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Democracy across Borders

Report from The Democratic Audit of Sweden 1997

SNS FÖRLAG

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Contents

Foreword 7

1 The Future of Democracy 9
Is Democracy Only Possible within the Nation State? 10
Is the Nation State Disappearing? 13
Is Multilevel Democracy Impossible? 15
Is Democracy Suffering from a Crisis of Confidence? 21
Current Problems of Democracy 25

2 How Democratic Is Sweden? 31
Measuring Democracy 31
Popular Government 33
Constitutional Government 40
Effective Government 45
A Situation Report 48

3 How Democratic Is Europe? 50
The Construction of the European Union 51
Popular Government 55
Constitutional Government 61
Effective Government 64
Maastricht and the Idea of Democracy 67

4 How Democratic Are the Municipalities? 70
Measuring Local Democracy 70
Popular Government 72
Constitutional Government 83
Effective Government 87
Variations in Local Democracy 90

5 Voters and Representatives across Borders 94
Between Local Patriotism and World Citizenship 97
A Political Class? 106
Networks across Borders 112
Does Democracy Need Reforming? 122
The Quality of Democracy below the Border 129

6 Democracy as Problem-Solving across Borders 134
Where Is the Democratic Deficit to Be Found? 135
Solving Problems across Borders 141

Bibliography 150

The Democratic Audit of Sweden 1997

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Foreword

This is the third report from the SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden. Reactions to the first two reports have demonstrated the need for a deeper discussion of constitutional issues and the performance of the political system. Swedish democracy has been shown to suffer from major shortcomings. Particularly weak points are the inability of the mass media to meet the ideal of enlightened understanding and the lack of balance between political ambitions and economic resources.

The Democratic Audit of Sweden will be producing a new report each year. It is the hope of SNS that this regular examination of the political system will have the same significance for public debate as that of the SNS Economic Policy Group. In this way, political scientists and economists will be able to contribute facts and analyses on a scientific basis to the public discussion of politics and economics.

The Democratic Audit of 1997 consists of the same researchers as in the preceding year. The report is the product of team work in which all the members of the Audit contribute to each chapter. The group has conducted a number of special studies for this year's report. These have been carried out at Uppsala University's Department of Government in collaboration with Anneli Anderson, Per-Åke Berg, Lena Lundström, Katja Marcusson and Peder Nielsen. SNS would like to thank all those who have contributed to the production of the report.

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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, January 1998

Hans Tson Söderström
Executive Director of SNS

1 The Future of Democracy

The debate about politics and democracy is often carried on as though the wider world did not exist. It is the nation state which forms the obvious framework for democracy.

But imagine if the political system on a national scale were now coming to its historic end? Is the nation as a fundamental entity eroding away? Are we engaged in discussing the details of a democracy which is starting to dissolve before our very eyes? Has democracy any future at all?

A gloomy scenario might look something like this. The basic premise, first of all, is that democratic government is inextricably bound up with the nation state. The bedrock of representative democracy is made up of institutions such as parliament, government and political parties whose foundation is the nation. Second, national boundaries are becoming porous. New kinds of political issue such as environmental problems, terrorism, drug trafficking, international crime syndicates and the large-scale movement of refugees refuse to recognise the borders of any particular state. Information technology has made it possible to communicate across borders, economics has become internationalised. Third, according to the pessimists any attempt to construct democratic institutions on an international scale is doomed to fail. The European Union, for instance, suffers from a democratic deficit and co-operation among the Nordic countries has never led to any real political integration. Fourth, the consequence must be the paralysis of the political system, which can no longer meet the expectations of the public. The crisis of legitimacy affecting politics can only get worse. Democracy will wither and die.

Let us develop further these theses and expose them to critical scrutiny. Can democracy thrive only within the framework of the nation state? Is the nation state approaching its historic

end? Can democratic government be realised simultaneously on many different territorial levels? Is democracy threatened by a profound crisis of confidence?

Is Democracy Only Possible within the Nation State?

It is, of course, a historical fact that there has frequently been a close link between the process of democratisation and the formation of nations. In Sweden, as in many other European countries, parliamentary government and universal suffrage developed into a means of integrating the great masses of the population into a society that was being torn apart by the industrial revolution. This linkage is particularly striking in the case of Sweden because industrialisation and democratisation occurred simultaneously during a brief and intense period in the decades either side of the last turn of the century. Both the economic and political spheres were changed fundamentally and new groups were brought to power. Industrial renewal and democratic reforms were brought together in a project that laid the foundations of modern Sweden.

In other countries, too, a powerful link exists between democracy and the nation. The common identity of nation and people was self-evident to the French revolutionaries. The monarch was replaced by a national assembly which represented the French people. American schoolchildren are taught that their country came into being through the declaration of independence and their forefathers' proclamation of a republic. The Declaration of Independence of 1776 opened with the words ,"We, the people", and in so doing broadcast the watchword of popular sovereignty to other nations of the world.

Among our Nordic neighbours the connection between the nation and democratic government is particularly noticeable in those countries where democratisation coincided with efforts to achieve national independence. The slogan of Norwegian parliamentarism, "All power in this chamber", was aimed both at the monarchy and at Swedish supremacy. In Finland, the cam-

paign for democracy formed part of the struggle against Russian rule. When the Icelanders proclaimed their republic at Thingvellir in 1944, they celebrated both independence from Denmark and the bond with an ancient tradition of popular government.

Consideration of the institutions of democracy also makes it obvious that it is the nation state which serves as the crucial matrix. The right to vote in parliamentary elections is linked to national citizenship and it is the principle of parliamentarism which regulates the relationship between the government and parliament within a state. For all intents and purposes, political parties and interest organisations are nationally based. The rights and freedoms of citizens are regulated and maintained primarily through the legislation and judicial systems of the states to which they belong. Public debate and opinion formation which are so crucial to an active democratic process take place by means of the mass media which are structured along national lines; the education system, too, is organised around the nation at its core.

This description might seem uncontroversial but can be questioned in a number of respects. The historical perspective is far too short. Democracy is also alive and well within borders other than those of nation states. Moreover, there is no logically self-evident territorial foundation for democracy. Democratic government and the nation need not necessarily coincide.

The history of democracy reaches much further back than that of the nation state. Greek democracy became a reality within the confines of the city state. In Northern Europe, the commons were summoned to deliberative assemblies at the level of the hundred and the shire. During the Middle Ages, Italian cities and Provençal villages enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy. Local democracy has roots that are very ancient.

In everyday language the meaning of these terms tends to coalesce. Nevertheless it is possible to provide clearer contours for these concepts. The concept of the *nation state* is misleading. It suggests that the nation and the state normally coincide. And yet it is a rare exception when the inhabitants of a state are

ethnically and culturally homogeneous. Multicultural and multilingual states are the norm in today's world. The term nation state gives an exaggerated impression of uniformity. The *nation* can be defined as a subjective community, founded, for example, on a shared language or culture, or on participation in a unifying political project. The concept of the *state* should be reserved for the apparatus of public power. A state is a centralised and specialised organisation with effective control over a territory. *Nation state* is often used as a descriptive term for a territory controlled in this way, but the term is far from satisfactory, since it can be interpreted as though countries were normally homogeneous. The word *international* is used for extremely diverse phenomena affecting several countries. A more precise term is *intergovernmental*, which refers specifically to treaties and other forms of co-operation between states. Intergovernmental decisions within the European Union (EU) are arrived at by unanimity, which allows each member country to enjoy the power of veto. A more extensive form of collaboration can be referred to as *supragovernmental* meaning that the states concerned are subordinated to an organisation of political power at a higher level. Supragovernmental decisions are arrived at by majority voting, which means that individual countries can be forced to bow to the will of the majority. The term *region* is ambiguous since it is used both to refer to intergovernmental cooperation across state borders and to the organisational level immediately below that of the state; there are also other senses in which the concept of the region is used (Aronsson 1995).

In terms of their political organisation, the majority of the states currently in existence demonstrate a broad range of forms of government. Most noticeable is the diversity that exists within the federal states. The federal polity allows for a broad sphere of autonomy for the regions. In countries such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland and Germany it is often legitimate to refer to the existence of states within the state. Within unitary states of the Nordic kind there is also a considerable degree of decentralisation in the form of local self-government; Åland, the Faroes and Greenland enjoy a special

autonomous status as well. Democracy is realised not only through governmental institutions but also in large measure through various forms of regional and local self-government.

It is part of the very nature of the concept that democracy requires a people (*demos*) who govern themselves. This is not to say that such a people need necessarily be organised on a territorial basis. The political science literature contains various models for non-territorial representation. One example is what is known as the consociational model, which can guarantee aboriginal peoples and religious and linguistic minorities, for example, a considerable measure of autonomy within the framework of a common state and a proportional distribution of resources (Lijphart 1977).

Is the Nation State Disappearing?

Equating the state and democracy is thus obvious neither in historical nor logical terms. It remains a fact, however, that thus far at least the democratic systems of today have been realised for the most part in particular countries. It is therefore entirely legitimate to treat the second part of the worst-case scenario completely seriously. Is the nation state in the process of disintegrating as an economic, social and political organisation?

No one can deny that major technological and economic changes currently taking place are having a considerable effect on the role of the nation state. The main ingredients in this social revolution are now so well-known that they form part of every description of the background and context of current social problems. The political system of the state is being squeezed by internationalisation and decentralisation.

This makes it possible to develop a prognosis by quite simply extrapolating from the current changes. In the longer term we can envision a system in which the nation state has disappeared. Part of political power has disappeared upwards, to international conglomerates and organs of public power which encompass continents or even the whole world. The remaining

powers have been taken over by autonomous regions and local government authorities.

An international research group has investigated how realistic this scenario actually is (Berger & Dore 1996). The hypothesis under investigation is that international trends will force individual countries into convergence and, as a result, the scope for state-based politics will become increasingly restricted. While the researchers acknowledge these trends are hard to assess, they are forced to conclude that there is as yet insufficient support for the convergence hypothesis. Many commentators have exaggerated the homogenising affect of international competition. Asymmetries in respect of information and power, organisational factors, culture, dissimilarities in social infrastructure and other circumstances create niches and pockets of difference. Even though the external pressures may be similar, countries react in extremely different ways.

Each country has its own special traditions and is subject to different preconditions for solving social problems. As yet there is little to suggest that these individual characteristics might disappear, during the foreseeable future at least. Moreover, there is still scope for choosing a different national model. This century has witnessed numerous examples of how countries have fundamentally changed the relationship between economics and politics by changing their national model. At the beginning of the century anti-trust legislation in the United States created more diverse and competitive businesses and industries. The French constitution of 1958 brought an end to a long period of unstable and paralysed parliamentary government. During the 1980s New Zealand implemented extensive changes to the welfare system and has now also changed its electoral system. Studies also indicate that European integration has not impaired the freedom of action of individual countries. Ireland has, for example, concentrated on increasing its exports. Germany has elected to develop its regional infrastructure and the Netherlands have deliberately promoted medium-sized companies (Kohler-Koch 1996). Our conclusion is that there are many alternative courses of action and that there is broad and varied scope for political visions and choices. The question

is not whether politics can make use of this scope but which policy should be adopted.

As a result and while not denying the significance of the trends towards globalisation, Europeanisation, regionalisation and municipalisation, the most realistic scenario is based on the assumption that the state will remain a primary context for political decision-making for the foreseeable future.

Is Multilevel Democracy Impossible?

Already it is possible to discern the contours of democracy in the future. Democratic government is being realised simultaneously at the global, European, state, regional and municipal levels. Political decisions are made as part of parallel, interconnected processes at many different levels. We are living in an age when the foreign policy of states has become the domestic policy of the world, to borrow a phrase from Richard von Weizsäcker, the former German president.

As far as the individual is concerned, there are many different aspects to citizenship. Democracy is realised through the cooperation of individuals within communities of different kinds. Some of these communities exist on a voluntary basis, while in others membership is obligatory and the community is equipped with powers of compulsion over its members.

Will this complex system of many, partially overlapping, forms of organisation work? How is democracy on a global scale to be realised? Can the model of the future really be compatible with the democratic ideal of a vital popular government?

The democratic systems of today are based on one form or another of constitutional government and the separation of powers. For several hundred years, the doctrine of separation of powers has been of major importance as an organisational principle for the structure of the state. Under this doctrine, the judicial power was made separate and embodied in independent courts of law. This particular form of the separation of powers within the state is occasionally referred to as the horizontal

separation of powers. Vertical separation of power, then, would mean that political power has been divided into different territorial levels. The simile may have a certain value as a means of marking the fact that public power can be divided on a territorial basis, but the analogy is incomplete and to some extent misleading. The metaphor of different levels is a distraction if it suggests that what is at issue is a strict division like that between the steps in a hierarchical organisation (König, Rieger & Schmitt 1996, 20).

The separation of powers need not function as a zero-sum-game. The fact that one organisational level has been strengthened need not mean that another has been weakened. It is in principle possible to construct a constitutional system in which the various levels strengthen one another. Municipalities which work well may make it easier for central government to improve the execution of its fundamental tasks. The workings of the European Union may help the member states to realise their particular political aspirations.

The hierarchical simile is also misleading in the respect that it assumes that all communication between "the apex" and "the base" has to pass through all the intervening levels. A very different pattern of contacts is manifested in actual practice (Eklund & Östhol 1991). The regions establish links with Brussels without going via their capitals. The municipalities implement cross-border regional collaboration right across national boundaries. Local movements form part of global co-operation. This trend towards "glocal" networks serves to link together local patriotism and world citizenship.

It is obvious that the current concepts of politics are insufficient to describe and understand the new organisational forms of democracy. The search for better analytical tools has, of course, already begun; there is, for example, a growing body of political science literature about *global governance*. We shall briefly indicate a number of the salient points here.

The universal requirements of constitutional government do not become less important simply because politics is being globalised and decentralised. On the contrary, in a more complex form of social organisation it is particularly important to

maintain the requirements for predictability and a clear division of responsibilities. At stake here is the design of constitutional regulation. The allocation of powers and responsibilities between the various levels should be stipulated in the constitution or the corresponding legislation. Current systems are not regulated in a consistent manner. It is in this respect that the relationship between the EU and its member state Sweden, for example, differs from the relationship between Sweden the nation state and the country's municipalities. Even though the treaties which regulate the authority of the EU in particular instances may be vague and hard to interpret, they set the limits for determining what matters fall within the decision-making remit of the Union. In contrast the constitutional allocation of authority between the state and the municipalities is poorly defined. The Instrument of Government (the Swedish constitution) stipulates that democracy is realised through local self-government, but provides no clearer indications as to the limitations of local self-government. Certain constitutional guidelines can be found on the other hand in the European Convention on Local Self-Government.

Another key issue has to do with the power to allocate powers and responsibilities. How should the rules for changing the allocation of authority be designed? It is not possible to fix both the territorial boundaries and the allocation of responsibilities among the different levels once and for all. Every now and then changes in the development of society and in political priorities may necessitate adjustments to the allocation of powers and responsibilities. The question is who should possess this "authorising authority" (i.e. the authority to determine authorities) and on what grounds such constitutional changes should be implemented. A related problem concerns the interpretation of the current regulatory systems. There must be one or more bodies which are able to resolve conflicts concerning the allocation of powers and responsibilities. In a federal state such as Germany it is the constitutional court which is entrusted with the vital task of resolving disputes between the federal level and the constituent states.

A further question relates to the basis for the allocation of powers. A number of fundamental principles have been proposed. One of these is the principle of subsidiarity, which may be interpreted as a universal decentralising guideline. As long as there are no special reasons to pass powers up to a higher level, the presumption is that political decisions should be made at the most local level possible.

A related line of thought has been developed within the framework of the economic theory known as fiscal federalism (Heinemann 1996). According to its terms, decentralisation provides the most effective form of organisation with the proviso that differences in regional preferences exist. That is to say that in a decentralised system consumers should also bear their full share of the costs. On the other hand a complication arises if the costs of organisation and co-ordination are also taken into account, these become greater in decentralised systems. This tendency forms an argument for centralisation. Economic theory then provides no general solution for the multilevel problems of politics. At stake therefore is finding a balance between different advantages and disadvantages.

It is an obvious precondition of democratic government that the public should ultimately be free to determine the allocation of authority. In practice all such arrangements need also to be based on the premise that the arguments for centralisation and decentralisation may vary from one objective area to another, and may also change from one period to another. The issue is whether it is possible to deduce arguments in respect of the relationship between central and local powers from the general principles of democracy.

According to an influential interpretation the answer is a disappointing one. Although the theory of democracy has much to say about how government should be organised within the various levels, it is deemed to lack answers to the question about how the "demos" should be defined and how one "demos" should relate to another (Dahl 1982). Other political scientists have, however, tried to take this matter one stage further; David Held, for example, has proposed three tests for

deciding at which level particular issues should be resolved (1995, 236).

It is our judgement that it is not possible to derive any recommendations in terms of the allocation of responsibilities between different levels from the traditional theory of democracy. The theory of democracy has to do with designing the rules for the institutions of politics and for decision-making processes. To go beyond this and pass judgement on the allocation of responsibilities between different decision-making levels would require knowledge of the particular desires of individual citizens. In a democracy it is ultimately the citizens who decide the issue of centralisation or decentralisation. Citizenship in a democracy is based on a subjective experience of community, a feeling of being involved in a common political project (Schnapper 1994).

One means of analysing the balance of pros and cons between centralisation and decentralisation is offered by the model of power developed by James Coleman (1973, 1990; cf. Hernes 1975). The model contains three fundamental concepts: interest, control and power.

Here *interest* is a subjective concept which indicates the importance an actor assigns to a particular issue. Interest in this sense is thus based on the way an individual or a group experience a social problem. Patently there are alternative ways of defining interest, for example, by degree of attention, how many are affected by an issue or how strongly they are affected. In which case the problem becomes who is to determine how the criterion of "affectedness" should be implemented in a particular case. The natural course in a democracy would be for the question of interest to be decided by the persons affected. Only the person wearing the shoes know where they pinch.

Control stands for the capacity of the actors to affect the outcome. One might object to such a general formulation since it is difficult to define "capacity to affect" in any detail. Yet this is exactly what democracy is about. The capacity of the people to influence social change presupposes popular, constitutional and effective government.

Power constitutes the product of interest and control. This serves to explain why democracy theory is often at a loss when faced with the problem of finding the right balance between centralisation and decentralisation in a multilevel system. It is not enough simply to take account of *control* (i.e. democracy). *Interest* (i.e. the particular judgements of members of the public about the significance of various social issues) is also essential.

The model sets out a norm for the way in which interest and control should be combined. The optimal distribution is one which maximises the power of the actors, i.e. in which they have control over the outcomes they judge to be of interest. If the prevailing distribution of control fails to coincide with what is optimal, the actors then have the option of improving their situation through a form of exchange. In this way local self-government can be considered as a solution to a problem of exchange of this kind. The inhabitants of a specific geographic unit exchange control over the outcomes in other units for greater control over the outcome in their own and as a result everyone gains greater power. The inhabitants refrain from using the option to affect the water supply of the neighbouring village and in recompense are allowed to take their own decisions about their own water.

Even if in most cases one might imagine that the value of control over one's own locale would prevail over the value of control over some other randomly chosen area, it is still far from certain that barter is the best solution when considered from the point of view of the collective. The incentive structure prevailing in decentralised decision-making may occasionally give rise to collectively irrational outcomes (the Prisoners' Dilemma) and to the absence of the benefits of large-scale production or to losses as a result of shortcomings in coordination (the tragedy of the commons). An extensive measure of decentralisation may result in local interests invoking their veto against any change whatsoever (NIMBY or "not in my backyard"). The main argument in the choice between central and local decision-making has thus to do with how heavily such disadvantages weigh against the advantages that the exchange model can offer.

No theory of economics or political science is in a position to recommend unequivocally that the one or other political problem should be handled globally, nationally, regionally or locally. On the other hand social science provides analytical instruments which can help to clarify the nature of the problems concerning the balancing of pros and cons. Nor is there anything to suggest that democracy is impossible to realise in a multilevel system. On the contrary, it may be just such a pluralistic social order which would best allow for the realisation of the democratic concept of citizenship.

Is Democracy Suffering from a Crisis of Confidence?

Democracy is a form of government which is founded on the consent of the citizens. It is, however, not a precondition of the democratic system that each and every individual at any given moment must agree with every public decision. On the contrary, democracy's open society presupposes that human beings are different and that they are free to develop their own individual life-projects. The multiplicity and changing nature of pluralism make it the polar opposite of a uniform, closed and static society. Democracy is a means of living with dissension, conflicts and critical debate. Dissatisfaction with the prevailing conditions and the desire to change society are the energy which fuels the democratic decision-making process.

There exists, however, a more fundamental form of dissatisfaction. If large parts of the population always feel excluded from society and believe themselves lacking in the power to effect social change then a key precondition for the survival of democracy is also lacking. A lasting and fundamental questioning of the institutions of politics can erode the foundations of democracy.

Seen from a European perspective, there is nothing to suggest that the democracies find themselves in an acute crisis of confidence. Available surveys show that while European citizens have become more independent and critical, their faith in

the democratic ideal of government has not diminished (Kaase & Newton 1995). However, there is evidence to indicate that the attitude of the population to the political system is characterised by powerlessness and alienation. One example is the study carried out by the Swedish Study of Power and Democracy of changes in attitudes in a Swedish industrial town. At the beginning of the 1950s many employees felt that they were part of a labour movement with real power. Towards the end of the 1980s they felt more like a middle class without power (Åberg 1990). Material standards had risen but power had become more diffuse, evasive and elusive. It is only possible to speculate as to what the 1990s have meant in this regard. Presumably the feeling of powerlessness will hardly have subsided; on the other hand, confidence in the security of material progress must have taken a knock.

In its previous reports the Democratic Audit has warned of the danger of the trend towards a democracy far removed from its citizens. The globalisation of democracy must be a cause for concern when considered from this perspective. International collaboration still continues to follow the established routines of diplomacy. International politics has traditionally been based on the principle of intergovernmentalism. This means that representatives of each country come together in a room, close the doors, do their negotiating and finally reach a compromise with which they all agree. Only then does the rest of the world know about the outcome. Even within the EU, major decisions are still made by representatives of the member countries meeting in closed session.

A profound conflict exists, and one which is difficult to solve, between the decision-making methods of diplomacy and the requirements of democracy for transparency and oversight. There was a time when the subjects of the state accepted without murmur the secret decisions of its leaders. Today's citizens are a different breed. They are better educated, more independent and make greater demands. They do not accept decisions until they have had the reasons explained and been able to weigh the advantages against the disadvantages for themselves. The requirement for effectiveness of the method of negotiation

must therefore be weighed against the claims to legitimacy of democracy. The negotiated democracy has also shown itself to suffer from major flaws in Swedish domestic politics. Our previous report showed how decision-making in certain sectors of politics could hardly be said to satisfy the fundamental requirements of popular, constitutional and effective government. The current decision-making model is not tenable in the long run. The requirements of accountability, oversight and transparency must be accorded greater importance. New forms of institutional solutions may well be required.

It is probable that our era will subsequently be seen as the beginning of a major period of political readjustment. Hitherto the idea of democracy has been tested on both the local and the national scale. The internationalisation of politics is an inescapable consequence of the fact that many collective problems are no longer restricted to the old administrative boundaries; environmental problems provide a striking example. Now the main constitutional issue is to discover working forms for transfrontier democracy.

There are two possible strategies. One is defensive and aims at avoiding stating and solving the problem for as long as possible. This involves clinging for dear life to the old decision-making methods, trying to conceal and to mask the fact that the world of politics has been internationalised and to lull people into the belief that the basic rules of democracy have not been changed. It is, however, only a question of time before the public discovers the gulf between words and deeds. The risk is that a defensive strategy will favour conspiracy theories which suggest that the change is being brought about by anonymous and invulnerable powers. The fear of the unusual and the strange provides a fertile seedbed for populist movements. Expectations of this kind are partly self-fulfilling. If the picture of the future exaggerates the impression of determinism, the will of the people to exert influence is diminished and the feeling of powerlessness grows.

Offensive leadership would point out instead that in many respects the future lies open, that politics has unexploited resources for developing a better society and that it may not

only be possible to internationalise democracy but that democracy itself may also have something to gain from being realised on a global scale. The offensive leader would have no need to formulate this vision in his or her own terms, he or she need only avail themselves of a two hundred-year old essay by Immanuel Kant.

In *Zum Ewigen Frieden* (On Everlasting Peace, 1795), Kant formulated the connection between peace and democracy earlier and more clearly than anyone else. Kant's aim was not only to produce a truce, a postponement of hostilities, but to create a conclusive peace which would remove all the existing reasons for any future war. Kant formulated a number of fundamental principles for creating a state of peace. The first is that each state should be republican, i.e. it should have a constitution based on the freedom of members of society, on the subjection of all to a common system of laws and on the doctrine of equality before the law for all. Another principle is that international law should be founded on a federation between free states.

Expressed in contemporary terminology Kant's program would mean first and foremost that representative democracy is the best guarantee for peace. Internal peace secures external peace. Kant also thought it would be wrong to form a world government within a universal state and that nations should continue to exist, on condition they were joined together in a free association. The independent states would undertake to obey international law.

Kant's essay was long considered a utopia. Many generations of pacifists have seen their dreams brought to nothing by an apparently endless succession of European wars. With the end of the Cold War and the establishment of democracy in an ever increasing number of countries, this vision has suddenly begun to seem slightly more realistic. Imagine if it were actually possible, for our generation or the next, to create a world of peace and democracy...

Current Problems of Democracy

It is beyond dispute that democracy currently faces a problem of legitimacy. However, it is also true that the public's lack of trust is not unalterable, it can be remedied. Democracy is based on an interaction between voters and those they elect to power. Far-sighted leadership can win back the trust of the public.

