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CHARLES F. KETTERING  
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MEXICO

# PAINTING THE LANDSCAPE

A CROSS - CULTURAL EXPLORATION OF  
PUBLIC - GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

## 1.1. Mexico

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### Process Report

*How might the results have differed if another group had been selected?*

In terms of the elected and appointed government officials, I don't believe that selecting different interviewees would have changed much. While lip service and some effort is being made to engage in "citizen participation" at all levels of government, resources, training and genuine will to share the decision making process with the public are limited. Participation never goes much beyond the "consult" level and is always bound by political interests. The growing use of the Web to provide information is beginning to spread, especially at the federal level, and is also viewed as "participation."

On the other hand, if we had interviewed more – or different – representatives of civil society, the stories may have varied somewhat in their details. Because we interviewed the leader of an indigenous group, we saw public participation through the lens of 500 years of racism and colonial oppression. Had we interviewed someone from an NGO involved in gender, human rights, food security or other issues, the perspective might have been different, but probably would have mirrored the indigenous group's frustration of trying to deal with a government that changes every six years (or more often, on the local level), lacks basic listening skills and is not truly committed to working with the public to find solutions.

*What surprises were there?*

We were surprised at how difficult it was to identify qualified public participation practitioners. This job category or profession is not common in Mexico. It is telling that the practitioner we interviewed was a Mexican who studied for 3 years in a western country, where he gained a different perspective on what participation can be. In the same vein, it was surprising how difficult it was to find elected officials who go beyond political rhetoric to actually plan and implement meaningful public participation programs.

*What did not go according to the plan?*

Surprisingly, once we were able to identify the candidates and schedule the interviews, everything went very well.

## **Findings**

Participants of this research were sourced from various organizations and positions in Mexico including Federal Administrator, State Administrator, NGO Leader and Public participation practitioner.

### **Research Question 1**

**What is the nature of public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes across different cultures?**

Formally known as the United Mexican States, Mexico has a population of approximately 107 million people. It consists of 31 states and a Federal District, which includes most of the country's largest city and also its capital, Mexico City. Approximately 60 percent of the population are of mixed indigenous and Spanish descent, nearly 30 percent are completely indigenous and the remaining 10 percent have European heritage. The official language is Spanish, "and various Mayan dialects, Nahuatl, and other indigenous languages are also spoken."<sup>1</sup>

### **Context of Public Participation**

Two general themes emerged that characterize the cultural context of public participation and deliberation in Mexico. First, project interviews reveal a relationship between government and its citizens that is more formal in nature and more immediately focused.

One reason is that, structurally, political eras provide only limited administrative stability within the government. "Only the public representative is elected. The other persons are hired employees," said a local elected official. Most notably, when the government changes, most administrative staff across government – "almost everything...90%" – also turn over.

For example, "My position is a political appointment," said a Mexican federal administrator. "However, the person in charge of the administrative coordination of the councils – an assistant director - stays in her position. This was introduced by President Fox's administration; it did not exist before. Previously, when the administration changed, the entire universe changed. The world was re-invented every six years."

Similarly, a state administrator described how his agency "typically work[s] with short term perspectives, since every year there are new rules and regulations that affect our programs. Obviously, it is possible to have a long-term view, perhaps a six-year term, as there is an upcoming change of administration, and new administrations will improve every action."

The turnover aspect of the government structure also affects how local governments manage programs. “Take, for example, municipal governments, that have three-year administration terms,” said the state administrator. “They develop short term planning – three years- and they do this considering the resources they receive, both from the federal and the state government, and they have to consider in what stage of their administration each of them is, in order to establish goals and projects appropriately.” [Interviewer Tara Mirel comments: “I remember in my interview with the municipal government/local elected official, he talked about how they come into an empty office – no furniture, no files, no staff, nothing. They have to basically start from scratch.”]

There are also some structures in place within agencies that support public participation and deliberation, albeit on a limited basis. A Mexican federal administrator described a highly structured process that has been in effect for several years for the purpose of consultation on specific issues. Groups are formed to consult at the invitation of the president of the agency’s advisory council (a political appointee). The consultation group must be representative of certain institutions and organizations; for example, it “must include two representatives from the senate, which is the upper chamber of Congress, two from the lower chamber, four representatives of gender equity organizations,” etc.

Second, in Spanish and in Mexico, the word “public participation” generally is conceived as a service mechanism of the Mexican government. It is directly related to government programs – from the public attending government meetings or writing questions on the government websites. However, “citizen participation,” a common term used, not limited to government-sponsored participation, and it seeks engage people in order that they may to influence decisions that are made. [Regional Coordinator Bea Briggs notes: “Deliberation is not a commonly used term in Mexico; it also is interesting to note that there is no Spanish term for ‘engagement’.”]

### Public Participation

For example, a local elected official describes how public participation in the Mexican context “involves financial support for projects and a small number of group meetings with citizens.” Here, “Meetings are very rare. People do not get together to discuss their common problems. They rarely meet and when they do, it is for private parties, but not to discuss common or important problems, or even to discuss their most important concerns.”

The reason for this, the local elected official explained, is because “People’s social consciousness is limited. They do not become involved in activities in order to improve living conditions in their community, or in their neighborhood.” Further, the family is the primary focal point for most endeavors. “People tend to work individually on their private endeavors instead of joining efforts with other people,” said the local elected official. “They include family members, their children, parents,

grandparents. Participation with the general public is very limited. Including people not belonging to one's own family is not in the Mexican nature."

Similarly, a Mexican state administrator explained how the responses prepared by his agency to questions from the public represent 'public participation.' "Often we are amazed when we receive e-mail messages from very distant places, from people we could not even remotely think might have access to this information," said this official. "For example, all strategic communal centers have satellite antennas. Any regular citizen from the most distant place in the hills is able to express his questions or concerns in connection with a program, or with a resource that is available which did not reach him, to find out how he can participate."

There is reporting based on public participation. "...we draw-up the minutes of each meeting, including the opinion and comments of each participant. This information comprises a large package of data that we send to our main office in Mexico City, where it is processed in order to know exactly the situation, requirements and concerns of regular citizens in relationship with each program," said a state administrator. Expectations "are very high, vital, since in order to meet social expectations, [ministry name] must be 100% involved with civil society in general," said the administrator.

In selected instances, participation may extend beyond standard approaches. A public participation practitioner described a public survey undertaken by a Mexican agency at the behest of an international funding organization outside of Mexico. The practitioner said he believed the Mexican agency involved was "satisfied with the process and their expectations were met. The mere fact that the survey was conducted was important," said the practitioner. Generally, institutional expectations for citizen participation appear to be lacking, according to an NGO leader: "I believe this is a challenge for institutions as well, for organizations" outside of government in Mexico.

