous challenges and where both tend to regard the other party as a major problem, it is far from clear that the Swedish model has the capacity to deliver the type of decisions required.

The Swedish power elite contains major cleavages in ideological as well as social terms. There is a particularly large gulf between political and economic financial elites. These tensions together with powerful conflicts within the political sphere do not constitute the best foundation for high decision-making capacity and outcomes in the public interest.

4 Leadership in a Sectorised State

Iron Triangles and Policy Networks

The size and complexity of the public sector has led to a very extensive degree of specialisation and a need to reflect over how public tasks are delegated. In practical terms political leadership in most countries is exercised within relatively well-defined policy sectors such as agriculture, education, health care, transport and defence. Any evaluation of democracy and leadership should therefore pay particular attention to these sectoral decision-making arenas. One of the tenets of constitutional theory is that the principle of the separation of powers can be implemented by keeping the different roles of the state separate. Originally the institutions of public power were separated along the lines of the legislative, executive and judicial functions. The Norwegian Study of Power and Democracy which investigated the condition of democracy in Norway during the 1970s and 1980s, found that this traditional division had become less significant. The major lines of co-operation and conflict no longer run parallel with particular institutions but cut across them. Each sector has its special decision-making rules and routines for solving problems and resolving conflicts (Olsen 1978).

The segmentation of politics is a necessity if democracy is to be realised in practice. However, it also means that democracy is faced with major dilemmas. The advantage of sectorisation is that specialisation helps the decision-making process to function. Different interests and the parties concerned are given the opportunity to contribute knowledge which forms the basis for policy proposals and decisions. Being able to find support for public decisions among different social groups makes their implementation easier.

The disadvantage is that the general interest can suffer as a result. Close contacts between politicians and special interests may obstruct open and free debate about various alternative courses of action. The sectoral decision-making arenas are often closed to

criticism, innovation and insight. Public bodies find it difficult to serve as independent organs of supervision. Close relations between the protagonists in each sector lead to an ambiguous division of roles. In the context of their client relationships, politicians risk becoming the prisoners of special interest groups.

Significant variations exist among the various sectors. Access to the decision-making arenas may be especially restricted in different policy areas. An extreme instance is provided by the iron triangles formed by the interest organisations, parliamentarians and civil servants in certain sectors. Political science has generally considered that the iron triangles have a negative effect on democracy. The participants in such closed circles are bound together by mutual ties of loyalty and tend to obstruct the participation of new protagonists and ideas in the evolution of political decisions. Within these enclosed environments a form of group-thinking readily develops which has been shown to have grave consequences for the evaluative faculty, the sense of reality and the moral judgement of those involved (Janis 1972). Other segments may be more open. These may be described as more loosely organised policy networks with a relatively large number of different parties involved, none of which has the power to exclude another from access to the decision-making arena (Heclo 1978). Most decision-making environments are located somewhere between the extremes of the iron triangle and the policy network.[1]

[11] The concept of corporatism refers to collaboration between the interest organisations and the state. Since private companies often form part of sectoral politics, we have not made use of this concept. A good deal of social science research has focused on sectoral politics. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used. The vast majority of studies have concentrated on decision-making within sectors and the relative influence of the various actors involved (see e.g. Jordan & Schubert 1992). Attempts have also been made to determine the scale of the sectors and the extent to which they overlap. The aim has been to chart the relationship between the issues and the actors involved (Laumann & Knoke 1987; Burstein 1991). However, the literature on sectoral politics has paid little attention to the issue of political leadership. In recent years research has mainly concerned the way in which the sectors are run (Yaffee 1995; Klijn, Koopenjan & Termeer 1995). The difficulties involved in reforming closed decision-making spheres has been attested to by both researchers and commentators (Peterson 1993; Atkinson & Coleman 1992; Peterson, Rabe & Wong 1986; Feldt 1991; Stockman 1986). Few, if any, studies have been concerned with the democratic role of politicians and their responsibilities for representing the public interest in sectoral decision-making. The explanation lies in the general tendency to equate politicians with the other actors in the sector. Our study is based on the notion that politicians have a special role to play in the decision-making process.

Measuring Democracy in Sectoral Politics

The criteria of the Democratic Audit may be used to evaluate democratic leadership in a segmented political system. The question is whether elected politicians can satisfy the requirements for popular, constitutional and effective government in a sectorally segmented decision-making process.

One of the democratic requirements affecting sectoral decision-making is that elected politicians cannot simply choose among already proposed alternatives but should also enjoy real opportunities to decide on what the alternative proposals should be and how they should be developed so as to meet the general public interest. Naturally this does not mean that other protagonists should be prevented from putting forward proposals, the key point is that the special interests should not be able to manipulate the power of politicians to set the agenda.

Elected representatives should therefore have at their disposal an overview of the problem and have access to as complete a basis for decision-making as possible. Politicians need in consequence to ensure that they listen to and understand all points of view. The political actors concerned must be allowed into the decision-making process. Voluntary associations, civil servants, private companies, groups of citizens and individuals must be given the opportunity to contribute their own points of view. The decision-making arenas must therefore meet the requirement for social representativeness. An open and critical discussion about the political possibilities for action can be promoted by politicians who are prepared to argue for their own alternative proposals in the course of electoral campaigns. At the same time it is important that politicians are willing to listen and are prepared to re-evaluate their own views. An attitude that is too fixed and too defensive in relation to the voters risks undermining the democratic legitimacy of political decisions.

A smoothly working process of opinion formation is needed in order to meet the requirement of democracy that the principle of government by the people should determine a decision-making process organised on a sectoral basis. Politicians may bring debates to a halt by making their own point of view an issue of

political prestige. Journalists have a major role to play here as a result of their power to shape the image of the decision-making process. When politics is depicted as a tug-of-war or a personal conflict, rational argument risks being overshadowed. The different political actors concerned have to be allowed to put forward and defend their viewpoints.

The second main criterion for a democratic polity, constitutional government, is satisfied primarily through the observation of the principle of the separation of powers. In order for public power to be subject to control, the exercise of power must be regulated by a clearly-defined and predetermined division of responsibilities. It is in this context that a significant risk exists that politics organised on a sectoral basis will tend to muddy the roles and responsibilities assigned by the traditional separation of powers. Normally the segmented process of decision-making is informal and unregulated. The absence of an organised decision-making process informed by a systematic evaluation of both its advantages and disadvantages may result in an impoverishment of the quality of the decisions arrived at. The special interests may gain a disproportional influence. Separate roles tend to coalesce and the supervisory role of the state is diminished. The Norwegian Study of Power and Democracy from the 1970s and 1980s characterised this system as a negotiated economy with mixed administration (Hernes 1978).

Finally, a democratic system has to meet the requirement for effective government. It is commonly understood that it is on this point that politics organised on a sectoral basis enjoys its only distinct advantage. The disadvantages in relation to popular and constitutional government are supposed to be compensated for by the fact that the system actually produces decisions capable of implementation.

The requirement for effective government has to be evaluated on the basis of the capacity of politicians to monitor and compare alternative courses of action in relation to costs and benefits. Experience shows that it is easier for the various sectors to expand than to reduce the level of demands they make on state resources. It is much simpler to persuade the different political actors involved to agree on increases in expenditure than to agree

to make savings. The difficult task of prioritising and balancing different sectoral demands can only be solved by politicians who have an overall view of the budgetary situation and who are able to balance conflicting claims on resources as part of an open debate.

The problems of sectoral politics will be illustrated here with reference to two case studies. They affect widely disparate areas of concern but have a number of important features in common. The decision-making process in question has led to public debate and criticism, special interests have been blamed for having illegitimately acquired the advantage and new political actors have tried to participate in the discussion. The first case is the package of proposals known as the Dennis Agreement (*Dennispaketet*), which is intended to illustrate the difficulty of implementing major long-term decisions within the field of transport policy. The second case concerns the hunting of small game which led to an exacting conflict in the beginning of the 1990s. The chapter ends with a short account of the decision-making arena of the social insurance system and a general discussion on democracy and sectoral politics.

Transport Policy

The roots of the transport policy decision-making sphere can be traced back long before the advent of democratic government. Over the centuries a pattern of co-operation developed which has remained remarkably stable in terms of its fundamental features. Individual entrepreneurs have long been involved in the transport systems used by society. During the twentieth century interest organisations were formed with the aim of promoting those issues which most directly affected them. Debate within the sector has been particularly concerned with the division of responsibility between the public and the private sectors in relation to the building and financing of roads and railways; the advantages and disadvantages of the various technical solutions have also been given a high priority on the agenda.

The idea that major investment in infrastructure may promote industrialisation, employment and growth has given transport

policy an importance all of its own. During the present century transport policy has as a result been shaped by the values and patterns of conflict of industrial society. Towards the end of the 1960s, official transport policy started to become subject to criticism from environmental groups and regional interests. In the last few decades a significant number of road-building and other transport projects have been the target of protests by extraparliamentary groups.

As a result of initiatives made by the European Roundtable of Industrialists and several other industrial consortia, transport policy was back in the spotlight once more in the 1980s. The aim was to get the state involved in major infrastructure investment projects. One example was the Scandinavian Link, intended to safeguard the transport links between Oslo and Hamburg via Sweden and Denmark. One of the projects involved was the Uddevalla proposal, forty kilometres of motorway on the west coast of Sweden between Stenungsund and Uddevalla (Falkemark & Westdahl 1991). It was in the context of this project that the issue of a transport link over the Sound between Sweden and Denmark was brought to the fore again. Both the government and several major companies set up studies into the transport situation in the metropolitan areas.

Experience had shown that the municipalities and the county councils in Sweden's three largest cities, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö were incapable of solving traffic problems on their own. The political institutions at local and regional level were clearly not suited to make investments of this magnitude. The minister of transport and communications complained of the difficulty in achieving solutions which were universally acceptable: "A large number of different local, regional, government and other bodies and groups represent their own particular interests" (dir. 1990:21, 106).

The means chosen for solving this problem were in one respect typical of Swedish politics. Three experienced men were appointed by the government to conduct the negotiations. These negotiations, one for each of the three major cities, were made subject to a small but crucial number of limitations on which the participation of central government depended. They were to

achieve three goals: to improve the environmental situation of the region concerned, to improve access and to create the conditions necessary for the development of the region. They had less than a year in which to carry out their assignment. It was also made clear that central government would only foot part of the final bill. Municipalities, county councils, companies and private individuals would be obliged to contribute to the overall financing. Finally, the negotiators were to "co-operate with the government and the municipal authorities, the county councils and industry in order to achieve effective planning and organisational solutions" (dir. 1990:21, 107). The government clearly identified a number of the political actors to be consulted but refrained from identifying others who could nevertheless be expected to have strong views, such as the environmental and NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) groups, motorists, the trade union movement and the employer organisations. The negotiators appointed for each of the three cities set out their plans in much the same way. It should be pointed out that there was an overwhelming preponderance of men among those participating in this process. The negotiations resulted in agreements between the Social Democratic Party and the Moderate Party; in Stockholm and Gothenburg, the Liberal Party was also a signatory to the compromise.

The negotiations were effective and successful to the extent that they resulted in agreements based around the three major political parties in the metropolitan areas. However, it would soon become clear that there remained much to achieve before they could be practically implemented. In Gothenburg the compromise was built on relatively shaky foundations. The whole agreement is now being reassessed. The Malmö-deal was less comprehensive and therefore easier to implement. However, all the necessary permits have not been obtained and the work has yet to start. The agreement in Stockholm, which was arrived at under the leadership of Bengt Dennis—at the time of the transport policy discussion head of the Bank of Sweden—was particularly complicated and divisive. For this reason special attention will be paid here to an examination of the Dennis Agreement.

