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A JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT  
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CHARLES F. KETTERING  
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SWEDEN

# PAINTING THE LANDSCAPE

A CROSS - CULTURAL EXPLORATION OF  
PUBLIC - GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

## 1.1. Sweden

### Findings

Participants of this research were sourced from various organizations and positions in Sweden including State Administrator, Locally elected official, Local Administrator, NGO Leaders and Public participation practitioner.

### Research Question 1

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

Like Scotland, Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary representative system. Interviewees addressed the cultural context of public participation and deliberation several times, even noting the close relationships people feel in small towns as one reason for the social cohesion that supports active involvement in community affairs. A local elected official observed how both language and rural similarities among the two countries has facilitated knowledge-sharing.

### Context of Public Participation

#### ***Active and Passive Public Involvement***

Interviews suggest both an active and a passive orientation towards the public's involvement in government decision-making. The context of public involvement was described as active in that there are words that exemplify the engagement of individuals in local affairs. For example, a provincial-level administrator said the word "*lokalemböhr*" [phonetic] was used to describe "people at the grassroots level [who] are participating." Similarly, a local administrator used the phrase "*folklig dia programme*" [phonetic] as a literal translation of public participation. "It's actually from your country. It is adopted from a social audit network where we try to measure the outcome of our activities, not only in economical figures, but also from a social perspective and ecological perspective. The purpose is to prove that we actually are doing something good for the community."

It is also passive, influenced by a traditional political structure that is socially liberal. "In Sweden, we have a sort of law that says if you cannot go to the shop to get your food, then the local government brings it to you," said a local elected official. "And then we said it is more important that they have food every day, or they have elderly healthcare, or they have childcare than have, for instance, a broadband in every house. To take care of our people is more important than other. To build a new football field, it is not so important. It is more important that people get food or what it is (i.e. what their social needs are)."

This in turn has much to do with participation, according to a provincial administrator. "In the Swedish way, we are sort of spoiled," this individual said. "We have a really great level of service. But now the state and municipalities can't afford to provide the same amount of service, like in the traditional Swedish model. I think people have lived in that way for many years – a couple of generations. People are so used to the state and government coming to solve it. That bad side of the Swedish model is that it partly ruined the peoples' capacity to deal with and solve things themselves."

Some of the passive orientation towards involvement is rooted in the traditional segmentation of issues among different sectors in Sweden. For example, "the elderly care have one bag of money, and the school has one bag of money," a provincial administrator said. "If we cooperate and use the same stuff, both sectors can save money. Sometimes with the traditional way of working, the elderly politicians have more difficulty seeing new ways." The NGO leader said, "...I think perhaps the people here used to have a lot of... I say much more served on a silver plate. They are very spoiled with the government taking care of everything."

### ***Political Transition***

While several Swedish interviews reflected on a frustration with the 'passive' nature of public involvement activities, the same interviews also pointed towards the emergence of a transition in the nature of the relationship between the government and its citizens. This transition is giving birth to new structures for service provision and new intermediaries for facilitating involvement. "I think the people living in the area and the political systems are quite old fashioned in these municipalities," the provincial administrator said. "I think it should be a completely other structure of politics, because it could be much more useful and you could get more people keen to work with certain questions. It's not cost effective. People are not too keen on being politically involved." Greater involvement of political leaders is also warranted, this administrator observed. New municipalities need "maybe more full-time politicians working with these sorts of questions, instead of these free-time or part-time politicians."

There are also instances where people from outside of the municipality are becoming involved. "In two of the villages that have people active, there are people from outside," the provincial administrator said. "They don't have any natural belonging to the villages. They moved there and see the possibilities so clearly and are quite active." But some see a down side to involvement of people from outside the village. "Maybe people think things are going too fast. It's not the way it used to be," said the administrator. "Why should he or she come and do things in other ways if we have managed before?". Most importantly, "They have to take part more in the future if they want to have the same services and the same infrastructure as they are used to having," the administrator said. "I don't think that I should say what measures should be taken, because I think there are probably many and probably there are professionals who know them better than me, but I think that the first step is that people, whether they are civil servants or individuals or companies, they have to ask themselves, "Do I want

to participation?” And if I do, it also follows that there are some obligations to actually take part, to actually go to the meetings, to voice your expressions, and be prepared to put some effort behind your opinions as well.”