The state administrator characterized participation as part of "the civil servants' duty: we are very well paid and we must provide the services," this interviewee said. "Our salaries come from taxpayers' money, and this is very clear to us. Therefore, we work with transparency and honesty, and our goal is to benefit those citizens that had never before received any help."

### Citizen Participation

The terminology is also distinct. "In representative governments," said the Mexican federal administrator, "public participation is the citizen's right to express his opinion regarding government decision-making. In this case, I understand "citizen participation" is equivalent to what you present in your letter as "public participation". I believe it is only a question of translation. "Public opinion", "public participation"... We are speaking about 'citizen participation.'"

A local elected official defined it as, "We, the city council, assist the municipal president in issues involving public policies; we are the general public's representatives in the city council." A public participation practitioner observed that "the Mexican government has

almost no public participation culture.” According to interviewer Tara Mirel, this practitioner was referring to the United States’ definition of p2. While the Mexican government has “public participation” in the Spanish definition’s sense, but this person was saying overall there is almost no public participation (based on the U.S. understanding).

Moreover, responses from the local elected official reflect a lack of institutional capacity for citizen participation. “To tell you the truth, we had a very limited knowledge of the things that were required. There are many requirements and we had very limited planning. The requirements are much higher than we had foreseen,” said a local elected official. There are not any goals, this interviewee added.

Some interviewees at the local level expressed a desire for an enhanced degree of community involvement beyond the service conception of public participation, albeit for different reasons. “In [community name], as well as in the entire country, it is necessary to offer more support to rural activities, or activities of the primary sector, because those are the activities that receive the least support in every state,” said a local administrator.

“There used to be more agricultural production in [state], even in [community name], half, or one third of the population, was engaged in the production of corn, animals, or cattle,” said a local elected official. “Currently only 5 to 10% of the population is engaged in food production activities.” For this reason, “citizen participation should be fostered and encouraged,” said a local elected official. “Additional funding and support for more people are required in order for agricultural activities and public participation to grow.”

The NGO leader’s perspective also pointed to a broader conception of participation. “I believe that public participation is important, especially to watch over government representatives at all levels, even international representatives,” this person said. [Interviewer Tara Mirel recalls that this leader rejected attending a government meeting only to be counted; instead, this person only participates if s/he feels s/he has a real voice.]

Finally, within these structures and others that seek to facilitate citizen participation, there also is acknowledgement that different needs and interests are at play in political and administrative processes. A Mexican state administrator said, “First, we have cultural differences. Addressing an indigenous person from the hills of Nayarit is very different from addressing a citizen from the Tepic municipality. There are different concepts and ideas; some of them are –shall we say- more politically involved, some of them are simply regular people who truly understand the purpose of our assistance.”

## **Research Question 2**

**How do different cultures support or provide space for public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes?**

This research question sought to understand how different cultures – and in turn, different associated governments – provide support for or how they facilitate the practice of public participation among those they serve. Like all countries included in this study, Mexican participatory processes is related to how participation is conceived and defined. We identified support for public participation in the data through responses to interview questions concerning how such processes are defined, how people access such processes and the specific tools or practices that are used to support engagement.

### **Public participation design framework**

This part of our research focused on how public participation is defined and the corresponding design framework

### **How is public participation/deliberation defined?**

Public participation and deliberation processes in Mexico reflect values of service, openness and responsiveness that are common among democracies. Interviewees characterized three types of public participation processes.

**Assistance.** “Emphasizing the service element of participation, a local elected official noted that “Sometimes people contact us, because they know we can help them, we can offer support, or assist them to apply for financial support.” When doing so, “They discuss their problems, their needs.” Similarly, a federal administrator said, “My professional duty is to assist citizens.”

**Transparency.** The federal administrator’s office “also responds to regular citizens’ inquiries, even if they do not belong to the council; they are entitled to make inquiries, according to the law of transparency that is currently in effect in our country” said the official. “We receive those questions, we have a time to respond to them, and we are proud to say we have 100% compliance with the term established by the law.”

**Input for Policy-making.** A state administrator who is a political appointee explained that “People express their opinions, and they remain open to other types of policies. Obviously, there are restrictions in the case of administrative policies. Participation is open and we consider all kinds of proposals.”

### **Concept of Public Participation**

The concept of public participation itself was described as meaning:

- Problem-solving, where “groups, or people, who get together to support each other in order to solve common problems for mutual benefit. This is what public participation is about, as well as requesting the government and its representatives to provide support, to facilitate, to make resources available to solve common problems” (local elected official);
- A right of expression, specifically “in representative governments, public participation is the citizen’s right to express his opinion regarding government decision-making. In this case, I understand “citizen participation” is equivalent

to what you present in your letter as “public participation”. I believe it is only a question of translation. “Public opinion”, “public participation”... We are speaking about ‘citizen participation.’” (federal administrator);

- Deliberative learning. Public participation” is gathering insight from citizens’ opinions in order to learn about their concerns and needs,” said a state administrator. “It is simply the opportunity for them to assert their rights in relation with the rules of each of the programs developed here at [ministry name].”
- Organizing and political representation. “How to become organized, how to assume our responsibility, not only about our work within our families, and in our homes, but to be aware of the responsibility of preserving our language and our values.” This same interviewee said “Participation also includes strengthening or recreating our forms of representation, our traditional social organization, as well as our political and spiritual representatives, and knowing what [umbrella name] means, what the [umbrella name] people is, who we are, where we come from.” (NGO leader);
- Policy-making. “Yes, public participation is the process that the government initiates in order for the public, civil society, to participate in decision-making for public policies of a country, a region, or international organizations. It is the manner in which civil society, through different civil or indigenous organizations, is allowed to participate in plans or programs that are conducted in different areas of government administration.” (NGO leader);
- A right. One interviewee conceptualized public participation “as the peoples’ right to participate in the preparation of plans, study programs, environmental plans and policies and development programs; this includes political participation as well.” (NGO leader).

Moreover, some in the indigenous community see such participation as separate from public-government efforts. “We, the indigenous peoples, have always been outside the colonial governments, those that were imposed on us when the Spaniards arrived in 1492,” said the indigenous NGO leader. “Our peoples had their own structure, economy and education, their own forms of participation. The countries, states and nations that they created have denied us participation within the community. If we are speaking about “public participation”, we have to think about public participation as indigenous peoples, not only in connection with national states or in connection with governments.” This interviewee described the existence of processes within the indigenous community itself. “We indigenous peoples have our own traditional social organization, and therefore our own forms of decision-making and public participation; this is how we solve different problems within our communities. This is how we maintain harmony, ethnic and social cohesion, especially reaching consensus.”

This NGO leader also said, “I believe that public participation is not frequently mentioned in Mexico, although it is required. Public participation is not clearly defined in Mexico. ‘Citizen Participation’ is included in certain occasions in order to prepare national development programs.” A public participation practitioner offered a corollary

point of view when he said, “I do not know if it can be properly called public participation, since most of it was carried out in government offices.”