Even before the start of negotiations about the traffic problems of Stockholm, various interest groups had begun to mobilise

support for their particular projects. The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce campaigned quite openly; the Swedish Road Federation (*Svenska Vägföreningen*) worked mainly in the wings; the *Österled* (Eastern Urban Motorway) Consortium was formed in 1986 to campaign for support from politicians (Falkemark 1994; Halldin 1995; Adeström 1995). These bodies were among the first to be invited to discuss transport issues with the head negotiator. Subsequently the political parties in Stockholm were asked to attend, each in turn, to discuss their views on the traffic and environmental problems affecting Stockholm. It was at this point that the mass media started to focus attention on the situation. On the basis of their consultations with the parties, Dennis and his assistants set out a proposal, which had, it was stated, to be accepted in its entirety or not at all, and which came therefore to be known as the Dennis Package Deal (Malmsten 1993). The parties found themselves obliged to respond rapidly to the deal proposed.

Discontent with the negotiating procedure spread to other political spheres. Several interest groups also began to organise opposition to the proposals. As a result it became impossible to conduct an open and free debate on the traffic problems facing Greater Stockholm. Positions hardened and political prestige was, in consequence, at stake. Both proponents and opponents insisted they had popular opinion on their side. Opinion poll surveys were commissioned. Motorists threatened to form a political party of their own under the banner "no road tolls, no car party". The environmental movement declared itself opposed to any proposal to build new urban motorways. The municipalities in the Stockholm area started to debate the issue. Local councillors in Ekerö, a Stockholm suburb, declared that they would use all the legal means at their disposal to stop the *Västerled* (Western Urban Motorway) Project. At this point the politicians would have been in a position to ensure public support by means of a referendum on the Dennis Agreement. The parties who signed up for the compromise failed to support this option.

A preliminary agreement was signed in January 1991. The question remains as to what was actually achieved by this agreement. The most controversial aspects of the traffic policy of the

Greater Stockholm area—the Eastern and Western Urban Motorway Projects together with road tolls for access to the main routes into the centre of Stockholm—were not included. The hasty preparation was explained with reference to the ticking of the political clock. The parties that backed the proposal needed to show that they could reach an agreement in order for central government to include the necessary financing as part of the national budget. The parties also hoped that the compromise would remove the issue from the upcoming electoral campaign (Halldin 1995, 23). In both respects this was a successful strategy. The price, however, from the point of view of democracy was a high one. Practical and tactical considerations were given higher priority than meeting the requirement of popular government.

The negotiations continued after the elections of the autumn and new arguments were put forward in the course of the debate. By 1992 the three parties were able to agree on the three remaining controversial parts. This was after a long period in which the negotiating partners were far from reaching agreement. A look back at the years 1990–1992 makes clear that on several occasions it appeared as if no agreement of any kind would be possible. The fact that the electoral support of the parties differed in regional terms made the compromise an extremely sensitive one. The driving force behind the agreement did not derive primarily from the voters or the political parties but from government and private industry. Both put pressure on the parties to arrive at an agreement. The Dennis Agreement was subsequently approved of by parliament and the Cabinet. The majority, although not all, of the municipalities have also accepted the agreement.

Agreement did not, however, lead to the disappearance of transport policy from the political agenda in Stockholm. New and established interest groups helped keep the Dennis Agreement in the spotlight of public debate. The process of opinion formation around the issue came to resemble that of the nuclear power debate, a highly politicised issue in the 1970s that engaged considerable numbers of concerned citizens.

It has now been over six years since the Government issued its directive. The first impression of decisiveness and readiness for action has long since paled. It remains an open question today to

what extent the Dennis Agreement will be implemented. Many of the subsidiary projects have been postponed and the only thing that seems clear is that tax-payers will be bearing the burden for years to come. The problems involved have become increasingly complicated. The parties which lined up behind the Agreement have also been affected by internal conflicts, as the viewpoints they put forward were not firmly entrenched among their members and sympathisers.

The parties have made several attempts to improve the situation. Their leaders have listened to the criticisms and improved the social representativeness of the negotiating groups. In 1994 Stockholm's local authority and the Stockholm County Council decided to open a communications chancery, (*Denniskansliet*). They have also begun to invite interested political actors to collaborate on the future implementation of the whole package of proposals. The question of to what extent these efforts will be sufficient to restore the public legitimacy of the parties concerned and to satisfy in a more adequate fashion the requirements of popular government remains unanswered. The situation is characterised to a considerable degree by fanaticism on the part both of the opponents and the proponents. Many of those who are against the Dennis Agreement feel that they have not been listened to. Those who want to see the project implemented have become distrustful and discouraged by the conflicts, cost rises and political incompetence (Rosenthal, Tamker & Åkerlund 1995).

The history of the Dennis Agreement and its counterparts in Malmö and Gothenburg provides important lessons on political decision-making in the post-industrial society. A key issue is why the negotiators chose to structure their discussions as they did and why local and regional politicians accepted the limitations imposed in the government's directive. Why did the negotiators consider it was sufficient to bring together the Social Democratic, Moderate and the Liberal parties in order to form a sustainable majority? In the light of the analysis presented in chapter 3, this would not appear to be a matter of chance, as these are the very political parties who have the strongest representation among the power elite. The investments to be made by industry were to be an important precondition of the negotiating process. The

negotiators acted entirely in accord with the government's wishes when they gave priority to the Social Democrats, the Moderates and the Liberals as parties to the negotiation.

These negotiations could only be approved from the democratic perspective if an extremely restrictive concept of democracy is applied. This kind of elite compromise was the norm in Sweden several decades ago and may be said to have formed the corner-stone of the old decision-making culture of the Swedish model. There are several reasons why such a celebrated model of negotiation is no longer tenable. Today's voters are no longer as respectful of authority and no longer accept direction from the power elite as a matter of course. Ecological considerations have become much more prominent and make political solutions impossible which only take into account the interests of economic growth. The position of the party leaders has become much more precarious and the scope available for elite compromises has diminished.

The concept of democracy to be found in the old model was able to accept a consensus based on iron triangles and group thinking. It was the leaders in that period who determined the way problems were conceptualised, decided which protagonists would take part in the decision-making process and laid down which solutions should be considered best in terms of the public interest.

An assessment based on the criteria of the Democratic Audit highlights several problematic matters. There are good reasons to question whether the criteria for popular government have been met. The reality was far from the ideal in terms of effective participation and equality in decision-making; those who participated in the decision-making were far from representative. Apart from the Centre, Left and Stockholm parties none of the political actors who represent new and alternative points of view were consulted in the preparatory discussions; nor did any of them take part in the negotiations themselves. The general public was provided with little information and few opportunities to engage in discussion on the contents of the negotiations. The larger parties avoided one of the major issues affecting the future in both the 1991 and 1994 electoral campaigns. The opportunity

both to shape and to sound out public opinion was not exploited; no referendum was ever announced.

The decision-making process also had major shortcomings from the point of view of constitutional government. Transport policy was shown to be characterised by a lack of distinct roles and clear division of responsibility. A considerable number of political actors within private industry behaved more like political parties. They sought the support of the voters and used results from opinion surveys which they commissioned themselves as arguments for their projects. Opinion surveys developed into an important weapon in the propaganda arsenal. In the name of popular opinion special interest groups were able to put themselves forward as the representatives of the general public. At the same time as the economic interests functioned as political parties, popularly elected politicians frequently appeared to be functioning as special interest groups. The parties acted as private companies (cf. Brunsson 1993). They avoided submitting the package of proposals to the court of popular opinion in general elections. Several politicians had also long been part of the iron triangle of transport policy. The problems that dominated the restricted world-view of their particular sector failed to coincide with those on the party manifestos or with the voters' demands.

The role of the administrative authorities can also be questioned. The National Road Administration (*Vägverket*) behaved as though it were both a political party and a special interest group. The question is whether it is part of the responsibility of an administrative agency to attempt to persuade the public on controversial political matters by hiring media consultants. The National Road Administration also entered an alliance with the Swedish Road Federation (*Vägföreningen*), and civil servants employed by the National Road Administration refrained from criticising the Dennis Agreement because they were afraid of sanctions (Ahlstrand 1995, 61). As a result the board could not meet its responsibilities as an independent supervisory agency. The grey area between the public and private sectors may have contributed to the relaxing of the boundaries between their respective responsibilities. Österleden AB, a listed company formed to implement the Eastern Urban Motorway Project, was

purchased by the National Road Administration and thus became part of the administrative authority's efforts to put the Dennis Agreement into effect. As a result of this purchase several individuals from the company were employed in the unit run by the National Road Administration.

A further example of a lack of clarity in the allocation of roles is provided by experts and journalists. University professors in several subjects were engaged in the debate both for and against the agreement. It was often impossible to know if they were arguing on the basis of their expertise or whether they were using their academic titles to promote their private viewpoints. The same kind of problem could be discerned in the mass media.

It may be possible to argue that the indistinct allocation of responsibilities we see today is part of the ongoing transformation of the public sector. Nevertheless it is not at all appropriate that public decisions be made in such a way that erodes the ability of politicians to be politicians. A democratic leader should proactively take up the responsibility of representing the general interest. Our case study clearly shows the need to increase the capability of politicians to meet this major responsibility.

Nor can the Dennis-negotiations be given a positive mark in terms of effective government. None of the parties involved was in possession of a full overview of the economic costs. Nor did they seem disposed to arrange for one to be provided. The cost estimates of the special interest groups were seldom questioned. General experience, confirmed by a well-known Swedish study, indicates that the special interests have a strong tendency to underestimate the costs and overestimate the benefits of their favourite projects (Lindbeck et al. 1994). Estimates of other kinds of consequences were also missing. The shortcoming of the Dennis Package Deal in not paying adequate attention to environmental issues was also dealt with in the government's Bill (prop. 1993/4:86). Criticism over a lack of consideration for environmental factors was even presented in special reports and remittal statements on the agreement formulated by various political actors (Halldin 1995).

This case study in sectoral politics shows that the leadership capacity of politicians leaves much to be desired. Although the

parties themselves were aware of the transport problems and were prepared to find solutions, the government's intervention forced them to accept a package agreement which had major shortcomings in economic, political and even to some extent in technical respects. The fact that the decision-making process extended over several territorial levels created problems of its own. The pressure exerted by the government on the negotiators to conclude agreements quickly may be interpreted as strong leadership. But effective government performance was achieved at the cost of local self-government and public support. Local politicians were tempted to subordinate government by the people and the separation of powers to economic inducements and promises of central government support.

Is the Dennis Agreement a unique case or is it the norm for politicians to fall victim to the particular risks of sectoral politics? Unfortunately the current state of research suggests that this case is no exception. Ambiguous roles and a lack of clear responsibility create problems for democracy. Dialogue and agreement are part of a living democracy, but the form of negotiation culture that develops within particular sectors often brings with it major disadvantages. The decision-making process on issues to do with major infrastructure investments shows that it can be difficult to meet the requirements of open and critical debate. Goal conflicts are concealed and cost estimates are inadequate (see also Falkemark & Westdahl 1991).

The solution of the problems can hardly be state regulation of infrastructure policy. The issue is not what the state ought to do, but rather what the politician should do to ensure that the decision-making process provides adequate scope to take account of the general interest.