### ***Presence of Community Organizations***

A Swedish public participation practitioner noted the presence of organizations that work to engage community members in local problem-solving efforts. “There is a lot of organizations like this, almost in every village, who's working in the same way,” said this interviewee. “I think it's also like that in other countries. But maybe we work in different directions, because every area has their own problems. Even the big cities have problems with some things. Maybe it's easier to live in a small village and have problems. Then you can go together and do something about it. It's easier than if you live in a small city or small town.”

### ***Urban and Rural Connection to Services***

There is interest in learning how others structure programs and services in remote and rural areas. A provincial-level administrator described how “There's quite a lot with the rural shop [grocery store] as a base, and then we want to put more public and nonprofit services connected to the shop. That's why Scotland is so interesting for us because we think this way you run a Scottish village service point is different than typical Swedish sectors. It can be useful for us to learn how you can put different kinds of services under the same roof, or in connection to each other.”

“So in Scotland, in small villages, you have a small post office,” said an NGO leader speaking on the same subject. “They are also selling other things, small things. And I know if we should have that type of service in this village, the people will demand much more, they will not go there. The selection is not big enough for them. So I think the people in Sweden is a bit spoiled of the services that the government has had for us, but we see that it will not be like that in the future. The government does not have the money to have this whole lot of services like we have had earlier.”

### ***Public Involvement as a 'Control Instrument'***

Emphasizing the pragmatic nature of public participation as applied today, a local administrator said public participation is used also as “a control instrument for the members – to see that the board is doing what they are supposed to do. But these are all very new things for Swedish people. We have just started it, but we see big potential for this. We like this system very much.” The goal of using social audits, this interviewee said, is “to be able to prove to our stakeholders that we are fulfilling our mission.” Another administrative-level interviewee also echoed the increased influence of performance measures at the government level.

### ***Culture of Volunteerism***

Sweden also has a culture of participation at the community level that parallels the culture of volunteerism in Scotland, an NGO interviewee said. This leader stated, “Volunteers for... that helps out with lots of things, I understand. Because what we do, the people that sits in all these committees in the village, that is a voluntary thing to

do. They do not receive any money or some benefits for it, just - often you do your, say, five years in a committee and then you feel, perhaps, 'I have done my part.' Someone else takes over."

A local elected official said, "What is very important to mention is that the voluntary groups are very important in Sweden. I think you said that when you go to Scotland you said that it is very important with these voluntary groups, too. It is the same here in Sweden, but we do not have them... they are not as clear as they are in Scotland. There you have this SCVO, for instance, who works directly under the government. We do not have any kind of that group in Sweden, but we have a lot of voluntary groups."

Another administrator, at the local level, also addressed the movement toward "exploring the potential for expanding the services and products offered by the shops." This interviewee explained how his organization had "initiated a product with some Finnish partners, a similar organization to what we have – a similar situation and a similar structure. We initiated a corporation with them, and the municipality accepted the idea and took the responsibility. The municipality is now the host for this corporation. They have employed us to represent the municipality in this corporation."

According to this administrator, local government sees the value of adapting new ways of providing services. "The municipality is supporting that project very much. They are supporting it by helping us get in touch with the right people. They are also supporting it financially, although at a modest level. Then we have the [organization type] authority who is very much involved in this, and they are supporting us quite substantially with money if you talk about percentage, and also very much by mentoring the project. That is an example of how the municipality interacts with the local community based upon a need defined by the local community."