### **Terms, Meanings, Processes and the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation**

*The public sector decision makers at the federal, state and local levels* explained that the term ‘public participation’ is not used in Mexico and its equivalent here is ‘citizen participation.’ The range of meanings of ‘citizen participation’ (CP) is worth noting.

The persons interviewed at the *local and state levels* define CP to mean the public’s access to government institutions and ability to participate in and benefit from its programs. This definition does not relate to decision-making and does not enter onto the IAP2 Spectrum.

The interviewee at the *federal level* used CP to refer to a formal process he oversees that invites stakeholder organizations to become part of a 3-year term on a council that participates at the ‘consult’ and ‘involve’ levels (on the IAP2 Spectrum) at one Ministry for its state and federal-level programs and policies.

At all three levels of government, ‘transparency’ was mentioned in relation to CP, referring to the public’s access to information regarding government programs. Specifically, the interviewees elaborated that CP included the public’s requests for information via the web and the posting of detailed program information and beneficiaries on the government’s web page.

*The practitioner/consultant* interviewed preferred the word ‘public consultations’ to refer to his work with citizens. In this case the ‘public’ included government-selected stakeholders living or working in a specified area. Generally he defined the term public participation as citizens’ input in government processes and decision-making, with a caveat that this exists more in discourse than in practice. It is worth highlighting that both this example and the one cited above (at the federal level) only included participants with a formal government invitation.

The *NGO interviewee, an indigenous leader*, held yet a different perspective on CP. His experience – as well as that of his community – is of being excluded from government decisions or being asked to participate in a ‘token’ manner in government meetings. As a result, his own definition of ‘public participation,’ is a process that confers the indigenous community with ‘autonomy,’ ‘liberty,’ and ‘decision-making’, independent of the government. In other words, for him, public participation means working at the “empower” level of the IAP2 spectrum.

### **Common Terms**

The most common term for public participation was ‘citizen participation.’ Other common terms used by interviewees included citizen participation, citizen cooperation, social participation (local elected official); a citizen’s council, plural citizen participation, citizen participation, public opinion (federal administrator); and citizen participation, general objectives of the population as concerns the federal government, general

common welfare (state administrator). The indigenous NGO leader said, “We use ‘autonomy’ and ‘free determination,’ involving not only participation but decision-making as well, although we use ‘public participation’, especially when we attend international forums, as it relates to different international agreements and treaties.”

Interviewees detailed the design or framework for public participation processes that were used to engage citizens. For example, at the federal or ministry level, there is a formal structure for citizen involvement:

- The federal administrative official described how the advisory council associated with his agency “represents a carefully planned sample of civil society,” and that the council is “grouped into commissions that meet regularly.” The citizen representatives “who comprise these commissions are sometimes true experts in their fields, when they come from the academic sector. On other occasions, they are ‘expert’ citizens representing native groups, or gender-equity groups.” Participation itself is very structured. “Once council members meet, they receive training on parliamentary procedures. At meetings, each member has a sign bearing their name that they raise when they wish to speak. Each member is allowed to speak for a maximum of three minutes. The rules facilitate the participation and input of all participants.”
- This office “draws up the proposed recommendations and their rationale, which are then sent to the office responsible for protected natural areas,” said a federal administrator. “According to the provisions of the decree, every recommendation is required to be answered. If the response is affirmative, the council’s suggestion will be implemented. The response may also be negative, i.e. we are not able to implement the recommendation because it would affect third party rights, or because the constitution does not provide for that, or for any other reason. No recommendation may be left unanswered. Therefore, our statistics measure the number of recommendations received –you can see it in this graph– and their impact, i.e. how many recommendations have been implemented as public policies, and this shows the Council’s batting average.”
- The official notes that since “Citizen participation is not common in Mexico; therefore, these councils are centers for citizen participation.” The involvement of non-government organizations is highly desirable. “Non-governmental organizations are one of the most important groups. It is not relevant if those that are elected when the councils are established have been incorporated very recently or if they are long-standing organizations.”

By comparison, at the agency or commission level, the experience includes formal invitations but the content of the meetings appears more relaxed. A public participation practitioner described how their invitation-only group meetings with local and regional stakeholders included complaints as well as requests for assistance and the discussion or exploration of potential joint ventures with the commission sponsoring the participatory process.

This same interviewee also noted how political consistency can help. At the time of the interview, national elections had been held and the incoming administration represented

the same political party as had been in power when the interviewee had coordinated the commission public participation process. The public participation practitioner was asked, "Will the new administration accept this strategy? Is this because they belong to the same party?" and this individual responded: "The fact that it is the same party helps significantly," also noting that "The president of [commission acronym] is currently a member of Felipe Calderón's [group name]. I do not know whether he will stay in the position of president of [commission acronym], but at least he will advise the next administration about the importance of maintaining and implementing current projects."

## **Justifications**

Justifications provided for public participation and deliberative processes included agency mission, public entitlement ("Because they are Mexicans and they are entitled to do so.") and for program planning and management. An indigenous NGO leader also described the traditional roots of public participation among Mexico's significant indigenous population and the justification for such processes:

Since ancient times, the customs of communal, participative labor have been maintained, together with the principles of trade, reciprocity and mutual assistance, not only to protect the interests of our own people, but also to protect all forms of life of humanity, as well as of Mother Earth. The [NGO organization] was born from this collective vision of communal participation in the indigenous world. This entailed a process of reflection, of exchange at forums, meetings, conferences and assemblies, where discussions were conducted about the future of life, how to ensure the survival not only of a community, but also of an entire people and all of its knowledge....[The vision was of] a life where indigenous people could be free, independent, and make their own decisions; a collective organization and the exercise of collective rights in order to foster the conditions to promote and uphold traditional knowledge, and to recreate [organizations] based on our ancient wisdom, to create and recreate social institutions to strengthen social union, ethnic identity, as well as to ensure social production. It was intended as well to foster initiatives to solve communal problems, health problems, to recover the ancient medical knowledge on how to cure and prevent sickness....

The [NGO organizational] document speaks of our consciousness as a people in a difficult situation, with social problems, but also with great potential and many possibilities; in this case, the power of a community, the power of collective participation, the participation as a people who have an ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity, as well as a spiritual identity. At that time, there was still a certain resistance to accepting us... there was even persecution. There was the five-century old belief that our people had to be subject to a different political, economic, ideological, and religious power, and that meant we had to set aside our identity, our history, and our collective memory....[This] Organization was also about the initiatives, or the manner, in which to approach specific problems, from food to the violation of rights, not only human rights but also the collective rights of indigenous peoples. There was also the issue of our representatives, or leaders, who were unjustly imprisoned, that required organization towards protesting, or making the

attention of the local, national and international media aware of the issues that were unfair. For example, the lack of fair representation in courts, such as trials, or convictions, were conducted in a language that was alien to the people and with no interpreters or translators. Most of the people who were in prison did not even know why they were there; others did not have attorneys to help them. All these were examples of the corruption that reigned in the different spheres and levels of government.