In today's world political leadership is largely to do with creating sound institutional conditions for individuals, groups of citizens, companies and perhaps above all for the political system. What is meant by constitutional politics are deliberate efforts to improve the constitutional conditions for decision-making.

The term democracy means government by the people. The debate on democracy is mostly concerned with problems of government. In this report we also want to highlight the fact that what is meant by the people, the demos, is no obvious matter. A radical solution, but one impossible to implement, would be to consider the entire population of the world as a single demos. However, as soon as one accepts that there are a number of different "peoples", the issue arises of how these different groups of citizens relate to one another.

Associations of citizens can be formed on non-territorial bases as well as on territorial ones. Democracy does not require the existence of a state, nor in fact a geographically defined area. What suffices is the existence of a fairly permanent group of citizens who are united by a bundle of rights and obligations (Rosas 1995). Developments in information technology may facilitate the evolution of such virtual communities.

For the present, however, democracy is based largely on territorially defined groups of citizens. When we refer to the territorial levels of politics, what we are actually dealing with are different groups of citizens ranked in ascending order of demos-size. The problem of geographical classification is two-fold. The first aspect has to do with determining the number of levels, such as the global, the state, the regional and the municipal. The second consists of the task of drawing the territorial

boundaries within the respective levels; how, for instance, regional boundaries should be drawn within a state.

In terms of constitutional politics, there are two directions in which discussion can go. One alternative is to take the existing levels as a given. The question then is whether the political organisation needs to be revised. Is there some reason to abolish a particular level of organisation? The proposal put forward in Sweden to abolish the county councils exemplifies this option. And yet the main trend must surely be that more and more levels are being added to the political organisation of states. The Maastricht treaty introduced European citizenship (Erne et al. 1995). A trend towards regionalisation can also be found within Europe. In addition decentralisation within municipalities means that a new local level is being added in the form of neighbourhood and sub-municipal councils.

The second alternative in terms of constitutional policy is to ignore the current order and try to construct the most suitable organisation based on certain theoretical principles. A thought experiment of this kind has been carried out by Burkhard Werner (1992), the German political scientist, whose model involves the citizen forming part of several, partially overlapping states. This might involve an identification state, a tradition state (with responsibility for culture and education), a solidarity state (dealing with the redistribution of income), a defence state, a currency state and an administrative state to deal with any remaining public duties.

Even if we restrict ourselves to the current forms of organisation it is obvious that a need exists for constitutional changes at every level of politics.

The Global Level. A democratic world order would require an effective legal system operating on a global scale. An international system of courts of law would be necessary to solve conflicts within global politics by peaceful means. Peace, democracy and justice would thus become mutually independent. An international legal system would not, however, require the existence of a world government, but could be organised on the basis of intergovernmental cooperation (Kelsen 1944).

The constitution of the United Nations has provisions which cover, although only just, the need for a global organ of cooperation for the countries of the world. In practice the UN evinces major shortcomings. The UN shares the same problem as many entrenched bureaucracies, namely the reluctance to reform itself. There is no dearth of ideas about providing the UN with a structure more appropriate to the conditions pertaining after the end of the Cold War. The difficulty lies in the practical implementation of the constitutional changes.

And yet the UN is only one part of the growing system of global decision-making. International conventions and intergovernmental treaties are forming an ever more detailed network of more or less global legislation and international regimes, as they are known. Voluntary, non-governmental organisations are playing an increasingly important role in the arena of world politics. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other development agencies are serving as political legislators through the requirements they impose for good governance. The world of nation states of traditional diplomacy has been transformed into a diverse range of global actors which is difficult to survey in its entirety. These new forms of global power have only been partially described. In many instances the allocation of power and responsibility is unclear.

Europe. Bit by bit the European Union has taken on the features of what is in historical terms a unique creation, one which refuses to be neatly pigeonholed by constitutional conventions. The EU is not a federation since it lacks the distinguishing balancing mechanism between the central and regional powers; the status of the European Parliament, for example, cannot be compared with that of the American House of Representatives or that of the German *Bundestag*. Nor is the EU a federation of states, since the EU can make supragovernmental decisions with legally binding effects on the member countries. The fact that the EU cannot be fitted into any of the current constitutional models need not be a problem in itself, but the current organisation of the Union has significant flaws when seen from

the democratic viewpoint. A discussion focusing on the EU is to be found later on in this report.

The Nordic Countries. Cooperation among the Nordic countries has been forced into the background by the major changes taking place on the European scene in recent years. It would, however, be precipitate to discount the Nordic countries as a future arena for democratic cooperation. Nordic cooperation derives much of its strength from the practices of day-to-day "Nordicism" and the developed network of contacts which exists between individuals, companies, organisations, researchers, artists, municipalities and administrative authorities (Wisti 1981, Turner & Nordquist 1982). Cooperation on a more formal basis between the Nordic states is a relatively gloomy saga of projects that have come to naught. Nordic cooperation is currently being shaped by a greater measure of integration in the entire Baltic area and by the fact that three of the five Nordic states are now members of the European Union.

Sweden. To judge by appearances at least, the major changes of recent years as a consequence of Europeanisation and decentralisation have had relatively little impact on the organisation of the Swedish state. Studies carried out by the Democratic Audit have shown that the political system suffers from major flaws. In many instances the allocation of responsibilities is unclear and the power of scrutiny fails to function satisfactorily.

The Counties. Sweden's regional organisation is currently being changed in certain key respects. In a few years roughly half the population will live in three counties: the county of Greater Stockholm and the new greater counties of Skåne (Scania) and Västra Götaland. New forms of cooperation between counties, county councils and municipalities are being experimented with in several other regions.

The Municipalities. Even though local self-government has ancient and long-standing traditions, the recent history of the

municipalities has been one of constant change, switching abruptly between centralisation and decentralisation. The experiments with different forms of organisation have led to results which have frequently proved difficult to assess, although they have seldom had any tangible positive impact on local democracy. A subsequent chapter is devoted to the problems of local democracy.

The Local Community. Municipalities still remain the smallest unit within a representative democracy. However, there are now many places where new forms of self-government are being developed within parts of the municipality. Neighbourhood and sub-municipal councils and NIMBY-groups are just some examples of this kind of local mobilisation. Svågadalen is the first modern case of a municipal council elected on a non-partisan basis. The boundary with the associational life of civil society is a fluid one. In many cases, these are experiments which have yet to arrive at any definitive form.

Even this brief survey has demonstrated that political organisation is currently going through extremely significant changes. The global political level is becoming increasingly important, as are the European, the regional, the municipal and the local levels. While Sweden and the Nordic countries may not have grown in importance as political arenas, they have hardly diminished in importance as yet. This does not only mean that political power has moved from one level to another. The structure of the entire political system is changing. Democratic government is being realised simultaneously in many different territorial arenas.

The main issue to be dealt with in this year's report of the SNS Democratic Audit is assessing how multilevel democracy is working. The conclusions of such an assessment will naturally depend for the most part on the yardstick chosen. How the ideals of democracy should be defined is by no means a self-evident matter. There are those who would assert that the global level requires a concept of democracy all of its own, while the principles of local self-government have their own special

attributes. We have decided, however, to apply the same ideal of democracy to all the levels within the political system. It is our view that the common understanding of democracy has a universal application. Irrespective of whether it is being practised at global, European, Nordic, state, regional or municipal levels, democratic government has to satisfy the three fundamental requirements of popular, constitutional and effective government.

The three chapters which follow analyse three important territorial levels. The issue is how democracy is working today in Sweden (chapter 2), the European Union (chapter 3) and the Swedish municipalities (chapter 4). Subsequently, the findings are presented of a new study of the relationship between voters and their elected representatives in a political system consisting of four different levels: the European parliament, the *Riksdag* (the Swedish parliament), the county councils and the municipalities. The concluding chapter discusses the future conditions of politics in a democracy across borders.

2 How Democratic Is Sweden?

The SNS Democratic Audit has been developing an approach for assessing the state of Swedish democracy on a systematic basis. This chapter presents a new survey of democracy in Sweden which also provides an opportunity to discover any changes that may have occurred and whether democracy has improved or deteriorated in any respect. In addition, reviewing the survey serves the purpose of discussing the methodological problems inherent in an audit of democracy, together with its limitations and opportunities. The discussion will also provide a starting point for the subsequent chapters. It is there that we apply our democratic criteria to the EU and the Swedish municipalities.

Measuring Democracy

The assessment of the established democracies is not uniform. In one respect the changes have been very positive. Democracy has never been in as favourable a position. For the first time democracy finds itself without powerful enemies and is free to develop under relatively peaceful and calm conditions. But there is also a dark side to the reality of democracy. There is decreasing confidence in the ability of the political system to solve economic and social problems.

This means that there is a need for a wider range of nuance in discussion of the strong and weak points of the political system. It is no longer enough to refer to democracy in a more or less general sense. Democratic systems can look very different. The practical design of democracy varies greatly both over time and between countries, regions and municipalities.

Discussion of the workings of the political system should therefore be concerned with the quality of democracy. It is not enough to state that the minimum requirements of democratic government have been fulfilled. What is required now are means to guarantee the quality of democracy. The development of criteria for determining what is a good democracy forms part of that process.

The democratic ideal as formulated by the Democratic Audit is one of popular, constitutional and effective government. The people must be free to govern themselves under egalitarian 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, not on one but on several requirements. This is our position in the public 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 actually be 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 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. For the sake of comparability the observations were graded along a five-point scale. In order to examine the reality in Sweden, two main methods were used: contemporary Sweden was assessed against the democratic ideal and the changes over time were analysed. This made it possible to judge whether the democratic system had deteriorated or improved. When, in future, we refer to the 1997 survey, it should be borne in mind that the period in question is that between April 1996 and March 1997.

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 both the 1995 and 1996 audits, the Swedish political reality was far from the ideal. An obvious example is provided by the shortcomings of the Riksdag in its attempts to exert control over the agenda of European policy. As a result of Sweden's membership of the European Union, a significant part of the parliamentary agenda has come under the control of bureaucrats. Neither the public nor parliament have been able to gain adequate control over the process which precedes decision-making by the EU.

The EU-committee has not come up with effective forms for the exercise of parliamentary influence over EU-decisions. In an evaluation of the experiences of the first two years of EU-membership, the Riksdag itself noted that it must improve its capacity to influence EU-issues (KU 1996/97:2). The parliamentary committees are too passive and the EU-committee has not been accorded the same powerful 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.

In comparison with those in other countries, the Swedish EU-committee displays a number of weaknesses. In contrast to the Danish and other national parliamentary EU-committees, the Swedish committee is not entitled unilaterally to remit consultative matters for debate in the chamber of the Riksdag. It should be possible to strengthen the powers both of the EU-committee and the other specialist committees of parliament. Both Finland and Germany have shown a greater level of ambition when compared with the kind of collaboration existing between parliament and government in Sweden (Bergman 1997).

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 (Gutman & Thompson 1996). Democracy requires a functioning public sphere.

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, both previous reports succeeded in demonstrating the major shortcomings of the mass media. The assessment in 1996 was a particularly negative one. The tendency of the mass media towards oversimplification, dramatisation and an obsession with individual personalities works against enlightened 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 working practices of the mass media and the world-view of journalists proved capable of conflicting directly with the democratic ideal.

It would now seem that the degeneration of journalism has led to a backlash. There have been fewer excesses of sensationalism. The mass media have begun to monitor themselves to a greater degree. Last year's very critical assessment should therefore be adjusted in a positive direction.

Our previous reports pointed to shortcomings in the Swedish debate on Europe. It has proved difficult to initiate and maintain a broadly-based and informed political debate with a European perspective. Here the responsibility should not be assigned primarily to the mass media but to the politicians who have failed to take the initiative and form public opinion.

Effective Participation: Election Campaigns

In a representative democracy it is elections that constitute the primary means for calling those in power to account. In our

1995 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. Subsequently, however, this encouraging picture has taken on considerably gloomier overtones. The European parliamentary elections in September 1995 could not even meet the low standards set for a functioning electoral campaign. The assessment of this particular aspect of democracy had therefore to be revised in a negative direction in last year's report.

Concern exists that 1998 will be characterised by lower levels of voter turn-out and a widening gulf in terms of a lack of confidence between the voters and those they elect. The risk must be that representative democracy will come to be seen as a tug-of-war between the people and the elites. However, simply because the voters are weak, those elected to office need not be strong. What is unfortunate about contemporary politics is that it combines weak voters with weak politicians. In last year's report we pointed out that democratic government requires leadership. Experience also shows that voter turn-out falls when politicians mumble and fail to inspire; interest in elections rises as a matter of course when politicians formulate clear-cut alternatives to vital issues. Voters become stronger when leaders become stronger. The key factor is filling the public sphere of the democratic dialogue with lucid voices and lively debate.

The question is to what extent the frequent surveys of public opinion are affecting the dialogue of democracy. When the leader of the Liberal Party in Sweden resigned, among the reasons she gave was that she had been unable to improve the opinion poll ratings of her party. One result of the continual recurrence of opinion polls is that we find ourselves in a permanent election campaign. Maria Leissner's resignation brought a number of questions to the fore, to which no satisfactory answers have yet been found. Who has the power to commission polls and to formulate the questions? Is the quality of opinion surveys sufficient to allow them to serve as the basis for such vital decisions as the change of party-leaders and thus the composition of alternative governments? Are the respon-

dents to the rapid-fire battery of questions posed in telephone polls aware that for all practical purposes the constitutional power they are exerting is comparable with that of the Riksdag in electing a prime minister? Do journalists and political commentators know that their interpretations of opinion are not simply a harmless form of shadow-play but form part of a decision-making process with far-reaching consequences for the leadership of the country? And not least important: should the political parties accept and support this trend?

Effective Participation: Voluntary Associations

Many conditions have to be satisfied if the public are to exert effective control over the government of the country. The existence of a civil society, the public working together on a voluntary basis, is a particularly important factor in contributing to the realisation of a democratic form of government. It allows the public to be trained to take responsibility for common affairs. A multiplicity of groups, organisations and associations make up a society in which power is shared among the many, thus hindering any one person or group from taking power into their own hands. A precondition of economic and political progress is the existence of social capital, the capacity of individual people to work together to solve shared problems. The voluntary associations serve as a school in democracy.

The studies carried out by the Democratic Audit have shown that Sweden still satisfies this condition relatively well, despite the fact that Organisation-Sweden is faced with a great many problems. The classical social movements and the major interest organisations are only weakly supported by the public. 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 overall judgement should nevertheless be a relatively favourable one. Attempts to form new parties and associations show that there is a desire for organised social engagement. Another aspect of the more encouraging picture is that a good

many of the more established organisations have become aware of the problems and are experimenting with new forms of practice (Micheletti 1996).

Effective Participation: Local Self-Government

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

In certain respects local government has improved over the past year. The municipalities have been awarded broader areas of competence. The most recent 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.

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 politics has become increasingly dominated by professional politicians. In its 1995 report, 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. Hitherto, however, few municipalities have chosen to exploit this opportunity.

Like both its predecessors, this year's Democratic Audit has come to the conclusion that the merits and weaknesses of local democracy roughly balance out. As a result, the overall judge-

ment is, at best, only acceptable. It should be pointed out that this judgement is based on the general terms of an overall assessment. Provision is made in chapter 4 for a more differentiated analysis of democracy in local government.

Although assessing democracy in the county councils is a more difficult judgement since the field is relatively poorly researched, the observations available point to considerable problems. A survey carried out in 1996 showed that 82 per cent of the population considered that they lacked adequate knowledge about the views of the parties on the county councils and that 50 per cent believed that the county council was a central government agency (Marknadsfakta 1996). On the basis of a survey they conducted, the judgement of current and previous county commissioners for the county of Stockholm was that the county council suffered from obvious shortcomings from the point of view of democracy. A comparison with the assessment by the Democratic Audit of the municipalities shows that the county councils were believed to have particular problems in that there is poor public support for the political parties and county council elections hardly function as an effective means for the public to call politicians to account (Fritz 1996).

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 such as government, parliament, county and municipal councils is today equal to or almost equal to that of men. In a special study, the Democratic Audit of 1996 was able to ascertain that in recent years the trend has also been favourable for the representation of women in other spheres as well.

In other parts of political life and society, however, the status of women appears 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.

While it is true that a certain rejuvenation of parliament took place as a result of the 1994 general elections, younger men and women are usually under-represented in the decision-making bodies of society. Despite the fact that pensioners have recently shown signs of a stronger degree of political mobilisation, older people still remain poorly represented among those elected to office. The decision-maker is usually a middle-aged man.

Democracy's ideal of equality is particularly poorly realised in relation to immigrants. Swedes 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. Fewer and fewer foreign nationals are bothering to make use of their right to vote in municipal and county council elections.

Citizen Tolerance

The survey carried out by the Democratic Audit in autumn 1994 showed wide-spread intolerance among Swedes. 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. The lack of both earlier and more recent surveys makes it impossible to express an opinion about whether intolerance is decreasing or on the rise.

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 effective such limitations are is a matter of dispute (Petersson 1996b). 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 (Hermansson 1986; Holmes 1995).

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 the rule of law. 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 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 at the beginning of the 1990s.

An overall assessment must, however, take account of how the constitutional protection of rights and freedoms is actually implemented by the state. It is in this regard that there is cause to point to failings in the Swedish legal system.

A celebrated case to go before the European Court of Human Rights dealt with the freedom of an employer to employ staff without signing a collective agreement. Although the Swedish government was not found guilty in the Torgny

Gustavsson case, the Court had obviously not been provided with a full account of the actual circumstances. This case has cast a shadow over the behaviour of the state authorities.

Cuts in the public sector have also brought vital constitutional problems to the fore in relation to the social rights of citizens. Lengthy queues for residential care are increasing the risks of arbitrary treatment. Pensioners needing residential care are being refused the right to move to another municipality. One study has shown that less than half of the municipalities had adopted the recommendations of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (*Kommunförbundet*) concerning the rights of the elderly and the handicapped to move to special housing in other municipalities (SOU 1996:161, p. 18).

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 his or her rights.

The rule of law risks being weakened as a result of cuts and restructuring within the legal system. Two major changes are currently being discussed. The first would set limits to the right to appeal decisions by the county courts to the court of appeals. Since this freedom to have verdicts reviewed is fundamental in a constitutional state, the proposal has caused great concern. The second change would result in the amalgamation of the general and the administrative courts. Warning voices have been raised that the system of administrative courts, the purpose of which is to try the complaints of individuals against the administrative authorities, would be weakened as a result (Francke et al. 1996).

In its 1996 report, the Democratic Audit came to the conclusion that a general assessment of the real conditions of the rule of law should be based on a more exhaustive and recurrent examination of the courts and the administrative authorities. It is a failing that the legal system and the administrative authorities have not developed methods to make it possible to monitor

on a systematic basis any changes to the rule of law. Such surveys are particularly important if any deterioration in quality, as a consequence of the kinds of reorganisation currently under consideration, is to be discovered. There is an impending risk that cuts in the legal system may threaten a fundamental function of the state.

Separation of Powers

The aspect of Swedish constitutional government which was subject to most criticism in both 1995 and 1996 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 made both separate and 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.

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 precepts of local self-government raise 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 division 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.

A special committee set up to consider the constitutional protection of local self-government has now put forward its proposals (SOU 1996:129). The committee has come to the conclusion that the current constitutional provisions are inadequate and the preparatory works hard to interpret. What is therefore proposed are certain changes to the constitutional rules and that a special chapter dealing with the municipalities and the county councils be added to the Instrument of Government. This would serve to denote more powerfully the importance of local self-government.

The gathering together in a chapter of their own of the provisions relating to the power of taxation, the electoral system and the right to vote in local elections can scarcely be considered noteworthy. The changes are mostly editorial and are not intended to affect the legal position. The key issue here is rather how the allocation of powers and responsibilities between the state and local government agencies is to be regulated. The committee proposes a paragraph setting out the principles in the following terms: "The municipalities and the county councils are to deal with those matters laid down by law, or by special provisions, in the interests of their members and on the basis of the principles of local self-government. In the case of legislation affecting the municipalities and the county councils, particular importance is to be assigned to the principle of local self-government".

The proposal may be criticised on two grounds. First, the doctrine of local self-government has not been adequately defined. As long as the principle has not been more closely defined, too much freedom of manoeuvre in interpretation is left to the state. Second, it is ultimately the state which unilaterally interprets the allocation of powers and responsibilities between central government and the municipalities. Sweden has adopted the European Convention on Local Self-Government which stipulates that municipalities "shall have the right to judicial process to guarantee the free exercise of their authority and respect for the principles relating to local self-

government which are laid down in the constitution or national legislation". The legislative proposals of the committee have not helped to move the debate forward.

Furthermore, the problem of the separation of powers between the central and local governments is steadily becoming worse. Various branches within the public sector are attempting to pass costs on to one another. In many key areas it is unclear how powers and responsibility for costs are allocated among the central government, the county councils and the municipalities.

The issue of the division of responsibilities between central and local government raises a key question. The desirability of centralisation and local self-government has to be weighed against the universal requirement for equal treatment. There is no general solution; it is not possible simply to opt for either central or local government. The division of responsibilities between central government and the municipalities must be free to vary among different fields and to change over time. To this end a constitutional debate is required of the kind currently lacking in Sweden.

A large part of the responsibility has to be laid at the door of the municipalities. They are faced with choosing to retain the current position of a large and loosely defined sphere of operation or to restrict the local government sector to those areas where local self-government is actually to be allowed to decide the outcome. In those areas where national uniformity is desirable it is the state which should bear the responsibility, while local self-government should be limited to those areas in which the municipalities have been given the opportunity to make their presence known and to compete with one another.

Effective Government

By effective government is meant the ability of the public to realise shared goals through collective action and under democratic forms. Political effectiveness can be analysed on the basis of three different requirements. First of all, each actor needs

certain resources to realise his or her goals. A collective body must be able to make tenable decisions by appropriating decision-making rules which make it possible to achieve coordination even when differences of opinion are pronounced. Furthermore, an actor must be able to implement those decisions which have been made. Within the political system it is the effectiveness of the organisation of public administration which is being examined here.

Resource Control

Control over an adequate supply of available resources is a precondition for an independent decision-making capacity. 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.

In 1995 the assessment by the Democratic Audit 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. The political system was making itself dependent on the market.

Even though there were a number of positive signs when last year's report was being drawn up, the Democratic Audit considered that it was too early to judge how realistic these prognoses were. The improvement of the state finances is, however, now so pronounced that it requires an amendment of this judgement. An evaluation of the resources of the political system does not therefore result in the lowest possible mark but in the next lowest mark. Here we need to separate the trend from the level. The trend is positive, but the level is still negative. Sweden has a long way to go to achieve balanced public finances. The accumulated national debt casts a long shadow of interest payments over the immediate political future.

Decision-Making Capability

In order for a democracy to work effectively, what is required is that the actors in the political field make lasting decisions. The Democratic Audit found in 1995 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 at a time when difficult decisions have to be made. The parties were finding it increasingly difficult to reach agreement across the ideological divides. The ability to reach compromises had diminished. In 1996, however, a more positive judgement could be made. Parliamentary cooperation between the Social Democrats and the Centre Party has strengthened the decision-making capability of the political system.

The upgrading of the judgement was also based on a significant constitutional change. The realignment of the financial year and the tightening of the budgetary process have helped to improve the decision-making capability of the political system. Since the parliamentary and the constitutional positions are unchanged there is no reason at this point to change the overall assessment.

Outcome Control

The effectiveness of democracy is ultimately determined by the way decisions made by parliament are implemented. Sweden was once celebrated for her competent, effective and incorruptible administrative system (Heckscher 1952). Even if corruption and bribery are considerably greater problems in many other countries, the revelation of improprieties in the administration of municipal and central government in Sweden should not be ignored. These have seriously damaged the confidence of the public in the political and administrative system.

The most significant flaws in the system of implementation have to do with the large and complex administrative apparatus of the state which is difficult to monitor. 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 and prosecuting flaws in the execution of public decisions.

Some of the shortcomings can be explained by the deteriorating quality of the evidential basis on which decisions are made. In an earlier phase of Sweden's modern history, the system of public commissions of inquiry was celebrated far beyond the country's borders. Today public decisions are made on what is frequently an inadequate evidentiary basis. The consequential analyses and self-assessments of the administrative authorities are rarely of acceptable quality. The Cabinet Office and the Ministries often lack the comprehensive overview, the authority and the co-ordinating capacity required to manage as large and complex an organisation as Sweden's public sector. The inability to manage the public sector by means of a consistent and effective administrative policy also explains why our overall assessment of the implementation side has to be a downward one. It should be pointed out that the issue is not to do with an acute, precipitate deterioration occurring simply over the last twelve months. Instead, it is a gradual deterioration in the working methods of the public sector that now gives rise to a poorer mark.

A Situation Report

As in previous years, a review of the thirteen indicators is summarised in an overall picture of the current state of Swedish democracy (table 2.1). 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

Table 2.1 Swedish democracy: A Situation Report

	1995	1996	1997
Popular government			
Control of the agenda	–	–	–
Enlightened understanding: the public sphere	–	– –	–
Effective participation: election campaigns	+	0	0
Effective participation: voluntary associations	+	+	+
Effective participation: local self-government	0	0	0
Decision-making equality	+	+	+
Citizen tolerance	–	–	–
Constitutional government			
Rights and freedoms	+	+	+
Rule of law	+	+	+
Separation of powers	–	–	–
Effective government			
Resource control	– –	– –	–
Decision-making capability	0	+	+
Outcome control	+	+	0

norm and two minus signs indicate that Swedish government performance departs substantially from the democratic norm.

In five instances the assessment is a positive one, in three cases it is acceptable and in five the rating is a negative one. The trend during the last twelve months remains unchanged in ten fields.