### ***Accountability and Service***

"I think there is accountability both to the municipality and also to the [agency name], people at governmental level. But I work more closely with the municipalities. At the work, we have different meetings or seminar with people at the governmental level. It's quite useful to have access to that kind of network and these people." For this interviewee, "the most common ways of working from my organization is not with locals but with municipalities. The municipalities are supposed to work with locals. My organization has more expectations from people at the municipality level," in large part because the "objective for my organization is making development for the region. It's one of the main issues – to make the region grow."

This interviewee also described "some rules in political decisions that are taken." Specifically, "The politician has said that they would try, even if it is sort of against a politician -- I don't even know the Swedish word for it," this person said. "If they have taken some kind of decision about the area, they have decided to try within the project, even if it's against this certain decision, that they will try it in the small term or area and see how it works. They will it a change to at least try new ways of dealing

with the cooperation of public sector and private sector.” Although expressing an interest in spending “more time at the local level to participate at these local meetings,” in general this individual felt “it’s better for me to be in the background, especially when the project ends. I don’t want the activity to stop if the project stops. I can help them with that work and maybe applications for some funding for activities and so forth. I think this is a good method to work with and I hope that the project will continue so we can work with more municipalities.”

An NGO leader working at the local level said, “I know that the government is very satisfied with the work we are doing because they feel that they cannot do the service as good as we want them to. Therefore, they are very supportive with everything we want to do to improve the services in the village. And I think in the long-term it would be for most of the governments around Sweden where you have these areas outside of the largest cities, you have to have people to do a bit more by themselves if they want to maintain the services that they are used to having.” Interviewees described several initiatives developed in order to work around these challenges - largely inspired by economic trends and changing policies. In one instance, initiatives can be stimulated from outside Sweden. For example, the local administrator said that the movement towards a new way of organizing services “was from the beginning a European Union project.” According to the administrator, “One of the objectives was to create an organization for the local community to continue to develop the tourist infrastructure in the area when the EU funding was over.”

A provincial administrator also observed how economic realities have led to changes at the local level. “...the municipalities haven’t got the same economic capacity as before. They are more ready to work incorporating other ways than they were 25 years ago. Many of the old women say, “oh dear little girl, this we have tried in the early 80s. it didn’t work then – why do you come with these ideas again? You were at school when we tried this”. But I think this economical point for the municipalities means that they can’t afford the same level of service now. And even if it was the same kinds of questions in the 1980s as it is now, it’s also kind of nutrition to see other countries and this transnational work. It gives extra strength, especially to the local people.”

Changing how services are provided and engaging the public in this transition – which is “a couple hundred years old” -- will be challenging, said a local elected official. “It is a part of Sweden. I cannot say why. This is our political system. It is a part of that. I never really reflect any other way. Since you were a child in Sweden, you know what you grew up with.” Learning from other countries who are struggling with similar challenges will be “very, very interesting.”

## **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. We identified support for public participation/deliberation 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.

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

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

### **Concept of Public Participation**

Interviews with five Swedish individuals were conducted in English. Conceptual definitions of p2 that emerged from these interviews included:

- **Local participation.** “When you say public participation, I mostly think of the locals that are doing the work at the local level,” said a state administrator. It also has a public servant/political connection, according to this interviewee: “But of course, they need access and connections to the local councilors and civil servants as well. Public participation is sort of local level with a good network of civil servants and politicians. Then it can be good public participation.”
- **A dialogue between people and public servants.** “I think it should mean that issues that are of general public interest engage the people who are concerned, the people who are affected by the issues,” a local administrator said. “It is a dialogue between public servants and the people who are directly concerned about the issue. Public participation in that case would then mean that the public and those civil servants sit down, listen to what laws and regulations state, and discuss the present condition and the objectives of the different parties.”
- **Invitation to participate, implement.** “Public participation implies participation – not only voicing your opinion. It means that the public can also take part – temporally or more structurally in the implementing of the project or the issues,” said a local administrator. “Public participation shouldn’t just mean that your voice is heard. It should also mean that you are taking part somehow in the implementation of the issues. You have this way of saying that public participation could mean that the decisions should be made on a level as close to where the effect is going to take place.”
- **Expression of wants.** “I think that if you're a small ordinary man or woman in the little village, you think that I'm here and they are up there, the people who are making all decisions,” said a Swedish public participation practitioner. “But I don't think it's like that. If we don't from our little place, if we never tell the ones up there what we want, then they never know. They up there, they are also honorable people. Our politicians and all the people who's working in the municipality, we have had a very good work together with them. When we're working together and ask a lot of questions and they ask us a lot of questions and all this talking, talking, talking, we get a lot of exchanging of what we want