[The] Organization was considered as very important in order to bring change, to influence Congress to introduce and pass changes to current legislation, or to pressure authorities for decisions or action to solve those legal problems. However, organization was required as well in order to strengthen all the institutions I mentioned before: educational, cultural.

For these several reasons, this indigenous NGO leader explained that exercising the “right to participate in preliminary free and informed surveys is especially important in the events where the government intends to develop public projects, initiatives or actions.” This individual also said, “...we are convinced that public participation is important in order to carry out a project. The participation of all the members of the community, in this case the indigenous people, is important. The entire mission and vision of this project is based on and strengthened by the ideas, proposals and suggestions of the community. They are vital to the project.”

## **Regularity/frequency**

The frequency of participation varied across the five Mexican interviewees:

- A federal ministry reports receiving “thousands of inquiries per month; yes, thousands,” said a federal administrator. The advisory council managed under the ministry’s auspices “represents a carefully planned sample of civil society, grouped into commissions that meet regularly.” This group meets “two or three times every six months.”
- A state administrator said meetings initially are held “in January/February, the months in which our programs start-up. After that, we meet as often as necessary, since not only the state or the municipalities, but also civil society organizations and minority groups, or rural organizations, request our attendance to disclose information regarding our programs.”
- The office of a local elected official conducts “a meeting every week” in different locations in order to respond to citizen needs and requests. These roundtable meetings are sometimes held in public places “but they are more frequently held in private homes.” Requests for assistance can be made once annually. The volume of requests are about 15 per week or two to three people per day including those “who belong to communes.” (Local elected official)
- A public participation process with a defined scope and timeline that was sponsored by a Mexican commission for a particular project purpose.
- Organizational meetings of the NGO are held at least once monthly. The group is also involved in convening an annual “international meeting on indigenous wisdom and culture.” A range of “Different representatives participate in the

meetings of this four-day event.” Attendees represent “basically an indigenous movement, of the [name] people, but it includes representatives from other local and national peoples as well. It is a continental indigenous movement, even a world-wide movement.” Several individuals external to Mexico participate in this meeting.

## **How people access participatory processes**

Access to public participation and deliberative processes is made possible through several different mechanisms: *[Editor's Note: The categories to which these strategies/techniques have been assigned were made by the project team (and not by interviewees) as one means for organizing what appear to be like activities together.]*

### **Meetings, Committees and Community Dialogue - Face to Face**

Federal administrator

- Council members are elected from one of five regions dividing Mexico for the purpose of drafting recommendations for use in policymaking. “We visit each state and we invite every non-governmental organization that works on [subject area] to participate. We do not include other kinds of organizations. The organizations meet with public officials, and elect the state representatives for the council. There is a council named [formal name] in each state.”
- “I will give you a significant example of how this process works: We identify 17 universities, and among them, those that offer [subject area]-related studies. We invite the professors to join the council, explaining that this means donating two or three days of their time every so often. They do not receive a salary or any other compensation; we only pay transportation and hotel expenses.”

Local elected official

- This official seeks to provide awareness of assistance programs available locally. “The regulations are about establishing close contact with people, about facilitating consensus, and about enabling people to determine what their requirements are, what projects they would like to conduct.”
- “Sometimes people contact us, because they know we can help them, we can offer support, or assist them to apply for financial support.”
- “We visit population centers, communities where producers live. We conduct meetings, and we invite people to attend and to inform us about their requirements, as well as to request our support. We are committed to supporting them, to assisting them, to accompanying them when they need to address requests to the different government offices.” Members of the public “initiate the contact. But it works both ways. We go to them and they come to us. However, I would say it is more frequent for them to come here.”
- “Our doors are open to everyone. We do not leave anyone out. The only condition is that they belong to the municipality of [community name]. We are not able to assist them if they come from places like [community name], or

[community name], which do not belong to the municipality of [community name].”

- “We have invited people to meetings; we have invited groups by neighborhoods, by work areas, those who grow corn, those who breed sheep. We have made efforts, but the public’s response is limited.”

NGO leader

- This organization seeks to empower indigenous individuals and organizations. The group seeks to facilitate “communal participation, which begins in the core of each family.”
- “Indigenous peoples want to participate not only in the preparation of the documents, but also in the surveys, to have the right to participate in preliminary free and informed surveys.”
- “The process takes place while we sit together in the form of a circle. We conduct general meetings to talk about the different topics or problems, to reach consensus and to assign responsibilities and work to be carried out.”
- “We use the “circle of the word”. The “baton of the word” is handed to participants to indicate it is their turn to speak. That is one technique.”
- “The other technique we apply is to use one meeting to generate additional meetings in other places. One representative of a community attends a meeting, goes back to his community, starts a discussion and gives us feedback that includes comments about the things that are well done, what should be improved, what is not working; we follow-up on this process for evaluation.”
- “Others offer their services, and we have to consider their financial situation, i.e. how to offer them a compensation that will cover their living expenses.”
- “We have a meeting here (in [community name]) once per month, and the same happens in the communities.”

### ***Both Meetings, Committees and Community Dialogue - Face to Face and Information Sharing***

State administrator

- The goal of this program is to create awareness of program benefits that are provided by this agency. The process of public participation starts at the federal ministry level. “[Ministry name] starts this process through its programs. At the beginning of each year, Congress passes rules and regulations for each program, as well as setting financial ceilings (maximum budgets); these are immediately uploaded to the internet page so that they are transparent to all citizens. Thus, everyone is informed concerning mutual participation and commitments.”
- For this program, “Everything is in electronic media. We already have virtual communication through teleconferences, with the participation of all kinds of parties belonging to organizations as well as ordinary citizens, to allow for 100% public participation.” “We make our best efforts to disseminate information through the radio, with “The Voice of the Four Villages,” we are on television, trying to send our message to all areas within reach of the TV signal, we also use the press, we post special information in newspapers that also reach those

remote areas, and last with the municipal presidencies, through groups that link coordination to send information to the different areas.”

