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CHARLES F. KETTERING  
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UNITED KINGDOM  
AND WESTERN  
EUROPE

# PAINTING THE LANDSCAPE

A CROSS - CULTURAL EXPLORATION OF  
PUBLIC - GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

## 1. UNITED KINGDOM/WESTERN EUROPE

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### Process Report

#### *The implications of choosing this set of interviews*

Two sets of interviews were chosen according to a set of criteria that included access, willingness of the participants to get engaged and to help, differences in the political structures, cost and prior contact. It was important that we chose a country external to the UK and of sufficient difference to give the possibility of a different set of responses to the same questions. Cost was the over-riding criterion that prevented the team from travelling further afield. The two countries chosen were Scotland and Sweden.

The framework provided by the Research team that would be held constant across all the different countries (the profile of the interviewees) was able to be interpreted across both of the countries chosen. It was possible to identify (without too much difficulty) people that fitted the profile. The difference between the two countries was wide enough to make the results of real use. Sweden is emerging from a time when the welfare state organizations are no longer in primary control, where tax regimes are less punishing and where the wellbeing of the population is being addressed by a different paradigm of thinking.

Scotland now has its own Parliament after 300 years. It has its own set of governance protocols and has established itself as a country with a vision of its own future. It too went through radical social change in the 1980's and early 1990's where social services and transport were privatized and individualism was celebrated. Scotland, however, managed to retain much of its commitment to publicly owned assets (the Water industry) – in comparison to England where they were put into private, corporate ownership.

The two sets of interviews gave opportunities for difference to be identified given that the two countries were both in Western Europe and both subject to an emergence from a dominant welfare state. However, the nuances of language made it difficult to be sure that meaning had been captured and the smallness of the sample may open the results to a charge of bias.

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

I think all interviews held in Western Europe at this time would have raised the question over the tension between entrepreneurship, individualism and corporate or state control – particularly of national assets. However, there is no doubt that there are a number of

splits across Europe: South Europe v North Europe; English (as a language) v French or Spanish Europe; the welfare Europe v the Entrepreneurial Europe, the Emergent Europe (the accession states) and old Europe; those inside the EU and those who have chosen to stay out and so on...

So, had the interviews been conducted in any other country in Europe (beyond the UK) the results would be similar in some senses – but potentially quite different in others. We think, however, that the results do represent in large part responses that would have come from anywhere in mainstream Europe – wherever they would have been conducted. The results would have certainly have had a surface difference of illustration – but there would have been less divisions evident when the value base underpinning the interviews was interrogated.

*What surprises were there?*

- That the public, perhaps without knowing it, are influential in directing political decisions (in both countries).
- That there was such a wide interpretation or definition of what public participation was.
- The uncertainty of some of the politicians in their own role and its relationship to the public – and how the public should be brought into the political process.
- How reluctant politicians were to 'go on the record' – and how they much preferred others at a less senior level to answer the hard questions.
- There was a strong sense of hierarchy in Scotland than in Sweden.

*What did not go according to plan?*

However, efficient we tried to be, circumstance dictated that changes were made at the last minute and people became unavailable without notice. This proved difficult in Sweden, but was helped by an exceptionally helpful contact where alternatives were found quickly and within the same profile.

The length of the interviews made them a marathon: exhausting for all concerned and carving out substantial time from busy schedules. The transcription of the interviews then became a substantial piece of work which then took the project into deficit.

Generally speaking, it is believed that the two sets of interviews have given us sufficient information to be able to contribute in a valid way to the interrogation of the relationship between people and Government when combined with the data from the other countries involved.

## **Comprehensive Report**

Recurring themes across both sets of interviews:

- That Western societies are moving in the direction of greater and greater P2;
- That there is a thrust to include new technologies in bring the public into governance;
- That politicians are moving to a model of outreach;

- That public forum and networks are being built to enhance a two-way conversation between people and politicians;
- That change is happening in spite of politicians – not because of them;
- That there is a recognition that participation is only of the few not the majority;
- That it is impossible to bring vast numbers into a consultation process (on everything);
- That there is a drive to include excluded groups;
- That there is a sharing of values: social justice, inclusion etc

### **Similarities**

- There was a similarity of values: democratic values, a need to service the people, to hear what they say and act upon it etc;
- Both countries are moving away from the deficit model – where need drives intervention;
- There is a move to shift local assets to the public;
- That the commitment to P2 in Government in both countries is seen as fragile;
- There is an obligation (by law) to consult and engage;
- Excluded people in both countries are a target;
- That the process is very slow in both countries.
- That there is a lack of consistency between differing local authorities in both Sweden and Scotland.

### **Differences**

- More people seem willing to be engaged in Sweden than Scotland (example the numbers attending the Swedish breakfast clubs);
- The Swedish process is not as well developed – due, in part perhaps to the new political direction;
- Scotland has a historic commitment to ‘bottom-up’ and is more comfortable with the concept;
- Terminology is essentially different in each country – but the outcomes and the expectations would seem to be similar;
- The political structures are different in that there is a legal requirement that 50% of the representatives in Parliament are women in Sweden;
- That the notion of ‘sustainability’ was important in Sweden and less so in Scotland.
- There is an emphasis on the ‘economic’ rather than ‘social’ as the driver of regeneration in the UK.
- In the UK the population are more distrusting of politicians;
- In the UK NGO’s play a much more radical role than in Sweden – and are able to effect change without government agreeing it first.

### *Other points of interest*

In the recent past, almost all change was initiated and driven by the Government in Sweden – this had now changed and the models of social change were now similar in each country.

The political complexion had moved in each country from the centre more to the periphery. Social interventionism was now not controlled so clearly from the centre.

That further provision needed to be made to include the disfranchised, disabled and excluded groups in PP in each country.

The P2 process was recognized as being of real importance in each country – even if the outcome was not what an individual wanted.

It was possible to by-pass government to process social change.