Hunting Policy

The history of hunting policy can be traced far back in time. The power over who could hunt and what could be hunted provided the crown with an opportunity to demonstrate that it ruled the country. State regulation increased during the seventeenth cen-

tury. Hunting rights were one of the most controversial issues in the Parliament of the Estates. As a reaction to the ideas expressed in the French revolution, the state returned to the peasants the right to hunt on their own land. The misuse of this right led to renewed regulation by the state. During the nineteenth century the character of hunting policy changed. Hunters started to organise and to promote their particular interests. The hunters' organisations had gained an established position in the state system of regulation by the time the 1938 law on hunting was enacted.

The method for making decisions relating to hunting has followed the general trend in Swedish policy. The decision-making power was first centralised and sectorised. The Swedish Hunters' Association (*Svenska jägareförbundet*), the largest hunting organisation in the country, was accorded special status by the government and admitted to the political decision-making process. Nowadays, the municipalities have a greater measure of responsibility for the care of game animals as a result of the wave of decentralisation. A 1988 framework law lays down the legal requirements and Sweden has ratified several international conventions on hunting (SOU 1983:21; Tillhagen 1987).

The difficulty of realising a democratic form of leadership in sectoral decision-making processes is made clear in the decisions that have been arrived at in relation to the hunting of small game and fishing outside the zone of cultivation and in reindeer-grazing land above the tree line. This case illustrates the problems that may arise in a decision-making arena which traditionally comprised only a small number of political actors, who were able to set their own agenda and were free to exert great influence over the making of political decisions.

Small game hunting did not become an important political issue until the beginning of the 1990s. The parliamentary commission set up at the end of the 1970s (SOU 1983:21) on hunting and the care of game animals together with the commission investigating the rights of the Sami set up in the 1980s (SOU 1989:41) had touched on the subject. The major factor, however, was the request put to the Government by the Swedish Hunters' Association and the Federation of Swedish Farmers (*Lantbrukarnas riksförbund*) to open the mountain areas above the tree line to

hunting and fishing by all hunters. These two organisations have traditionally had good contacts with the government, particularly with the ministry of agriculture, and have actively participated in the decision-making arena of hunting and agriculture. Behind the initiative lay the concerns of the organisations with the system for awarding hunting licenses. The time factor was a key issue. The aim of the organisations was that their proposal should be dealt with in the government's legislation on the herding of reindeer (prop. 1990/91:4). The remittal procedure made clear, however, that there was little support for the proposal. An important factor that was highlighted was the need for good working relations between the huntsmen and the Sami, the indigenous people of the North (prop. 1990/91:4,51–52; Samediggi – Sametinget 1994, 25–26). The Social Democrat minister of agriculture Mats Hellström accepted this and decided not to include the proposal in the government's bill. This should not be taken to mean, however, that he opposed the hunting of small game.

The Swedish Hunters' Association and the Federation of Swedish Farmers refused to accept the rejection of their proposal. Instead of seeking to collaborate with the Sami, they intensified their lobbying of politicians. They put forward a revised proposal to the government's experts on Sami issues, who put the proposal back at the top of the sector's agenda. This time the proposal was sent to a limited number of political actors for their views. Those given the chance to comment on the proposal failed to include all those affected, and did not even include all those considered to belong to the sector. Criticism of the initiative was revived. The ministry of agriculture then reworked the proposal taking into consideration some of the criticisms made by the political actors to whom the proposal had originally been referred. The new proposal was more comprehensive and the non-Socialist government made clear in their Sami bill that they were prepared to go to greater lengths to assert the land-rights of the state north of the zone of cultivation (prop. 1992/93:32).

The change of government in 1991 had obviously been of major significance in bringing about a more favourable response to the demands of the hunters. The agriculture minister was now Karl-Erik Olsson of the Centre Party, well-known for his close

contacts with the organised interest groups within the agricultural sector. A further explanatory factor can be found in the fact that public opinion supported the hunters, which was made clear in an opinion survey commissioned by the Swedish Hunters' Association. Individual civil servants within the ministry of agriculture also exerted great influence on hunting policy. Over the years they had become dependable participants in the hunting policy sector. On the other hand little attention was paid to the consequences in terms of the state's relations with the Sami and the cultural identity of the Sami. Sami issues do not form a sectoral network of their own but are spread across several ministries and policy sectors.

The proposal that "the granting of rights for hunting and fishing shall be extended to include all land where no significant inconvenience is caused to reindeer herding or where the hunting and fishing rights of Sami collectives are not infringed" turned out to be very controversial (prop. 1992/93:32, 131). The Sami expressed their displeasure both through parliamentary and extra-parliamentary channels. Other political actors also got involved. The Office of the Ethnic Discrimination Ombudsman (*Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*), an administrative agency responsible for investigating discrimination against minorities and ethnic groups, appealed to the standing committee involved to allow the next assembly of the Sami Parliament to give its opinion on the matter before a decision was made by the Riksdag (Samediggi – Sametinget 1994). MPs from the Left, Social Democratic and Christian Democrat parties moved amendments critical of the new proposal. The Bill and the reactions of the Sami to it attracted a relatively great deal of attention in the media. Nevertheless a majority of the Riksdag voted in favour of the Bill.

However, the issue stubbornly refused to disappear from the political agenda. The methods adopted by the Agricultural Marketing Board (*Jordbruksnämnden*) and the county administrative boards (*länsstyrelser*) to implement the new law also led to protests. The administrative authorities were given the task of jointly revising proposals for the development of the licensing system. The lack of consultation participation was equally apparent here. The interests of the Sami and the environmentalists were given

much less consideration than those of the organised hunters. As a result the law lacked legitimacy for a large number of social groups and explains why the issue of the hunting of small game became so controversial and so polarised (Andersson et al. 1993; Vår Fågelvärld 1995).

There was another change of government as a result of the general elections in 1994. The new Social Democrat minister of agriculture, the first woman in this post, admitted that the issue of the hunting of small game had been badly handled by the government and parliament and that the result had been a deterioration in the climate of collaboration between the Sami and the rest of the population. Margareta Winberg promised that the government would subsequently "handle these issues by agreement with the Sami and their representatives". "If the legislation and its implementation takes place with respect for the conditions of the Sami and the demands of Nature, this will be of advantage for all the parties concerned (Winberg 1995a, 5; see also Winberg 1995b).

However, the commission she appointed in 1994 to study and report on hunting is following exactly the same course as practised in the old sectoral politics with one exception. The fact that the problems of hunters without land forms part of the committee's directive indicates that the issue of small game hunting has been deemed an important matter for the commission to investigate (dir 1994:127). The composition of the commission reflects the traditional appearance of the sector. The majority of experts are hunters or representatives of hunting interests. The Federation of Swedish Farmers and the timber industry each have a representative. Nature conservancy has an expert in place, but the Sami have no representative on the commission. The only new element in the list of participants is that the commission decided to engage a greater number of women. Through an increase in the number of experts, positions were created for a number of women, in several cases hunters themselves.

Over the years an increasing number of political actors have been drawn into the conflict over the hunting of small game, which has also developed into an important symbolic issue for the Sami. In September 1995 the Sami appealed to the European

Court of Justice to determine whether the state was guilty of exceeding its powers over Sami hunting and fishing rights (Baer 1995). Other important actors are interest organisations and administrative authorities within the environmental sphere. Their objections apply both to the threat posed by hunting to the environment and the judicial rights of the Sami. The issue of the legal situation in relation to land north of the cultivation zone was not discussed either in the Bill or the report of the parliamentary standing committee. This silence becomes all the more remarkable when seen in the light of the special instructions given the parliamentary commission on the legal status of the Sami to strengthen those same rights (Ds 1995:47, 72). Sweden's Ornithological Association (*Sveriges ornitologiska förening*) asserted that the ministry of agriculture had neither the ambition nor the capacity to hear the views of representatives of nature conservancy on these controversial issues (Vår Fågelvärld 1995).

A number of bodies have expressed concern about the dominant role played by the Swedish Hunters' Association in the field of hunting policy. The Sami and the nature conservancy groups consider the hunters' organisation to be much too powerful and that its privileged relations with central government must be reconsidered. Similar viewpoints have also been expressed in parliamentary motions moved by the Social Democrats, the Centre Party, the Left Party and the Greens. The government has also directed the new commission of inquiry into hunting to take note of these considerations (dir 1994:127).

The controversy surround the hunting of small game brings a number of major problems relating to democracy to the fore. Did the decision-making process meet the requirements for popular, constitutional and effective government? What role did politicians play in the decision-making arena of hunting policy?

The requirements in relation to popular government failed to be fully met. Many of the interest groups concerned were not allowed to participate in the discussions which preceded the decision. Several other political actors who had gained access to the arena found it difficult to get a hearing for their points of view. The organised hunters and farmers were accorded a higher priority than the Sami, who do not oppose the hunting of small game

but demand the right to decide for themselves on the allocation of hunting rights, and the nature conservationists, the majority of whom were opposed to any hunting of small game whatsoever. The decision-making process failed as a result to be informed by an open and wide-ranging debate on the balancing of the interests involved and on how those interests might be prioritised. The hunting sector provided evidence once more of closed group thinking and the consequence was polarisation and a failure to gain public support.

Nor were the requirements of constitutional government met satisfactorily either. There were numerous examples of ambiguous roles and an indistinct division of responsibilities. The case study illustrates the way in which sectoral politics tended to erase the boundary between the state and the organised interest groups and encouraged corporatist solutions to political problems. The quasi-official status of the Swedish Hunters' Association was to have a major effect on the way the issue was dealt with. The state and the Swedish Hunters' Association were locked together in a symbiotic relationship of mutual dependency. The Swedish Hunters' Association performed both as an expert witness for the state and as a group representing the interest of its members. The blending of these roles made it more difficult to call those responsible to account. These problems are being attended to in the new commission of inquiry into hunting; the government considers that there is "good reason to reassess the allocation of responsibilities between the administrative authorities and the interest organisations" (dir 1994:127, 6). The treatment of the Sami also gives cause for concern from the point of view of constitutional government. The question of fundamental principle—the land-rights of the Sami—has never been satisfactorily answered. It is particularly remarkable that the government failed to delay its most vital legislative decisions on hunting rights until the Sami had got their assembly, the Sami Parliament, up and running and been given the chance to put forward their views on the proposed changes.

Another weakness of the decision-making process was that the interests of the environmental and nature conservancy groups were not taken sufficiently into consideration. No investigation

into the consequences for the environment was undertaken prior to the law being passed.

An investigation of the process that preceded the decision on the hunting of small game shows that the politicians remained relatively passive. They did not ensure that the interest groups and the various other bodies concerned were allowed to participate in the consultations. The evidence was rather one-sided as a result.

It may appear as if the politicians presuppose that all the actors are able to function like the Swedish Hunters' Association and the Federation of Swedish Farmers and will be in a position to make the same effective use of lobbying techniques in their contacts with politicians. It is, however, a fact that not all the political actors involved enjoy the level of resources necessary to exploit the whole arsenal of modern methods of persuasion. The Sami, the environmental groups and many others assumed that the traditional standard operating practices would apply in their case. They sat waiting for the matter to be initiated by being referred to all the groups concerned—which turned out not always to be the case. The referral system became partisan as only a few of the categories of interested groups were contacted. Their close contacts with the ministry of agriculture meant that the hunters and the farmers were always one step ahead of the other interest groups involved.

Research into iron triangles and networks has shown that public officials may play a key role in the decision-making process. There is evidence to indicate that the Sami and the environmentalists were disadvantaged in the administrative handling of the issue (Andersson et al. 1993, 21; Samediggi – Sametinget 1994). These groups were only allowed to participate once the decision had been made and only the details of implementation remained to be discussed (Ds 1995;47, 63).