In two areas the trend is a positive one. The dramatic deterioration of the public sphere in 1996 was temporary; the position has now returned to the slightly negative level of 1995. The judgement on resource control has been revised from very to fairly negative.

In a single instance the trend has gone in a negative direction. Problems to do with implementation in the sphere of public policy have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the political system.

While Swedish democracy still suffers from some notable flaws, there are currently no areas which could be termed catastrophes.

3 How Democratic Is Europe?

Democracy was once perceived as being tied to the local community. The conceptual prototype was the Athens of antiquity and to some extent the Italian city-states of the Renaissance. Democracy on a broader scale was long considered to be only a magnificent utopia, a grandiose idea which would never work in practice.

When seen against this background, representative democracy may have to be considered one of our most significant social innovations. The notion that the making of decisions can be delegated without any ensuing alienation of power also made it possible to realise democracy within the framework of the large-scale nation state. Today we find ourselves facing a similar challenge. Is it possible and is it desirable to put the principles of democracy into practice beyond the limits of the nation state?

The debate about the possible forms for an international political community was given particular urgency by the two world wars. In Europe the issue has remained on the agenda during the whole of the post-war period. Alongside the efforts to guarantee peace and liberty under the auspices of the United Nations, cooperation within the field of international law developed at an early stage and this resulted in the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and a range of institutions—the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights—based in Strasbourg. In recent years, however, the interest in the future political organisation of Europe has been increasingly bound up with the process of integration taking place within the framework of the European Union. This is also the main context in which the speculations of political theory on the future shape of democracy are being taken seriously and being given concrete

form. It is moreover this problem which should be the principal issue in the current debate on the constitutional future of the EU.

The Construction of the European Union

The EU of today with its fifteen member countries has gradually evolved from the economic cooperation which developed shortly after the war between the two main antagonists on the continent of Europe, France and Germany. The first stage involved the setting up in 1951 of the European Coal and Steel Union, whose members were France, Germany, Italy and the three Benelux countries. Soon afterward the idea arose of working together in the political and military spheres as well. While these plans came to nothing because of a lack of interest on the part of France, subsequent efforts were aimed at a widening of the scope of economic cooperation in the form of a customs union and a common agricultural policy. The second stage in the process of integration is linked to Treaty of Rome of 1957 which resulted in the foundation of a European Economic Community (EEC). Simultaneously the six founding member countries of the EEC started working together in the field of the civil use of atomic power (Euratom).

It was not until the beginning of the 1960s that the question first arose of extending this form of cooperation to include other countries. French opposition meant, however, that an association of Great Britain with the states of the European continent was to prove impossible. France also made the continued economic integration of Europe problematic in one other respect. At a meeting in Luxembourg in January 1966 the French president forced through a constitutional compromise, which established on an informal basis the legal right of every member country to veto changes which threatened their national interests. This Luxembourg Compromise was to hinder every attempt to broaden European cooperation for several years.

Nevertheless, the 1960s also witnessed the making of a minor step forward. Although this step failed to attract any great attention, it has turned out to be of some considerable significance in the longer term. In a treaty of 1965 the foundations were laid for the European Community (EC) as a result of the bringing together within a common institutional structure of the three areas of economic cooperation: the Coal and Steel Union, the EEC and Euratom. This aside, it would not be until de Gaulle had left the political stage that anything new could happen. At the beginning of the 1970s, the question of admitting new members was on the agenda once again and the following decade was characterised by efforts at expansion. Six new countries were admitted to membership: Denmark, Great Britain and Ireland (1973), Greece (1981) and Portugal and Spain (1986).

The most recent ten-year period has also witnessed a measure of expansion: Austria, Finland and Sweden became full members in 1995. However, the most significant feature of this period is the widening and deepening of cooperation under the leadership of Jacques Delors. The fourth step in the constitutional process was taken in the middle of the 1980s. In 1987 the member countries adopted the Single European Act, thus making the common internal market a reality. This involved, in formal terms at least, a break with the Luxembourg Compromise in that the Community was now free to arrive at decisions by a qualified majority.

The trend towards a greater measure of supragovernmental decision-making was continued in the formation of the European Union (EU) as a result of the Treaty of Maastricht which was signed in February 1992. It was then that the current principles were established, according to which the decision-making rules differ among the three pillars (spheres) of the EU. Within the first pillar, which encompasses the original form of economic cooperation (EC), the EU is nowadays to all extents and purposes a supragovernmental organisation while both the other pillars (foreign, security and defence policies on the one hand, legal and domestic policy issues on the other) continue to

have the character of a form of intergovernmental cooperation between independent states.

The notion that today's EU rests on three pillars was originally a reference to the image of a temple from the world of antiquity. In addition to the three pillars, the simile also allows for a common roof. Despite the fact that the rules for decision-making differ between different spheres, for the most part it is the same institutions which carry out the making of decisions. This common structure consists of three types of institutions:

- EU-institutions which are not representative but which carry out administrative and judicial tasks on behalf of the Union. Here belong the Commission in pride of place, together with the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors and in the future, if and when Economic and Monetary Union becomes a reality, the European Central Bank.

- EU-institutions which represent the governments of the member states. Here we find the Council of Ministers, or the Council, and since the mid-1980s, a special variant known as the European Council made up of the heads of government of the member states.[1] Another important body is the Permanent Representatives Committee, made up of the ambassadors of the member countries to the EU, whose job is to prepare the ground for the meetings of the Council.

- EU-institutions which represent the citizens of the EU-countries. These consist primarily of the European Parliament, although the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee can also be said to be composed of representatives of the public other than members of governments.

The evolution of the EU illustrates the point that the political alliances of the future will not necessarily resemble the old nation state. In institutional terms, the EU is reminiscent to

[1] Furthermore, it is customary to use the term *Ecofin Council* when the Council is made up of the economics and finance ministers of the member states.

Table 3.1 The Member Countries of the European Union

	Year of accession	Population (in millions)	Commissioners	Votes in council	Seats in parliament
Germany	1951	79,5	2	10	99
Italy	1951	57,8	2	10	87
France	1951	56,7	2	10	87
The Netherlands	1951	15,3	1	5	31
Belgium	1951	10,0	1	5	25
Luxembourg	1951	0,4	1	2	6
Great Britain	1973	57,5	2	10	87
Denmark	1973	5,2	1	3	16
Irleand	1973	3,5	1	3	15
Greece	1981	10,3	1	5	25
Spain	1986	39,4	2	8	64
Portugal	1986	10,4	1	5	25
Sweden	1995	8,7	1	4	22
Austria	1995	7,8	1	4	21
Finland	1995	5,0	1	3	16
Total		367,5	20	87	626

Source: Bainbridge 1996 and Petersson 1996a.

some extent of the USA and other systems of the balance of power, although what is usually asserted is that the EU is an organisation *sui generis*, i.e. what we are dealing with is an entirely new form of organisation. Although there may be some truth to such an assertion, the phrase is often used to support the notion that the constitution of the EU is very difficult to describe.

There can be no doubt that it is the Council of Ministers which makes the crucial decisions within the EU, although the final say frequently rests with the European Council. It is also decision-making within the Council that is being referred to when it is said that in constitutional terms the European Union is a kind of hybrid between previously familiar constitutional arrangements. On certain points—the first pillar, i.e. the EC—the EU nowadays resembles a standard federal state or federation (62 of the 87 votes in the Council are necessary for a qualified majority) while much of the remainder of the Union's decision-making has the character of intergovernmental collaboration.

Day-to-day decision-making in the EU is, however, mainly the province of the Commission and all its committees. If the status of the Council is reminiscent of the government in an individual country, the Commission most closely resembles the public administration. The Commission has a significantly more powerful status than central administrative agencies in terms of the initiation of political decisions. In formal terms, it is the bureaucrats within the EU who are empowered to initiate proposals. In contrast the Commission has a weaker status in terms of the implementation of policy than a normal public administration. The Commission is responsible for implementation but does not itself control the outcome since on this point the EU is ultimately dependent on the administrative bodies of the member states.

As a rule, talk about a democratic deficit is made with reference to the fact that the European Parliament, the sole body to be directly elected by the people, has a fairly subordinate role within the EU. What this presupposes is that one is making an evaluation of the EU's democratic content based on an institutional comparison. The analytical method used by the Democratic Audit is a different one. What the specification of a number of criteria allows for is that it is possible in principle for democracy to be realised by various institutional arrangements. In addition it allows us to establish different kinds of democratic deficit in greater detail.[2]

Popular Government

In a democracy it is the people who rule themselves. The ideal of popular government means that independently thinking individuals first carry out a discussion under free and comparable forms and subsequently arrive at a decision on those issues they determine for themselves to be their common affairs. Eurobarometer data show that EU-citizens have come to evaluate their organisation increasingly critically in this regard. To the extent

[2] Cf. here the methodology and arguments in Karlsson 1997.

that one can refer to a serious problem of legitimacy for the EU, it is the shortcomings experienced in terms of popular government that should be attended to (Karlsson 1996). The following examination shows to what extent the negative attitude of EU-citizens is well-founded.[3]

Control of the Agenda

According to the constitution of the EU, it is the Commission, broadly speaking, which has a monopoly on the right to put forward proposals for new regulations and directives, which correspond to ordinary laws in national legislation. In practice political initiatives are a result of informal consultations between the civil servants of the Commission and those of the Council of Ministers (Nilsson 1995). However, in formal terms, it is the Commission and not those who have been elected to office who set the policy agenda. While the commissioners put forward by the member states always have to be approved by the European Parliament, and while the European Parliament is in principle free to pass a vote of no confidence in the entire Commission, there is no doubt that in comparison with both the democratic ideal and the process of parliamentary decision-making at the national level the EU suffers from a significant deficit in this regard.

Enlightened Understanding

It is perfectly possible to maintain that the standard of public debate in Europe is neither better or worse than the discussions that take place within the framework of each of the member countries. However, from the point of view of democracy, there is a particular drawback that applies in the case of the EU. The special problem for the EU is the lack of a day-to-day political debate at the European level. It is true that one could discern a hint of a joint debate, e.g. with reference to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. But on the whole there is in Europe not the

[3] The whole of this section has been influenced by Karlsson 1997.

slightest suggestion of the broad public debate which characterises the national democracies. In this regard the situation is so unsatisfactory, not to say woefully inadequate, that there is no reason for us to evaluate the quality of political discussion. There is after all almost nothing to evaluate.

The primary cause of this deficit is of course the absence of a common European language. This is, it has to be said, in part a reflection of the cultural diversity of Europe and consequently not something to lament. Here we are dealing in a direct sense with a circumstance that we cannot attempt to change and nor should we. On the other hand it is worth thinking about what steps can be taken to correct some of its consequences. One such factor, which contributes to the democratic deficit, is that thus far the European media with few exceptions function mainly at the national level. In addition there are other factors which both can and should be the object of direct measures of constitutional policy. Here, of course, we are thinking of the closed nature of the EU, which is particularly striking when compared with the Swedish principle of public access.

Effective Participation

A functioning popular government at the European level requires that channels be developed in the long term to provide European citizens with the means to participate in EU-politics. As here, too, we are making requirements directly comparable to the ones we make of national democracy, there are three forms in particular of public participation which should be attended to: election campaigns, the activities of organisations and local (in this case national) self-government.

European *election campaigns* function much less well than do national ones as an instrument of popular government. Nor can the problem be avoided with reference to the fact that the only Swedish EU-election hitherto was an extreme case with voter turn-out at slightly above forty per cent. The trend is namely identical in the other EU-countries. The EU-election engages the interest of fewer people, in addition the level of turn-out is diminishing, and the political parties continue to per-

form as national actors to a large extent. In this context it might possibly be a sign of vitality that the party structure at European level is not simply a reflection of the national. It is, however, important to remember that the directly-elected European Parliament is a relatively new creation. The first regular EU-elections were not in fact held until as recently as 1979.[4]

An audit of organisational life provides a similar result. The network of *voluntary associations* is fairly poorly developed at the European level. The democratic deficit is made worse by the fact that the European system of organisations seems to be even more uneven or unbalanced that those at the national level. A possible positive interpretation of the EU is that its political institutions provide members of the public with new means to exert influence. The actual outcome appears, however, to be anything but positive. Research into the influence of the interest organisations within the EU reveals a fairly uniform picture. Brussels has become something of a circus for professional lobbyists. What this has meant in practice, in the case of agriculture at least, is that the traditional special interests have been able to strengthen their hand. Although one can discern a tendency towards a gradual increase in the presence of trade unions, environmental organisations and women's networks, for example, informal participation within the EU still displays a tangible preponderance in favour of business organisations.[5]

National self-government—popular government within the member states—would appear to be one of the foremost resources of the EU. National democracy has after all been strongly influenced by conditions at the local level. If one assumes that the mechanisms are roughly the same at the supranational level, this would mean that one of the most important preconditions for the development of a European democracy is nevertheless in place.

The overall picture is, however, gloomy. The EU is far from satisfying the democratic requirements for effective participa-

[4] See Karlsson 1996, Pedersen 1996 and Lodge 1996.
[5] See Grote 1990, Van Schendelen 1993, Mazey & Richardson 1993 and Andersen & Eliassen 1996b.

tion. EU-citizens lack the institutions necessary for channelling their political commitment.

Equality in Decision-Making

For many people the very heart of democracy is identical with the idea of political equality. The vote of every citizen, not simply on the day of the election but in general terms, should be of equal value in terms of the exercise of political power. In a representative system the degree of political equality can be said to depend on two factors: on how justly representation works and how well the mechanisms for accountability function (Karlsson 1997).

When it comes to the EU, there are reasons to look both at the Council and the European Parliament. Power is localised to the Council, whereas it is the European Parliament which has direct contact with the citizens.

As evidenced in table 3.1, national representation is based neither on the principle of one person, one vote nor on one member state, one vote but rather on a sort of half-way house. The European Parliament leans towards the former while representation in the Council is more reminiscent of the latter. In both cases, however, we are dealing with a kind of modified proportionality. This embodies in a real sense the mixed nature of the EU as an international organisation encompassing both supragovernmental and intergovernmental features. The problem with this method of constructing national representation is that it fails to satisfy any of the fundamental models of democracy. If instead we take various forms of social representativeness into consideration, it becomes a simple matter to state that the situation within the EU is significantly worse, e.g. in terms of equality, than in Sweden.[6]

The poorly developed mechanisms for exerting accountability are, however, a greater problem from the point of view of democracy. The public has positive opportunities to call members of the European Parliament to account, but this can hardly

[6] In this regard, see SOU 1996:43. The situation is somewhat better in the European Parliament than within the EU-bureaucracy.

be said to give the people any significant power since Parliament is the weakest institution within the EU. The opposite applies to the Council. This is where power lies but the voters face major difficulties in calling its members to account in any meaningful way.

Citizenship

The examination of Swedish democracy carried out by the Democratic Audit emphasised the value of tolerance. There is no need for any special emphasis on the assertion that this democratic virtue becomes even more important in a more culturally diverse Europe. We lack systematic information about the extent of intolerance in Europe, but to judge by the expansion of parties hostile to immigrants, we have scarcely any reason to be optimistic. However, the examination of the democratic nature of the EU needs to take account of other kinds of empirical data. The starting-point for popular government as an ideal can then be formulated very precisely: political citizenship should encompass all adult persons who are affected in a more permanent manner by the making of joint decisions. If we compare the procedures of the EU with a fundamental norm of this kind, we have cause to emphasise two serious shortcomings.[7]

First, it is a very palpable, practical problem for the European democracies that a large part of their population consists of immigrant and refugee groups whose members are not accorded in political terms the same status as full citizens although they may have been resident for years within the boundaries of the country. It is true that there may sometimes be a risk that certain people are accorded more than one nationality and thus are given a sort of double franchise. But this appears to be simply a theoretical dramatisation when considered in relation to the political exclusion which so concretely affects a considerable section of Europe's working class.

Another problem in this context is that the nationality rules of the EU are arbitrary in their effect, or more accurately, they

[7] See Bauböck 1994 and the relevant parts of Brubaker 1989.

depend on the legislation of the different member states pertaining to citizenship and this varies considerably.

There is no shortage of ammunition available for anyone wanting to criticise the flaws in popular government within the EU. If we as EU-citizens stress these particular aspects of political governance, there is every reason to be concerned. The only point on which the EU can be said to gain a half-way decent mark would be in relation to popular government within the component parts of the EU, i.e. national self-government. This provides the EU with a powerful popular foundation on which to build. However, this foundation should continue to exist irrespective of whether the EU introduces further elements of supragovernmentalism or sticks to the idea of intergovernmental collaboration. But the anxiety that has to be taken seriously is that the development of the EU risks undermining this foundation. The conflict between the Swedish principle of public access and the confidentiality rules of the EU provides the clearest example in this regard. The problem is, however, more fundamental and more extensive. The process of integration within the EU is increasingly being seen as an elite project. It mainly involves the national leadership, while Swedish voters in particular have become more sceptical. The lack of confidence affects not only those in power in Brussels, but those in Stockholm as well.

Constitutional Government

The shortcomings in popular government at the European level need not be considered a major problem. A conceivable position might instead involve considering the EU as a state developing into a supragovernmental night-watchman.[8] A development of this kind would mean that the EU would have to live up to the ideals we associate with constitutional government.

[8] Majone 1996 can be identified with an attitude of this kind.

Rights and Freedoms

For its part, the EU has not adopted any declaration of human rights and freedoms. The Treaty and the European Court make reference instead to the European Convention on Human Rights, the legal document which in this respect most calls a European constitution to mind. To judge by the literature in the legal field reviewing this matter, the situation this has created is a fairly satisfactory one:

> The structure of legality of the EC with its application of the classic fundamental principles of law together with respect for human rights on the basis of documents including the European Convention has strengthened the element of constitutional government in Europe and has had positive effects on the member states of Europe.[9]

One can, however, object to this very positive assessment that from the legal point of view the EU has failed in the most fundamental regard. As mentioned previously, the EU is unable to guarantee that the members of its population all enjoy equal treatment as citizens.

Moreover, the solution referred to is the subject of discussion on a more technical legal basis. Demands have been made, within the European Parliament as well, for an EU-Convention of its own. Another possibility would be for the EU, as a body corporate, to ratify the European Convention. Both solutions might entail problems of their own. A parallel list of rights can lead to doubling-up and to disputes. Were the EU instead to adopt the European Convention, conflicts as to jurisdiction might arise between the Court of Justice of the European Communities in Luxembourg and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (Petersson 1996b, 46).

Rule of Law

Even if due process is not expressly guaranteed in the basic treaties, the Court of Justice has long since applied the general principles of due process. The Court has declared that Com-

[9] Lysén 1993, 150.

munity law must be clear and unambiguous and its implementation must be predictable for those affected by it. EC-law also recognises the right of the individual to judicial review, the right not to be judged in absentia and the right to defend oneself (Petersson 1996b, 46).

In this regard the EU functions as satisfactorily as Sweden and the other member states.

Separation of Powers

As made clear above, the EU is fully entitled to stand comparison with most of its member states both in terms of the practical realisation of fundamental rights and freedoms and the respect shown for the equality before the law of its citizens. The primary weakness from the point of view of constitutional government pertains to the observation of the principle of the separation of powers within the EU.

If a very generous interpretation is used, it is possible to assert that a distinct notion of the separation of powers has been a guiding principle in the development of decision-making procedures within the EU. The legislative process is set apart by the fact that the core EU institutions have been assigned their own particular tasks. The Commission is solely responsible for the proposal of all new laws. The Council of Ministers decides whether a new law should be adopted. The European Parliament is, however, free to examine all proposed legislation and in certain cases has the right to use a veto. The Court of Justice, finally, is charged with dealing with any conflicts of interpretation that may arise.

The problem is thus not that the EU is entirely lacking in the separation of powers but that the distribution of power and responsibility is often unclear and ill-defined. This applies in particular to the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the EU and the member states. However, the allocation of roles between the particular institutions of the EU is not particularly well-defined either. The structure of political power in Brussels is said to suffer from "Byzantine complexity", an intricate system of institutions and decision-making processes

which is difficult to monitor in its entirety (Gidlund 1995). In common with a number of member states, Sweden for example, a clear shortcoming can be discerned with regard to the separation of powers.

The internationalisation of constitutional government is one of the most important events to take place in post-war constitutional history. Today citizens are able to assert their rights by virtue of a system of rules and institutions which exists on a geographic level that transcends that of the nation state. In overall terms, it is also possible to maintain that the EU asserts itself relatively well as a constitutional government. In this regard the EU can stand comparison with many democratic polities.

Effective Government

In the view of the EU held by certain politicians and analysts of the future, its organisation should be considered mainly on the basis of the results it produces. According to this perspective, the EU-project is a means to bring about peace and prosperity for the peoples of Europe. While the organisation may have shortcomings in relation to the ideals of popular and constitutional government, this is acceptable, as long as it is able to demonstrate effective government.[10]

In what follows, an assessment is made of to what extent such a strictly instrumentalist view is capable of offering a sustainable foundation on which to defend the EU.

[10] Among Swedish political parties, it is the Social Democrats and the Conservatives who come closest to sharing such a functionalist view of the EU (see Krantz 1995). A vigorous exposition along the lines of this argument as to how the legitimacy of the EU should be considered historically is to be found in Joseph Weiler (1991), while currently it is Fritz Scharpf (1996) who is the most prominent advocate of the corresponding normative position.

Resource Control

The EU regulates its own economic resources by means of the annual budget proposed by the Commission and approved by the Council and the Parliament. A significant difference when compared with Sweden, for instance, is that the constitution of the EU stipulates that the budget must be balanced.[11]

The EU is not affected by the kind of debt problems so common among the member states. Instead, the EU's problem in terms of resources has to do with the considerable degree to which it is dependent on the willingness of its member states to pay the contributions they owe. However, since the mid-1970, the EU has been entitled to collected its own taxes (VAT), and certain fines. This has allowed the EU gradually to strengthen its economic base.

However, by comparison with the national budgets of each of its members, that of the EU is still a very modest one; it corresponds to just over 1 per cent of the total GNP of all the member countries and roughly 2.5 per cent of their total public expenditure. In terms of Europe as a whole, the EU-budget thus plays a fairly minor macro-economic role. This circumstance reflects the fact that policy within the EU is mainly to do with various kinds of regulations rather than with the redistribution of resources. This is not to say that the economic activities of the EU are totally without significance. For several member states—Greece, Ireland and Portugal, in particular—grants from the EU's Structural Funds mean a considerable increase in the level of public investment.

Decision-Making Capability

The ability of a collective body to arrive at decisions which are binding on all the members depends on both the institutional rules in place and the extent to which a climate of consensus exists. When it comes to the latter, there is an absence of systematic studies which would allow us to say anything more

[11] The budgetary process is regulated by articles 199–209 of the Maastricht Treaty. The budgetary policy of the EU is dealt with in Laffan & Schackleton 1996 and in Nugent 1994.

definite about the extent to which the decision-making culture has varied over time and between the different spheres of the EU.[12]

The decision-making rules of the EU vary among different spheres, but one consistent feature is that it is more difficult to arrive at a decision within the EU than in a particular member state. The normal procedure in the Swedish democratic system is that it is sufficient for a legislative proposal to garner the support of a simple majority in order to pass. Unanimity is frequently required within the Council of Ministers and at its simplest a qualified majority consists of 62 votes out of 87. The only thing in this respect to argue in favour of the decision-making system within the EU is that such a separation of powers tends to create stable majorities. However, this argument, which can be derived purely theoretically, presupposes that the system of separation of powers is clearly of such a nature that its playing rules are predictable. As was previously made clear, it is doubtful whether this is a distinguishing characteristic of the EU.

Outcome Control

The gigantic and labyrinthine complexity of the EU is occasionally a source of complaint. And there may very well also be good reason to criticise the administration in Brussels. But compared to a normal state, the bureaucracy of the EU is tiny. The EU has in fact hardly any administrative apparatus of its own to deal with the implementation of the decisions it makes. The EU is dependent in this regard on the public administrations of its member countries. The duties of the EU's own bodies—in this case the Commission and the Court of Auditors—are mainly to do with monitoring and oversight.

A simple means of assessing the EU in this regard is to make a comparison with the member countries. If we grant the assumption that the EU's monitoring and oversight functions

[12] In this regard, see Kalin 1996 who argues in favour of the view that the key feature of the decision-making culture of the EU is the creation of consensus through permanent negotiations taking place in closed committees.

are carried out satisfactorily, then implementation should work as well or as poorly as it does in the member countries. This presumably rather naive evaluation would place the EU on an equal footing with Sweden. To judge by the data on compliance by the member countries with EU decisions, there is a significant measure of variation in this regard. Broadly speaking there is a correlation between the degree of "compliance with the EU" and the proximity of the member states to the North Pole. A more realistic evaluation would therefore be that the implementation of decisions works less well within the EU than within Sweden.

An overall assessment of the various components of effective government shows that the EU cannot properly be compared with the member states. However, by way of a concluding reflection, we would maintain that the most interesting comparison does not relate to the extent to which the EU falls short, but rather to the difference in kind that can be registered here. Politics within the EU is namely less to do with distribution and redistribution, and comparatively more to do with regulation and deregulation.[13] Such a shift in the centre of gravity naturally has consequences for the kinds of requirement one should make of a working administration.

Maastricht and the Idea of Democracy

For almost every particular point in our audit, we have been able to register a more or less serious shortcoming. The EU does not suffer from a *single* democratic deficit but from *several.* If we allow some slight shading in this picture, however, we can state that the EU gets a decent mark nevertheless in terms of constitutional government and that effective government on the part of the EU could be worse. The most serious defects relate to popular government. One is entitled to wonder

[13] See Majone 1996 in this regard. An enlightening comparison can be made here with the idea of "judicial democracy", the point of view argued for in Lowi 1979.

in this regard whether the EU reaches even the minimum acceptable level for democracy.