- “Often we are amazed when we receive e-mail messages from very distant places, from people we could not even remotely think might have access to this information. For example, all strategic communal centers have satellite antennas. Any regular citizen from the most distant place in the hills is able to express his questions or concerns in connection with a program, or with a resource that is available which did not reach him, to find out how he can participate.”
- “We offer complete open access through the internet; every item of each program and their rules and regulations are available to citizens through direct internet access, as a means for general public participation.”
- “At the beginning of each administrative term, we hold meetings with the two different branches of government, state and municipal, through [department name], and we invite every municipality. We interact through municipal planning committees in order to disclose exactly what the plan for each year is, within the framework of our programs.”
- “The groups meet at [department name]’s office and also at this office. In addition, the state organizes regional meetings (in the north, central region and south) by municipality, which we attend to disclose program rules and regulations.”
- “We collect all of those concerns in a mailbox. If it is possible to answer them firsthand, we do. Otherwise, we forward them to an office in the ministry who handles the respective issue.”
- “It is very important for each program to have its rules and for those rules to be made known through different media, both electronic and public, in order for each participant, each citizen, to have accurate information about the program regulations and participate in an appropriate manner, having full and detailed information.”
- “First, through meetings, organized by committees, participation using information provided through mass media, and last, the individual participation of each federal government staff member, for example the [ministry name], the state of Nayarit’s delegation, in each of the places which the needs have been assessed of those who have received benefits.”
- “We publish all the information concerning every program in the [ministry name] Internet webpage, making it available for everyone to find the answers to their questions.”
- “Obviously, we have the duty to publish our final results, to show transparent account statements of each of our programs. We are supervised by different auditing offices belonging to both the state and the federal government. The roster of people who have received benefits from our programs is available to the public, for the first time ever, in [ministry name]’s webpage.”
- “This is why we intend to present this professional report, in order to inform citizens about the activities of [ministry name]. Therefore, we would like to invite you, once we have set the date. We intend to invite representatives from all government branches: federal, state, municipal, as well as members of

Congress and senators. We are determined to make this information known as widely as possible, for everyone to know who and how many we are, how many people receive benefits, and why we do this.”

- “We had to visit every community, door to door, to be able to reach them. They would tell us stories about leaders conditioning support on belonging to a certain group, or a certain religion. That is over. We feel proud that people come here to assert their rights. We feel proud of our work.”

#### Public participation practitioner

- “The first part of the process for drawing up this strategy was preparing a diagnosis of [subject] in [qualifying description] areas. The second step was conducting regional workshops with people who work in the commission: directors, assistant directors or people who are in charge of [subject] in [qualifying description] areas in Mexico. This was a first phase of participation inside the governmental institution.”
- “The following phase was drawing up the first document of the strategy, with the information and input gathered from these workshops. Eight workshops were conducted in eight previously selected [qualifying description] areas throughout the country. The workshops included a planning meeting with people who belong to the [qualifying description] management –government officials- as well as a meeting to obtain input from [subject] services providers who work and operate tours in [qualifying description] areas. Therefore, these meetings included representatives from the private sector –private companies-, persons from communally owned land (ejidos), persons from rural areas, fishermen, people who live in [qualifying description] areas. This is the kind of public participation currently included in the strategy. Based on the comments made at those meetings, and considering the opinions and requirements of [subject] service providers, we introduced changes to the strategy.”
- “In addition, we sent our survey via the internet to all the employees of the [formal commission name] [commission acronym] and of the [organization]. We have already received their input and included that information in our document.”
- “These workshops were conducted in eight [qualifying description] areas. The government staff who manages each [qualifying description] area sent invitations to [subject] service providers, both from the private sector and from the communities. The meetings were typically conducted in the morning.”
- “However, the process was not uniform; it was different in each [qualifying description] area.”
- “Once the date was established and the invitation was sent, we attended the meetings.”
- “It is a formal written invitation. The invitations were sent to communities and to [subject] service operators, establishing date, time and venue. Participants were required to confirm their attendance.”
- “I prepared an agenda for every meeting. Typically we would have an attendance of from 20 to 40 people.”

- “It was important to know every participant; therefore, at the beginning of the meeting, participants introduced themselves, explained their business, the community they came from and what their activities were in the [qualifying description] area.”
- “In order to have records of all meetings, attendees signed the roster at the end of each meeting. I made a brief closing summary of the most important issues, and also confirmed that I had understood their requirements correctly. The meetings were always in the form of a roundtable, even if there were a large number of participants; we never used the classroom form.”
- “We prepared a survey form that was sent to the different offices of [qualifying description] areas to be filled out and returned. I prepared a diagnosis based on these forms; as you can see, this was not an in-depth study.”
- “We personally visited the eight [qualifying description] areas because we wanted to have firsthand experience of these meetings with the [subject] service providers, and to learn what their problems are, and what is required to develop [subject], as well as to support conservation.”

### **Who is included and excluded**

Interviewees identified several precursors to participation that enabled inclusion, as well as others that prevented people from participating.

### **Who is included**

Who is included varies:

- Federal – The council managed by this ministry office includes “Participant citizens, including deputy members, total approximately 450 members that integrate the main groups. Indigenous persons, young persons, and women comprise these groups. There are also institutional groups: non-governmental organizations, academics and representatives from state governments, both from Congress and from the executive branches.” Members of the council “are replaced after three years,” said a federal administrator. “All organizations involved in [subject area] issues are invited. Therefore, academics, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society in general are invited to participate every three years. There is no guarantee that they may be reelected. As I said earlier, I am pleased when some of them are reelected, to reduce learning curves, but regulations do not provide for any rate of reelection.”
- For public inquiries, “Well, we never know who presents the inquiries that come through the transparency system. Citizens are free to give their names, or to choose the name of Juan Pérez, or Mickey Mouse, or Charlie Chaplin –we receive questions signed with all those names- and we do not investigate anything, we just answer the questions.”
- State – The state administrator interviewed described how this particular office works with those individuals who are highly marginalized. “We work with the three branches of government: state, federal and municipal, with non-governmental organizations, and in general with all of the regular citizens in the state,” the official said. This person said, “We are 100% concerned. There

might be groups living in very distant locations in the hills. When we conduct our surveys, sometimes it takes three or even four days to draw up a roster of 20/30 individuals, while in urban locations we draw up a roster of 200 individuals in the course of a morning.”

- The official is sensitive to the cultural differences that must be considered. “Addressing an indigenous person from the hills of Nayar is very different from addressing a citizen from the Tepic municipality. There are different concepts and ideas; some of them are –shall we say- more politically involved, some of them are simply regular people who truly understand the purpose of our assistance.”
- “Ultimately, citizen participation is very important, since a number of rules and regulations involving the goals of each program depend precisely on this participation. If we speak about senior citizens, we know we are referring to people aged over 60, and we need to reach them in order to learn about their concrete needs, to include them within the policies.”
- Local – “We interact with peasants, people working on communally owned property, people who cultivate the land to grow corn, fruit trees, or breed small animals such as fish or poultry, for food,” said a local elected official. This office also works with those who do not share ownership of land, including those in rural areas and those working on land owned by communes. “We work with citizens, with producers.” These individuals “carry out the main work. We are technical advisors. We guide them, and sometimes we procure financial support for their projects.” They carry out 95% of the work.”
- Referrals are from “Old acquaintances, neighbors, people we know. Those who do not know us do not come because they do not trust us. They think we do not want to support them.” As a result, “Participation has increased, but not to the extent that we expected. We would like to provide assistance to more people.” The office serves “approximately 12 groups and 1,000 individuals per year.”
- Agency or Commission – A public participation practitioner described his work conducting a public participation process on behalf of a Mexican commission. Meetings held “included representatives from the private sector – private companies-, persons from communally owned land (ejidos), persons from rural areas, fishermen, people who live in [qualifying description] areas.” They also included “representatives from municipalities, as well as from the government [subject] departments of different states.” Land involved “belonged mainly to the communities, and therefore there were representatives from communally owned land, or from rural communities.”
- “Every workshop was different. There were two areas where we invited approximately 40 people and only 10 attended. Typically we had 80% attendance.”
- “Invitations were not open, although there was no intention of leaving anyone out. The invitations were specifically addressed to [subject] service operators. There were a number of areas where invitations were extended to people from the municipalities, to representatives of the state Ministry of [subject], and to representatives of non-governmental organizations, in places