and what we want to do.” “I think that is the meaning that everyone can express what they want,” said a locally elected official.

- It is also “**kind of a village development,**” said a public participation practitioner.

## **Common Terms**

Interviewees used different terms for describing public participation or deliberative processes. A locally elected official said in terms of the phrase ‘public participation,’ “we do not have that expression.” A public participation practitioner said the term “community activist” was used.

A state administrator used the word *Lokalemböhr* [phonetic], which “means that people at the grassroots level are participating.” This person also said that the phrase “fire souls” was common; “Because they are burning for interest for the locals, fire souls are quite often used. It’s quite often imagined that he or she is a fire soul over this issue.”

## **Justifications**

Topics that generally are the focus of participation or deliberation include “mostly local issues,” said a locally elected official. For example, “we are going to have an election and now we talk about the taxes,’ “the gas price”, “about the elderly care,” and “about broadband.” Such efforts focus “mostly” on “local questions or concerns” and these meetings are “very informal.

The rural aspect of living in some Swedish community compels people to participate, said a locally elected official. For example, “in the rural areas, you do not have a library everywhere. You do not have a grocery everywhere. So, you have to take more part in your all-day living in the rural areas compared to the city....If you go to a small village you do not have anything. So then you have to take part and then you have to express your mean or say, ‘We must have this here, too,’ or ‘You must help us to get to the library,’ or ‘We must have home delivery of food,’ or something like that because you cannot go to the shop. You have more interest in the rural areas to be a part of the society and take care about the questions.”

## ***Use of Media and Email***

Some meetings draw a lot of interest. “I talked about these meetings when we have breakfast” meetings, said the locally elected official. “There was one kind of meeting where they had a lot of questions in which we could not answer every question. There were 20 or 30 questions and you cannot answer everyone. You must go back and you must try to find the answer back home in the office then. We try to answer it to everyone, not just one person. The most common is the e-mail.”

The official also said, “And then we have the local press here, the local newspaper here. It is nearly a monopoly. I think it is 85 percent of all inhabitants read that paper. So, they are very, very good in writing on these questions. So, you can read the

answer in the local newspaper, too. Nearly everyday they write about decisions that were taken by the local government, and that is very good.”

“When we send out the answers by e-mail, then we will have one who writes down everything that was said, and every question, and every answer there,” the official said. In addition, “If they have a meeting in a village, for instance, nearly every time someone from the village will write down stuff, and many times someone from the village will write down what was said and send it to the local newspaper, too. So, they publish it in the paper. That is very good.”

### ***Level of Participation***

Local communities set priorities for government through their participation. An example was provided by a local administrator who is involved in “running a project financed by the state authority....It is a very Swedish thing. There is an authority and I guess that they would say that their mission is to protect the consumers’ rights on the market. We have been given the task to explore the potentialities of expanding the products and services delivered by local grocery stores in the area. This is a very important issue for the whole community, because the tendency is that it is going to be less and less. Small grocery stores out in the countryside – you have the same thing in Scotland – but then this state authority gave us this task to explore the potentialities of bringing in non-traditional services and products into these camps. The municipality is supporting that project very much. They are supporting it by helping us get in touch with the right people. They are also supporting it financially, although at a modest level. Then we have the [organization type] authority who is very much involved in this, and they are supporting us quite substantially with money if you talk about percentage, and also very much by mentoring the project. That is an example of how the municipality interacts with the local community based upon a need defined by the local community.”