All the evidence would suggest that the decision reached on the hunting of small game is not an isolated exception. Other studies of decision-making within the spheres of hunting and fishing have clearly revealed that a number of dominant actors have been able to exert a disproportionate influence. The agricultural sector is usually used as a paradigm of the iron triangle. Even if there is a general tendency for established iron triangles

to start to corrode and to be faced with challenges from new groups, it remains a fact that many established sectors still favour the interests which have long formed part of their particular decision-making procedures. Today, the Federation of Swedish Farmers continues to enjoy a special status in relation to other concerned interest groups.

In a number of cases politicians have attempted to compensate for the strength of the major interest groups by including new ones, such as consumers, but politicians have seldom taken control of the decision-making arena themselves (Micheletti 1990). A study of the decisions made on sports fishing found that politicians are passive. There is apparently "a significant lack of concern among the political decision-makers concerning the consequences for the development of fishing resources" (Ds 1995;47, 17). One of the main reasons is that many of the interest organisations in the fishing industry choose their chairpersons from among parliamentarians or other groups with influence over the way fishing policy is shaped. Once more we see illustrated the way in which sectoral politics mixes up roles and dilutes responsibility. It is "unclear whether it is the state which regulates the industry or the industry which regulates the state" (Ds 1995:47,8).

The inevitable conclusion is that significant aspects of Swedish public policy can hardly reflect the common interest. In many cases politicians have simply accepted the fact that the decisions of parliament represent the interests of a well-organised few. In these areas the decisions arrived at have been more an expression of the will of the special interests than that of the people.

The Policy Sectors and the Future of Democracy

The assessment from the democratic perspective of the fields of transport and hunting policy makes for depressing reading. The requirement of popular government can hardly be said to have been satisfied. The examination also shows that these two decision-making arenas do not meet the requirements of constitutional rule for the separation of powers. The participating actors have not respected the boundaries of their own authority, which

makes it more difficult to carry out an objective assessment of the issues and to maintain public supervision. The sectorisation of politics has often been justified by the need for effective government. However, this third criterion of democracy cannot be said to have been satisfied either.

Our case studies clearly show how difficult it is for new political actors and new issues to gain access to the established decision-making arenas. The sectors are distinguished by their selective openness: they are open to certain actors, but closed to others. It is not our view, however, that all the doors to the decision-making arenas can be kept open. What is of overriding importance from the perspective of democracy is *who* determines the conditions of access. The examples show that it is by no means certain that politicians have the power to control such access. The need for political leadership is obvious. The legitimacy of democratic government is threatened within those sectors which obstruct open debate on the different viewpoints and on alternative courses of action.

These studies of transport and hunting policy give rise to an important question. Do politicians *always* play a passive role in the sectoral decision-making arenas? A comparison with a very different sector shows that politicians can play and actually have played an active role, but that a great many external factors affect their preparedness to take on a more prominent role. This is the case within social insurance policy. By its very nature this is a complex area, comprising many different insurance schemes. The major conflicts in this sphere have tended to follow the left–right dimension (Fürth 1980; Hermansson 1993).

Social insurance schemes have been high on the political agenda on a number of occasions. However, in contrast to transport and hunting policy it has been parliamentary commissions of inquiry that have pushed for legislation. The requirements of popular government have been better met within this sector. The pensions issue was even made the subject of a consultative national referendum. Politicians, including key Cabinet ministers, have also been heavily committed to the social insurance sector and have therefore taken greater responsibility for its decision-making processes (Hermansson 1993). The political parties have

adopted clearly defined viewpoints on these matters which they have then put to the voters and as a result have behaved as responsible bodies.

The separation of powers has also been more satisfactorily respected within the field of social insurance. With the exception of unemployment insurance, the interest groups have played a subordinate role in relation to politicians. Few companies have marketed their own projects. The vast majority of special interest groups have channelled their demands via the political parties. The administrative authorities have acted in keeping with the public interest. Within this field the proper functioning of constitutional government has meant that public policy has been just and effective.

This positive evaluation is based on an historical retrospective. The current situation calls for a new examination of the field. Social insurance policy is nowadays significantly more problematic. The good marks awarded for satisfactory government performance have to be reduced. Social insurance has become increasingly expensive and there is currently a great deal of evidence that the social insurance system has led to unforeseen and negative sideeffects both for individuals and public institutions (Eklund 1993).

What has occurred to give rise to a reduced level of democracy in this sector? In no sense have political leaders remained ignorant of the problems. Demands have been made for a thoroughgoing reform since the beginning of the 1960s. A commission of inquiry, appointed in 1975, proposed a new model and new guidelines (SOU 1979:94). The idea was that parliament would set the targets for a simple and unified social insurance system which would integrate the various forms of insurance in stages. The proposal was met with positive responses from the political parties and other groups involved (prop. 1982/83:3). Given the strength of this support, and in the light of the major significance of social insurance for the majority of citizens, it is surprising that the government and parliament did not use the opportunity to make the reform proposal a reality.

The failure to make this decision illustrates the often difficult balancing act within a democracy between the principles of popu-

lar, constitutional and effective government. The report was presented a few months after the non-Socialist parties had returned to power and the proposal failed to be accorded the same priority as the promises they made in their electoral manifestos. The consequential effects of the second oil crisis also dominated the agenda of the government. The Cabinet restricted itself to a diluted legislative declaration of principle (prop. 1982/83:3), which was passed by parliament. The original reform proposal soon fell into oblivion.

The proposal of the commission of inquiry focused mainly on those aspects which fall under the heading of constitutional government. During the subsequent years, however, problems relating to the requirement for effective government, lower levels of productivity and the lack of economic resources, were to dominate the political agenda. Instead of gearing up for a structural reform the politicians allowed the initiative to slip from their hands. Various details were referred to further commissions of inquiry. The more time passed, the harder it became for the politicians to exercise effective leadership. Gradually the politicians lost control over the development of the sector. The social insurance system started to run at a loss. It became increasingly clear that several of the major systems involved had negative social consequences (Eklund 1993). Social insurance became an ungovernable policy sector. The interest organisations and even the administrative authorities showed that their own interests were bound up with the prevailing system. Politicians were incapable of creating sufficient support for a comprehensive reform.

These problems led the expert group for research into public finance within the Treasury (*Expertgrupp för studier i offentlig ekonomi, ESO*) to start their own inquiry. The main reason was the alarming rise in costs within the social insurance sector. This initiative reflects concern over the incapacity of politicians to gain control over resources and to demonstrate effective leadership. No politicians took part in the inquiry, which was conducted instead by economists. The members of the inquiry proposed a new social insurance system (Ds 1994:81). Many of the referral agencies were critical; a certain number, however, responded positively. In common with its predecessors, this inquiry was also

to see its proposals left on the drawing-board. Nevertheless, the issue still remains on the political agenda.

Our evaluation of the state of democracy in the sector of social insurance started on a positive note. Changes within the area must, however, lead to a more negative assessment. Nowadays the social insurance sector also suffers from many of the problems which characterise the two previously investigated sectors. All three areas make clear that Swedish politicians are not capable of functioning as effective democratic leaders.

One of the most important elements of successful political leadership is a constructive capacity to discover whether ideological differences can be brought together in new, innovative combinations to promote the common good. In all the cases we looked at politicians have demonstrated their inadequacy in this regard. They have failed to make clear whether the differences of opinion are so profound that there can only be winners and losers or whether the conflicts are of such a kind that it is possible to reach a compromise solution which can lay the political foundations for lasting and legitimate decisions. Instead politicians have found themselves the political underdogs. They have given far too much credence to the threats posed by the special interest groups and the opposition of public officials to change.

The sectoral decision-making process is of major significance for the outcome of public policy. When the sectors are functioning properly they force public officials, interest organisations, politicians and employers to engage in dialogue and to try and find constructive solutions. In these circumstances they can contribute to the co-ordination of different spheres in society and help to improve the bases for dialogue, and for toleration and understanding for the points of view of others. As a result the participants can both contribute to gaining support for public decisions and in addition improve the general decision-making methods in different sectors (Gorpe & Hägg 1982, 141–151). This presupposes, however, that the participating actors have a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities and of those of others (Lane 1987).

Since the sectors are so significant in relation to the entire political process their shortcomings have major repercussions on the

conditions for democracy. At the same time the demands being made on the sectoral decision-making process have increased. Strong leadership can no longer be achieved by hierarchical organisation and elite democracy. The problem is that the current demands for broader participation can lead to a reduction in decision-making capacity. An extension of participation may, however, strengthen the legitimacy of politics and as a result facilitate the implementation of political decisions. The conclusion is that what is needed is a debate in principle on the way the sectors function (Klijn, Koopjan & Termeer 1995).

5 The Role and Responsibilities of the Politician

The ideal democracy is frequently described in terms of a set of positive institutions and decision-making rules. The model of democracy we have devised is no exception to this practice. There are good reasons why the procedures for the making of decisions should be accorded a key place in the definition of a properly democratic form of government. And yet this picture remains incomplete. A working democracy does not only impose requirements on institutions but also on individuals. Democracy can only work in a society of enlightened and responsible individuals. These requirements relating to the individual apply both to the citizen and to those elected to office. The demands made on the individual citizen are, of course, very significant ones, but must be beyond the scope of this report. Discussion will focus here on the demands that may be imposed on political leaders.

What Democracy Requires from Leadership

Even a great statesman like Abraham Lincoln considered that he did not lead but followed the people (Miroff 1993; Current 1996). The problem of leadership appears to contain a paradox. On the one hand politicians are expected to be sensitive to public opinion, while on the other they are supposed to be independent and to take an active part in the process of opinion formation. Good politicians should have the courage to raise inconvenient issues and to explain any views they hold that are unpopular. Democracy is based on the notion that both these expectations can be met by the same person. Democratic leadership requires a very particular form of interchange between the voters and the people they elect.

As a result the theory of democratic leadership clashes with a number of customary notions of what defines a good leader. A traditional and rather narrow concept of leadership is often formulated in terms of what are seen as typically masculine qualities. According to this stereotype male leadership is distinguished by its toughness and decisiveness, while qualities such as sympathy, honesty and a willingness to compromise are usually ascribed to women leaders (Alexander & Andersen 1993; cf. Krogstad 1991).[1] Discussion of leadership by women can contribute significantly to the discussion of a modern ideal of democratic leadership.

Over the centuries Machiavelli's *The Prince* has come to represent the acme of political leadership. The ideal of democratic leadership differs from his crude and purely instrumental power politics in two fundamental respects. First, democracy forbids certain violent and manipulative power techniques by reference to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizen. Second, the aim of the ideal of democratic leadership is not only to promote the interest of the individual but also to take into consideration the common institutions of government by the people.

Nor is it a given that all the ideas that have been developed for leadership and management in industry, for example, or in the realms of sport, defence and public administration, can simply be applied directly to those elected to political office. Democracy requires a very particular form of leadership – based on the fundamental democratic requirements of government by the people, the rule of law and effective political action.

Popular Government

One of the main requirements for a functioning government by the people is that the public and their elected representatives are free to set the political agenda and are also in a position to main-

[1] The issue of whether there are actual differences between men and women leaders is a very controversial one. There are many studies which provide evidence of a number of such differences, but the differences observed between men and women as leaders would seem to depend largely on the historical social context and the specific decision-making situation (Oskarson & Wägnerund 1995; Skjele 1992; Offerman & Beil 1992; Denmark 1997; Apfelbaum 1993).

tain a continuous dialogue with one another. This notion of ideal democracy does not mean that political leaders are passive instruments whose only role is to decipher public opinion. The politician really does have to lead from the front. In consequence the political leader must have a clearly defined identity. In a political system like that of Sweden, based on parliamentary government and proportional representation, what is required is both political parties with a distinct ideological profile and politicians with an identity of their own. The public should be able to identify those party politicians who have both a will of their own and a vision of a different society.