What, then, will happen to the EU in the future? A constitutional change is planned for as part of the Maastricht Treaty. Within a few years the member states of the EU will join together in an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) which involves a greater measure of supragovernmentalism within the fields of currency and monetary policy. However, in the case of Sweden, EMU would not only mean that political power will pass to supragovernmental bodies. The constitutional realignment brought about by a European Central Bank would also involve an extensive deregulation of currency and monetary policy to what is in political terms an almost completely independent agency. Different views may be held as to whether this new order is compatible with the principles of democracy or not (e.g. Hermansson 1996 and Petersson 1997) but surely no one is in a position to maintain that EMU, in itself, offers a solution to the democratic deficit.

Are we then in a position to imagine that the citizens and organised political actors of the EU will address the issue of this democratic deficit in some other way? A first opportunity is currently being provided by the intergovernmental conference.[14] The current constitutional order is effective at making any normal political attempt at constitutional reform difficult to introduce.

The Maastricht Treaty contains fundamental flaws from the point of view of democracy. To begin with, the wording of the Treaty is so difficult to master and so legally complex that even this purely practical problem poses yet another difficulty if the population of Europe is to become involved on a political level with the future power structure of the EU. The other flaw is connected with the fact that the constitution of the EU has the character of an intergovernmental treaty. In combination with the fact that the contents of the Treaty hand power over to supragovernmental agencies, this gives rise to a very peculiar

[14] The intergovernmental conference is dealt with in a special research project with future contributions from Sverker Gustavsson and Anna-Carin Svensson at the Department of Government, Uppsala University.

arrangement. The tiniest emendation of the constitution requires unanimity among the member states. This makes it not only difficult, but in practice almost impossible to effectuate a constitutional policy. This entails a deliberate repudiation of the opportunity for a constitutional learning process, and this in turn goes against the fundamental notion of democracy never to lock oneself in and throw away the key when facing the future.

4 How Democratic Are the Municipalities?

Assessing the quality of democracy in the municipalities makes for a very divergent picture. The bright side emphasises the renaissance in local self-government. Decentralisation, subsidiarity and civil society have become the lodestars of public debate in many countries. The gloomy side of the picture highlights the threat to municipal autonomy. The freedom of action of the municipalities is being threatened by economic restrictions, central government regulation and supranational decisions. The crisis of confidence between the public and those elected to office is also a feature of local politics.

Measuring Local Democracy

The question is whether it is possible to apply the same democratic criteria at both national and local level. The answer is not self-evident. There are those who would maintain that local democracy is of so particular a nature that it must be assessed on the basis of very special normative requirements. The study carried out by the Democratic Audit is based upon the contrary position, i.e. that the same fundamental democratic requirements are valid for all territorial levels. Our starting-point is therefore that it is not only the state and the EU that must comply with the ideal of democracy based on popular, constitutional and effective government but the municipalities as well.

The practical execution of a study of this kind involves certain difficulties. One problem is to translate the general democratic requirements and our more detailed criteria so as to make them applicable to the particular conditions of politics at the

local government level. Another difficulty involved is in the collecting of the relevant data.[1] In presenting the findings of our survey we need to emphasise the limitations and preconditions of the study right from the outset. We have selected two starting-points. The first is to cover all the municipalities of the country. Previous studies of local government democracy have usually been limited to a particular municipality or to a limited selection of municipalities. While we have been forced to accept a certain level of attrition in some sections, our aim has been to carry out a comprehensive study. The second precondition involves not basing the study on primary data. The idea instead is to exploit the available secondary information as collated, for example, by the central administrative authorities, commissions of enquiry, researchers,[2] the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (*Svenska Kommunförbundet*) and *KommunAktuellt*[3] (a publication dealing with contemporary municipal affairs). This has allowed us to present an inventory of the current state of knowledge: how far-reaching are the conclusions that can be currently drawn with reference to the quality of municipal democracy? It is hardly surprising that the survey has exposed a number of gaps. On many points we would have preferred to have had more data available. As a result our study has become a reference source as to how to improve the state of knowledge about local government politics.

And yet what has become clear is that it is currently possible to gather enough information to make two kinds of systematic comparison. First, we can now compare the municipalities on a systematic basis. Is it possible to identify a particular municipality which is especially flawed in terms of local democracy? Has the democratic ideal perhaps already been achieved in a municipality? Second, it is possible to compare the democratic

[1] Peder Nielsen, of the Department of Government at the Uppsala University, has helped to develop the structure of the study and been responsible for the collection of the data.

[2] Some of the statistical information has been derived from the municipal database compiled by Leif Johansson of the Department of Government, Lund University.

[3] A journalistic examination of Swedish local democracy was carried out by, and published in, KommunAktuellt. This also involved survey material processed by journalists. The periodical has contributed certain material to the survey of the Democratic Audit and thus made parts of its material available for publication in a form other than in the standard periodical.

requirements one against another. Is municipal politics flawed in some particular respect with respect to popular, constitutional and effective government? This allows us to assess municipal democracy with greater accuracy than the single overall mark we have handed out hitherto.

While our data-collection covers all 288 municipalities in Sweden, it does not include the county councils. It should also be pointed out that, in keeping with standard usage, we use the term municipality for two partially distinct phenomena. By municipality is understood both the political and administrative organisation and a specific territory. Our discussion of municipal democracy deals with both these aspects.[4]

Popular Government

The principle of the sovereignty of the people places the same fundamental requirement on local government politics as it does on national politics. The public should be entitled to discuss local government issues under free forms and to develop an independent view of these issues. Those elected to office must be answerable to the voters at universal elections. Every member of the public has the same right to participate in decision-making on common affairs and also has the obligation to respect the right of other citizens to hold divergent opinions.

Control of the Agenda

According to Sweden's Instrument of Government, decision-making power in the municipalities is exercised by elected assemblies. The main principle is therefore that local self-government is realised through representative democracy. The Local Government Act, however, also provides scope for certain elements of direct democracy. Municipal councillors can authorise local referendums or opinion surveys; furthermore, if at least five per cent of the enfranchised inhabitants of a mu-

[4] The municipalities have not been weighted for the statistical operations presented in this chapter. Consequently small and large municipalities carry the same weight.

nicipality or county council support the proposal, they are now entitled to call for a referendum.

The question is to what extent members of the public and their elected representatives are free to determine which issues become the subject of political decision-making. In reality it is mainly elected councillors who have the opportunity to decide for themselves the choice of the key political agenda. As a result the initiatives of elected councillors are of key interest. In recent times, concern has been expressed that elected councillors have become marginalised. In certain instances the decentralisation of decision-making responsibility within the municipalities is considered to have reached a point where councillors have little left to do anymore.

The recent commission of inquiry into municipal renewal gathered information about the activities of locally elected councillors between 1992 and 1995 (SOU 1996:169). On average the councils meet nine times a year in plenary session. In a number of municipalities the elected representatives met together more sporadically, in the lowest instances three to four times a year, while the councils in the most active municipalities assembled more than once a month. The size of the municipality was an obvious factor; the municipal councils of the larger cities assemble more frequently than do those of the small rural municipalities. This fact is hardly surprising but it is interesting for reasons of its own. There has been a protracted debate as to whether democracy is served most favourably within small or large units (Dahl & Tufte 1973). The conclusions point in different directions. Proximity and direct personal contact between citizens count in favour of the small units. On the other hand, larger units are better able to develop the diversity, variation and balance of powers which are the preconditions for an open, dynamic society. If the activity level of elected councillors is used as a measure of the vitality of local self-government, in particular of the capacity of those elected to set the political agenda of the municipality, the larger municipalities have the advantage in this regard. It should, however, be pointed out that the correlation is not perfect. Small munici-

palities which have very active elected councils can also be found.

Another measure of the activity of local councillors is the duration of their meetings. On average, the plenary session of the council lasts barely three hours. The variation around this average figure follows the same essential pattern as the number of meetings. In the larger municipalities, the meetings last longest but there are also a considerable number of small municipalities with diligent (and long-winded?) speakers.

The individual councillor is free to raise particular matters by means of motions, interpellations and questions. If one counts the number of matters raised per individual councillor, one discovers a systematic variation across all the municipalities in the country. The more prosperous the municipality, the more committed and involved are the elected members of its local council. The highest level of activity is namely to be found among the councillors in municipalities with wealthy and well-educated inhabitants. The correlations are thus the same at the municipal and the individual level: the greater the level of social resources, the greater the level of political participation. Conversely, this means that the municipalities that are poorest in terms of resources also have the most passive politicians.

Following a change to the Local Government Act, it is now possible for a group of the inhabitants of a municipality to demand a referendum. In a survey the periodical Kommun-Aktuellt confirmed that 40 such popular initiatives had been taken. A statistical analysis shows only weak correlations. It is true that there is a tendency for demands for referendums to be slightly more usual in larger, densely-populated municipalities. Nevertheless, the general impression is that this option offered by the Local Government Act has been invoked in every type of municipality. However, in each and every case the local council decided to reject the proposal to hold a referendum. The notion that this moderate element of direct democracy would be able in the long term to revitalise the stagnant state of the political parties in many municipalities can therefore be said to have failed utterly. In this regard, established politicians at local

level have shown evidence of a lack of openness and capacity for renewal.

Enlightened Understanding: the Public Sphere

Here our attention turns to the structure of the mass media in the municipalities. Do diversity and competition exist between different media? Is the individual citizen free to choose a different newspaper, radio station or TV-channel? Overall the competition situation in relation to the daily press is unsatisfactory. State subsidies for the press may possibly have slowed the rate at which smaller daily papers are being forced out of business, but they have been unable to halt the process. In numerous municipalities, readers have little or no choice. The largest daily paper covers 57 per cent of households on average. In every fifth municipality, the largest newspaper is read by more than 80 per cent of households. The degree of concentration of the press has no clear correlation with the structure of the municipality.

The deregulation of radio and television has lead to an increase in diversity which may to some extent compensate for the lack of diversity in the press. However, the range of programs offered by many of the new radio and TV-channels is so light-weight that they can hardly meet the need for an informed social debate. The advent of neighbourhood radio at the end of the 1970s meant that voluntary associations were given greater opportunities to spread their message. Political parties and religious communities have started to exploit this channel to the public despite all its technical limitations. There are on average half a dozen neighbourhood radio licences per municipality, the odd one of which may apply to a political organisation. However, the distribution around this average is significant. The major cities are in a class of their own while at the other end of the spectrum there are a number of small municipalities which have no neighbourhood radio transmitters at all. This is one more piece of evidence in support of the notion that the size of the municipality has a positive effect on democracy in that the

large units provide greater opportunities for diversity within the public sphere.

There are various ways in which the municipality is in a position to help the public to acquire knowledge about social issues in general and about the municipality in particular. In the course of the debate in Sweden, access to public libraries has been considered a vital precondition for public education. The scale and quality of public libraries varies considerably between municipalities. If one considers the book-stock, it is obvious that the largest municipalities have the most books overall. It is more interesting to analyse the number of volumes in relation to the number of inhabitants. Library resources expressed in terms of the number of books per inhabitant are greatest in the sparsely populated parts of Norrland (Sweden's largest and most northerly province). However, the most important factor is the political one. Even when one allows for other structural variables, it is the party-political colour of the municipality that is the key factor. Social Democrat-controlled municipalities invest more in public libraries than do non-Socialist ones.

Technological change is providing municipalities with new opportunities to make information available to the public. The general impression given is that the municipalities have been relatively tardy in terms of exploiting the Internet and other new means to open up the municipalities to public oversight. Many municipalities still lack their own home-page. Only a few municipalities have been sufficiently forward-looking to create this new form of public space (Westby 1996). Our survey shows that information technology has been developed furthest in the larger urban municipalities. The difference between those municipalities under Social Democrat control and those under non-Socialist control is minimal; the significance of individual pioneering spirits is greater.

There is also room within the contemporary institutions of representative democracy for greater transparency. Ten per cent of the municipalities have decided to hold open meetings of council committees. Roughly every other municipality holds "decentralised" meetings of the council outside the central

location of the municipality. Two out of three municipalities have established "question times" open to the public. In these respects there are relatively small differences to be found among different types of municipalities with the obvious exception that decentralised meetings are most common in sparsely-populated municipalities.

Some municipalities have actively adopted technology to help facilitate public insight into the political process. Radio transmissions of council meetings occur in 38 per cent of the country's municipalities; 8 per cent have live transmissions on television. It is primarily those who live in larger municipalities who have the opportunity to receive the debates of the municipality. This is yet another example where small municipalities are not always best at democracy.

Effective Participation: Election Campaigns

Even if political activity is not the sole indicator of a vital democratic process, a low turn-out is nevertheless a signal that many members of the public do not consider using their right to vote worthwhile. Turn-out in municipal elections in Sweden, which are held at the same time as elections to parliament, is relatively high (approximately 85 per cent). There are nevertheless certain variations among municipalities, from the lowest at 70.2 per cent (Haparanda in the North) to the highest 91.9 per cent (Vellinge in the South); the figures date from the municipal council elections of 1994. The population structure of the municipalities is reflected in these variations. The highest turn-out is to be found in those municipalities whose populations include many professionals and high income-earners. The lowest turn-out is to be found in those municipalities with a high level of unemployment, a high rate of ill-health and a large number of foreign residents.

Despite, or perhaps indeed because of, the joint election day there are signs that the scope for independent local campaigns has increased. The number of locally-based parties has increased in recent years. In the municipal elections of 1994, the group of "other parties" (i.e. those parties other than the eight

parties who are or have been represented in the Riksdag) received a total of 3.8 per cent of the vote. Most frequently these are local parties. At the elections of 1994 these parties were awarded seats in 41 of the municipalities. There are obviously special factors lying behind the successes of these local parties. There are, in fact, no systematic differences in respect of the economic and social structure which can explain the variations.

Effective Participation: Voluntary Associations

An assessment of local government democracy must put special emphasis on the vitality of civil society. In order for the inhabitants of a municipality to be citizens and not anonymous and atomised individuals, there must be common meeting-places in the community. Organised associational life is of greatest importance in this regard. Voluntary associations of citizens tend to promote democratic dialogue. Social movements, study circles and parties with popular support produce social capital. Active participation in associational life creates confidence and trust among citizens. The voluntary associations function as a school in democracy. New social movements which get young citizens involved can provide a dynamic element in a living democracy.

There are currently no comprehensive data on the number of members of associations in the country's municipalities. We are forced therefore to limit ourselves to a few particular, although significant, aspects of civil society.

Representative democracy is based on an interplay between the electors and the elected. In the political traditions of Sweden and the Nordic countries, democracy is founded on political parties with the characteristics of social movements. There are several crisis signs today which would indicate the lack of vitality in local party organisations. The reasons given by the public inquiry into local democracy for several of their proposals were couched in terms of the currently unsatisfactory working of the political parties as channels for the involvement of the public (SOU 1993:90). A key issue is how many mem-

bers of the public are members of any political party. Surprisingly enough there are no current statistics about party membership within the municipalities. We have therefore put together these membership figures by means of a questionnaire survey in which the parties participated. The number of members is best related to the number of voters. In this way it is possible to calculate the proportion of members for every party in all the municipalities. The average hovers around a few per cent. However, there is a wide range of variation among the municipalities. Relatively speaking, most party members are to be found in small, sparsely-populated municipalities. The size and relative density of population of the municipality is of very great significance. From this statistical satellite perspective, what is clearly apparent is the extent of the recruitment problems faced by the political parties in the major urban areas.

Study circles are a cornerstone of the Sweden of the social movements. The adult education associations gather statistics concerning the number of study-circle hours in the municipalities of the country. Calculated in the number of hours per inhabitant there are great variations. This kind of public activity demonstrates a pattern that differs to some extent from what is usually observed in terms of political participation. The highest level of activity in study circles is recorded in the municipalities of Norrland which have high levels of unemployment and of ill-health. The level of activity of the adult education associations compensates to some extent for the degree of social exclusion which exists in other respects.

Effective Participation: Decentralisation

When examining the quality of democracy at national level, an important criterion is the presence of local self-government. This indicator is also in all likelihood a corresponding instance for the measurement of local democracy. What is focused on here is whether lively sub-municipal units exist, such as neighbourhood councils and neighbourhood associations. This aspect is particularly important in a country such as Sweden, which currently has barely 300 municipalities as a result of a heavy-

handed process of amalgamation. These large municipalities were provided with a form of government characterised by centralisation, professionalisation and the politicisation of the parties (Strömberg & Westerståhl 1983). In recent years there have been several attempts to decentralise power within the large municipalities.

At the beginning of the 1990s the Council of the Social Movements (*Folkrörelserådet*) set up a major project for the development of the rural areas, "All Sweden should come alive". The aim of this kind of neighbourhood politics is to organise and develop methods to improve the interplay between citizens and the politicians and officials of a municipality. The idea is to strengthen the influence of the public over the development of the local area and to design a form of social planning based on the involvement of members of the public (Olsson & Forsberg 1997). According to one report there are now over three thousand such neighbourhood groups. A good many of them are associated with the already established network of local heritage societies. Obviously this form of local activity is most prevalent in sparsely-populated municipalities.

Even though Sweden finds itself lagging behind developments in neighbouring countries in certain respects, attempts are now being made to transfer responsibility in the schools to boards of governors with parental representation. Thus far change has been slow to happen and according to the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) such boards exist for comprehensive and special schools in only eleven municipalities.

Equality in Decision-Making

The social representativeness of the composition of local councils can be investigated by comparing the voters with those elected to office. The trend has been positive in one respect. As is the case in the Riksdag and in the county councils, the proportion of women among those elected to office has been gradually rising. The proportion of women elected to municipal councils after the most recent elections was 41 per cent on average. However, significant variation exists around this

median figure; the proportion of women varies between 22 and 53 per cent. The explanation of this variation is an interesting blend of demographic and political factors. Although the representation of women tends to be highest in urban municipalities with a high tax-base, the composition of the political leadership of the local council is also a major factor. Those municipalities under Social Democratic domination have comparatively better levels of female representation on the local council.

Another measure of equality in the municipalities is the size of the proportion of leading administrative personnel who are women. The degree of equality among high-ranking municipal officials is lower than among the political leadership. On average women make up 18 per cent of leading municipal officials and corresponding posts. The municipalities which are most equal in this respect need not necessarily be those with the largest proportion of women council members. The correlation is as good as non-existent.

Foreign citizens who have been registered as domiciled in the country for at least three years enjoy both the right to vote and to stand as candidates in the election for members of their municipal council. Turn-out among immigrants has, however, fallen and is now down to 40 per cent. Immigrants have apparently found it difficult to gain access to the political establishment. This lack of representativeness and equal opportunities is particularly important to note since it may be a sign of a lack of openness in the political system. The question is how great the differences are between various types of municipality. Calculated as an average across all the Swedish municipalities, the proportion of those of foreign extraction lies around 8 per cent. The proportion of foreign-born citizens among those elected to serve on municipal councils is in contrast only 4.5 per cent. One municipality in five is totally lacking in immigrant representation on its elected council. The degree of under-representation varies among municipalities; in some municipalities the number of those born abroad serving on municipal councils is actually proportionally greater than in the population. However, this variation in the representation of immigrants is difficult to explain in terms of the structural characteristics of municipali-

ties. Neither economic, social nor political circumstances show a particularly powerful correlation. The explanation of the degree of representation of immigrants must therefore be sought primarily in factors particular to each individual municipality.

Citizen Tolerance

In a previous report, the Democratic Audit was able to demonstrate that a considerable element of intolerance existed within Swedish popular opinion. The question is whether there any systematic variations among municipalities. A study of how the requests made by Muslims to build mosques were received in various locations indicates that there is considerable variation among Swedish municipalities (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995). No opinion survey data exists to provide information about the climate of tolerance in each municipality. The indicators have therefore to be indirect ones.

The periodical *Expo* has taken it upon itself to chart on a systematic basis the prevalence of racism in Sweden. On our behalf, Expo has used the data it has collected to make a composite report, municipality by municipality, on the following survey items: postal addresses with racist connections, skinhead-gangs and organisations of right-wing extremists, repeated or major incidents with racist connotations, racist demonstrations, racist concerts, "white-supremacist" music groups and companies which operate to distribute racist material. Phenomena of this kind are wholly absent in 112 of the country's 288 municipalities. This does, however, mean that in just over 60 per cent of the municipalities there occurs some form of expression of a potentially racist kind. In 23 municipalities there are four or more instances of evidence of racist opinion formation.

The question is whether intolerance is being expressed politically in terms other than opinion formation. New parties have campaigned on a more or less camouflaged message of hostility to immigrants. Such right-wing populist parties were represented on the councils of 50 municipalities after the elections of 1994. There is a certain correlation, albeit a weak one,

between the number of votes cast for these parties and expressions of racism.

Another measure of the degree of tolerance is the attitude to homosexuals. The great majority of municipalities have appointed special *partnerskapsförrättare* (officials responsible for the certification of "marriages" between homosexuals), but a score of them have failed to meet the legal requirements in this regard. In some fifty municipalities negative comments have also been made in the local media. The variations among the municipalities do not, however, follow any systematic pattern.

Constitutional Government

In a democracy public power is subject to limitations. These are justified by reference to minorities and the rights and freedoms of the individual. Public power is to be exercised under the law. Since the major part of public sector activity currently takes place within the municipal and county councils, the quality of constitutional government is determined in large measure by the way local government bodies perform in this respect. Is there a corresponding form at the local level for constitutional government as it is exercised nationally? In order for a municipality to be considered as satisfactory in this regard the three general requirements of constitutional government must be satisfied. First, the public must enjoy a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Second, the exercise of public power should meet the requirements of the rule of law. Third, public power must be organised according to the principle of the separation of powers.

Rights and Freedoms

The issue here is whether the municipality satisfies the constitutional rights of its citizens in practice. One form of restriction of the freedoms of expression can be said to exist if the municipality obstructs demonstrations or other expressions of political

opinion. In the established democracies, there ought to be few actual examples of serious infringements of fundamental civil and political rights. The debate about whether the municipalities live up to these requirements has been concerned mainly with social rights. The Swedish variant of the welfare state is based on a very extensive public sector in which the state sets out the contents of these rights but hands the delivery of services involved over to the municipalities.

One test of the capacity of the municipality to meet the fundamental rights and freedoms has to do with the rights of children. This is a group which does not form a powerful lobby of its own. The rights of children are therefore ultimately dependent on the involvement of the political and judicial agencies. Available data relate to whether the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child has been debated by the full council, whether the municipality has implemented special information programmes on the children's convention, whether the municipality has adopted a policy document on the children's convention, whether there is a municipal *barnombudsman* (ombudsman for the rights of children) and whether the municipality has made a decision affecting the influence of children and young people on the municipal decision-making process. In 91 municipalities, the council has not taken any of the initiatives mentioned above. Only a dozen municipalities have carried out three or four of these initiatives. It is mainly the larger urban municipalities that have been particularly active in asserting the rights of children.

Rule of Law

Since members of the public encounter public power in the form of municipal authorities, the quality of the application of the law will be determined to a considerable degree by the administrative practices of the municipality. There are several forms of appeal procedures by which individual members of the public can appeal against municipal decisions. Special administrative courts have the power to render municipal decisions null and void and also to change them in certain instances. It is the

duty of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen (*Justitieombudsmannen*) to scrutinise both central and local government administrative authorities. There are also several public bodies charged with monitoring the municipalities.

The task of gathering information from the administrative courts of appeal as to how frequently municipalities are the losers in different kinds of administrative cases has proved practically impossible to perform within the framework of this survey. It is perhaps surprising that this data is not already accessible and also that it cannot readily be presented as part of the judicial bench-marking of municipal administration.

However, on the basis of statistics provided by the Parliamentary Ombudsmen it is possible to examine how frequently that body has criticised the municipalities. The data relates to the kind of criticism that has arisen as a result of a complaint made by an individual. The information does not, however, cover the relatively small number of inspections which have been carried out on the initiative of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen themselves. During the period between November 1990 and August 1996, there were a total of 714 instances of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen criticising a municipality. One municipality in three avoided any criticism whatsoever. In most cases, the criticism involved was in relation to an isolated event. Only in a very few per cent of municipalities was there more than one reprimand per year. Calculated in absolute terms, critical verdicts were naturally most frequent in the large municipalities. A more pertinent measure is the degree of criticism expressed in proportion to the size of the administration or municipality. Here no systematic differences could be shown.

A similar picture is obtained if one surveys the 116 occasions on which the National Agency for Education criticised Swedish municipalities in the period from 1992 to January 1997. The comments were in relation to slightly over a quarter of the country's municipalities. If one controls for the size of the municipality, no systematic correlation remains.

A vital precondition for being able to monitor due process is that the public has the right to have access to the general documentation of the municipality. As part of the principle of public

access to official documents, it is presumed that the municipal administrations keep their documentation in order and make it accessible. An investigation of the way the Archive Act is being complied with in the municipalities indicated serious flaws. In barely a third of the municipalities were the provisions of the Archive Act observed by all administrations. Just over a tenth of the municipalities infringed the requirement of the Archive Act that there should be a description of the contents of the municipal archives together with a complete inventory. Faults in the rule of law in this respect were not concentrated within any particular type of municipality.

Separation of Powers

Meeting the requirement for the separation of powers also involves the existence of independent bodies to monitor the practices of the municipalities. Each municipality must employ both professional and elected auditors according to the Local Government Act. In many municipalities power is concentrated among a restricted number of professional politicians who hold several offices at the same time. The issue of the separation of powers should perhaps also be examined from a dynamic perspective. Are municipalities run by a permanent one-party government or does a regular alternation of power take place?

Currently municipalities differ significantly in terms of their internal organisation. The details of what follows are based on a survey of those elected to office carried out by the research department of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (*Kommunförbundet*). Certain municipalities are either wholly or partly sub-divided into neighbourhood councils, others have a purchaser-provider organisation, while some have a combination of organisational principles. A few small municipalities may have only half a dozen committees while the municipalities of the major cities with complex organisations may have fifty or so different committees. The larger municipality has the scope to implement a more pluralist organisation, but also has to pay the price in the form of difficulties in oversight and coordination.