where their participation was important. However, the condition for being invited was to be involved in [subject] activities; otherwise, people were not invited, and the management of the [qualifying description] area handled this.”

- “Neither consultants nor [agency acronym] had any control over the invitation process. We suggested some groups or persons that should be invited, but sometimes good or bad personal relationships influence government staff, and they include the people with whom they have good relationships and leave out those with whom relationships are conflictive.”
- “[Agency acronym] was interested in having rosters of participants that included their names, where they came from, their communities, and gender. It was a record of attendees, but there were no requirements related to the participation of women, indigenous or young people.”
- NGO – Decision-making processes by the NGO involve “the participation of the elders, the guardians of ancient wisdom” as well as “the wise men, and whoever is interested in participating.” These “meetings are open to all men, women, young persons, elders and children as well.” Here, “different communities are able to participate with the [organization] either teaching or learning ancestral culture.”

## Who is excluded

Likewise, interviewees highlighted who or what groups they saw as being excluded:

- State administrator
  - People “should [participate]. However, we know from experience that many people do not participate because they lack information, or simply because they are waiting for their neighbor to take the initiative. Later, when their neighbor has received the resource, they will ask for their advice to obtain it for themselves. Their questions arise when they see that a neighbor has received a benefit and they have not.”
  - “In former administrations, benefits were granted on a “friendship” basis. This has ended; there is absolute transparency in resource management, and this has allowed us to increase the number of beneficiaries and to reach people who needed support and had never received, or even dared to apply for it. This was truly sad.”
- Local elected official
  - “Citizen participation exists, but is limited. It is no more than people filing requests for services or for financial support, and community/group activities are not very frequent. Citizen participation exists but is rare; it is not like in other places where there is more participation, more organization. In [community name], as well as in Mexico in general, citizen participation is uncommon; it is only starting, beginning to grow.”
  - “Meetings are very rare. People do not get together to discuss their common problems. They rarely meet and when they do, it is for private parties, but not to discuss common or important problems, or even to discuss their most important concerns.”

- “People’s social consciousness is limited. They do not become involved in activities in order to improve living conditions in their community, or in their neighborhood.”
- “People tend to work individually on their private endeavors instead of joining efforts with other people. They include family members, their children, parents, grandparents. Participation with the general public is very limited. Including people not belonging to one’s own family is not in the Mexican nature.”
- “Unfortunately, there are not many possibilities for us to reach more people promptly. Support is limited.”
- NGO leader
  - “There is a belief that indigenous peoples have no capacity to think, or no right to decide.”
  - “The communities are very large; sometimes due to problems of communication, or long distances, people do not receive the invitations. Sometimes meetings are organized with very short notice; these could be the reasons for people not being able to attend. However, the meetings are open to all men, women, young persons, elders and children as well.”
- Public participation practitioner
  - “We included communities, but not private households.”
  - “We say it is “public” because it did not include government officials.”
  - “We suggested some groups or persons that should be invited, but sometimes good or bad personal relationships influence government staff, and they include the people with whom they have good relationships and leave out those with whom relationships are conflictive.”
  - “[Geographic area] [subject] service providers do not get along with those from [community name], because they have completely different profiles. Cancun providers are urban entrepreneurs, while those of [community name] are fishermen; this is a very conflictive relationship. Therefore, only [geographic area] providers were invited to the meeting. Why were [community name] providers not invited? It was a matter of time, and we were not able to collect the points of view of all the parties involved.”
  - “Government representatives were not always present. The management of the [qualifying description] area asked me if they should invite them, as I had the authority to decide if they should be invited or not. I had no objections to inviting government representatives; however, if they considered discussions would be facilitated when there were no government representatives present, they did not invite them.”
  - “The management of the [qualifying description] areas has good relationships with the parties that were involved in the meetings. Representatives from [commission acronym] attended most of the meetings, but they did not take a leading role in the events. There were also a number of events they did not attend, and participants to those meetings felt more at ease discussing their concerns.”

## Barriers to participation

Interviewees also identified several barriers to participation:

- **Service approach.** “Citizen participation exists, but is limited,” said a local elected official. “It is no more than people filing requests for services or for financial support, and community/group activities are not very frequent.”
- **Importance of government as facilitator.** Belief that the Mexican people are not inclined to work together without the prompting of government (local elected official).
- **Limited financial resources.** “Unfortunately, there are not many possibilities for us to reach more people promptly,” said a local elected official. “Support is limited.” Moreover, this interviewee noted that “Funding is very poor, very limited. It is mainly provided by the municipality, and to a lesser extent by the state and the federal government.” This official also argued that the need for more funding. “In [community name], as well as in the entire country, it is necessary to offer more support to rural activities, or activities of the primary sector, because those are the activities that receive the least support in every state.” This person also said “Therefore, citizen participation should be fostered and encouraged. Additional funding and support for more people are required in order for agricultural activities and public participation to grow.” A public participation practitioner whose process was funded by an international organization described how funding limitations affected his work. “It was more difficult for [commission acronym] to accept it, because they considered they could not afford the investment of time and funds. Since [agency acronym] is providing funds for this project and they intend to support other projects, [commission acronym] finally agreed that it was advisable to conduct the survey.”
- **Tension between time and other resources available and those desired.** A public participation practitioner described the project he worked on “a very significant learning process.” This person said, “It was satisfying to see how important conducting the survey was, although perhaps I would have done some things differently. The time assigned for the meetings was not sufficient; one morning was not enough to discuss all the issues and many of them were left pending. Many things could have been better organized, as the venues, the people who were invited, and people who were not able to attend should have had a second chance to participate; there were many details that could have been improved.” The interviewee said “I would have liked to be better prepared to conduct this type of activity.” Moreover, “The survey we conducted included a number of activities we intended to carry out, but it did not have specific goals, or impact indicators, or many additional features that could have improved the process.”
- **Lack of trust** among those who do not know government officials. “They know we can help them, but they think we are not willing to do it,” said a local elected official. “I believe they remember past experiences with people who did not treat them properly, or people who have turned them down because they belonged to

a different political party, or simply because they did not like them. That type of thing has happened.” A state administrator concurred, stating “...many times before this administration, when people spoke about government offices there was a lot of mistrust.”