Participation in this “organization is open for all villages and all associations in the area,” said the local administrator. “We haven’t excluded anyone. We are inviting anyone. But I think maybe one thing that is an obstacle here is that people in this area are going through a transition period between where a situation where the municipality and the state took care of a lot of services that they now think that they cannot afford to do, and they are in many cases obliged to provide those services by law.”

The size of a local community may limit the participation level and also the effectiveness of some committees. “If you look at it almost every people in the village are somehow member in some other committees,” said an NGO leader. “And if the committees work like they should, that people bring questions to their committee board, and brings up ‘We want to do this or that,’ and the chairman of that committee takes it to our committee, the umbrella committee, so to say, the democracy process works. And if it works in every one of these committees then we can say 100 percent of the village - if we say we want to have a new bakery, or something, and we agreed on that, we can say the whole village is behind it. And the companies as well because in the board of this committee we have two or three people from the companies in the village sitting there as well.” However, “I think the village or the area you are looking at perhaps has

to be in a certain size. I think you cannot have this type of organization for a larger area or there are more people involved. I guess we are somewhere about [number] to [number] people living in this area. So it is quite a small group. It is more easy to feel what people want, what they think, how they will react to certain things. If there are also a couple of thousand people you will not know what all of them are thinking. Although that is my guess.”

Even in a smaller community, “It is always difficult to - you need new people. Some of them - [indiscernible] now it is enough. I do not want to sit in the committee anymore. Then it is a rather tough job to find new people. They do not stand in line for sitting in the committees. But often they know someone that is already in the committee and that person tries to talk him into it. So often, the sitting committee helped each other to find new people. Like I said, we have a lot of committees and not so many people. So, therefore, it is not so easy.”

In order to recruit members, “We try to describe what you are doing in the committee and what good it will bring to the village,” said the NGO leader. “If new people who have moved into the village and you asked them to sit, often it is no problem to have them into some committee. But to people already living in the village and know everything, how it works and how much work, perhaps, if you are in a certain committee and then it can be tough. Some other committees do need a lot of effort and hours to do a good job. Some people are not so happy about - or they have more than enough already. Or they are sitting in a couple of committees already, so it can be difficult.”

Referring to the broadband project the community pursued, as referenced earlier in this section of the Swedish report, the NGO leader said this project was completed in a short period of time. “It is a lot of - it is a very wide area we dug it in. But it brought a lot of people together that do not socialize, normally. We were posted in small groups by five to six people in each group and started with this job. We did not just dig outside our door or house. We were at other places around the village and worked with this. Some said you felt that you were working for your neighbor or for someone else in the villard. After a week or so, perhaps neighbor on your backyard.”

## **Types of public participation/deliberative processes**

Interviewees also discussed a range of types of public participation or deliberative processes. Types of public participation/deliberation shared by the Swedish interviewees included three general kinds: Community partnership and service delivery, decision making, and social audits.

### **Community Partnerships and Service Delivery**

- ***As grants management.*** “I work for the [organization name],” said a state administrator. “When I started to work there, I worked with service matters because in the Swedish system we got the money from the government and the possibility to give grants to rural shops so they can survive in these rural areas. It is necessary. The grant system is not specific to the shop; the

[organization name]'s role is looking toward the people living around the shop. The people living around the shop are getting more benefits after the grant comes into the shop. After that work, came an [acronym] project called [project name]."

- **Service deployment.** A stated administrator described, that public participation practices are about "delivering services to remote and rural areas." This administrator emphasized the practice of public involvement as working to increase public and nonprofit collaboration in service delivery, essentially focusing community and governmental efforts on providing "different kinds of services under the same roof, or in connection to each other."