The average number of ordinary members per committee is approximately 12, but there is a broad range between the minimum number, 8, and the maximum size of 17. A small number of elected members on each committee means that responsibilities are concentrated in relatively few hands. Although large committees may be cumbersome for the purposes of assembly, it is an advantage from the perspective of the doctrine of the separation of powers if responsibilities are broadly distributed. Large municipalities also enjoy an advantage in this respect.

Effective Government

The effectiveness of local government democracy is synonymous with the capacity of members of the public to realise collective goals through joint action under democratic forms. Effective government requires access to shared resources, decision-making capability and outcome control.

Resource Control

Discussion in this area has primarily been concerned with the economic resources. In order for the political system to act effectively, the municipal economy must be balanced. The principle of local self-government has been exploited in several municipalities to expand the volume of services produced far beyond the available resources. A large and growing budget deficit is seriously restricting the freedom of action of the current generation and of those to come.

Solidity, or the equity/assets ratio, is one means of calculating the degree of control exercised by a municipality over its economic resources. By this is meant the capital of the municipality as a percentage of the total of its resources. Solidity is a measure of the size of that part of the resources which has not been "pawned"; solidity as used here also covers the pension-debt of the municipality. The solidity of the municipalities was 37 per cent on average in 1994. A few municipalities had negative solidity while the highest value recorded was 73 per cent.

An alternative measure of the economic state of affairs is the debt burden of the municipality. The sum of short-term and long-term debts, including pension debts, expressed in SEK per inhabitant, constitutes a measure of the "public debt" of the municipality. Around the average of 47,000 SEK in 1995, there was a range of variation between 17,000 and 131,000 SEK.

Obviously both these measures will coincide to a considerable degree. Similar differences between the municipalities may be observed in both instances. The variations relate in part to the composition of the population; municipalities with a large number of high-income earners and a high tax-base have a better financial situation than poor municipalities. Of greater importance than this structural explanation, however, are political factors. Municipalities under Social Democratic rule have a greater degree of debt and worse solidity than those under non-Socialist rule.

Decision-Making Capability

Although difficult to approach empirically, it may be desirable to examine to what extent elected politicians are able to reach agreements that work and are stable. For want of direct surveys one has to try to assess the circumstances which facilitate the political decision-making process.

One aspect of this has to do with the relative strengths of the political parties in the municipal councils. In 1995 the Democratic Audit calculated the degree of fragmentation of the party system in the Riksdag (Rothstein et al. 1995). The idea is that increasing party splits lead to greater problems in forming working majorities. In similar fashion, we have now calculated the degree of fragmentation in the elected councils of the municipalities.[5] This index constitutes a means of measuring the collective effectiveness of the council. In a party system such as Sweden's, what this measure describes in practice is the relative dominance of the Social Democrats in the council. A fragmented council means that many parties are roughly the same

[5] The measure is an index of concentration which is identical with the inverse value of the effective number of parties (Coleman 1986).

size and therefore that the Social Democrats do not have a dominant position. If one abstracts exclusively this aspect of the effectiveness of the municipal political system, the resulting conclusion is that democracy does best when there is a single dominant party.

Hitherto the conclusions reached pertaining to the effectiveness of the municipalities have pointed in different directions. The analysis of the municipal control of shared resources indicated that those municipalities under Social Democrat control worked least well. The conclusion in terms of decision-making capability demonstrates in contrast that effectiveness is increased if a large party is able to make decisions on its own. Here we see illustrated one of the inherent dilemmas of democracy. In terms of practical municipal politics, what is shown is that a Social Democratic dominated municipality can demonstrate effectiveness in the short term by expanding the provision of services but can undermine effectiveness in the long term by increasing the level of debt and weakening the economic foundations of the municipality.

Outcome Control

The effectiveness of democracy is ultimately dependent on the way the decisions taken are implemented. Data on the effectiveness of the administration may be desirable but are seldom available. The degree of implementation should therefore be measured by means of the available measurements of productivity. There are nowadays indices for service production within several major areas, education and child care for example.

An overall measure is constituted by an index for municipal service.[6] The level of service in a municipality is compared with the national average. The various measures of service which form part of the overall measurement indicate the proportion of a specific target group who make use of a service. It should be pointed out that the index does not take account of

[6] Published in *Vad kostar verksamheten i din kommun 1994* (What did the activities of your municipality cost you in 1994?), a publication of Kommunförbundet and SCB (the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Statistics Sweden).

the fact that the need for a service may be different in different municipalities; nor does the measure take account of the quality of the service provided. It turns out that the party political factor also has a role to play in this aspect of effectiveness. On average Social Democratic controlled municipalities have higher levels of service provision.

Variations in Local Democracy

As should already have become clear from this brief survey, gathering comparable data on the various dimensions of democracy and making it systematic entails a good number of problems. The analysis and interpretation of this data provide further problems.

Differences between Municipalities

Quantitative measurements can be assigned to a number of indicators. Turn-out, the index of representativeness and economic indices may be expressed in figures which make possible various kinds of statistical analysis. Other indicators, however, may only be formulated using qualitative judgements. The audit of Swedish politics at national level has shown that the observations can be summarised on a graded scale. Similarly the observations concerning municipal democracy should be possible to express along a scale with plus and minus signs.

Taking the next step to a composite index is tempting but problematic. Using a five-point scale, it is a technically simple matter to create an overall index of the quality of democracy in a municipality. An operation of this kind is based on a number of specific assumptions. Here it is assumed that a flaw from the point of view of democracy can be compensated for by a higher mark in a different respect. There are, however, objections in principle to this assumption. Democracy can also be seen in terms of a chain which is no stronger than the strength of its

weakest link.[7] The selection of calculation method is in any case not a technical matter but an issue to do with the theory of democracy.

The study has opened up the option of studying variations among the municipalities. A key question is which empirical link should apply among the different dimensions of democracy. In statistical terms it is possible to calculate the correlations among all the local democratic indicators. The conclusion of this analysis is that the correlations are weak in general terms. In those cases where more significant co-variations can be observed, this is most frequently a consequence of the fact that both indicators have a common explanation, such as the degree of urban density, size, income structure or party political composition.

One consequence of these weak links is that a single overall democratic index may be misleading. The more weakly-correlated factors form part of the composite measure, the more all municipalities will end up in proximity to the overall average. Deviations from this mean figure will depend to a considerable extent on the selection of indicators. Identifying one municipality as the most democratic on the basis of these indicators and another as the most undemocratic would be based on relatively arbitrary foundations. We have therefore refrained from presenting a ranking of the municipalities.

The pattern of weak correlations tells a very interesting story of its own. We can now reject the hypothesis that when seen in overall terms certain municipalities are superior from a democratic perspective, while others are condemned to a permanent democratic deficit. On the contrary there is no municipality which is entitled to maintain that the quality of its democracy is guaranteed all along the line; each municipality has shortcomings in at least some respects. Conversely there is no municipality in which the situation looks totally bleak.

In every respect that we examined we found large variations. For every indicator it is possible to find exemplary municipali-

[7] A multiplicative model would therefore be more adequate. A combination of the two models could also be considered. Indicators within the three main areas can be added together, while the final composite is derived by multiplication.

ties. On the other hand it is not the same names which continually recur. The choice of exemplars becomes more complicated as a result. The variations within the municipal world are now so great that there is at least one aspect of the political life of each and every municipality which is worth other municipalities experimenting with.

Differences between Aspects of Democracy

Both our survey of the data on local government and other surveys indicate that significant differences exist in relation to different aspects of the democratic ideal. Turning first to the requirements for popular government, the municipalities of today have certain obvious weaknesses. Municipal councils have major flaws in serving as a forum for creative and interesting debate on the future of the community. Local parties today are poorly supported by the public. The influence of amateur politicians has declined; in contrast the power of professional civil servants has grown (SOU 1996:169). The picture is, however, not entirely dismal. The Swedish municipalities still enjoy a fund of active public involvement to fall back on. Local associational life is frequently vital. Apart from the figures relating to immigrants, turn-out in municipal elections is comparatively high. The representation of women has recently reached acceptable levels. An overall judgement of popular government in the municipalities of today would after all have to be relatively positive.

In contrast the situation seems less sound when it comes to the capacity of the municipalities to live up to the requirements of constitutional government. The Parliamentary Ombudsmen and other state institutions of control have recurrent cause to criticise the municipalities for not complying with the law of the land. The principle of public access to official documents is circumvented to some extent when municipal administrations fail to comply with the Archive Act or in other ways make it difficult for the public and the mass media to gain access to documents of general relevance. The freedom of expression of municipal employees has been squeezed during the cuts and

restructuring of recent years. The emphasis of municipal administrative policy on flexibility and pragmatic forms of working has come into conflict with the requirements of constitutional government for predictability, impartiality and the clear separation of powers. As a result the decentralisation of political power from the state to the municipalities involves great risks from the standpoint of constitutional government as long as the municipalities do not themselves actively take responsibility for ensuring that public power is actually exercised under the law.

The judgement on the effectiveness of municipal governments is a mixed one. The flaws are obvious. A good many municipalities have lost control, more or less, over their resources in recent years; some find themselves balanced on the brink of ruin. However, the more spectacular cases of municipal insolvency should not conceal the fact that many municipalities nevertheless have relatively well-managed finances and have been able to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities provided by regional, state and European grants and subsidies. Decision-making capability may in certain instances be reduced as a consequence of party fragmentation, but in many municipalities there is still a dominant party which remains in power election after election. In such cases the issue is rather whether decision-making power has become so great that it comes into conflict with the requirement of pluralism for opposition and alternation of power. Outcome control may be problematic, particularly in large and administratively complex cities, but the municipalities still retain the advantage that the administrative apparatus is in direct contact with the political leadership. The problem may possibly be that the symbiosis between the municipal leadership and leading officials has become too pronounced in places. The overall judgement on the effectiveness of municipal government must nevertheless be relatively favourable.

5 Voters and Representatives across Borders

In previous chapters our aim has been to examine the quality of democracy within three different parts of the political system: the municipality, the state and the European Union. The criteria for our assessment have remained the same throughout but each of the three systems has largely been considered on its own. In this chapter our approach is more explicitly comparative. At the beginning of 1997 the Democratic Audit carried out a major survey targeted at a random sample of voters and their elected representatives at different levels. By means of this survey, we can supplement previous chapters with a set of cross-level comparisons.

In addition, the survey allows us to broaden the focus of our examination in certain respects. Previous chapters have largely been concerned with each of those three levels that are usually considered to be the main ones. The current chapter supplements the picture in two key respects. First, it brings into focus the contacts and patterns of recruitment that *intermediate between levels*. Second, it broadens the scope by including the *intermediate levels*, that is, the regional, the Nordic, and that "intermediate level" to which the world community currently amounts.

Owing to considerations of space as well as methodology, our examination is limited to five main avenues of inquiry, each of which is allotted one section. In the first, we ask what role the different levels play in the lives of citizens: How do Swedish voters and their representatives relate to local patriotism and world citizenship? In the second section, we examine the social representativeness of those elected to office: Is it empirically justified to speak of a "political class" and, if so, how is the

existence of this class manifested among representatives at various levels? This question leads us on to the network that supplies the bridges between different levels: What links in the form of personal contacts and avenues of recruitment connect municipal politics with the United Nations? Our examination of the quality of democracy raises the issue of the need for constitutional reforms. In the fourth section, we pass that question on to the voters and their representatives. In the fifth and final section we temporarily hand over the task of examination to the examinees themselves: What verdict does democracy at various levels get from its own actors?

The Democratic Audit's Survey of Voters and Representatives

The survey by means of which we seek to answer these questions was targeted at five nationally representative subsamples: voters[1], municipal councillors (MCs), county councillors (CCs), members of the Swedish parliament, the Riksdag (MPs), and Sweden's representatives in the European Parliament, her Eurodeputies (MEPs). The first three are unrestricted random samples while the last two include all representatives concerned.

It should be noted that MCs and CCs in large municipalities and counties each represent more voters than do those in smaller ones. A nationally representative sample of MCs and CCs is therefore not directly comparable with a nationally representative sample of voters. In order to solve this problem, the sampling probabilities for MCs and CCs were made directly proportional to the number of voters each MC or CC represents. The results therefore provide an accurate description of the *representative of the average voter* rather than of the *average representative*.[2]

[1] In relation to the sample of voters, it should be pointed out that the population from which the sample has been drawn includes all Swedish residents aged 18–80. The sample thus excludes voters over 80 years of age but includes a smaller group (immigrants without Swedish citizenship) who do not as yet enjoy the franchise to one or more of the assemblies being studied here.

[2] Since we know the sampling probability for each representative, the sample can, if necessary, be weighted so as to be representative of the population of councillors irrespective of how many voters each councillor represents. A weighting procedure of this kind has, however, not been applied in the analyses presented here.

Table 5.1 The Democratic Audit's Survey of Voters and Representatives: Samples and Response Rates

Subsample	Sample size	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Voters	500	314	63
Municipal councillors	500	436	87
County councillors	500	426	85
Members of parliament	349	281	80
Swedish members of the European Parliament	22	19	86
Total	1871	1476	79

The data collection was carried out by means of a postal questionnaire during the first quarter of 1997.[3] Sample sizes and response rates are presented in table 5.1. Among representatives, the proportion of respondents is in the range of 80–87 per cent; among voters, the corresponding figure is 63 per cent. Based on current expectations for surveys of comparable type, the response rate in the former group must be considered very satisfactory; in the latter, it conforms to what can normally be expected.

The structure of non-response probably means that the differences between voters and representatives reported in our analyses usually appear to be smaller than they actually are. Although there is a systematic tendency in this direction, its magnitude should not be overestimated. The error caused by non-response should be limited in most cases to a few percentage points.

A word of caution is also in order with respect to the results for the Swedish members of the European Parliament. All 22 members were included in our sample and responses were obtained from almost all of them (19). We can therefore assess the *current* characteristics of the MEPs with great certainty—the same as for MPs and somewhat greater than for MCs and CCs. Nevertheless, the small number of MEPs presents a problem in that it is considerably less certain that these characteristics also reflect systematic patterns of recruitment and

[3] The field work was carried out by Per-Åke Berg with the assistance of Katja Marcusson. Anneli Andersson was responsible for the data registration and Lena Lundström for the coding of responses to open-ended questions.

experience. To the extent that it is these patterns that are of primary interest, which is usually the case for our own interpretation of the material, the results must be considered notably less certain than those for other subsamples.

Naturally, an element of sampling error applies to the larger samples as well. As a rule, one can be confident (at a probability of .95) that the percentage observed is less than 1 point off when the error is minimal and less than 5 points off when it is maximal. The smallest error is obtained when the number observed is close to 0 or 100 and the greatest when it is about 50.

Between Local Patriotism and World Citizenship

In chapter 1 (pp. 19–20) we discussed how the model of power developed by the American sociologist James Coleman can be used to analyse the balance between decentralisation and centralisation. According to this model, decentralised decision-making, in the form of local self-government for instance, can be seen as a solution to a problem of exchange. The inhabitants of a specific geographic unit exchange their control over the outcome in a different unit for greater control over the outcome in their own. As a result, everyone gains greater power, that is, greater control over those events that are considered to be of foremost interest.

In chapter 1, Coleman's model was put forward primarily as a tool for understanding a normative problem. There is, however, nothing to stop it serving as a basis for empirical hypotheses as well. One of the predictions that can then be derived relates to the relative importance members of the public assign to decisions reached at different levels of the political system. If the logic of the model has been allowed to control the allocation of authority, decisions made at the local level should be considered more important than those made at higher levels.

It is far from obvious that this hypothesis is correct. As was made clear in our discussion in chapter 1, there are a number of restrictions that may nevertheless provide members of the public with incentives to centralise decision-making on issues they

judge to be of great importance. In a country such as Sweden where universalism and equality continue to constitute powerful ideals, there is good reason to assume that these restrictions have been of particular importance. In addition, it cannot be taken for granted that the assessments of the public have had much influence on the balance between levels. Decisions on the allocation of authority have usually been made with a relatively large measure of consensus between the parliamentary representatives of the political parties and have only exceptionally become the subject of political conflict and broad public debate. In many cases, the issue has been treated primarily as a matter of suitability from a narrowly technical-administrative point of view.

The results presented in figure 5.1 allow us to determine the actual state of affairs. The figure shows how voters and different kinds of representatives judge the importance of decisions made within six political subsystems, ranging from the local municipality to the United Nations.[4] Irrespective of whom we take to be the judge, the hypothesis derived from Coleman's model proves to be relatively well supported. Municipal decisions are consistently seen as the most important. In addition, decentralised decisions generally tend to be regarded as more important than more centralised ones.

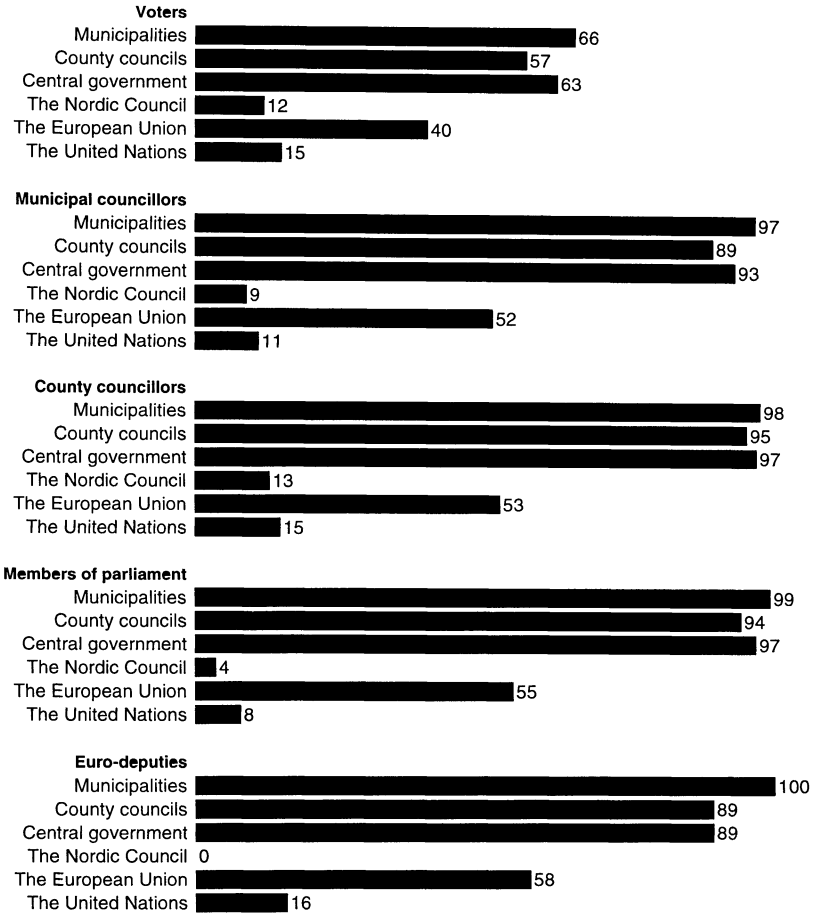
This, however, is not the whole picture. The pattern displayed can be likened to the blade of a handsaw: falling from handle to tip but in a zigzag rather than in a straight line. The three "main levels" correspond to the teeth of the saw, the three "intermediate levels" to the spaces between the teeth.

If we take a closer look at the "saw", we find that the blade is fairly uneven. It falls more swiftly towards the end than at the beginning. The difference between the municipal level and that of central government is very small, that between central government and the EU considerably more pronounced. The

[4] The responses to the questions presented in figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4 were obtained on a five-point scale whose alternatives were labelled very little, fairly little, neither great nor little, fairly great or very great. The items presented in figure 5.4 used a four-point scale with the alternatives labelled not at all interested, not particularly interested, fairly interested, and very interested. In other respects, the essential elements of the question wording are presented in the figures.

Figure 5.1 The Importance of Decisions

Percentage considering decisions made by the following authorities to be of fairly or very great importance for the individual citizen:



county councils are not far behind the other two domestic levels while the decisions made on other "intermediate levels" are assigned very little importance. The Nordic Council rather than the United Nations ends up at the very bottom of the scale.

As has already been observed the differences between judges in different camps are fairly small. Without exception,

collective decisions are assigned somewhat less importance by voters than by representatives. The Nordic Council and the UN, however, deviate upwards rather than downwards among voters, which also makes the differences between levels less marked within this group. The various kinds of representatives generally assign greater importance to decisions on their own level than do judges in other camps. A partial exception is the municipal level where the figure approaches 100 per cent among representatives of all kinds. In addition, it is worth noting that the Nordic Council obtains its very lowest ratings from those two groups who in practice have the greatest insight into its operations, that is, the MPs and MEPs.

The pattern evidenced for the perceived importance of decisions may serve as the basis for a hypothesis about the amount of attention paid to the course of events on the various levels. According to the general principle for rational action, more attention should be paid to those levels which are adjudged to be of greater importance.

Again, the hypothesis finds support in our data. As shown in figure 5.2, the saw-blade pattern recurs when we turn from the importance of decisions to the amount of attention. As expected, the figure also shows that voters generally pay less attention to news reports than do representatives.[5]

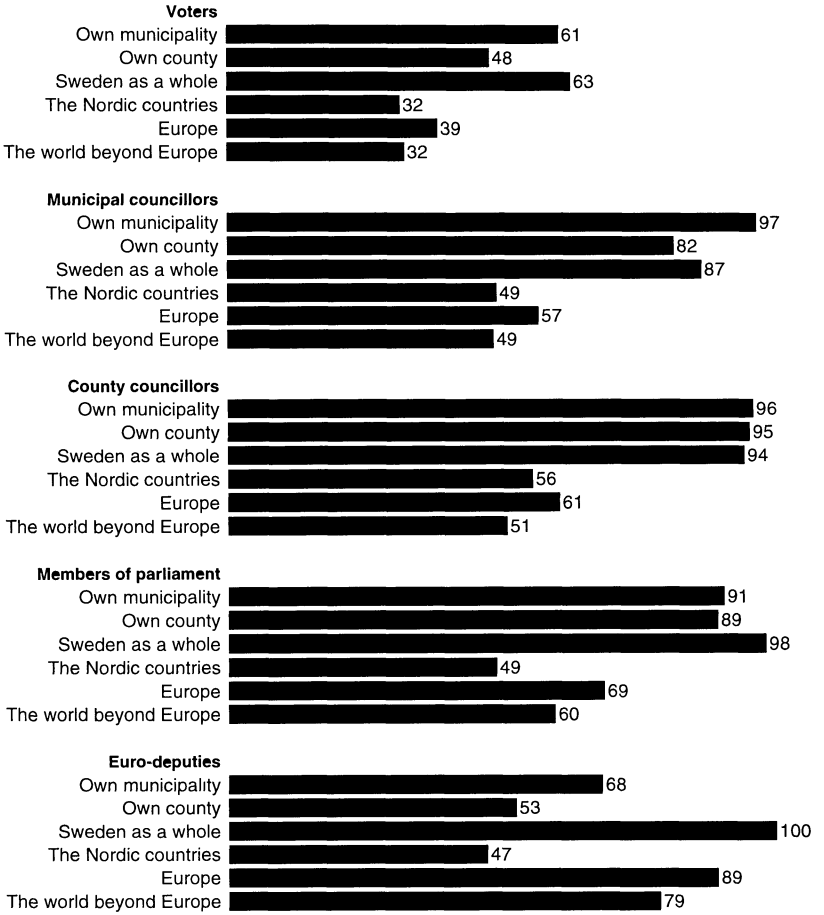
There are, however, also systematic differences compared to the perceived importance of decisions. One such difference is that the municipal level no longer consistently takes the top spot. Among voters, the national level takes precedence above the municipal even though the difference is very slight. One conceivable cause is that the supply of news at the national level is much more extensive.

Another deviation from the previous pattern is that the variations between different groups of representatives are more pronounced. The prominent placement of the representatives' own levels, also on occasion that of proximate levels, is more

[5] This result is confirmed when attention is measured in more absolute terms. On average, voters devote 72 minutes per day to following media news reports. The corresponding figures for the representatives, from municipal councils to the European Parliament, are 85, 91, 106 and 97 minutes.

Figure 5.2 Attention

Percentage devoting a good deal or a great deal of attention to news items in newspapers, on radio, and on television focusing on:

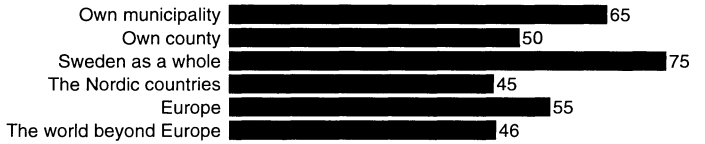


palpable here. That such is the case is neither hard to explain nor inappropriate. Representatives have, of course, a particular responsibility to follow the course of events on their own particular levels quite irrespective of the importance they assign to it in comparison with other levels.

A third difference is manifested in the placement of the Nordic and global levels. Even though these two levels remain

Figure 5.3 Interest in Politics

Percentage of voters who are fairly or very interested in the politics of:



at the bottom in most cases, they do much better in terms of attention than in terms of the perceived importance of decisions. Again there is an obvious explanation. The decisions made by the UN and the Nordic Council constitute only a tiny, and in certain respects insignificant, portion of all the political events at the global and Nordic levels that lay claim to our attention.

On the basis of this observation one might object that political news items themselves only constitute part of news-reporting as a whole, and that we can therefore not be sure that the data in figure 5.2 reflect the attention devoted to the specifically political portion. This objection can be countered at least to some extent by means of the data on voter interest in politics presented in figure 5.3. The pattern is very similar to the one presented for the same group in figure 5.2. The main differences are that the lead of the national level over the municipal is somewhat greater and that the European level surpasses the regional. Here, for the first time, all three "main levels" place themselves ahead of the three "intermediate" ones.