These general requirements should not be taken to mean that the politician should be the slave of a rigid ideology, blind to the desires of the voters and to the changes that have taken place in society. Every vision has to be interpreted, made concrete and adapted to a shifting reality. The good politician is one who succeeds in finding a balance when faced with the dilemma of satisfying the needs of both commitment and sensitivity.

Representative democracy requires two forms of dialogue, dialogue between politicians and dialogue between politicians and the public. No one has a monopoly on the truth in an open society. Competition and debate between different points of view are the life-blood of democracy. What is required for democratic debate is both personal conviction and a respect for the views of one's opponent. The existence of a vital and critical opposition to the government in power is of crucial importance. Skilled debaters are able to listen to their opponents, put forward counterarguments and make a case for their own viewpoint. A lively and objective exchange of views allows the public to orient themselves in the political landscape and gives them a basis of information on which to make their own political decisions. The verdict of the voters is made known in general elections; the outcome of the elections gives those elected a mandate to run the country.

A continuous process of dialogue between the electors and those elected is necessary for democracy to survive. It is particularly important in a society in which political office is usually a full-time occupation that politicians are in constant touch with those who elected them. Those elected to office need to be sensi-

tive to the wishes, demands and expectations of the public but must also be prepared to explain, to argue and to persuade. A key concept in the Swedish political tradition is that of the anchoring of decisions (*förankring*), which both refers to the gaining of public support and relates to the development of a consensus between the voters and those elected (cf. Lewin 1970). This is often a laborious and time-consuming process but one which at best can provide public policy with a popular foundation which in turn facilitates the implementation of decisions.

Political leadership is also vital from the perspective of deliberative politics (Eriksen 1995) and "discourse democracy" (Dryzek 1990). It is the responsibility of politicians not only to implement their programs but also to justify their actions in relation to the common good. Democracy is a set of procedures which provides scope for a reasoned debate based on argument and counter-argument. This means that an indivisible connection exists between democratic leadership, citizenship and the public.

Constitutional Government

A democratic polity must also be a form of government which respects constitutionalism. The fundamental requirements set by the principles of the rights and freedoms of the individual, the rule of law and the separation of powers also establish some of the important preconditions for political leadership. Public power is bound and limited by legal rules. The political decisions made in a democracy have the character of general principles, not of arbitrary or capricious decisions. Persons elected to office are expected to behave in accordance with the law and to strive for the common good and not for their own benefit. The democratic state founded on the rule of law is based on a separation of responsibility and authority. The administration of justice and the state are carried out by legal professionals and public officials who work under conditions of professional responsibility.

While the rule of law imposes restrictions on the scope that exists for the exercise of political power, this limitation can be used to good advantage from the point of view of political leadership. The principle of the separation of powers serves as a

stimulus for the closer definition of roles in public life. The rule of law compels the answer to the question of what democrat politicians should and should not do.

Effective Government

Effective government constitutes a further fundamental principle. It is the task of the politician to change society and, this being so, the art of political decision-making needs to be highlighted. This art may be the least well-known aspect of democratic leadership as it is frequently difficult to create understanding of the conditions under which political decision-making operates.

Political decisions are almost always preceded by a process of weighing the pros and cons and of finding compromises. In consequence there is always a foundation for discontent over the outcome. Few decisions can satisfy every demand and expectation.

The real world of politics is made up of conflicting interests. Apart from purely trivial matters, every political decision involves taking account of considerations of various kinds. The responsible politician has to meet the demands of the economy, the environment, distribution, regional policy, equal opportunities and all the other justified claims at the same time. Short-term demands have to be balanced against long-term consequences.

A politician or a political movement can seldom decide the direction of policy all on its own. Political decisions are often compromises between different minorities. Particularly long-term decisions on pensions, energy systems, defence and the constitution have to be based on an agreement supported by many different groupings. As a result the making of political decisions is a continual process of coalition-building.

The necessity of leadership involves several dilemmas and problems of finding the right balance. It is in this context that the general conflict between government by the people and the need for effective political action also has its counterpart for the individual politician. A politician may be a skilled orator and popular

debater but may lack the ability to turn his or her ideas into practical policy. Conversely, purposeful and action-oriented politicians may fail at explaining and gaining support for the ingenious decisions they have made.

The Role of the Politician

Every society develops its own variety of political leadership (Blondel 1980). In historical terms large variations also occur within the group of democratic countries. In countries with claims to be great powers, such as the United States and France, military merit has occasionally been a decisive factor; the generals Eisenhower and de Gaulle can be mentioned as examples. Lawyers, doctors and civil servants make up some of the other occupational groups which have frequently set their stamp on political leadership.

Not Just a Service Provider

During the period in which the welfare state was being developed Sweden produced its own particular type of politician: the service provider. Forty years ago the Swedish political scientist Jörgen Westerståhl coined the concept of service democracy (Dagens Nyheter, 2 and 4 August 1956; cf. Boström 1988). Power within the political parties had been centralised. The leadership of the parties had increased their power at the cost of the active membership. The job of mobilising support for a certain ideological view had been pushed into the background by the task of producing party manifestos which attracted as many people as possible. Furthermore the parties were becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another. The debate was no longer about matters of principle but had became overwhelmingly technical in character. A utopian and idealistic attitude had been replaced by a general ethos of service provision.

The concept of service democracy succeeds in capturing a vital element of society in that period. A new kind of politics was born with the expansion of the public sector. The task of politicians be-

came one of meeting the demands of the public for a continual increase in living standards. Service democracy was to succeed to the extent that for several decades politicians had the economic and administrative means to expand public services at central, regional and local government levels. Politicians became heroes as the architects of the expanding welfare state.

Service democracy was to have profound consequences for the way in which the politician, the citizen and the democratic process came to be seen. Democracy was to be realised vicariously. The role of the citizen was reduced to that of the voter and the client. This made the individual citizen turn to the public sector for help with their problems. The concept of delegation within representative democracy was pushed to its ultimate extreme. There was even a tendency to delegate individual responsibility to the political system.

Although it is obvious today that the expansionist period of the welfare state has long been over, this does not mean that the era of service democracy has come completely to an end. In the future the democratic and social state founded on constitutionalism will continue to consist of an important element of public services. The problem has been that the model of service democracy became so dominant that other aspects of the democratic process were overshadowed.

Political leadership need not only be direct, it can also be exercised indirectly.[2] In an open society value conflicts cannot be solved solely by economic means or on a professional basis. A society which wants to co-ordinate its efforts towards a common goal also requires democratic leadership. The politician is no longer a service provider who carries out and executes decisions. As a result leadership is about creating institutions, removing obstructions and providing stimulus for individuals and groups in society.

[2] According to the Norwegian political scientist Knut Midgaard (1993), the politician has both to take on a "practical responsibility" (for achieving concrete results) and a "strategic responsibility" (one in which the longer-term view is taken). Strategic responsibility is divided by Midgaard into both "institutional responsibility" (responsibility for the rules and institutions) and "power responsibility"(responsibility for the future distribution of power in political terms).

A change to the role of leadership along these lines requires a new way of conceptualising political governance. There are ways to bring about social changes other than the setting up of administrative agencies and the distribution of public resources. Providing an alternative, indirect form of leadership requires a greater degree of clear vision, public debate and the ability to achieve confident co-operation between various bodies and interest groups.

Being a Representative

What does it actually mean to be an elected representative? The debate on the nature of the political mandate is as old as the concept of representation itself (Pitkin 1967). The notions of representation held by current parliamentarians differ widely. In the event of a dispute, a number of them choose to put their party line first, others are guided mainly by constituency opinion while a few choose to follow their personal views (Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996). A perception common in today's Riksdag consists of a combination of these representational roles. Loyalty is focused primarily on the party in the MP's own constituency. "They are the ones who nominated me and voted for me", is the way this notion is frequently justified.

There is good reason to investigate this notion critically; it is, after all, by no means self-evident. Sweden's official doctrine of democracy, as expressed in the constitution, says only that parliament is the foremost representative of the people. If all parliamentarians saw themselves solely as representatives of their constituency parties, the consequences would be preposterous. The 349 members of the Riksdag are not enough for every party in every constituency to have a seat. If one makes the thought experiment that parliament should be large enough for every party in every constituency to be represented, then today's Riksdag, with its seven parties, would need to consist of between three and six thousand members; the exact figure depends on the allocation of the additional member seats.

There are also other arguments against the idea that the member of parliament should primarily be the representative of the

constituency party. The Riksdag should be the foremost representative of the people and this refers to the whole of the Swedish nation. It is far from obvious that the interests of the country as a whole always coincide with the interests of the sum of the individual constituencies. No one can deny that democratic government is based on the existence of a living contact between the voters and those elected to office. A territorial level of support is built into the electoral system by the division of the country into constituencies. Representative democracy requires, however, that individual members of parliament should be able to look beyond the horizons of their constituencies.

Competence

The demands made on politicians are often expressed in terms of competence. Does Swedish democracy have a problem of competence? Do we need more competent politicians?

The difficulty involved in answering these questions is due in part to the fact that the notion of competence is such a vague and ambiguous one. Competence is related to phenomena such as knowledge, expertise and professionalism. Competence can refer equally to qualities belonging to an organisation and to those of an individual (Söderström 1990).

A large number of different and contradictory demands are also made on the politician. Sometimes politicians are criticised for unilaterally favouring their own special interests; according to the most sweeping proposals put forward, farmers would be forbidden to sit on the parliamentary committee for agriculture. Occasionally the diametrically opposite accusation is made. A young politician was ridiculed because she wanted to sit on the defence committee without being an expert on military issues; this gives the impression that only generals are competent to look after defence policy.

Another accusation levied at politicians is that they lack a sufficiently high degree of formal education. The tacit or explicit comparison is made with the situation before universal suffrage when the Riksdag was composed overwhelmingly of university professors or wealthy men from the upper class. The ideal which

is apparently taken for granted here is a government and parliament manned by people with academic doctorates. At the same time studies show that the general public mistrusts politicians because they have lost touch with ordinary people (Gilljam & Holmberg 1995). It is impossible to combine the demands that politicians should be an educated elite and at the same time represent an average of the population.

Today a significant degree of uncertainty exists about which particular qualities should distinguish the good politician. An important source of confusion is that the nature of the job of the elected representative has changed dramatically in the last few decades. The increased size and complexity of the public sector have been accompanied by a great increase in the burden of work. The elected representative has become a full-time professional politician.

Political scientists have tried to analyse this change by means of theories and concepts of professionalisation. The idea is that politicians can be compared to the medical, legal, clerical and military professions. Such attempts have, however, been met with a considerable degree of scepticism and criticism. Although one can refer to political professionalism, the starting point should be the concept of politics and not the profession (Stolpe & Ståhlberg 1992).

What is particularly characteristic of contemporary politicians is that they work within a democratic system. The criteria for competence should therefore be primarily derived from the concept of democracy. A competent politician is an elected representative who is best able to realise the principles of popular, constitutional and effective government.

Although it is entirely possible to describe politicians as experts, this is an expertise of a very particular kind. The Swedish political scientist Hans Meijer once formulated the relationship between politicians and experts in the following way (1956). In a society with self-regulating professional specialities there are bound to be conflicts between the various expert demands. However, the balancing of these expert demands cannot, from a democratic perspective, be left to the experts. In a democracy it is the role of the politician to weigh the various demands of experts and

arrive at a decision. According to Meijer, the politician may be said to be an "expert at value judgements". The essence of political skill according to his perspective is the ability to make considered, principled and authoritative decisions based on the particular ideology and general values of the politician. This crucial dimension of political skill is not to be found in tactical dexterity nor in a formal academic education.