### **Decision Making and Policy Development**

- **Local decision-making.** A locally elected official explained that each village in Sweden essentially abides by a special set of rules that determine specific community practices and processes. This official explained that local governments interact with these populations and regional 'rules' through a '*bia mem*', or dialogue. A related concept is the use of activity groups. Each group has "an area of operation, which one for instance is cultural, and another is development of tourism for camping, and in there often you have one member from the [organization type] and the board and the rest are individuals from the community," said a local administrator. In some instances, initiatives are suggested by the local administrator, but in others "it's a member initiative, where a member feels that a field is very interesting and would like to do something there. They work out a plan and objectives of what to do. Then they come up with a plan for the board and the board says that it is okay, this is something that the whole [organization type] would feel is good. Then we would try to allocate some money for it. That way of working is rather loose. Some of these groups died; nothing happened so they just faded away. Some other groups turn into projects with their own budgets."
- **Role of NGO's in Community Initiatives.** Local action depending on issues. An NGO leader described its role in facilitating community responses to particular issues. "We meet when we have an issue, something that we feel we should take part and do something," said the NGO leader. "So that could be a question that brings us together, and we have talked on what shall we do." For example: "We have a café. Right now, we are a bit concerned that they do not find a new owner for the café. So we have tried to be part of that and see if we can do something to find new owners for them so it will not close. They wanted to continue to be a center point in the village. And then much more how to develop to something in new or better than what it is today."

The NGO leader spoke about the structure and process that the NGO uses in the community to facilitate such action."If you look at it almost every people in the village are somehow member in some other committees. And if the committees work like they should, that people bring questions to their committee board, and brings up "We want to do this or that," and the chairman of that committee takes it to our committee, the umbrella committee, so to say, the democracy process

works. And if it works in every one of these committees then we can say 100 percent of the village - if we say we want to have a new bakery, or something, and we agreed on that, we can say the whole village is behind it. And the companies as well because in the board of this committee we have two or three people from the companies in the village sitting there as well.

A contributing factor in the success of this particular NGO lies in this small village committee approach. "I think the village or the area you are looking at perhaps has to be in a certain size. I think you cannot have this type of organization for a larger area or there are more people involved." The NOG leader explained "It is more easy to feel what people want, what they think, how they will react to certain things. If there are also a couple of thousand people you will not know what all of them are thinking."

### **Social and Economic Audits**

Specific applications of participatory or deliberative processes reflected political and social purposes. For example, a state administrator said that community members "are not involved" once decisions are made "unless they have politicians involved at the councilor's level from their village. Some of the councilors are representative of area of the village." By contrast, a local administrator's comments reflected a more social perspective, where public participation supports social audits. The concept "is adopted from a social audit network where we try to measure the outcome of our activities, not only in economical figures, but also from a social perspective and ecological perspective. The purpose is to prove that we actually are doing something good for the community...But these are all very new things for Swedish people. We have just started it, but we see big potential for this. We like this system very much. We are giving lectures to members who want to learn more about it as well." An organization is in charge of the social audit, "and sometimes they ask for voluntary participation – unpaid work. All the time, the [organization type]'s work is a victim of revision and discussion. It is an ongoing process, hopefully two steps forward and one backward and not the opposite."

### **Regularity/frequency**

Meeting frequency varies greatly, according to the Swedish interviews. A state administrator said, "Many of the locals have meetings without me participating as well. In the summer there are no meetings, but from now on until Christmas there will be maybe 5 or 6 meetings in total. There may be more because it's many villages."

A locally elected official said that there are formal meetings that occur less frequently throughout several area villages. According to this interview, this administrator held "11 meetings during February and March and we had about a thousand people together in all this. Then we were in places, in villages that had between four to eight hundred people. We were surprised that there were so many who came to those meetings. But it is a lot of fun to be there, to listen to all the questions they have. So, it is free for everyone to come and listen. I do not know if it is because we have breakfast they come or something like that. But it is also, when we are having these public meetings in

the afternoon or the evenings that often comes a lot of people. They have many questions to discuss." A local administrator confirmed the varied frequency of local meeting, and explained that in their particular community agencies and organizations preferred not to hold meetings in summer. "Summer is a low season for people, but maybe 3 or 4 meetings every month". This official also described a challenge or frustration with the summer meeting schedule, explaining that often local village associations discuss topics that concern larger subset of the community as well as specific agencies or organizations. For this reason, it is difficult when specific organizations do not initiate meetings, but rather village associations develop agendas and form discussion groups outside of establish meetings.