In the above analyses, we took our vantage point in the perceived importance of decisions and looked ahead at the attention with which they are followed. But one might also choose to look back at the mechanisms that have shaped the various levels and their political responsibility. As we point out in chapter 1, theories of *demos* formation have tended to stress the value of a common identity, a feeling of affinity. One conceivable ideal is that the degree of political community in the form of institution-building is directly proportional to the feeling of social community. The question then is to what extent this ideal is realised in practice.

Figure 5.4 Feeling of Affinity

Percentage reporting a fairly strong or very strong feeling of affinity with people living in:

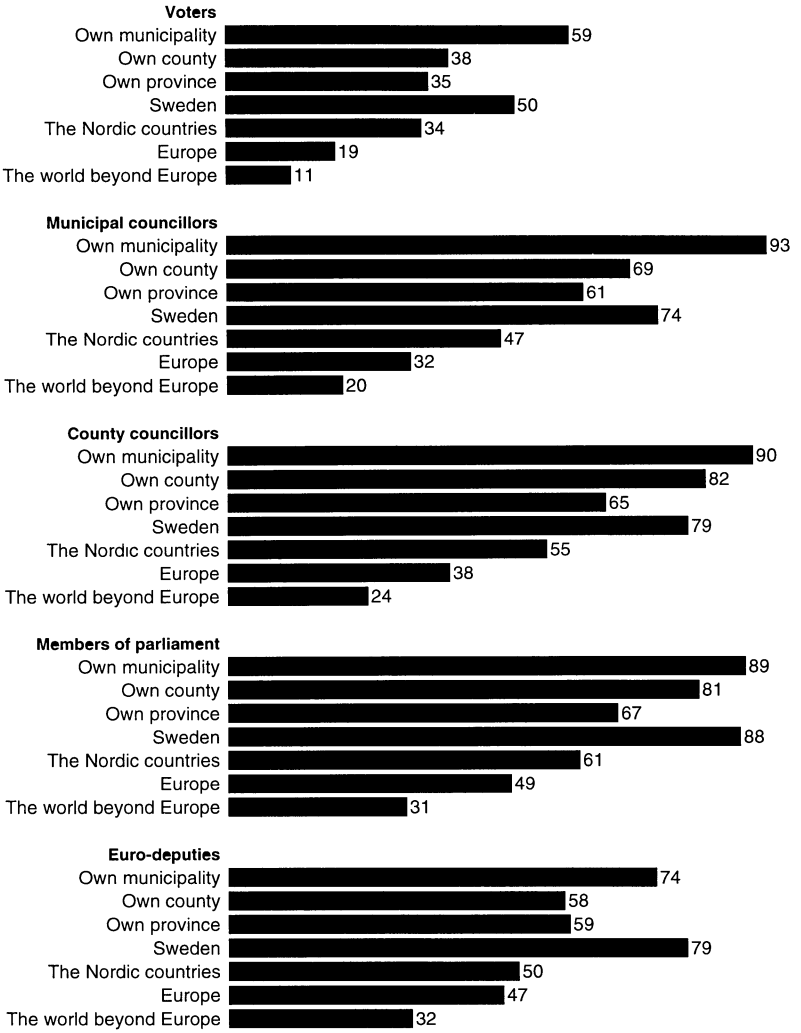


Figure 5.4 shows how strong a feeling of affinity is currently to be found within various territorial boundaries. The pattern contains both expected and unexpected elements. One of the

Table 5.2 Average Number of Years of Residence within Various Territorial Boundaries

Number of years at/in:	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Current address	14,4	15,1	16,0	15,8	15,2
Current parish/village/borough	21,4	22,6	22,2	23,5	17,9
Current municipality	27,2	30,5	30,9	31,2	25,5
Current county	31,4	36,8	37,6	37,4	30,2
Sweden	44,2	49,1	51,2	50,1	48,0
Average age	47,1	49,5	52,0	50,3	48,1

Note: For the sake of internal comparability, the results are based only on those respondents who answered all the questions utilised in the table.

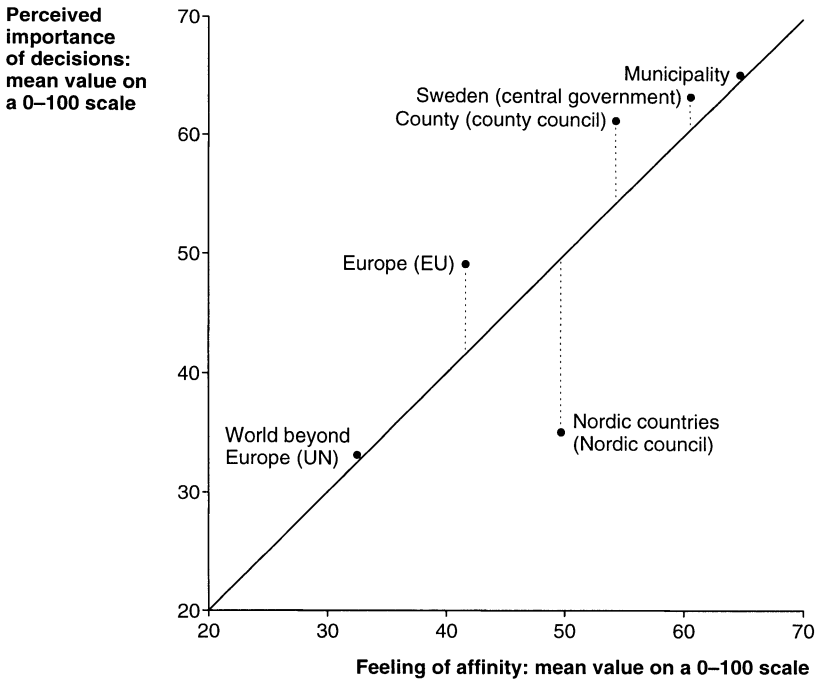
unexpected findings is that the strongest community sentiments are not to be found at the national level. Despite the fact that most of the symbols of a common identity—language, culture, history—are primarily national in character and that national residency far exceeds municipal (see table 5.2), the most intense expressions of affinity are found at the local level.

Another surprising finding is that the modern county boundaries inspire stronger feelings of community than do the old provincial boundaries. We elected to add the provinces to this particular measure precisely because we guessed that they remained more important with respect to identity than the counties. There is, for example, in every instance a Swedish term for the inhabitant of a particular province while such terms are largely lacking at the county level. This linguistic shortcoming notwithstanding, the counties beat the provinces.

More in line with initial expectations is the fact that the feeling of affinity is stronger at the domestic than at the international levels, and that it becomes weaker the further away from national boundaries one gets. Note that the saw-blade pattern is lacking in this instance. Instead the trend is linearly falling with the national level as the sole exception.

Another expected result is that representatives generally express stronger community sentiments than do voters, and that they tend to emphasise, relatively speaking, the ties to their own level. A strong feeling of identity with the constituency is likely to be a precondition as well as an effect of holding office. As shown in table 5.2, "rootedness" as measured by the number

Figure 5.5 Relationship between Feeling of Affinity and the Perceived Importance of Decisions



of years of residence within various territorial boundaries is somewhat greater among representatives than among voters. This relationship remains even when the slightly higher average age of the representatives is taken into account, at least at the politically relevant levels (municipality, county, nation). The ratio between the average number of years of residence and the average age is, with the partial exception of the Euro-deputies, higher among those elected to office than among voters.

With these patterns in the back of our minds, let us now return to the issue of how the social community relates to the political. By means of figure 5.5 we can study the link between the two. The six points show how the feeling of affinity among voters combines with the perceived importance of decisions at various levels. The diagonal line represents the ideal of strict proportionality.

In certain respects this ideal corresponds very closely to reality. This is demonstrated in part by the close agreement between the ideal and the line that best captures the statistical relationship between the two factors (the so-called regression line).[6] Two of the points, those corresponding to the local and the global levels, are also very close to the ideal line. In these two cases, the perceived importance of decisions corresponds almost perfectly to the feeling of community.

However, certain deviations can also be found. Three of the points fall slightly above the line, namely those corresponding to the national, regional and European levels. The discrepancy is particularly clear in the latter two instances. Here, institution-building has progressed beyond the level allowed by the feeling of affinity. A single point, that corresponding to the Nordic level, falls below the diagonal. Here, we find a yet unexploited potential for institution-building. As we have already indicated in chapter 1, the Nordic countries may be said to constitute an unrealised political community.

A Political Class?

An important criterion of popular government is that no social group is systematically excluded from political decision-making. Those elected should be socially representative of the voters. Equality in decision-making serves as one of the ideals on which the Democratic Audit bases its verdict.

There is no shortage of views as to how Swedish politicians perform with respect to this ideal. In a series of feature articles, the journalists Anders Isaksson and Anders Jonsson have provided a picture of the real state of affairs that makes gloomy reading from the point of view of democracy (Isaksson 1986, Isaksson & Jonsson 1992, 1996). In their view, the world of politics is such a closed one that we are entitled to speak of a political class. Together with an American and a Dutch colleague, the Swedish political scientist Lars Strömberg has

[6] The regression equation is $y = 1.02 + 0.99x$. The product-moment correlation is .83.

carried out a comparative study of Swedish local government politicians and their counterparts in the United States and the Netherlands (Eldersveld, Strömberg & Derksen 1995, chapter 2). The findings they present support the gloomy view. In several respects the Swedish political elite at the local level stands out as the most closed.

Others have come to less pessimistic conclusions. According to the political scientists Peter Esaiasson and Sören Holmberg (1996, 43–44), the social representativeness of the Riksdag is fairly good. To be sure, Swedish MPs consistently tend to be more socially privileged than the voters and in some instances the differences are quite pronounced. In many instances, however, the discrepancy is rather small and international comparisons show the Swedish parliament (and those of other Nordic countries) to be among the most socially representative in the Western world (cf. also Norris & Lovenduski 1995, chapter 10).

The Democratic Audit has previously reported several shortcomings with respect to equality in decision-making (Rothstein et al. 1995, Petersson et al. 1997). Both the young and the elderly, for instance, are poorly represented in decision-making assemblies. Immigrants frequently find the door to Swedish politics shut. However, like Esaiasson and Holmberg, we have also encountered brighter sides. The status of women has been strengthened and the goal of full equality is no longer particularly remote. For young people, too, the situation has improved. The political power elite at the national level is considerably less exclusive than other power elites. Our overall verdict on equality in decision-making has therefore come down on the plus side.

When confronted with the other points of view we have described above, however, this conclusion gives rise to a number of questions. Does our positive verdict really hold true? Can what appear to be contradictory views of the social characteristics of the political decision-makers be made compatible? If not, where is the point of disagreement to be found?

Table 5.3 Social Background and Status (Per Cent)

	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Age[a]					
18–30 years	19	7	3	4	5
31–45 years	24	22	18	23	26
46–65 years	39	63	72	71	68
66–80 years[b]	18	7	7	2	0
Gender[a]					
Man	49	58	55	56	58
Woman	51	42	45	44	42
Immigrant background					
No immigrant background	85	92	92	91	95
Second-generation immigrant[c]	5	4	4	8	5
First-generation immigrant	10	4	4	2	0
Father's/mother's[d] *occupation*[e]					
Industrial worker	23	23	21	21	11
Worker, non-industrial	19	16	16	14	17
Lower-level employee	2	3	3	2	6
Middle-level employee	16	14	17	21	11
Executive	15	17	18	20	22
Small entrepreneur	12	12	9	8	17
Farmer	14	16	15	13	17
Father's/mother's[d] *occupational sector*[e]					
Agriculture	20	19	21	18	22
Production	36	37	35	36	28
Circulation	25	25	20	22	28
Reproduction	7	8	11	13	6
Administration	11	11	14	11	17
Location during formative years					
Country	33	30	31	26	22
Village	28	25	23	24	11
Town	25	28	29	28	33
Major city	15	17	16	22	33
Number of years of full-time education					
0–9 years	32	20	18	16	0
10–11 years	16	14	19	12	16
12–14 years	31	27	23	27	32
15 or more years	21	39	41	45	53

[a] Since the table is generally based on survey data, this applies, for the sake of comparability, to age and gender as well, although more exact information is in these two instances available from other sources.
[b] The upper age limit for the sample of voters is 80 years. There is no upper limit for the sample of representatives. Nevertheless, there is but one response from an individual over 80 years of age. This response is included among those aged 66-80 in the sample of MCs.
[c] Persons whose mother and/or father immigrated but who are not immigrants themselves.
[d] Refers to the father's/mother's occupation during the formative years of the respondent. Since in many cases the mother was not gainfully employed during this period and since the occupation of the father has usually been more determinative of the social circumstances of the family, the data usually refer to the latter. Where information on the father's occupation is missing, the mother's occupation has been substituted.

Table 5.3 Social Background and Status (Per Cent)

	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Current employment situation[f]					
Full-time employee	44	65	60	—	—
Part-time employee	15	12	14	—	—
Parental or occupational leave	2	1	4	—	—
Retired	24	11	12	—	—
Unemployed	7	4	4	—	—
Not gainfully employed for other reasons	7	6	6	—	—
Have been unemployed on occasion					
No	65	69	74	65	53
Yes, for a total of 1–3 months	10	11	6	14	21
Yes, for a total of 4–6 months	6	8	7	8	16
Yes, for a total of 7–12 months	8	6	8	6	5
Yes, for a total of more than 1 year	8	6	4	5	5
Yes, no data on duration	3	1	1	1	0
Current/previous[g] *employer*					
Municipality	24	29	25	24	23
County council	5	6	14	8	8
Central government	15	16	15	18	15
Private	46	34	35	40	38
Self-employed	9	14	10	10	15
Current/previous[g] *occupation*[e]					
Industrial worker	10	6	10	10	6
Worker, non-industrial	26	10	6	6	6
Lower-level employee	12	8	7	5	0
Middle-level employee	28	32	37	42	29
Executive	17	36	32	29	53
Small entrepreneur	5	4	4	3	0
Farmer	3	5	4	4	6
Current/previous[g] *occupational sector*[e]					
Agriculture	4	7	4	6	6
Production	17	18	18	16	12
Circulation	32	13	10	15	12
Reproduction	27	35	39	41	29
Administration	19	27	29	22	41

[e] The classification is based on the occupational code used in the Swedish election studies (see e.g. Petersson 1977, 71-72, 283-286 and Petersson 1978, 199-221). Note that the executive group includes leaders of larger companies as well as some self-employed in liberal professions such as doctors and lawyers with their own practice. This explains why the sum of the percentage of small entrepreneurs and the percentage of farmers under the heading current/previous occupation is lower than the percentage of self-employed under the heading current/previous employer. The agricultural sector encompasses agriculture and associated industries; production refers to manufacturing, industry and craftwork; circulation includes commerce, communications and transport; reproduction encompasses the care sector, education and culture; administration refers to public as well as private administration. Note that the agricultural sector includes individuals who work within this sector without necessarily being farmers, such as agronomists and forestry workers. This explains why the percentage of farmers under the heading occupation is lower than the percentage for agriculture under the heading occupational sector.

Table 5.3 Social Background and Status (Per Cent)

	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Civil status					
Married	58	68	71	69	63
Cohabitating	15	11	10	14	16
Unmarried	16	10	7	7	16
Divorced	6	9	9	8	5
Widow/widower	6	2	2	2	0
Number of children at home					
0	53	52	56	52	71
1	19	17	20	23	24
2	20	20	16	16	6
3 or more	8	12	8	9	0
Household income before tax (thousand SEK)					
0–200	29	12	7	0	0
201–300	23	21	14	2	0
301–400	26	28	27	21	35
401–500	12	20	25	23	24
501 or more	10	19	27	54	41
Type of residential accomodation					
Detached villa/farmhouse	16	20	19	20	11
Villa/terraced house in residential area	44	48	54	48	26
Apartment block, not high-rise area	27	22	19	22	53
Apartment block, high-rise area	9	7	6	8	11
Other accomodation	4	3	2	1	0
Residential status					
Owner-occupier	53	62	68	69	37
Housing cooperative	9	14	13	12	42
Rented	31	22	17	17	16
Lodgings	4	1	1	0	5
Other	3	1	1	1	0
Location of residence					
Country	18	16	17	19	16
Village	27	26	31	26	16
Town	39	41	40	35	42
Major city	16	17	12	20	26

[f] Swedish members of parliament and members of the European parliament are employed full-time as representatives. What their occupational status would be like had they not been MPs or MEPs can in many cases not be determined. It is therefore not meaningful to provide a distribution for current employment situation for these two subsamples.

[g] For those who are not gainfully employed or are employed full-time as public representatives, party representatives or representatives of interest organisations, the information reported is based on previous employment in a capacity other than the three cited. For others, it is based on current employment.

Our answer is based on a broad survey of social representativeness among representatives at various levels. As far as we are aware, this is the first time a comprehensive picture of this kind has been made available. Although there are many previous surveys of social representativeness, the focus has usually been on one particular level at a time.

The numerical results are presented in table 5.3 (pp. 108–110). A more detailed examination of the large number of individual observations permits four main conclusions. The first is that those elected to office in many cases differ clearly, albeit not dramatically, from the voters. Among the areas in which such is the case are age (fewer younger and older people), immigrant background (fewer first-generation immigrants), education (more highly-educated), employment situation (more full-time employees), occupational category (fewer workers, more executives), occupational sector (more from administration, the care sector and education, fewer from commerce, communications and transport), income (more high-income earners) and residential status (more owner-occupiers or members of housing cooperatives). It hardly needs to be pointed out that these differences in turn are often interrelated.

The second conclusion is that there are also many areas in which the differences are fairly modest. The gender distribution among representatives is very similar to that among voters. The imprint of social origin is fairly weak. Voters and representatives do not differ significantly in terms of parents' occupation or occupational sector, nor in terms of the characteristics of the location where they spent their formative years. About as large a share of representatives as of voters have at some point experienced unemployment. The quantitative scale of this experience is also similar. It may be noted that in terms of employment circumstances, local government employees are somewhat over-represented among municipal councillors and county council employees among county councillors. Overall there are somewhat more self-employed but somewhat fewer private sector employees among the representatives. However, without exception the differences in this regard are small. The same applies to family situation (civil status and the number of chil-

dren living at home) and residential circumstances (type and location of residence).

A third conclusion is that in those areas where a comparison between the Riksdag and the parliaments of other Western industrialised nations is possible, no instances have been encountered where the degree of social representativeness in Sweden falls significantly below average. The Swedish placings range from the middle-ground upwards. Age structure belongs to the set of properties for which the situation is neither better nor worse than in most other countries while the gender distribution is the clearest example of a top position.

Finally it may be observed that the differences between decision-making assemblies at various territorial levels are usually rather small. In most cases the primary cleavage in table 5.3 runs between voters and representatives rather than between the various types of decision-making assemblies. But where variations do exist, they ordinarily show representatives at lower levels to be more like the voters than those at higher levels. Municipal councillors are on average the most socially representative.

To sum up, this renewed examination of the social representativeness of those elected to office provides no new causes for alarm. While the situation is not free from serious shortcomings, it is in many respects fairly satisfactory. This, however, is not the full answer to the questions we have raised above. Before we formulate the remainder, there are reasons to examine the characteristics of representatives in some additional respects.

Networks across Borders

Few would imagine that the different levels of the political system are separated by watertight bulkheads. But knowledge about the links between them is limited. Our study makes it possible to characterise the network in certain fundamental respects. The four samples of politicians were asked about the frequency of the contacts they, in their capacity as representa-

tives, maintained with each of five different power elites on each of six different levels. The resulting pattern of contacts can thus vary along three dimensions: in respect of the particular level of the elected representative, in respect of the level of the counterpart, and in respect of which power elite the counterpart represents.

The results are presented in table 5.4. As expected, the full-time politicians in the Swedish and European parliaments turn out to have a somewhat denser contact network than representatives at the municipal and county-council levels. Not surprisingly, the horizontal network linking actors at the same level is also better developed than any of the ones that serve as bridges vertically, across levels. However, interesting nuances appear at the intersection between these two observations. The higher the level of the representative, the more intensive the vertical links become in relation to the horizontal. Euro-deputies devote a considerably greater proportion of their working hours to contacts with other levels than do municipal politicians.

The level-by-level breakdown in the lower part of table 5.4 allows us to specify the results one step further. The figures show downward contacts to outnumber upward contacts by a considerable margin. This assertion may seem at first sight to be contradictory. After all, every link across levels must by definition run upwards as well as downwards, depending on from which point of view we choose to look at it. But the choice of viewpoint is in this case of considerable significance. An average member of parliament has many contacts with municipal councillors. An average municipal councillor has relatively few contacts with members of parliament. That such is the case is explained primarily by the simple fact that the total number of representatives at the municipal level is considerably greater than at the national.

Another pattern to be seen in the lower part of the table is that connections between proximate levels are more common than those involving a leap across several levels. While "glocal" links do occur, they still remain infrequent. Apart from these facts, there are also indications that the three

Table 5.4 Contacts with Power Elites and Voters in the Capacity as Representative (Average Intensity on a 0-100 Scale)

	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Contacts with politicians				
Own level	80	69	95	96
Other levels on average	15	24	41	48
Contacts with civil servants				
Own level	66	60	80	75
Other levels on average	7	14	21	19
Contacts with representatives of organisations				
Own level	45	41	55	55
Other levels on average	7	12	21	27
Contacts with journalists				
Own level	35	30	49	42
Other levels on average	5	8	21	29
Contacts with representatives of companies				
Own level	36	23	46	43
Other levels on average	5	8	19	19
Contacts with all elites on average				
Municipal level	52	46	49	27
Regional level	22	45	43	27
National level	12	15	65	53
Nordic level	2	3	11	17
European level	2	3	13	62
Extra-European level	1	1	7	18
Contacts with individual voters	71	70	85	79

Note: The table is based on a total of 31 survey questions. The first 30 concern the representative's contacts with five different power elites (politicians, civil servants, representatives of organisations, representatives of companies and journalists) on six different levels (municipal, regional, national, Nordic, European and extra-European). The last question concerns contacts with individual voters. In all cases the question asked specifically about contacts in the capacity as representative. The value 0 on the scales corresponds to the response "seldom/never", 25 to "once or a few times a year", 50 to "once or a few times per month", 75 to " once or a few times per week" and 100 to "almost every day".

"intermediate levels" occupy a less central position in the network than the three "main levels".

The variations in respect of which power elite the contacts are directed towards are simpler to describe than those between levels. The most frequent contacts are those with other politicians. The greatest intensity is manifested in relations with other politicians. These are followed in descending order by those with civil servants, representatives of organisations, journalists and representatives of companies. The sequence is fairly independent of the level on which the representative serves. It

is only in respect of the latter two groups that certain variations in the rank order can be discerned.

From the above description, one might get the impression that the representatives devote most of their time to elite power games and that the relationship with voters is confined to the indirect route represented by contacts with journalists. However, the direct link to the electorate has neither been forgotten in our survey design nor in reality. As indicated on table 5.4, contacts with individual voters in the capacity as representative are a common element of the everyday life of politicians. To be sure, contacts with fellow politicians on the same level are still more frequent but the voters come in second.

One might of course suspect that the representatives idealise reality on this particular score. However, the figures are in no way contradicted by those obtained when asking voters about their contacts with politicians. As much as 25 per cent of the voters indicate that they have been in touch with a politician from their own municipality during the last twelve months. The corresponding figures for the regional and national levels are 9 and 8 per cent respectively. Although the questions asked of voters did not restrict contacts with a politician to those in which the latter served in his or her capacity as a politician, the figures are nevertheless impressive.

Holding Office across Borders

The patterns of contact presented above may give the impression that municipal and regional politicians are queuing up outside the entrance of the Riksdag waiting for their turn to pay court. Even though this picture may contain a grain of truth, it hardly constitutes the sole explanation for the structure of the network. Hitherto we have treated the four groups of politicians in our study as though they were distinct rather than overlapping. But is this treatment in line with reality? Are, say, county councillors nothing but county councillors?

As shown in the upper half of table 5.5, the answer is in the negative. On the contrary, holding office across borders is a fairly common phenomenon. More than 50 per cent of the

Table 5.5 Holding Office across Borders (Per Cent)

	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Number of levels spanned by offices currently held besides that serving as a sampling criterion				
0	73	41	44	95
1	24	50	43	5
2	2	8	12	0
3	0	1	1	0
Number of levels spanned by offices currently or previously held besides that serving as a sampling criterion				
0	58	8	3	0
1	35	66	32	26
2	6	22	42	42
3	0	3	17	16
4	1	0	5	5
5	0	0	1	11

members of county councils and of parliament hold office on at least one other level. Roughly 10 per cent hold office on two or three levels in addition to the one serving as a basis for sampling. It is only in the European Parliament that multi-level-politicians are conspicuous by their absence, presumably because the geographical distances involved place practical barriers in the way.

As indicated by the figures presented in the lower half of table 5.5, this presumption is not entirely unjustified. When previous experience is taken into account, it turns out that the Euro-deputies are anything but isolated from the politics of other levels. On the contrary they constitute the most highly-experienced group of representatives. All of them have held office on at least one other level. Over 30 per cent have held office on at least three other levels. A more detailed examination of the lower half of the table shows that the characteristics of the Euro-deputies form part of a general pattern. The higher the level to which the representative has advanced, the broader the experience with politics on other levels.