- **Lack of interest on the part of the public.** “We have invited people to meetings; we have invited groups by neighborhoods, by work areas, those who grow corn, those who breed sheep,” said a local elected official. “We have made efforts, but the public’s response is limited.”
- **Rural character of much of Mexico.** “People like to live in cities, they look for comfort. They have utilities, electricity, cars, highways, television, public media. Very often in rural areas there is no electricity, there are no roads for vehicles; rural activities are very difficult,” said a local elected official.
- **Lack of information by the public.** “However, we know from experience that many people do not participate because they lack information, or simply because they are waiting for their neighbor to take the initiative,” said a state administrator. “Later, when their neighbor has received the resource, they will ask for their advice to obtain it for themselves. Their questions arise when they see that a neighbor has received a benefit and they have not.”
- **Limitations on involvement.** A state administrator said, “We had to visit every community, door to door, to be able to reach them. They would tell us stories about leaders conditioning support on belonging to a certain group, or a certain religion. That is over. We feel proud that people come here to assert their rights. We feel proud of our work.”
- **Lack of power.** An NGO leader said that “the indigenous peoples have no authority to create”
- **Discrimination.** “There is a belief that indigenous peoples have no capacity to think, or no right to decide,” said an indigenous NGO leader.
- **Belief or perception that outcomes are pre-determined.** “...governmental advisors had previously prepared the conclusions and outcomes of the surveys, and therefore they did not make sense,” said an NGO leader. Further, this individual said, “Those who support public participation wish it were in-depth, real, true, legitimate. For others, public participation is only useful in order to legitimate certain issues, or decisions that have been made regarding human rights, the environment, or other areas.”
- **Lack of participatory/deliberative culture.** “I believe that public participation exists more in the discourse than in reality,” said a public participation practitioner. “There is an international trend towards public participation, but there is no culture of public participation in Mexico, or in any branch of the Mexican government, or in political parties. They speak about public surveys, but there are no actions taken towards actual participation. There is a lack of education on how to conduct the kind of work required for public participation activities.”

### Research Question 3

## What positive and negative outcomes occur as a result of public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes?

This question sought to examine the results of participatory or deliberative processes and associated accountability mechanisms. The goal was to isolate what interviewees and their respective organizations saw as beneficial and also not beneficial as a byproduct of such efforts. The ethical dimension of engagement was also considered.

Several outcomes from public participation and deliberative processes were reported by interviewees. These included:

- **Provision of financial assistance.** (local elected official). Similarly, a state administrator described **public support**: “We have ‘thermometers’ that show results, in terms of funds applied, in terms of participation of people receiving benefits from projects. Those are our thermometers.” These measures “may be qualitative when they concern the general public and quantitative when we speak about project units.” Further, “Both qualitative and quantitative results are important, because they show different parameters.”
- **Recommendations or draft policy statements** (federal administrator), as well as an **intention to affect Mexican policy** (NGO leader). **Consistency of policy** was also noted as an outcome: “...in Mexican politics, long-term means six years. The strategy is being drawn up now, when the change of government administration is coming up, with the intention that this [commission acronym] administration will pass it on to the next administration. Everything changes in Mexico every six years,” explained a public participation practitioner.
- **“...a wider view of the landscape”** (federal administrator)
- **New ideas improvements** to commission work (public participation practitioner). “For example, the permit system: Permits are required for providers to work in protected areas. The government bureaucratic system requires new permits to be issued every year; [subject] service providers believe this term should be extended to three, or better still, five years. This is included in the strategy, as a recommendation to extend the permits to three years in order to improve the system.”
- **Progress towards organizational goals**: “What was the impact of the public survey? In my opinion, it had a significant impact. We worked for seven months in order to carry out the diagnosis and to draw up the process for a national strategy, in a country that includes very different [qualifying description] areas, with different ways of developing [subject]. [Commission acronym] was established only [number] years ago as a department of the government administration, and they have made significant progress in their organization,” said a public participation practitioner. Several ideas came “from the manner in which other countries manage [subject], as well as from government actions in this regard, and from the survey.”
- **Conflict resolution.** “[Subject] was not an important concern for [commission acronym],” said a public participation practitioner. “Most of the people who work in [commission acronym] are [type of profession], and they consider [subject] to be negative, representing a threat. Therefore, the possibility of discussing

[subject] with them was positive.” This interviewee also noted that “[Commission acronym] divides the country into seven regions. Especially in the Northern regions, discussing [subject] is highly conflictive. I believe we achieved speedy progress on an issue that still causes internal conflict in the institution.”

- **Budgets.** “...once goals have been drawn up, commitments are established and serve as a basis for programs and financial ceilings (maximum budgets) requested for every program. Once we know our financial ceilings, we are able to provide resources for people who applied for them, mainly in the items they are requesting,” said a state administrator.
- **Public awareness and accountability.** “We publish all the information concerning every program in the [ministry name] Internet webpage, making it available for everyone to find the answers to their questions,” said a state administrator. This same interviewee said, ““It is important to let people know that the Nayarit office of [ministry name] is planning to offer a live report on the activities carried out during this [number]-year period. This event may take place on television, or perhaps in a theatre, with the intention of promoting open participation and wide disclosure of the projects conducted both by [ministry name] and by [organization], [organization], [organization], [organization] and [organization], the different [subject] programs.” “Therefore, we would like to invite you, once we have set the date. We intend to invite representatives from all government branches: federal, state, municipal, as well as members of Congress and senators. We are determined to make this information known as widely as possible, for everyone to know who and how many we are, how many people receive benefits, and why we do this.” Similarly, an NGO leader noted how community members are present when decisions are made.

## Impact on decisions

Interviewees identified the following influences or potential impacts for public participation and deliberative activities:

- **Influencing Mexican policies** (NGO leader)
- **Strengthening organizational work.** Public participation “has a positive impact,” said an NGO leader. “It is useful for us to be clear about the steps we are taking and to learn how to strengthen our work. From public participation, we learn what things are not working correctly, how the [organization] could achieve a better impact, better promotion.”
- **Strengthening deliberative capacity.** “All these proposals and suggestions are positive, and even if we do not agree with some of them, we always discuss and analyze them to consider what their actual impact could be if they were implemented,” said an NGO leader.
- **Conflict or problem resolution.** “A number of governments are realizing the value of public participation as a tool for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Most conflicts world-wide are a consequence of the lack of public participation, and of the failure to recognize that the public is entitled to decide on the resolution of problems,” said an NGO leader. This interviewee also commented, “Public

participation should always be considered as a tool for the resolution of problems that belongs not only to the government, or to civil societies, but to humanity as well, because anything that affects a social or cultural group, or biodiversity, is affecting humanity as a whole.”