Here we have reason to refer to "Politik als Beruf" (1919), Max Weber's classic lecture on politics as a vocation. Weber says that there are three qualities which define the politician: "commitment, a sense of responsibility and a sense of proportion". The ethics of temperament and the ethics of responsibility are "not abstract opposites, but complementary, only in combination can they make up the real human being, the person who can have a political vocation." If we wish to analyse politics as a skill and an occupation it should be in terms of politics as a vocation, rather than in terms such as professionalism and competence.

This fundamental observation is particularly relevant in a period which is searching for an alternative role for the politician to that offered by service democracy. A clearer definition of the tasks of the elected representative would have a direct impact on the relation between politicians and voters and in consequence for the working of democracy as a whole.

"Politics is like patiently and intensely drilling into a plank of wood, with commitment and detachment at the same time", Weber concludes. Historical experience shows that "the possible would not have been achieved, unless the impossible had been reached for time after time."

Opinion Formation

The notion that politics is the art of the possible misses the point. From Weber's point of view, politics is characterised rather by the capacity to bring together the impossible, the bold vision of the future, with the possible, the everyday compromise based on a practical understanding of the real world. Political leadership is to do with clothing an idea in words and letting words take power in

practical action. This implies an indivisible connection between politics and language. The principal tool of the political leader is the word.

Political leadership is often conceived of as the capacity of a skilled demagogue to captivate and excite his listeners. The art of political oratory has been codified in a number of fundamental rules for developing an effective rhetorical practice (Johannesson 1990). However, a powerful political leadership need not be one that satisfies the requirements for democratic leadership. Propaganda can be an effective tool for rallying the support of the people behind government leaders, but all too many examples, from our own era as well, demonstrate that successful opinion formation can turn into a form of thought control and in consequence threaten freedom of speech and the right to criticise. The principles of the democratic ideal would appear to impose clear restrictions on the freedom of leaders to influence the thinking of the population. At the same time a prerequisite of the democratic process is that leaders are prepared to lead and to mould public opinion. What form of opinion formation is acceptable in a democracy?

One can make a distinction between convincing and persuading. Both are based on winning over the opponent to one's own viewpoint. Convincing involves getting someone to realise for themselves that there are good reasons for a particular viewpoint. For the persuader there are no such limitations; every means, every trick, is permissible in order to prevail over one's opponent (Björklund 1991). The democratic leadership of opinion is based on the ability to convince. Leaders have to be able to set out their reasons openly and to be able to argue in support of them.

In principle the democratic necessity of convincing by argument also works in the opposite direction, from the citizen to the politician. There is no definite answer to the question of how much the politician should listen to the opinion of the people between elections. The need to take the current state of opinion into account is less crucial in relation to those issues which the party may have taken to the country and where the external conditions remain unchanged. Expressions of opinion by the public may, however, provide important signals on other issues. A

politician must always be prepared to listen in order to discover whether new arguments affect the basis on which the decision was made.

In consequence democracy requires a public sphere, a forum for continuous dialogue and debate. This forum is the basis for a working process of communication. It may be worth recalling that this concept has gone through a significant shift of meaning. Nowadays, communication refers primarily to a unilateral transfer of information. The word communicate is derived from the Latin *communicare,* which means to make common, to share. Communication is actually very closely related to community and participation.

The democratic era has witnessed the development of a number of techniques for political communication. The mass membership party can be considered as a communications system (Berglund 1972). The party leadership was able to reach the whole country with its message through a widely disseminated network of local branches while members were able to make their views known at the same time. Robert Michels was among the first to recognise the trend towards centralised control and oligarchy within political parties. An alternative form of public life, which has played a particularly important role in the Nordic democracies, has been provided by the social movements, the adult education associations and study circles.

Technical and social changes have led to new forms of political communication. Statistical sampling methods, the attitude theory of social psychology and the opportunity provided by computers to process large volumes of data have made it possible to measure the views of the people on various issues. Mass surveys developed into an important instrument not only for commercial marketing but also for use in electoral and other political campaigns. Opinion polls have become a regular feature in the efforts of the mass media and the political parties to assess the intentions of the general public. However, as a means of political communication they have severe limitations. They only provide simple answers to simple questions and cannot meet the need for dialogue and debate.

Most political information is communicated via the daily newspapers, radio and television. The mass media are the most import-

ant source of information about the political process. The ability of politicians to shape opinion is to a great extent determined by the mass media. The same mass media fulfil several significant tasks in a democratic society. They provide the public with information about society and politics. As critical examiners they are supposed to focus public attention on acts of impropriety.

Just how well the mass media function within the public sphere as a forum for the exchange of opinions has become a key issue. Even though there are major variations between various kinds of media and between individual journalists a range of narrative techniques typical of the modern mass media can still be discerned. This "media logic" has developed into a successful method for capturing and retaining the attention of the general public. Accentuation, simplification, polarisation, intensification, concretisation and an obsession with celebrities and individual personalities are some of the most effective tools of mass media language (Hernes 1984).

The powerful position of the mass media has brought about a backlash. Nowadays the planning of media strategy is undertaken not only by companies, interest organisations and the public authorities but also by the political parties. The growth in mass media courses, public relations staff and media consultants also bears witness to more deliberate attempts by different political parties to exploit the mass media for their own ends.

This has led to the press, radio and television occupying a more prominent place in the decision-making process. Previously the mass media were only involved once the political decisions had been made and implemented. Today those in power exploit leaks and give leads at an early stage in the decision-making process to weaken their opponents and to win over public opinion to their side. Decision-makers regularly think in media terms. Media logic has forced its way into many different social spheres and has acquired in consequence a major indirect influence on the course of events. Negative publicity can kill new ideas and proposals at an early stage. This power of veto tends to favour the status quo.

The dominance of the mass media in the formation of public opinion can dilute the identifying features of politics. In certain respects a fundamental antagonism exists between the frames of

reference of the mass media and democratic politics. The mass media emphasise the individual event, while politics is based on the link between events and the holistic perspective of ideology. The mass media promote individuals while ideas and principles play a much greater role in politics. The mass media require simple answers to simple questions, while the tools of politics are compromise and finding a balance between demands that are hard to reconcile.

And so politicians find themselves in a difficult dilemma. On the one hand they are being forced to learn how to exploit the language of the mass media, while on the other they must also assert the special nature of political life. The mass media can hardly be accused of having become too powerful, it is rather the alternative actors that have become too weak. Opinion formation need not only take place under the conditions imposed by the mass media. The key question is whether it is even possible in a mass media society to persuade the public of the necessity of taking difficult, long-term political decisions.

The shortcomings of the current situation cannot be dealt with by more mass media courses, rhetorical skills or training in speech-making. Democracy requires a public sphere in which a dialogue can take place between the public and their elected representatives about serious and complex social problems.

The Practice of Government Conditions

The question is whether the political system is organised in such a way as to allow the exercise of successful political leadership. In this section the focus will be on government, parliament and local and regional councils.

The Government

The government has a key role to play in a parliamentary system like that of Sweden. The Instrument of Government states laconically: "The Government rules the country". It is obvious that the capacity of the government actually to govern depends on a

whole range of different circumstances; a few of the important limitations have already been discussed in the first chapter of this report under the heading of effective government. The size and complexity of the public sector increase the demands made on the political leadership. Here we shall focus on the constitutional status and internal organisation of the Government.

We do not share the opinion that Sweden's almost unique arrangement of small ministries and autonomous administrative agencies is one in which it is more difficult to exercise political control. On the contrary, experience of the gigantic ministries of other countries indicates that in this respect Sweden enjoys an advantage from the point of view of political leadership. The example of Denmark shows that a system which makes the individual minister responsible for both major and minor matters runs a great risk of overloading. The politician who has overall responsibility may be easily swamped by administrative detail. In the debate on this subject taking place in Denmark, Sweden is cited as the ideal model (Bjerregaard et al. 1994).

This should not be understood as suggesting that the Government Chancery (the Swedish Cabinet Office and the Ministries) is organised in such a way as to exploit the advantages of the Swedish model to the full. Despite years of attempts to delegate individual administrative matters to the courts and the administrative agencies the daily work of the government ministries still groans under the burden of administrative detail. The Government Chancery suffers from major shortcomings when it comes to its ability to monitor, analyse and follow changes taking place within different policy areas. These weak points are being further exposed as the new budgetary process makes greater and greater demands on individual ministries. Membership of the European Union is also sorely testing the co-ordinating capacity of the Government.

Our conclusion is that there are hardly any constitutional barriers to the Government exercising effective political leadership. Successive governments have, however, failed to provide the ministries with an appropriate organisational structure and a level of staffing which corresponds to the demands currently being made for analysis, co-ordination and advance planning.

The working methods of the Riksdag have long been the subject of investigation and discussion. A number of shortcomings are in the process of being corrected. The new budgetary process gives the Riksdag an improved ability to exercise control over the parlous condition of the state finances. The EU-committee is one, albeit half-hearted, attempt to involve the national parliament in the increasingly internationalised arena of political decision-making.

Nevertheless parliament suffers major shortcomings in playing its constitutional role as the foremost representative of the people and of public power. A number of failings may be laid at the door of individual members; as mentioned previously, the way some members interpret their responsibilities, for example, may undermine the capacity of the Riksdag to represent the public interest. Other shortcomings can be traced to the organisation of parliament and its internal system of regulation.

The current organisation of the parliamentary committees dates from the revision of the constitution that took place in the early 1970s. The previous set-up which largely reflected the separation of powers—as between legislation and taxation, for example—was replaced by a sectoral organisation in accordance with the then current ideals of social planning and the expansion of the public sector. Experience has shown that this set-up had significant disadvantages. Special interests and a narrow perspective on the issues within policy sectors could be cultivated at the very heart of the national parliament. The ability to look beyond sectoral borders was impaired.

If the democratic system were seen as a learning process, the Riksdag would be able to fulfil an important task through its constitutional responsibility to examine government practice. As has often been pointed out, the Riksdag suffers from severe shortcomings in functioning as an effective monitoring agency.

Since parliament has the supreme legislative authority it is the Riksdag itself which to all extents and purposes regulates its own working practices. This means that great demands are placed on members of parliament to create rational and appropriate rules

for their own working practices. The principle of ethical regulation has hitherto applied to the private financial arrangements of individual members. The provision of more clearly defined regulations and a greater degree of openness would contribute to the creation of conditions of greater propriety and thus would serve to counteract public suspicion.

A further important aspect of the self-regulation of the Riksdag applies to the relations between members and different special interests. Currently there exists a grey zone of concealed and ambiguous loyalties. It is part of the nature of the way members of parliament are recruited that the majority of members have personal links to social movements, economic interest organisations, private companies and other interest groups. Many of these interested parties consider MPs as "their own" representatives in parliament. Individual members often find themselves in a dependent position of some magnitude in relation to these interests, as a result of the employment opportunity they provide once their parliamentary careers are over.

It goes without saying that such conflicts of loyalty may inhibit the freedom of the individual members to assert the public interest and the long-term needs of the country. The supplementary provisions of the Riksdag Act relating to the declaration of interests lay down that no one may participate in the deliberations of the Chamber on matters of personal concern. It should be pointed out that the provisions relating to government ministers are stricter. According to the Instrument of Government members of the Cabinet may not undertake any public or private employment, nor may they undertake any commission or perform any function which is liable to impair public confidence in them. One option would be to allow the same strict rules to apply equally to the members of the Riksdag. A self-imposed prohibition of this kind against "work on the side" would obviously have to be generously compensated for. The foremost representatives of the people must be able to be independent and display political courage.