Table 5.6 presents the pattern in more level-specific terms. The results provide a very clear view of the career paths of politics. In theory it is possible to make the leap directly into the Riksdag or the European Parliament. In practice it is highly unusual. The majority take the long way round. Almost every-

Table 5.6 Holding Office across Borders: Percentage of Office-Holders per Level

	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Percentage holding office within				
Municipality	—	52	40	0
County council	19	—	13	0
Central government	10	13	—	5
The Nordic Council	0	1	11	0
The European Union	1	3	2	—
The Council of Europe	0	0	3	0
The United Nations	0	0	1	0
Percentage holding, or having held, office within				
Municipality	—	90	93	89
County council	32	—	53	32
Central government	17	24	—	68
The Nordic Council	0	1	17	11
The European Union	1	3	7	—
The Council of Europe	0	0	4	5
The United Nations	0	1	16	26

one starts at the municipal level. Around 90 per cent of those who now serve on county councils, in parliament or as Euro-deputies have experience of municipal politics. More than 50 per cent of MPs and over 30 per cent of MEPs have passed through the county councils. Among the MEPs, 68 per cent have been members of the Riksdag.

The length of service on each level shows broad variations. As shown in table 5.7, the typical municipal councillor is a veteran with 13.5 years of service at the local level. The county councillors are not quite as experienced. Here, the average length of service amounts to 10.6 years. Once we reach the parliamentary level, the figure has fallen further to 7.6 years. That the Euro-deputies also fit nicely into this picture with a period of service of 1.6 years is a fact without significance. Given that Sweden did not become a member of the EU until 1995 and held its first elections to the European Parliament in the same year, the figure could hardly be higher at the time of the survey (early 1997). But there is much to suggest that it will fit into the pattern when it becomes theoretically possible for it to deviate.

Obviously the fact that the average length of service falls with a rise in the territorial level does not mean that representa-

Table 5.7 Holding Office across Borders: Average Number of Years in Office per Level

	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Among those holding office within				13,6
Municipality	**13,5**	16,1	18,4	—
County council	7,2	**10,6**	10,1	—
Central government	7,0	7,4	**7,6**	—
The Nordic Council	—	—	4,7	—
The European Union	—	1,8	—	**1,6**
Among those holding, or having held, office within				
Municipality	13,5	13,5	14,0	11,8
County council	6,9	10,6	7,8	—
Central government	5,9	6,8	7,6	10,3
The Nordic Council	—	—	4,4	—
The European Union	—	1,8	1,7	1,6
The United Nations	—	—	2,4	—
On the level on which the rep. has served longest	13,5	15,0	15,1	14,4

Note: Values have only been calculated to the extent that they could be based on at least ten individuals. An approximate indication of the number of individuals underlying each particular assessment can be obtained by means of the figures in tables 5.1 and 5.6.

tives higher up in the system are less experienced as politicians in general. As evidenced by the last line of table 5.7 they have at least as long a period of service as others *on the level on which they have served longest.* Our survey contains no measure of the total time spent in political service irrespective of level. But it seems likely that it is somewhat longer among those who have made upward progress through the system.

The cause of the phenomenon is instead the hierarchical pattern of recruitment. Most politicians start their political careers at the municipal level. Many remain there. A smaller number go on to the county council. A large proportion of these stop there. A small proportion go on to parliament and so on. The consequence is that the proportion of "level-veterans" grows larger at lower levels than at higher.

Another of the boundary lines worth attending to in this context is that between unpaid and professional politicians (table 5.8). It has long been well known that a considerable proportion of MPs could be regarded as professional politicians prior to their entry into parliament. Among the MPs in our study, 24 per cent had been in full-time employment as party representatives, 14 per cent as representatives of organisations

Table 5.8 Politics as a Profession (Per Cent)

	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Full-time employment as a public representative				
No, never	84	76	0	11
Yes, but not currently	6	8	0	47
Yes, currently	11	15	100	42
Full-time employment as a rep. of political party/assn.				
No, never	90	83	76	58
Yes, but not currently	8	12	24	37
Yes, currently	2	5	0	5
Full-time employment as a rep. of interest organisation				
No, never	91	88	86	84
Yes, but not currently	5	8	14	16
Yes, currently	4	4	0	0
Full-time employment in any of the three capacities				
No, never	70	58	0	0
Yes, but not currently	13	18	0	53
Yes, currently	17	24	100	47
Number of years of full-time employment in any of the three capacities				
0 years	70	58	0	0
1–5 years	13	15	35	32
6–10 years	7	11	17	21
11–20 years	6	13	30	26
21 or more years	2	3	14	16
More than 0 years, no data on duration	1	1	4	5
Percentage of adult life (from 18 years) in full-time employment in any of the three capacities				
0 per cent	70	58	0	0
1–25 per cent	17	20	42	37
26–50 per cent	9	15	32	32
51–75 per cent	3	5	16	16
76–100 per cent	0	1	5	11
More than 0 per cent, no data on duration	1	1	4	5

and 32 per cent had held one of these two positions. Had it been possible for us to distinguish those who had been employed full-time as public representatives (as municipal commissioners for instance) prior to gaining a seat in the Riksdag, the figure would probably have been higher still.

There is also a considerable element of professionalisation within municipal and county council politics. Twenty four per cent of county council members are in full time employment as public, party or organisational representatives and 42 per cent

have been so employed at some point. The corresponding figures for members of municipal councils are 17 and 30 per cent.

In this instance, the figures for the Euro-deputies should be treated with even greater caution than usual. For unknown reasons more than half the members of the European Parliament declared that they were not employed full-time as public representatives despite the fact that they receive the same pay for their services as do members of the Riksdag.

A Broad Entrance but a Long Corridor

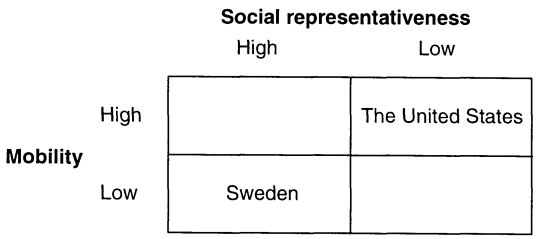
On the basis of the above observations we are ready to return to the contradictory portraits of the political power elite provided on pp. 106–107. Perhaps these pictures are not as incompatible as they first seem.

The figures we present in table 5.3 and the conclusions we draw in the surrounding text once more confirm the fact that the entrance to political life in Sweden is wide. One does not have to be socially or economically privileged in order to participate. The degree of social representativeness is therefore relatively high.

But this wide entrance is followed by a long corridor. The data presented in the previous section indicate that long, loyal and occasionally professional service is required in order to get anywhere. Once there, one stays for the duration. Mobility in and out of political service is therefore limited.

On several points these observations are in line with those presented in the cross-national study of local political elites carried out by Eldersveld, Strömberg and Derksen. They are also compatible with some of the observations made by Isaksson and Jonsson. For example, what set the Swedish politicians apart in the cross-national study was that they had remained in office for such an unusually long time. No less than 72 per cent had been in office for 11 or more years; the corresponding figure in the American case was 29 per cent. This deviation in the direction of greater exclusivity is in full agreement with our data. There is no doubt that turnover among local politicians in Sweden is very low.

Figure 5.6 Two Aspects of Openness



The group of Swedish politicians included in the cross-national study also distinguished themselves by their high age. Only 5 per cent were younger than 40 years old compared with 22 per cent in the United States. On this point the data from the cross-national study is not in complete agreement with our own. But this might well be due to the fact that the local politicians included in the two studies are not fully comparable: top-level officials only in the cross-national study versus county councillors in general in ours. In a system with little mobility, the queue to the major offices tends to grow long, which of course makes it difficult for younger politicians to make their mark.[7]

It is not inconceivable that Sweden and the United States are polar opposites on both the dimensions under consideration here (see figure 5.6). In Sweden the entrance may be wide but the corridor is long. In the United States, it is the other way around. It does not seem particularly likely that a Swedish citizen without extensive political experience would suddenly

[7] By contrast, we find it difficult to place much confidence in the results Eldersveld, Strömberg and Derksen (1995, chapter 2) present on social origin (the occupation of the father), which identifies Swedish politicians as the most exclusive in this respect as well. The three authors themselves note that on this point there are problems of cross-national comparability. One indication that the results may be a methodological artefact is that the Swedish politicians are simultaneously shown to have a lower level of educational attainment than those from the two other countries. Another is that the observation conflicts with close to everything we previously knew about social mobility across generations in Sweden and the United States, be it in relation to power elites or to ordinary citizens. We also find reason to question the authors' explanation of the alleged differences, namely that the strong class basis of the Swedish party system in this case has counteracted rather than promoted social representativeness. On this point as well, the proposition is in stark contrast to what previous research has shown, namely that political participation becomes more equally distributed in a class-based system of the Swedish kind.

exclaim: "I think I'll run for mayor this year". Nor, however, does it seem plausible that the American uttering these words would be a working-class woman from the city slums. The ensuing question is whether we are faced with a genuine dilemma or whether it is possible to find institutions that can meet the requirement for openness in both respects.

Does Democracy Need Reforming?

The criticism levelled at the workings of Swedish democracy by the Democratic Audit as well as many others raises the question of whether, and if so how, it should be reformed. In our survey, we passed this question on to the voters and the various groups of representatives. This allows us to assess the current level of public support for reforming the constitutional rules of Swedish democracy.

Table 5.9 shows the stands taken by voters and representatives with respect to fifteen different proposals for constitutional reform that, to a greater or lesser extent, have been the subject of public debate. The figures indicate the value of a so-called balance index, that is, the difference between the percentage who are largely in favour of a proposal and the percentage who are largely against. Theoretically, the measure can vary between −100 (all against) and +100 (all for).[8]

The proposals have been arranged in three different groups based on the statistical association between the responses. The composition of the first group is mainly an expression of historical and institutional conditions. It is fairly difficult to discern an intellectual principle that might explain why supporters of the monarchy want to abolish the county councils or see Sweden join NATO. What serves instead to link the issues in this group together is primarily the fact that in various historical periods they have become politicised in keeping with the classical left-right dimension. The second and third groups may be

[8] The responses were obtained on a five-point scale with the alternatives labelled very bad proposal, fairly bad proposal, neither good nor bad proposal, fairly good proposal and very good proposal.

Table 5.9 Views on Constitutional Issues (Balance Index)

	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
Left–right	+50	+50	+50	+50	+50
Allow a greater measure of candidate-based voting	+46	+33	+32	–9	+47
Reduce the number of MPs	+33	–22	–21	–30	–16
Abolish the county councils	+11	+36	–34	+1	+5
Introduce a constitutional court	+3	+2	+0	–13	+5
Increase the autonomy of the Bank of Sweden	–12	–23	–20	–14	–37
Join NATO	–16	–35	–26	–41	–53
Turn Sweden into a republic	–69	–38	–39	–36	–16
Con–pro the EU					
Leave the EU	+7	–29	–41	–68	0
Join the EMU	–35	–14	–1	+7	–5
Create a United States of Europe	–55	–60	–53	–77	–79
Increase the powers of the European Parliament	–64	–43	–36	–30	–47
Con–pro direct democracy					
Introduce direct elections to neigbourhood councils	+7	–20	–25	–23	–11
Arrange more referendums	+4	–9	–21	–30	+11
Divide municipalities into smaller units	–49	–26	–41	–14	+11
Abolish the four-per-cent threshold (for representation in parliament)	–55	–69	–74	–72	–42
Average unsigned difference between voters and representatives	—	21	24	33	23

more easily described by reference to their substantive content. The second concerns the EU, the third more direct forms of democracy.[9]

Within each group the proposals have been ordered according to voter support. Barely half of the questions, seven of fifteen, gain a greater proportion of positive than negative responses. But only two of the proposals find anything like a

[9] The pattern of correlations has been studied by means of a so-called principal-component analysis. Using Kaijser's criterion, a pooled analysis of all five samples yields a four-dimensional solution. However, the last dimension lies just above the boundary given by the criterion and the three-dimensional solution is considerably easier to interpret. In the varimax-rotated three-dimensional solution, all questions have a loading of at least .57 on the dimension corresponding to the question grouping. No other factor loading is greater than .48. Together the three dimensions account for 53 per cent of the total variance, of which 41 per cent by the first, 33 per cent by the second and 26 per cent by the third. An examination of each individual subsample reveals certain variations in the dimensional structure, primarily as a result of the fact that the correlations are generally weaker among the voters than among the representatives. When, as here, a joint solution is desirable, the one presented is most likely the best compromise.

clear endorsement from the voters, namely, the suggestion to allow a greater measure of candidate-based (as opposed to party-based) voting in general elections and the suggestion to reduce the number of MPs. For the eight questions showing negative scores on the balance index, by contrast, the rejection is frequently a resounding one. Generally speaking, voter support for the reform proposals is thus very limited.

This conclusion applies with even greater force to the representatives. Here we find a maximum of five plus signs (MEPs) and a minimum of only two (CCs and MPs). Moreover, what positive verdicts the representatives do hand out are usually weak ones. In the Riksdag, which in almost every case would be the body to rule on the proposal, there is no clear support for a single one of the fifteen proposals. In contrast, the resistance to change is often very pronounced.

If we turn from the overall pattern to the individual proposals, some additional observations of interest can be made. The proposal to allow a greater measure of candidate-based voting enjoys relatively widespread support in every camp apart from parliament. A reduction in the number of MPs is welcomed by the voters but not by the representatives, least of all by the MPs themselves. The proposal to abolish the county councils gains slightly more yes-votes than no-votes in all groups except among county councillors. The positive response is particularly pronounced among those who primarily stand to gain an increase in power if the proposal were implemented, that is, the municipal councillors.

The issue of a constitutional court is characterised primarily by a weak level of opinion formation. In this case, many refrain from taking a stand for or against. This result is not unexpected. As the Democratic Audit pointed out in its first report (Rothstein et al. 1995, 94), there has been a lack of public debate on this subject.

The proposals to increase the autonomy of the Bank of Sweden, to join NATO and to turn Sweden into a republic do not find support from any camp. In the first two cases, opposition is slightly less pronounced among voters than among representatives. With respect to the republic, it is the other way around.

When it comes to the European Union, opinion is more divided. Among voters, a bare majority would like to see a Swedish withdrawal from the Union. Among representatives, by contrast, opinion is clearly in favour of continued membership, particularly among the MPs. The only exception is the Euro-deputies, whose opinions evenly straddle the fence. With respect to the EMU, Swedish membership is clearly resisted by the voters but weakly supported by the MPs. Neither voters nor representatives think highly of the idea of developing the Union into a United States of Europe. The proposal to increase the powers of the European Parliament does not fare much better. Exactly how opinion should be interpreted in the latter instance is not perfectly clear. The opposition may well be directed against an increase in the powers of the EU rather than against a transfer of powers from the Commission and the Council to the Parliament.

Two of the four proposals in favour of more direct forms of democracy have the support of a bare majority of the voters, namely directly elected neighbourhood councils and more referendums. In contrast, the elected representatives are more or less clearly against both proposals with the partial exception of the Euro-deputies. Neither the voters nor the elected representatives express any enthusiasm for the proposal to divide the municipalities into smaller units. The proposition to abolish the four-per-cent threshold is less popular still. A notable fact is that opposition against a general subdivision of the current municipalities is strongest among voters in spite of grass-root movements for secession in several individual municipalities (Nielsen 1996). Instead, the most positive feelings toward this proposed decentralisation are to be found at the most central level, that is, among the Euro-deputies.

In summary, the results point to a considerable gulf between voters and representatives with respect to many of the constitutional issues investigated. As indicated by the last line in table 5.9, the gap is generally most pronounced for the body that, in view of issue contents, ought to be most representative, namely the Riksdag. In this case, as in that of social representativeness, it is the municipal councillors who end up closest to the voters.

Figure 5.7 Placement on Three Issue Dimensions (Mean Values on a 0–100 scale)

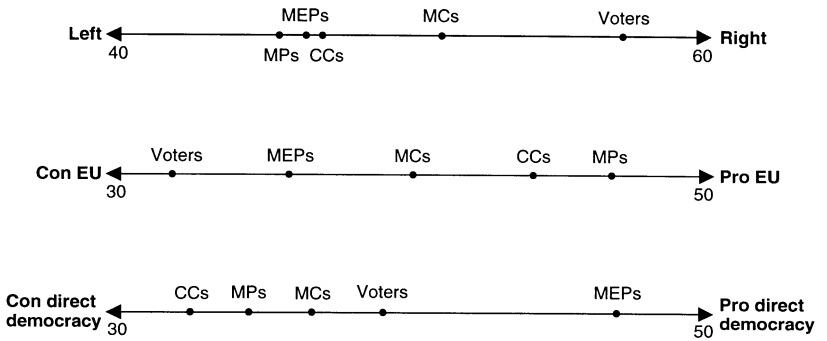


Figure 5.7 provides an overview of how the various samples place themselves on the three dimensions corresponding to the question groupings in table 5.9.[10] In two of the cases all groups of representatives are located on the same side of the voters: to their left on the constitutional left-right scale and to their right, i.e. nearer the positive pole, on the EU-dimension. On the left-right scale, it is the municipal politicians who take the position next to the voters; in terms of attitudes to the EU it is the Euro-deputies who end up closest (cf. Brothén 1997). In both instances the Riksdag turns up at the opposite end to the voters.

When it comes to the third dimension, the voters end up in the middle with local, national and regional politicians to one side of them and the Euro-deputies on the other. As has already been pointed out, the latter hold the most positive view of direct democracy, which may be considered odd given the site of their political activities but is readily explainable in view of the partisan outcome of the 1995 elections to the European Parliament.

[10] The three dimensions have been constructed as the mean value of the issue stands within each group. For the purpose of deriving the means, a maximally negative stand was scored 0 and a maximally positive stand 100. With respect to the proposal to turn Sweden into a republic and the proposal to leave the EU, the scoring was reversed since a negative stance on these particular issues corresponds to a positive one on the other issues belonging to the dimension in question.

The European Parliament and the Democratic Deficit within the EU

Some of the results presented in the previous section illustrate one of the dilemmas with which the democratic deficit within the EU confronts us. A conceivable way of reducing this deficit would be to transfer part of the powers currently vested in the Council and the Commission to the Parliament. From the perspective of popular government, the poor performance of past elections to the European Parliament appears to be the main argument against such a transfer. In Sweden as in other countries, turnout has been very low. The first Swedish elections to the European Parliament came partly to revolve around the wrong issue. To a large extent the election developed into a second referendum on membership rather than a ballot on which policies Sweden should promote within the EU as long as she remains a member. The fact that the Euro-deputies are more representative than the MPs in their views on Swedish EU-membership and on joining the EMU is fairly irrelevant given that it is the latter rather than the former who hold the outcome in their hands. But the very fact that the Euro-deputies share the voters' views on these issues to a considerably greater extent than the MPs is itself an indication of the potential power of direct EU-elections. Despite low turnout, the preferences of the voters on those EU-issues the election actually came to focus on were obviously embodied in the composition of the Swedish delegation of Euro-deputies.

A number of questions come to the fore in view of these observations. Is it reasonable to assume that voters have more control over EU-policy via the long and indirect route that links elections to the Riksdag with the positions adopted by Sweden in the Council of Ministers? Can one really demand of voters and politicians that they pay serious attention to the elections to the European Parliament as long as the powers of that body remain insignificant? Will it ever be possible to create a broad and animated public debate on everyday EU-politics, along with a reasonable degree of citizen opinion formation, without the focus offered by direct elections?

Table 5.10 Language Skills (Per Cent)

	Voters	MCs	CCs	MPs	MEPs
English					
Cannot speak	24	10	8	1	0
Speaks tolerably well	34	33	37	31	0
Speaks fairly fluently	42	57	54	68	100
German					
Cannot speak	56	42	40	39	5
Speaks tolerably well	34	45	48	49	37
Speaks fairly fluently	9	13	12	12	58
French					
Cannot speak	88	81	73	72	32
Speaks tolerably well	9	16	24	25	42
Speaks fairly fluently	3	3	3	3	26
Other language (excl. Swedish)					
Cannot speak	78	84	83	84	74
Speaks tolerably well	8	10	10	8	16
Speaks fairly fluently	13	6	7	8	11

With respect to the last question, one might object that the institutional arrangements lack significance since the preconditions are still inadequate in other respects. A common public dialogue on common European affairs is muted by the large number of language barriers. However, the question is whether the language barriers are so great that they cannot be surmounted. The Democratic Audit's survey of self-assessed language skills among voters and representatives demonstrates that a large proportion currently consider themselves having a fairly or very good ability to communicate in at least one of the major European languages. Over 40 per cent of the voters consider themselves proficient in English. Over 75 per cent have a reasonable command of the language. Among the representatives the corresponding figures are even higher: over 50 per cent speak English without any great difficulty; at least 90 per cent manage fairly well.

In terms of foreign languages other than English, the ability to communicate is more restricted. Almost 50 per cent of the voters and over 50 per cent of the representatives nevertheless claim a basic proficiency in German. The position of French is much less satisfactory. The table also clearly illustrates the par-

ticular recruitment premises that apply to the Euro-deputies. In terms of language skills they differ more from other groups of politicians than the latter do from the voters.

The Quality of Democracy below the Border

Three overarching criteria serve as the foundation for the Democratic Audit's examination of the quality of democracy. A satisfactory polity should meet the requirements of popular, constitutional and effective government. Thus far we ourselves have been responsible for judging how well these requirements are being met. In the following chapter, we present a summary of our conclusions. Before we reach that point, however, we shall temporarily hand over the examiner's task to those who largely shape the phenomena we examine, that is, to the voters and their representatives. How do these central actors themselves judge the quality of democracy?

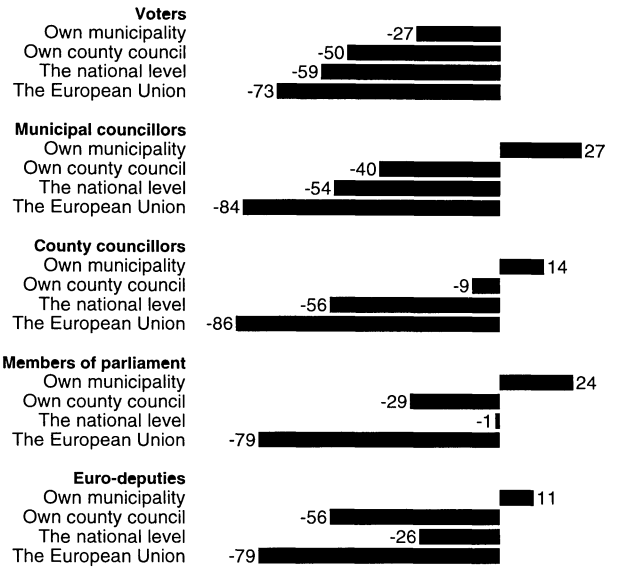
The three criteria correspond to an equal number of survey questions. The question wordings as well as the results are presented in figures 5.8 to 5.10. A greater number of indicators would obviously have been desirable. However, the limited space of the questionnaire did not allow for more than these three. On the other hand, assessments have been obtained for each of the four different territorial levels: the local municipality, the local county council, the state and the EU.

In all cases the assessments were obtained on a scale with five alternatives: very bad, fairly bad, neither good nor bad, fairly good and very good. As in table 5.9, the measure used in the figures is a so-called balance index, that is, the difference between the percentage who judge a situation as fairly or very good and the percentage who judge it as fairly or very bad. The collective assessment can as a result vary from −100, when all respondents consider the situation to be fairly or very bad, to +100, when all consider it to be fairly or very good.

The response patterns are very clear. According to the voters, the quality of democracy fails the test. Particularly negative is the assessment of popular government, expressed in the

Figure 5.8 Popular Government

Assessment of the interaction between voters and representatives within/at (balance index):

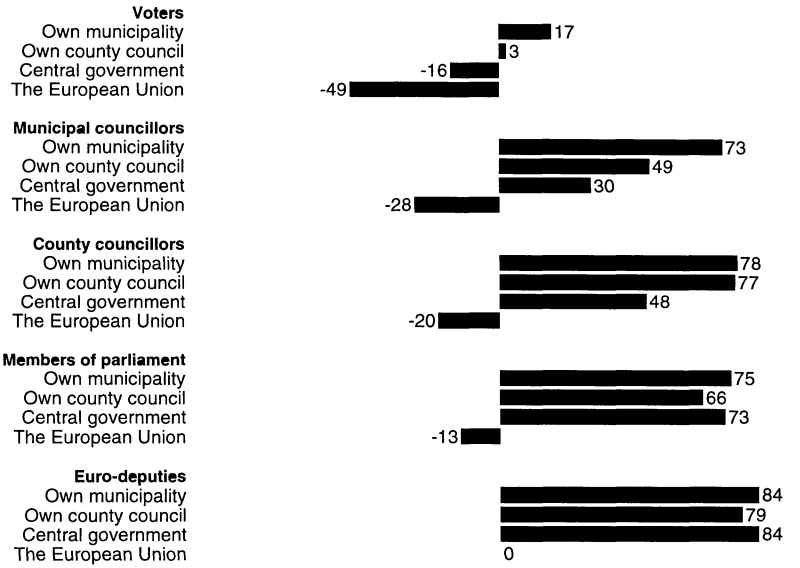


survey question as "the interaction between voters and representatives". The voters are strongly critical with respect to the criterion of effective government as well, that is, the capacity of the political system "to run the economy and get things done". Only with respect to constitutional government, formulated here as "due process and freedom from corruption" do the voters provide a minimal sign of approval. In light of the amount of attention recently given to irregularities and power abuse within politics and administration, it is somewhat remarkable that constitutional government is awarded the least negative assessment.

The assessments provided by the representatives are in general slightly less critical than those offered by voters, varying from the moderately negative to the moderately positive rather than from the strongly negative to the acceptable. But the ranking with respect to the three criteria remains the same.