### **How is feedback provided?**

Interviewees noted instances where feedback does or does not occur as a result of participatory or deliberative processes. “We do, but it takes approximately two months for us to visit the same place to follow up on their work,” said a local elected official. Such information is not passed on to future administrations. This individual was asked, are there any follow-up documents that the current administration will pass on to the next representative? “Almost everything starts from zero,” this interviewee said. “We have very few documents, only the laws and regulations, nothing else.” There also are “almost no records” in this interviewee’s office.

A federal administrator, by contrast, described detailed records about participatory efforts “...our statistics measure the number of recommendations received –you can see it in this graph- and their impact, i.e. how many recommendations have been implemented as public policies, and this shows the Council’s batting average,” said this official.

Likewise, a state administrator noted the value of recordkeeping. “They are very important, since we draw-up the minutes of each meeting, including the opinion and comments of each participant. This information comprises a large package of data that we send to our main office in Mexico City, where it is processed in order to know exactly the situation, requirements and concerns of regular citizens in relationship with each program,” this official said. The state administrator also noted how “all the information concerning every program in the [ministry name] Internet webpage, making it available for everyone to find the answers to their questions” as another indication of feedback provided. The state administrator’s office also generates ‘thermometers,’ as noted previously, in order to demonstrate results or feedback regarding “funds applied, in terms of participation of people receiving benefits from projects.”

This interviewee notes that such reporting is required. “Obviously, we have the duty to publish our final results, to show transparent account statements of each of our programs. We are supervised by different auditing offices belonging to both the state and the federal government. The roster of people who have received benefits from our programs is available to the public, for the first time ever, in [ministry name]’s webpage,” said the state administrator.

Only one interviewee described the effects of participation on capacity building. A state administrator said, “It is very interesting to get to know your neighbors –so to speak- and to learn exactly how they respond, or what their requirements are in certain situations, in order to see our reflection in that mirror and to be able to respond.”

## Efforts to balance opinions

Efforts to balance opinion reflected a range of considerations. These included:

- **Cultural and political considerations.** “First, we have cultural differences,” said a state administrator. “Addressing an indigenous person from the hills of Nayar is very different from addressing a citizen from the Tepic municipality. There are different concepts and ideas; some of them are –shall we say- more politically involved, some of them are simply regular people who truly understand the purpose of our assistance.”
- **Desire for consensus and mutual responsibility.** The participatory process as described by an indigenous NGO leader for his group “is comprised of wise men, elders, men and women, where issues are discussed and decisions are typically made by consensus” by the group in a circle formation. “It means that everyone agrees, and that if there is one person in disagreement, there is no consensus.” This “process takes place while we sit together in the form of a circle. We conduct general meetings to talk about the different topics or problems, to reach consensus and to assign responsibilities and work to be carried out,” said an NGO leader. This individual also said, “About balancing differing interests, I believe this relates mostly to the time that people are willing to devote to the process. Some of them are willing to work full-time, while others are only able to attend specific meetings.”
- **Considering both public and organizational concerns.** “In my role of consultant, I was expected to give my opinion on the different issues, as well as to respond to the expectations of these different persons and large institutions,” said a public participation practitioner. “In this regard, my work has required – and it still does- balancing all those different concerns, in order to meet the goal of building a strategy to improve the management of [subject] development in protected areas.” This interviewee also noted, “I had to respond not only to these two institutions and to their policies, but also informal relationships with each member of the team were difficult.” Moreover, “relationships among [agency acronym] and [commission acronym] representatives during the process were conflictive and I did my best to balance them.”

<sup>1</sup>The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001-07, <http://www.bartleby.com/65/me/Mexico.html>. Accessed on February 20, 2009.

## Summary

<b>Mexico</b>	
<b>Common Terms For P2</b>	<p><b>Most common term was ‘citizen participation’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen participation</li> <li>• Citizen cooperation</li> <li>• Social participation</li> <li>• A citizen’s council</li> <li>• Plural citizen participation</li> <li>• Public opinion</li> <li>• General objectives of the population as concerns the federal government</li> <li>• General common welfare</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Free determination</li> <li>• Public participation</li> </ul>
<b>Conceptual Definition For P2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Problem-solving</b> for mutual benefit</li> <li>• <b>A right of expression</b> about government decision making</li> <li>• <b>Deliberative learning</b> that gathers insights from citizens in order to learn about needs and concerns</li> <li>• <b>Organizing and political representation</b> as a means for preserving values and language</li> <li>• <b>Participating in decision-making</b> around policymaking</li> <li>• <b>The people’s right to participate</b> in the creation of plans, programs and policies and to be politically engaged as part of such an effort</li> <li>• <b>Engagement as an activity that is separate from government</b></li> </ul>
<b>Select Barriers To Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Customer service orientation</b>, <i>e.g.</i>, government fulfilling requests for service or assistance or for financial support</li> <li>• <b>Need for the government to facilitate engagement</b>, rather than taking initiative on one’s own outside of government</li> <li>• <b>Limited financial resources and other resources in support of public participation</b>, especially the state and federal levels.</li> <li>• <b>Tension between time and other resources available</b> and those desired</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of trust</b> among those who do not know government officials</li> <li>• <b>Lack of interest or apathy</b> on the part of the public</li> <li>• <b>Rural character</b> of much of Mexico</li> <li>• <b>Lack of information by the public</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of power</b></li> <li>• <b>Discrimination</b></li> <li>• <b>Belief or perception that outcomes are pre-determined and that the process is used to legitimate certain issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of participatory/deliberative culture</b>, which related to a lack of education about approaches and techniques public participation activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Select Examples Of Best Practices</b> <a href="#">[1]</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advisory council</b> that engages a carefully selected sample of civil society representatives</li> <li>• <b>Outreach to those who are “highly marginalized”</b></li> <li>• <b>NGO decision-making circle</b> that involves elders, “the guardians of ancient wisdom” and community members (“men, women, young persons...children as well”)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Select Outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provision of financial assistance</b></li> <li>• <b>Benefits from projects that accrue to people who participate</b></li> <li>• <b>Recommendations or draft policy statements</b>, as well as an <b>intention to affect Mexican policy</b> (NGO leader). <b>Consistency of policy</b> was also noted as an outcome</li> <li>• <b>“...a wider view of the landscape”</b></li> <li>• <b>New ideas improvements</b> to commission work</li> <li>• <b>Progress towards organizational goals</b></li> <li>• <b>Conflict resolution</b></li> <li>• <b>Decisions arrived as a result of participation serve as a basis for funding/budgets</b></li> <li>• <b>Public awareness and accountability</b></li> </ul>

[\[1\]](#) These are examples selected by the report authors; data coding did not reflect any interview responses that fall into this category