The ability to exercise leadership depends on the availability of resources. Even though the transition from a bicameral to a unicameral system was accompanied by a measure of improvement

in the scale of the office and secretarial resources available to individual members, conditions today can scarcely be considered satisfactory. It is of particular importance that the opposition should be in a position to develop reasoned and well-informed foundations for their proposals. Parliament has a major responsibility to monitor social trends in different areas, for setting the political agenda and for driving political debate forward. There is currently a great need for improved levels of support staff for individual members and a greater freedom to commission and carry out special investigations and to monitor the latest research in Sweden and abroad. The most important decision-making body in a democracy deserves more powerful knowledge resources.

Local and Regional Councils

Since the report of the SNS Democratic Audit is concerned with Sweden it is natural that the national political level is our prime concern. There is, however, good reason to point out that in personal and financial terms the public sector is primarily constituted by the municipalities and the county councils. Here the problem of leadership has its own special characteristics. Until only a few decades ago the organs of local self-government were for the most part run by politicians elected to serve in their leisure time. Moreover, the bipartite division that existed at national level between political and administrative matters had no counterpart at the local level; in the municipalities and county councils leadership and management were inseparable.

The amalgamation of the local councils and the expansion of the public sector changed the whole character of local politics. During the 1980s it became increasingly obvious that widespread uncertainty existed about the role of the politician in the municipalities and county councils. The political parties reported increasing difficulty in recruiting people to serve; large numbers of those elected to the councils resigned during their term of office and many of those elected were keen to discover new ways of leading and managing council affairs. The deteriorating financial climate increased the demands made on political leadership. This lack of certainty led to a debate about which factors distinguish

the management of private and public organisations and what they have in common (Arvidsson & Lind 1991). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Federation of County Councils initiated a number of projects aimed at investigating the role of the politician (Federation of County Councils 1995; Montin & Olsson 1994). The restructuring of municipalities and county councils, in particular the setting up of purchaser-provider committees to separate politics from the production of services, was justified in terms of a desire to create a new role for the politician (SOU 1989:108, SOU 1993:90, Westerståhl 1993).

It is not only the Swedish municipalities and county councils which are looking for a new role for the politician. Today's democracies are all making attempts at restructuring and finding new forms for local self-government (Hesse 1991). More exhaustive investigation is required before conclusions can be drawn as to what are the general difficulties at the local political level and which ones are peculiar to Sweden.

Recently a systematic comparative study was published which provides a more differentiated picture of the Swedish local politician (Eldersveld, Strömberg & Derksen 1995). The study comprises three stable democracies which have considerable internal differences from one another: the USA, the Netherlands and Sweden. In each country some twenty medium-sized cities were selected. Leading politicians and public officials were interviewed about their careers, their work, their personal values and their assessments of the problems and patterns of power of their cities. The data was collected in the middle and towards the end of the 1980s. While conditions in a number of respects may have changed subsequently, the general conclusions should still be valid.

The three political scientists state initially that there are significant similarities. In all three countries there are shortcomings in relation to social representativeness: women, the less educated and workers were under-represented among the decision-makers. In all three countries there were close ties between politicians and civil servants; the distinction that exists at national level between politics and administration was not as significant at local level. Despite the different characteristics of each of the three societies, the decision-makers shared a remarkably similar notion

of which problems were the most serious. It would appear as though cities in developed industrial countries everywhere are preoccupied by shrinking financial resources and have problems with economic development, law and order, unemployment and poverty. Just as striking were the similarities in relation to the great gulf between the politicians' notion of what needed doing and what had actually been achieved. Feelings of powerlessness turned out to be widespread among the most influential decisionmakers as well. Another general observation was that many organised groups were attempting to influence decisions and that in principle the leaders accepted the need for participation and conflict.

There also turned out to be a number of distinct dissimilarities between the three countries. In certain respects Sweden had the most exclusive power elite at local level. The Swedish officeholders were relatively old and had remained in their posts for a longer time. Although Swedish local politicians had more egalitarian attitudes to the extent that they strongly supported economic redistribution, power structures in the Swedish cities were more hierarchical and less democratic than in the Netherlands and the United States. There were few people in Sweden with a lot of power and many with little. The contact pattern of the elite differed also in a number of respects. The most powerful local politicians in Sweden had comparatively fewer contacts with local citizen groups, but their ties with the administrative authorities at high level and with national institutions were all the closer.

Eldersveld, Strömberg and Derksen were also able to demonstrate significant variations within each country. The results are particularly important when seen in the context of the ongoing and persistent debate about the scope for political leadership. A number of political scientists have previously maintained that the freedom of action enjoyed by the municipalities is nowadays so restricted by economic and other structural factors that the sphere of politics has shrunk. The differences between the American, Dutch and Swedish cities make clear, however, that between these structural conditions and the measures taken there was significant scope for the exercise of political leadership. The great contrast in the investigation was between the stagnating cities

on the one hand, and on the other those cities with active and dynamic leadership. In each country cities could be identified which had succeeded against all the odds in conducting successful policies. The investigation pointed out a number of variables which were particularly important for successful leadership: maintaining contacts with local groups, sensitivity to the problems of different groups, the individual values of the leader and the self-assurance necessary to take action.

6 Democratic Leadership

The conclusion drawn by this report is that there are a number of conditions operating within Swedish politics which facilitate political leadership. The system, however, also contains obstacles and circumstances that make democratic leadership more difficult. We have concentrated on four of the major preconditions: the constitution, the elite structure, sectoral politics and the role of the politician. The question is whether these factors make the realisation of democracy easier or more difficult (figure 6.1). This chapter summarises the main results and ends in three general recommendations for improving democratic leadership.

Figure 6.1 The Importance of Leadership for Democracy: an Analytical Framework

	Constitution	Elite structure	Sectoral politics	The role of the politician
Popular government				
Constitutional government				
Effective government				

Popular Government

The constitutional framework in which Swedish politics operates serves to promote the realisation of government by the people in one key respect. The proportional voting system also allows minorities and new movements access to the decision-making arena of parliament, which makes the political system both more open and more equitable. In making their choices voters are also

helped by the fact that the political parties have relatively clear profiles.

The great disadvantage of the proportional system of elections is that holding incumbent politicians to account is made more difficult. The power the voters exercise over the formation of government is indirect and frequently very diluted. The constitution provides little support but leaves it to the political actors themselves to find working methods for holding those in power accountable.

The Swedish power elite has a number of characteristics which may be deemed positive when considered from the perspective of popular government. Although the decision-makers are a socially exclusive group in many respects, the situation is not as bad as it is in many other democracies. In international terms Sweden's body politic reflects the population relatively well. In principle there exists a significant interplay in this regard between the constitution and recruitment policy. The list-based proportional election system has made it easier for women to gain a better measure of representation. The Swedish power elite is also relatively tolerant and its views on key political issues are not remarkably different from those of a majority of the population.

The pattern of views held by the power elite does, however, demonstrate a peculiarity which is problematic from a democratic-representative perspective. Outside the purely political sphere, a three party system is dominant. The Social Democratic, Moderate and Liberal parties make up the overwhelming majority of decision-makers in leading positions. The world view described by the left–right dimension is the dominant one, and the more ecological perspective of contemporary politics is finding it difficult to gain a foothold.

During the heyday of the Swedish model, the negotiating culture of sectoral politics was described as a bulwark of democratic government. It is beyond dispute at least that the major interest organisations were given a unique opportunity to influence the development of public policy. Politicians and administrative authorities were able as a result to gain support for their decisions from the social interests concerned.

The disadvantages of this method of decision-making became

increasingly obvious over time. The system excludes the increasing number of groups which also consider themselves to have a legitimate interest in participating in the political decision-making process.

The particular amalgam of views held by the power elite has helped to weld together the iron triangles. The three-party system has tended to preserve the closed nature of the sectors. New perspectives find it hard to gain access and creativity has been inhibited.

The role perceptions of Swedish politicians contain elements favourable to representative government. According to the general view politicians should serve their electors and be sensitive to and assert the interests of their own constituency. The egalitarian dimension of Swedish culture also means that public opinion reacts badly against any tendency to treat those elected to office as an elite with special advantages.

The elite survey carried out by the Swedish Study of Power and Democracy demonstrated the absence of an esprit de corps among politicians. The professionalisation of politics has not led to the development of a class separate from the rest of society. The study indicated that the problems in this regard were to be found in the sphere of business rather than in the political sphere. The homogeneity and esprit de corps of the major Swedish business people makes it difficult to achieve the openness and creativity which characterise a dynamic enterprise culture.

The problem with the role of the politician today is that in many respects it reflects a bygone era. The restricted notion of the task of the representative which characterised service democracy has contributed to the maintenance in power of the sectoral decision-making environments. Politicians have failed to assert the public interest sufficiently and have been reduced instead to the role of representing client groups and special interests.

The situation is made worse because the Swedish constitution fails to define precisely the roles and the division of responsibilities of the political actors and provides very little guidance to those elected to office. The absence of clearly defined rules puts the onus on politicians themselves to reflect on the nature of their responsibilities.

The question of the role of the politician is closely connected as a result with the structure of opinion formation. The dominance of the mass media over the intellectual exchange of politics is all too well-documented to need repeating here. Superficial journalism and an obsession with personalities leave insufficient room for the reflective dialogue of democracy.

Constitutional Government

Sweden meets some of the requirements of constitutional democracy for the separation of powers. Independent courts, local self-government and autonomous administrative authorities help to distribute and control public power.

Sweden as a parliamentary democracy, on the other hand, lacks those constitutional barriers that are built into the presidential system. Nor does Sweden have the semi-presidential form of the separation of powers which exists in republics such as Finland and France. Moreover, with the advent of its current constitution Sweden did away with the mild form of the separation of powers implicit in the old bicameral parliamentary system. The fusion between the executive and the legislative powers has developed to a very high degree.

The analysis of the structure of the power elite served, however, to demonstrate that Sweden possesses a social form for the balancing of powers which should be able, in principle, to compensate for the weakness in its constitutional arrangements for the separation of powers. Many other countries have a monolithic power structure with a significant measure of overlapping between the economic and the political elites. As the social movements have been able to provide an alternative avenue of recruitment, Sweden has been characterised by the existence of two parallel power elites ever since the advent of democracy.

It is, however, doubtful whether this bipartite power structure can completely replace the constitutional separation of powers. In relation to the roles and responsibilities of the politician it would be better from the point of view of constitutional government if unambiguous, formal rules were in place rather than informal arrangements.

The particular structure of the Swedish power elite can also be seen to have disadvantages from the perspective of the separation of powers. The separation between government ministries and administrative authorities may be clearly demarcated in constitutional doctrine (though this supposition is not itself beyond question), but political recruitment to the posts of directors general and county governors shows that the boundaries between the roles of the politician and the public official are often crossed.

Inexperience and an unwillingness to think in terms of principles and rules is also exemplified in the ambiguous and unconsidered view politicians take of their roles in democratic government. The flipside of the pragmatism of the Swedish model with its naive emphasis on personal chemistry and informal contacts reveals a darker face. There is currently an absence of rules governing conflicts of interest and the undertaking of outside work by politicians.

A further problem in relation to constitutional government is the social polarisation between the law and politics. The judiciary is middleclass in terms of social background and non-Socialist in political views. The mutual suspicion between the labour movement and the legal establishment has helped create the impression that the relation between the powers of the judiciary and those of politicians is a zero sum game and a tug of war. Constitutional government in Sweden would be improved were the law and politics not seen as alternative but complementary bodies. A functioning democracy requires powerful politicians and powerful jurists.