Figure 5.9 Constitutional Government

Assessment of how the following bodies perform in terms of due process and freedom from corruption (balance index):



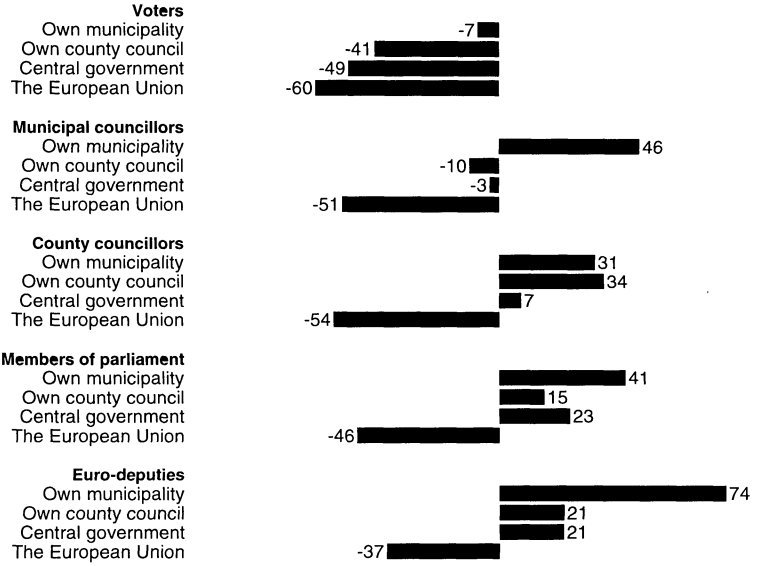
Popular government receives the worst mark, while constitutional government gets away with the least amount of censure.

The relatively high degree of unanimity between voters and representatives remains as we proceed to the level-specific assessments. The lower levels in the system are consistently considered to work better than the higher ones. Almost without exception, the municipalities are awarded the best marks. The EU fails to get a single little plus sign. Central government and the county councils find themselves somewhere in-between. According to the voters, the county councils work better than central government. Among the representatives, the internal ranking of these two levels varies somewhat.

In addition, one may note that the representatives tend to value their own level higher than do judges in other camps without necessarily indicating that it works best in an absolute sense. A generally reduced scepticism towards conditions at higher levels is also noticeable among politicians who have

Figure 5.10 Effective Government

Assessment of how the following bodies perform in terms of running the economy and getting things done (balance index):



advanced upwards though the system. This pattern finds its clearest expression in the assessments of constitutional government. With respect to popular government, by contrast, it is hardly discernible.

What do these assessments imply for democracy? Irrespective of whether the considerable lack of confidence expressed by the voters' judgements is justified or not, it is difficult to see this as other than a worrying sign. If justified, because it points to serious shortcomings. If unjustified, because it renders democratic conflict resolution more difficult. While it is true that a critical attitude and high standards may constitute a positive force, a diffuse and widespread lack of confidence may easily give rise to feelings of powerlessness and an unwillingness to let self-interest yield to the common good.

If one nevertheless tries to find a glimpse of light in the results presented here, it would be that the quality of democracy

meets with less censure on those levels whose decisions are considered to be most important, that is, the lower ones. In keeping with the previously presented model based on James Coleman's ideas, interest (the perceived importance of decisions) and control (the quality of democracy) are positively related. Above all, however, the assessments bear witness to the many difficulties facing large-scale democracies.

6 Democracy as Problem-Solving across Borders

Democracy may be considered a set of procedures for solving collective problems. The need for collective action arises when relations between individuals lead to problems of coordination. Such problems can often only be solved by concerted political action. With the collapse of national borders and the growing density of contacts comes an ever greater number of increasingly complex problems of cooperation. This places greater demands on the capacity to find practical political solutions. It is a matter of concern that the political institutions of today have not been adapted to meet the new circumstances. An increasing number of problems affect more than one state and require solutions across national boundaries. The working methods of traditional diplomacy are proving inadequate. What is required instead are new forms of collaboration between domestic political actors and their foreign policy counterparts. Moreover, it is by functional necessity that responsibility in many fields, such as communications, energy, migration, economic development and environmental politics, is shared among several different territorial levels.

In one respect it is possible to maintain that democracy is relatively well-equipped to deal with the challenges of transboundary politics. In the course of the last ten years democracy has triumphed on a global scale and broad popular support is to be found within the established democracies for the fundamental ideas of liberty, equality and solidarity that form the common heritage of democracy and the Enlightenment. The problem is rather with finding institutions capable of working on a practical level to realise the ideal of popular government in the New World Order of contemporary politics. How are members

of the public to become participants in a political decision-making process that extends across continents and encompasses states, regions and municipalities with starkly divergent cultures and historical experiences? How will voters be able to call to account their elected representatives in a complex system of many levels? One of the first issues to be addressed must be how contemporary democracy is actually working on several of the most important decision-making levels. The next would then be how the interplay between the levels is currently organised and what design its future shape should take.

Where Is the Democratic Deficit to Be Found?

It is worth reiterating one of the starting-points for our study. The assessment of the workings of democracy across the various organisational levels of politics is based on one and the same concept of democracy. It is our view that the ideal of popular, effective and constitutional government is formulated in terms so general that it is applicable not only to the national political system but also both to the European Union and the local municipality.

It is beyond dispute that comparing such diverse systems as the EU, the state and local authorities offers certain difficulties in practice. How, for example, is the decision-making capability of a local government authority to be compared with that of the EU? It cannot therefore be a question of exactly comparative data; the world of politics can seldom be rendered in detailed decimals and currency amounts. However, it is our view that a rough idea of the similarities and differences can be obtained by using the criteria developed by the Democratic Audit to monitor annual changes in Swedish democracy. As reported in chapter 2, this involves the use of a five-point scale in which two plus signs indicate that the reality is close to the democratic ideal and two minuses mark the opposite extreme, i.e. a very great discrepancy between the ideal and the reality.

Table 6.1. Democracy in the EU, the State and the Municipalities

	Popular government	Constitutional government	Effective government
The European Union	– –	0	–
The state	0	0	0
The munipalities	+	–	+

Our summary judgement of democracy in the EU, the state and the local authorities is shown in table 6.1. In order to make the comparison easier to understand, we use only the three basic elements of the democratic ideal: popular, constitutional and effective government.

When it comes to the EU, there can be no question that the major problem area is popular government. Some four decades after the advent of the European Community, it is still apparent that the primary motivation has remained economic. Despite many visions of a democratically-based community of European peoples, the political aspects remain secondary. To all intents and purposes, the EU lacks that form of public debate, public participation and the means to call politicians to account which are the day-to-day elements of a practically functioning democracy of a representative kind. Reference to a democratic deficit in the EU is therefore perfectly legitimate.

This depressing picture of democracy in the EU need not mean that the project of European integration is doomed to be overshadowed by a perpetual democratic deficit. The consolidation of democracy within the nation states was a long and laborious process. Moreover, experience indicates that the preconditions for constructing a stable democracy are at their best if the realisation of the separation of powers is developed before public participation (Dahl 1971).

As for the two other requirements made of a democratic polity, constitutional and effective government, the situation as regards the EU is not quite so precarious, although it provides no grounds for any positive verdict. The judicial system complies with the normal standards of Western countries, but the separation of powers within the Union leaves much to be desired. Effective government is restricted by complicated deci-

sion-making procedures and the dependence on the public administration of the member countries.

The table also shows how the democratic assessment applied to Sweden. The verdict constitutes a summary of the more detailed review in chapter 2. There are certain bright spots in Swedish democracy such as a relatively vital associational life and a comparatively representative corps of elected representatives; the growth in the representation of women in particular means that Sweden appears to be a pioneering country from an international perspective. The summary verdict on Swedish popular government is lowered by the weakness in terms of control over the agenda, the inadequate quality of public debate and intolerance among parts of the population.

While Sweden gets a passing grade in terms of rights and freedoms and the rule of law, the unsatisfactory nature of the separation of powers means that the overall verdict in terms of constitutional government is at best only acceptable. The same goes for effective government: a passing grade in terms of decision-making capability is lowered when it comes to control over the financial resources of the states.

The picture is a different one when it comes to municipal democracy. Here popular government passes muster; the survey in chapter 4 is supported by the voters' own assessment as shown in our poll in chapter 5. The poll also shows that municipal democracy functions well in certain respects: this applies in particular to the representativeness of elected council members and the contacts between the voters and those elected to office. The major flaw in municipal self-government has to do with judicial and constitutional issues. On this point we have arrived at quite a different verdict to that of the voters. In our judgement, the municipalities are no better than the other political levels at meeting the requirement of constitutional government. During the reorganisations of recent years, problems to do with the rule of law, predictability, the division of responsibilities and the power of scrutiny have been neglected. However, the requirement of effective government is satisfied fairly well as far as the municipalities are concerned. Even though many municipalities are affected by major financial problems,

they function fairly satisfactorily in terms of decision-making capability and outcome control.

The overall impression of democracy in the EU, the state and the municipalities is hardly an uplifting one. The overall verdict might possibly just be a passing grade but the shortcomings are obvious. While popular government functions tolerably at municipal level, the EU has major shortcomings and Swedish democracy is only working at half steam. All political levels have problems in maintaining effective constitutional government; it is the municipal level which evinces the largest number of shortcomings in this regard. Effective government is also marked down. None of the political organisations of today have the capacity to solve major social problems such as unemployment.

The Dilemma of Multilevel Democracy

A scheme such as the one presented in table 6.1 may be used to identify both the weak points and the merits within each level. In addition it may serve as the basis for a discussion about the linkages and connections both within and between levels.

As an experiment, let us imagine that democracy could be dramatically improved by constitutional reforms and changes in the working methods of the political organisations. What would happen? Is it possible to maximise democracy in all the squares of the table at one and the same time?

If at first we limit ourselves to comparisons within the lines of the table, what we see illustrated is the well-known problem of the internal dilemma of democracy. A unilateral emphasis on effective economic policy and on effective government may easily lead to conflict with the requirements of both popular and constitutional government. Similarly, a narrow judicial perspective risks neglecting the requirements for popular support and capacity for action. Finally, unrestricted rule by the majority runs counter to the need for constitutional and effective government.

The debate on the dilemma of democracy has usually been conducted on the basis of the political system of the nation

state. It is, however, apparent that the conflicts are just as current within the other levels. Although the growing power of the European Court of Justice may be a good thing from the point of view of constitutional government, it may also inhibit the capacity for action and, perhaps most importantly, come into conflict with the power of the member countries and that of members of the public to influence the decisions of the European Union. One example is the uncertainty that surrounded the freedom of Sweden to retain its monopoly on the sale of alcohol. A political issue of vital importance to a particular country was decided by a judicial body.

It is not difficult to find similar examples of this dilemma within municipal democracy. In practice today's problems tend to be the opposite of those discussed in these pages in relation to the EU. The arguments in favour of the local government reforms of recent years have primarily been in terms of improving efficiency and with reference to the need for effective government. The requirements of popular government have also been satisfied to a certain extent, at least as far as the stated ambitions go, but the requirements of constitutional government for predictability and a clear allocation of responsibilities have frequently been neglected.

Of course it should also be pointed out that the connections between the three criteria within the various levels may have positive consequences. Functioning constitutional government may strengthen popular support for the system and its capacity to make and carry out collective decisions in an effective manner. Popular and effective government may have the effect of providing mutual support and thus strengthening one another.

In a political system whose organisational basis is made up of different kinds of territory, it is probable that positive and negative connections will also occur *between* the levels. Popular government is an excellent example of such a conflict. Assume that the democratisation of the EU was pushed so far as to focus all political attention on the European Parliament. As a result the Riksdag would find itself sidelined.

However, incidences of positive connections may also be found; a strengthening of popular government at a certain level

can in fact provide positive effects at other levels. There can be little doubt that the principle of public access to official documents is the pre-eminent example. Greater access and transparency within the EU would not only improve popular support for the EU within its boundaries but also create more favourable conditions for public dialogue within individual countries, regions and municipalities.

Positive as well as negative links exist between the levels, both in terms of constitutional and effective government. Although the European Court of Justice can improve the implementation of laws within a particular country, the conflict with a partially alien legal tradition may result in the national legal system failing to develop a working synthesis of domestic and supranational principles. Improving the effectiveness of municipal government can similarly improve the capacity of the state to carry out political decisions through decentralisation but a powerful and autocratic administrative apparatus may also find itself involved in territorial conflicts which result in blockages and paralysis.

It is the obvious task of constitutional policy to attempt to reduce the likelihood of such conflicts through institutional arrangements. There is no definitive, no perfect solution to this kind of problem of balancing the pros and cons. Instead the democratic process has to be organised in such a way that the most suitable solution can be found through dialogue and debate. This will lead at best to positive effects of coordination. A strengthening of constitutional government at the national level, by a clearer separation of powers within the realm, for instance, can lead to an improvement in the effectiveness of local government. If the state can improve its capacity to take effective action this increases the capacity of the EU to operate a forceful policy against unemployment, which may in turn increase the legitimacy of the Union and the level of popular support for it.

It would be difficult to maintain that the current political leadership has tried out these means of improving the democratic process through institutional reforms. The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) concerning the future of the EU has

not served to drive the debate forward. A major barrier to reforms of this kind is the virtual absence of a forum for constructive constitutional debate in Europe. The flaws in the public sphere are thus hindering the capacity of the political system to improve the workings of democracy through a self-critical debate.

Solving Problems across Borders

The qualitative shortcomings of democracy today thus depend largely on the fact that political institutions have not been adapted to meet changed circumstances. Decisions which entail consequences for a particular group of citizens are often arrived at within territorial domains comprised to some extent of other individuals. As a result there is a deficient linkage between *interest* and *control*, if we make the association to the model elaborated on in our introductory chapter. Citizens with an interest in an issue lack the capacity to exert influence.

Is Democracy Enough?

Before we continue, it is time to discuss one fundamental objection. Are the scale and complexity of today's social problems such that democracy can still be considered a viable decision-making technique? Opinion is divided among scholars. Certain writers have expressed some scepticism about the capability of democracy in this regard (e.g. Finger 1993; Zolo 1992); others are trying to develop new models for a democracy across borders.

The arguments put forward by some of the sceptics take the dramatic view of the situation as their starting-point. Are the problems of today's world perhaps so enormous that there is no time to wait for the gradual and roundabout process of democracy? Would not a measure of injustice be preferable to total ruin (Hardin 1973; Moon 1983)? Environmental problems are usually cited as the prime example. The sceptics point to the

fact that traditional democracy has failed to deal with transfrontier problems of environmental pollution.

This argument cannot be summarily dismissed. There has been a long succession of failed attempts to deal with such supranational problems by means of treaties, conventions and supranational decision-making bodies. The environmental policy of the European Union has not been particularly successful (Ward 1996). The number of environmental policy initiatives has fallen and there is poor compliance with the existing regulations. It has proved difficult to integrate environmental policy within other sectors. Environmental policy has been overshadowed by the economic crisis. Furthermore, the influence of members of the public has been minimal. The means adopted to tackle environmental problems have been technically complex. This has meant that environmental policy has enjoyed little public support and made it difficult for the decision-makers to explain why it is necessary for each and every citizen to change their way of living. The individual is unable to see any way in which his or her actions can contribute to solving the problem. Alienation and powerlessness are the consequences of this shortcoming in terms of popular government.

Furthermore, it is the sceptics' view that the attempts that have been made hitherto to organise a transfrontier policy also suffer from defects from the point of view of constitutional government. The mandates of the public bodies responsible are weak and they lack the power to invoke effective sanctions against trangressors. An indistinct separation of powers makes it difficult to exert accountability within and between the levels. Instead of clarifying the allocation of authority, current intergovernmental solutions tend to create overlapping jurisdictions that prohibit problem-solving, thus allowing governments to avoid responsibility. One example is the difficulties encountered in implementing the Nordic Convention on the Protection of the Environment, despite great similarites between the Nordic countries with respect to political culture and environmental concern.

The current means of solving transfrontier problems are also flawed in terms of effective government. The main criticism is

usually levelled at the huge gulf that exists between the rhetoric of politicians on the one hand and on the other the relatively meagre resources devoted to the problem, their lack of readiness to reach practical agreements and the inability of public bodies to implement the decisions that have been made. Experience of the UN suffices as an example of the abyss between words and deeds.

Although the sceptics are very detailed in their criticism of representative democracy, they are considerably vaguer when it comes to formulating alternative means of solving the transfrontier problems of politics. While some may lean towards authoritarian solutions, the anti-democratic current is by no means the dominant one. What is rather more noticeable is a greater degree of concordance between the sceptics and the more optimistically inclined of those taking part in the debate. Having previously been paralysed by the gigantic proportions of the political problems, many have moved on to a more constructive search for new methods to solve the collective problems of action in a globalised world (e.g. Keohane & Ostrom 1995). Hitherto the history of democracy has gone through two main phases: democracy as practised at the level of the small town or village and democracy within the framework of the nation state. Democracy is now facing its third great transformation: finding practicable institutions for popular self-government on a global scale (Dahl 1989).

Extending Democracy across Borders

Attempts to renew democracy take one of two different paths. One of these involves exploiting the already existing organisational models to the greatest extent possible. Although the EU is to some extent a new type of political organisation, most of the organs of the EU are based on tried and tested forms. Representative democracy obviously constitutes the ideal of the European Parliament; the fact that the public chooses its members in universal elections is proof enough. The Commission has a number of features in common with the executive branches of the governments of the nation states. The Court of

Justice and the Court of Auditors are yet further instances of copies painted from national governmental originals.

A mechanical projection of current trends would mean the EU and the municipalities becoming more and more like the political system at national level. Although the changes at other territorial levels have not reached quite as far, it is a simple matter to discern similar patterns in those areas as well. Regionalisation and the calls for regional parliaments suggest a kind of formation of regional states. The more ambitious projects to reorganise the UN have, explicitly or tacitly, a global state as their ultimate aim.

Although the trend is not so developed that it is possible to draw any definite conclusions, we would want to express our doubts that a universal adoption of the state model will be capable of solving the democratic problem. The difficulty of putting into practice a form of popular government that works within the context of a project as well-established as the EU must be a warning sign. The issue is whether it is sufficient or even necessary to establish more levels organised on a basis similar to that of the state.

It might be more productive to build on the attempts to find new forms of operation for transfrontier politics. What these experiments have in common is that they are not aimed primarily at setting up new public bodies. Instead they try to get new forms of cooperation going between existing bodies and they presuppose that a vital seedbed exists at local level for transfrontier public involvement. The examples which follow are a mixture of what are as yet untested experimental models and the experience gained hitherto.

Reciprocal Representation

Emissions from British factories are polluting Swedish air. Problems produced in one country are having effects on the inhabitants of another country. In order to deal with the imbalance between the interest, control and power of the citizens, it has been suggested that a system of reciprocal representation be introduced. The idea is to give states the right to appoint mem-

bers of the parliaments of other states (Dobson 1986, Schmitter 1997). The aim is to create confidence and respect. An exchange of this kind can be organised in different ways. The model can also be applied at the regional level.

The idea of reciprocity may also be applied in other areas than that of representative democracy. Constitutional government means that the affected members of the public can have their case tried in the court system. The reciprocal rule of law would provide a member of the public with the right to take his or her case to be tried in the law-courts of another country. The proposal may seem unrealistic, but something similar already exists in fact under the Nordic Convention on the Protection of the Environment, even if the option has not been exercised to any great extent (Philips 1986).

The question is whether the model for reciprocal representation can really solve the problems of transfrontier democracy. As soon as it is to be put into practice, the problems start piling up. Which states are entitled to this form of representation? Should geographical proximity or geopolitical position be the determinative criteria? In the example above, should Great Britain also have the right to appoint members to the Swedish parliament? How many members should be elected and how might one link together a unicameral parliament and a bicameral one? How is one to determine exactly which way the wind blows and which countries and regions are affected? The idea of the reciprocal rule of law also involves similar problems. The general idea of reciprocal representation would appear to lead to conflict rather than to cooperation. Somewhat unsurprisingly attempts have therefore been made to find other means of discovering working forms for transfrontier democracy.

Cooperation: the Agenda 21 Example

Agenda 21 is a plan of action containing some forty separate chapters on the subject of sustainable development. It was adopted by the Earth Summit held by the UN in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Of primary interest in relation to the plan is that it links together actors of different kinds: central government

agencies, local government bodies, international organisations and voluntary associations. Although Agenda 21 is not legally binding, it has proved nevertheless to have great force as a consequence of the strong support shown for it internationally. The plan should be seen as a long-term decision-making process which unites classical diplomacy with the efforts of the local community to achieve a better everyday environment. The municipalities have been accorded a vital role in putting the plan into practice.

As a result Agenda 21 has come to represent a new means of solving transfrontier problems. It brings together actors from different spheres of power and demonstrates the ways in which democracy can work across frontiers. The key terms are tolerance, effective participation and able administration. The Rio Conference developed a new style of leadership. Individual countries or groups of countries could make themselves heard on issues in which they had particular interests. A small but tightly-knit secretariat ensured that the wider scale of participation did not undermine the capacity to take decisions. The perspective of the conference was deliberately one that bridged over sectoral dividing-lines. The process also demonstrates that negotiations have to be based on a powerful measure of resource control; particular importance was attached to the economic aspects and the scientific prerequisite of open and critical evaluation of empirical evidence. Non-governmental actors were especially encouraged to take part. The voluntary associations gained considerable influence during the negotiations. Private companies were accorded a new role, embodied in the creation of a new body, the Industrial Commission for Sustainable Development.

Only shortly after the operation was launched, studies were able to show that the democratic process as embodied in Agenda 21 was achieving practical effects. For Sweden's part, environmental issues were given greater prominence. The municipalities were accorded a key role as coordinators of contributions by members of the public, associational life, public bodies and private companies (SOU 1994:128, SOU 1993:19). This working-method is based on consultative processes of

dialogue, action programs to achieve sustainable development and the active involvement of all social groups. It is the task of every local government agency to start a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private companies and to adopt a local Agenda 21. The idea is that consultation and enlisting popular support for concerted solutions will lead to local government bodies learning from members of the public, associations and companies (Agenda 21, chapter 28 in Miljövårdsberedningen 1993).

The Agenda 21 process in Sweden has been unexpectedly successful. The issue of sustainable development was accorded the highest priority by the municipal sector (Swedish Association of Local Authorities 1995). Civil society was mobilised; this included the formation of Q2000, a network of young people committed to solving transfrontier environmental problems. This network has been highlighted by the UN as the prototype of the future (Micheletti 1996). Agenda 21 is fully in keeping with Nordic social traditions. It is based on consultation between groups, on dialogue and local initiatives from members of the public. Nevertheless, even a country as powerfully centralised as France has been shown to succeed in developing forms for public involvement with environmental issues within the framework of the local municipality (Engström 1996).

Sweden also has a lot to learn from Agenda 21. Shortcomings in the political system became apparent in the course of practical attempts to find solutions to transfrontier problems. These difficulties have to do with the lack of clearly defined divisions of responsibility. The poor separation of powers in Sweden has proved to be a handicap. Interest and control fail to meet on the same territorial level. The responsibility for a task often lies on one level while it is another which has the legislative authority and the right to take sanctions. The rigid division into sectors together with vague and contradictory statements of purpose further increase the problems. One local Agenda-21 coordinator declared: "There is nothing to stop us bringing together the environment and health, for instance, at the municipal level, but it is made more difficult by the fact that the

state does not get *itself* together on these issues" (Hultman, Hildingsson & Johansson 1996, 33). The impression given is that the state lags far behind the municipalities when it comes to efforts relating to environmental policy. What is chiefly lacking in the Swedish Agenda-21 process are overarching goals and political leadership (Naturvårdsverket 1997).

The Democratisation of International Politics

International politics has traditionally been the preserve of the closed world of diplomacy. It is, however, no longer simply a matter of signing treaties and ratifying conventions. The interweaving of foreign and domestic politics is making new working methods something of a necessity. The preconditions for the solutions to the problems of transfrontier politics have been changed in several vital respects.

It is in the interest of an increasing number of actors to participate. Previously foreign politics was the preserve of diplomats, foreign affairs ministers and legal specialists in international law. Nowadays supranational issues affect many different social groups and territorial levels. Central administrative agencies, regions, municipalities, voluntary associations, companies and individual citizens must nowadays be able to participate if the process is to result in decisions capable of implementation and of achieving practical effects.

Another fundamental change has to do with the increasing complexity of political problems. It is often impossible to fix solutions in the form of an unchanging treaty text. Uncertainty to do with the evidentiary basis for decisions, alternative courses of action and future consequences means that problem solving has to be organised as a continual process of experimentation. Recent research in political science has tried to capture this more democratic working method with the use of the concept of international regime (Larsson 1996; Conca 1994). The Agenda 21 process demonstrates the ways in which international agreements can acquire great political force through a combination of active citizenship and global monitoring agencies.

It is no exaggeration to say that we are now experiencing the beginning of a new world order (Rosenau 1990). The monopoly of international politics enjoyed by the nation states is a thing of the past. Today's citizens are becoming increasingly independent, informed and critical and they are making greater demands for participation. Voluntary associations are playing a greater role both locally and globally. The mass media and information technology provide people with rapid access to a means of communication for an exchange of ideas that is very similar to face to face meetings. A global consciousness is establishing the conditions on which to put into practice Kant's dream of perpetual peace.

This report began with the question whether democracy has any future in a world of fractured borders and increasing complexity. Our study leads ultimately to the conclusion that despite its flaws democracy will not only survive but will develop and broaden. We are only at the beginning of the democratic epoch.

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Does democracy have a future in a world of crumbling borders and increasing complexity? The major issue is how democracy can find proper forms of operation in the New World Order. This book examines the performance of democracy at multiple levels with particular emphasis on the European Union in comparison with national and local Swedish politics. In addition, the book presents survey data showing how Swedish voters and politicians themselves assess the quality of democracy on a global, Nordic, national, regional, and local scale.

Democracy across Borders is the 1997 report from the SNS Democratic Audit. The Democratic Audit is responsible for auditing the state of Swedish democracy on a yearly basis. This report takes 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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