The decision-making process in the sectorally organised domains of the political world suffers from major shortcomings in terms of constitutional government. The distribution of roles is ambiguous as is the allocation of responsibilities. The administrative authorities function as partisan political actors and neglect their duties as independent monitors.

An important reason why sectoral networks have gained such significance in Sweden is the absence of other arrangements for the separation of powers. In a federal system territorial divisions help to shape the decision-making process. A presidential system

forces politicians and administrative agencies to define their roles in less ambiguous terms.

There is also a link between sectoral politics and a poor level of protection for minorities. The absence of clearly defined rights for the Sami, for instance, has made it possible to divide up issues pertaining to the Sami among different policy sectors and thus to water down their interests as a group. The segmentation of the decision-making process has also delayed and problematised the recognition by Sweden of the interests of the Sami and of other minority groups.

Effective Government

While the extensive separation of powers entailed in the presidential model has its advantages in relation to constitutional government, this system runs significant risks of diminishing the effectiveness of democratic government. The various hold-ups in the American budgetary negotiations and the stand-offs between the President and Congress have brought the whole of the Federal government to a standstill on occasion. It is here that the concentration of power within parliament shows its strengths. In periods of majority parliamentary government both the government and parliament act with one voice. However, parliamentary government is in no sense a guarantee of effective government. Minority governments made up of several parties can be totally paralysed.

Today Sweden finds itself in a somewhat precarious position. The government lacks a parliamentary majority of its own and is in consequence limited in its ability to act decisively. Only by means of agreements with one or more opposition parties can the government get its decisions through parliament. The Swedish constitution is of little help here. For reasons to do with their historical experience, other countries have built into their constitutions mechanisms to make effective government possible. One example is Germany where, as a consequence of the collapse of parliaments in the Weimar era, the constitution requires that the opposition can only bring the government down if it is capable of forming a government of its own.

The parliamentary process requires negotiation, compromise and agreement. In certain respects the Swedish power elite is in a favourable position in this regard. The traditional spirit of consensus has helped to facilitate decision-making. However, the survey of the elites fails to provide a completely reassuring picture. There are powerful tensions at work both within and between the various power spheres of Swedish society. Polarisation and fragmentation make it more difficult to reach agreement. The old model still works but only within a decreasing number of established decision-making areas. However, the system is not so successful when the decision-makers are forced to work together under new conditions.

The sectoral model was believed to boost effective government. Even though the decision-making process suffered from weaknesses in terms of popular and constitutional government, at least it led to practical results. However, a question mark must nowadays hang over the notion that sectoral politics leads to effective government. The ability to make decisions is largely a matter of appearances. Our case studies show that what decision-making actually consists of is avoiding conflicts and sweeping problems under the carpet. The traditional sectors also find it difficult to deal with new political issues. The political system has ossified and is stagnating.

The special decision-making methods of corporatism worked best during the period of expansion of the welfare state, when the task was to develop the public sector and distribute a growing surplus. The sectoral decision model has even greater disadvantages during a period of cut-backs and savings measures. The sectoral perspective is a restrictive one and lacks adequate capacity to set priorities, to redistribute and exercise control over scarce resources.

The particularly specialised role of the politician in the service democracy made for effective government in a very narrow sense. The politician became the fixer, the social engineer and the person who could solve all of society's problems. Politics tended to be reduced to the production of services and to management.

Even now when the very particular conditions of the post-war decades have long since disappeared, the status of the politician

as a hero is still partially valid. Frustration over the fact that old methods of politics no longer work leads to a feeling of powerlessness. The democratically elected politicians of today are looking for a way to formulate their duties and responsibilities.

Three Routes to More Democratic Leadership

The task of the SNS Democratic Audit is to present a diagnosis of the state of Swedish democracy. Identifying weaknesses is one thing, recommending solutions is quite another. No expert can provide an absolute prescription capable of guaranteeing health and well-being. Changes to the working practices of the political system have to come about from within. It is part of the responsibilities of those elected not only to deliver decisions and services but also to reflect on the working methods of democracy. Even though we have refrained from making any detailed proposals, we wish to contribute to the debate on democratic leadership with three general points of view.

A Clearer Allocation of Responsibilities

Our analysis has shown that a number of weaknesses within the political system have their origin in the confusion of roles and in ambiguous divisions of responsibility. The idea of democracy is based on the understanding that mistakes will always be made in politics, just as in other forms of human activity. Democracy provides an organised method for learning from mistakes, correcting errors and calling those responsible to account. If supervision, public debate and accountability do not work, the fundamental dynamic of democracy is impeded. In a representative democracy it is particularly important that the responsibility of the elected politician is stated in unambiguous terms.

Discussion of the integrity of politicians has hitherto been largely concerned with the ethical issues that arise in connection with conflicts of interest arising from private financial links. Clear guidelines and public accounting may counteract the suspicion that those elected to office are being unduly influenced.

However, this issue is not only to do with private interests but also the interests of various social groups. Many politicians have ties to various organised interests through membership, commissions or employment. It is obvious that such contacts have many advantages, particularly in that they serve to strengthen the links between civil society and representative government. This type of organisational tie may, however, also impair the freedom of the politician to oppose particular special interests and to assert the public interest. One option would be for members of parliament to refrain from undertaking extra-parliamentary commissions or employment during their term of office.

The need for a clearer allocation of responsibility also brings into question the view held by individual elected politicians of their duties. Our survey of the decision-making procedures of sectoral politics showed that politicians are often too weak in relation to special interests and that they fail to assert with sufficient force matters of principle and issues with a broad perspective.

More Open and More Innovative Decision-Making Arenas

The idea of equality at the heart of democracy is usually diluted in practice by various forms of informal, social barriers to access to the different decision-making arenas of society. Even though in recent years the representation of women has improved, there remain major shortcomings in the social representativeness of the power elite. Experience shows that active and resolute measures are needed to broaden access to the centres of power. Those already in leading decision-making positions have a special responsibility in this regard. A determined policy of recruitment could help to break the glass ceiling which frequently hinders women and other excluded groups from coming to power.

The taking of a vote in the Chamber of the Riksdag is usually only the formal assent to decisions which in reality were made at a much earlier stage in the legislative process. As a result of the size and complexity of the public sector, politics has become extremely specialised. Many of the sectors of politics consist of relatively few individuals who know one another well. Our investigation has shown that these decision-making arenas frequently suf-

fer from major flaws when seen from a democratic perspective.

A counter-strategy would be *de-sectorisation*. The current division of politics into specialist areas is not a permanent phenomenon but the outcome of the period of expansion of the public sector; the government ministries were reorganised in 1965 and the parliamentary committees aligned along ministerial lines were replaced in 1971 with specialist committees. Many of the new issues of politics cut straight across the traditional cleavages and would require alternative, perhaps less permanent, organisational solutions. A more flexible system of project organisation within the Government Chancery could replace the rigid structure of the specialist ministries.

Different kinds of government bodies capable of *working across sectors* would provide an alternative or complementary solution to the organisation of the ministries by subject. The Ministry of Finance has long had the role of monitoring the work of other departments from the economic perspective. During Mona Sahlin's tenure of the office of Deputy Prime Minister, the Cabinet Office served a corresponding function as the body responsible for ensuring that the ministries met the requirement for equality between the sexes. This is an example of the creation of a cross-sectoral body for the realisation of highly important political values.

Some of the current problems can also be addressed by *re-sectorisation*. The scale of the public sector necessitates a division of labour in some form but the exact degree of specialisation is not fixed for all time. The very notion of a sectoral division embodies a political decision. It is significant that the Sami are not considered to constitute a sector of their own; those matters affecting the interests of the Sami have been split up between several different sectors which are controlled by other power groupings.

Even with the current division retained, there would be considerable scope for *improving democracy within the already established sectors as they are currently organised*. The primary strategy should be to achieve a greater degree of innovation and openness in the decision-making environments. Traditionally, the sectors have been insufficiently open to new political demands. Sectoral politics suffers from inadequate transparency. In order to consoli-

date support for decisions, it is no longer enough that a few men lock themselves into a meeting room and make known the results of their deliberations after the event. Today's public demand a better basis of information if they are to accept the decisions. The need to provide insight is an important argument for giving increased publicity to the negotiations in the sectors. It should not be denied that publicity can make the possibility of reaching agreement more difficult. The advantages of public attention however exceed the disadvantages. Publicity leads to a rise in quality in the making of decisions. The small-minded arguments of the special interests can seldom bear the light of day. A requirement that those involved justify their arguments publicly would promote fairness in the public sphere.

A More Visionary Political Pedagogy

Something is missing from Swedish public life. While Sweden has a gigantic public sector and politicians often appear in the mass media there is remarkably little in the way of democratic dialogue and political leadership.

The mass media must bear some of the responsibility for this state of affairs. Despite the efforts of skilled journalists and an effective system of distribution, today's media cannot meet the need for information and debate. The narrative logic of the mass media and the working conditions of journalists tend to favour the bizarre, the sensational, the short-term and an obsession with personalities.

Those elected to office can, however, no longer deny all responsibility. They have the twofold duty of playing the game according to the media rules and at the same time of asserting the special nature of politics and the democratic dialogue. A recurrent theme in this report is the need for increased transparency. This would entail an improvement in the quality of public discussion.

There is a growing gulf between the potential and the actual realisation of citizenship in the world today. Sweden is no exception in this regard. On the one hand the level of education is rising, the public daily spends hours reading newspapers, listening to

the radio and watching television and is probably better informed than ever before in human history. On the other hand, many voters express a feeling of estrangement from politics and a lack of understanding of many political decisions.

It is obvious that elected politicians have not been able to explain adequately the setting and the working conditions of politics, nor make them vivid. For many people politics is an alien world. The political should actually be a matter of common concern, everyone's business. There is no simple standard prescription for solving this form of political alienation. One option would be for more citizens to be given the opportunity of gaining experience of election to office. Another significant change would be the development of a more visionary political pedagogy.

It is in the nature of things that political life consists of disunity and conflict. Since individuals and groups have different values and desires there has to be an ordered way of solving conflicts by debate. Politics, however, also attempts to build on a set of common values. Democracy is an idea based on peace, humanism and toleration. An absolute pessimism is foreign to it. Political life is based on the notion that the future, at least in part, may be shaped by the efforts of human beings working together. Anyone who gets involved in political activity should be fired by a vision of a different and better future. The task of political leaders is to transmit their passion and commitment to other members of the public.

Since the public sector is so all-encompassing, the workings of the political system have particular significance for the future of Swedish society. The importance of institutions that work and of the members of the public who work within the institutions cannot be denied, but our analysis makes clear that political leadership can be of decisive importance. Put diplomatically, there is considerable scope for improvement. The answer to the question of whether Sweden will be able to avoid unemployment, a collapse of the public finances and social disintegration depends in large measure on democratic leadership.

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Contemporary democracy suffers from a number of problems of political leadership. Nowadays it is far from clear what it means to be a politician and which demands voters can make of their elected representatives. This book discusses different ideas about democratic leadership and describes Swedish politicians both as a group and as individuals. Special attention is given to the constitutional bases of the Swedish political system, the Swedish power elite, decision-making processes within policy domains, and the requirements that democracy imposes on individual political leaders.

The book also explains the theoretical framework used for democratic auditing and presents results from a study on citizen tolerance.

Democracy and Leadership is the 1996 report from the SNS Democratic Audit. The Democratic Audit is responsible for auditing the state of Swedish democracy on a yearly basis. This report uses democratic theory as its point of departure and constructs an ideal of democracy based on three cornerstones: popular, constitutional, and effective government.

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