There is more fluidity in the meetings scheduled by the NGO. This group does "not have a schedule for when to meet." Rather, said the NGO leader, "We meet when we have an issue, something that we feel we should take part and do something." Similarly, the public participation practitioner stated that people meet "a lot"; "almost once a week, we met and discussed how we could go together." "When we're talking about the school, the last year we had meetings almost every week in the beginning, sometimes twice a week...But now I think it's about month to month."

### **How people access participatory processes**

Access to participation is made possible in several different ways in Sweden, based on interviewee responses. Access points range from passive processes that attempt to share information or inform participants - to more active or empowering practices that actively encourage participants in decision making.

*[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**

- **'Opportunities to be heard' through discussion groups, breakfast meetings, seminars and conferences.** Such events mean "that we open up possibilities for this community to be heard" on specific questions, said a local administrator. These informal community events cover a wide range of topics, including "roads, tourist information, elderly care - everything." A public participation practitioner used a similar example, describing the successes achieved through grass root discussion groups in small/rural communities. By directly involving residents, parents, and interested communities members in focused group discussions surrounding the school system and budget cuts the community was able to work alongside the municipalities to develop solutions. According to this interview, the success of this forum was the opportunity for decision makers to learn from and building upon the expertise of the communities they are working within, as opposed to simply passing down a decision. Local officials described breakfast meetings as an informal and effective tool for inviting local village leaders to participate in regional

conversations regarding services, policies, and funding. According to a locally elected official, these meetings are free, "for everyone to come and listen".

A state administrator described the importance of these local discussion groups or 'local networks', but emphasized the need to balance these conversations with opportunities to invite the community at large to participate. "I think it's important to have these big meetings between all of the people. It's open for everyone to have some kind of formal part of this meeting. People can see what was talked about."

- **Activity groups.** These groups each "have an area of operation, which one for instance is cultural, and another is development of tourism for camping, and in there often you have one member from the [organization type] and the board and the rest are individuals from the community," said a local administrator. Sometimes the administrator initiates an effort, and other times "it's a member initiative, where a member feels that a field is very interesting and would like to do something there. They work out a plan and objectives of what to do. Then they come up with a plan for the board and the board says that it is okay, this is something that the whole [organization type] would feel is good. Then we would try to allocate some money for it." According to this interview, this method of outreach is very 'loose', and in turn many groups "die; nothing happened so they just faded away". Sometimes these activity group meetings take the form of informal discussion groups but other times the structure of the meetings is very formal if there is a decision to be made or a protocol developed. These meetings are held through the rural villages, often on the outskirts to avoid overemphasizing any specific business sector or downtown area. This administrator's work covers "approximately 20 villages, covering all-in-all 5,000 people".
- **Parliament of ideas.** At the local level, small community committees or informal boards participate in a "parliament of ideas", where community members are asked to actively take part in local decision making through a facilitated discussion of priorities and interest areas. According to a local administrator, in these meetings community members participate in a series of presentations and dialogues on a variety of topics. "Then we sum it up by saying, okay, it seems that most of the members point out these, in our case: tourism and the shops; those two. It's not a decision making meeting, but it is an indication for the board of what the members feel what should be focused on...We will have this parliament of ideas; then the board will formulate a plan based on that day. That plan will be presented at the members' meeting, and then the members will decide. It's a democratic decision of what to do." Questionnaires are also commonly used to provide direction to the local municipalities and village decision makers.
- **Small group meetings, local meetings.** Sometimes this form of access depends "on the question that we are discussing," said a state

administrator. "Maybe sometimes we are a smaller group. Then we just meet at the municipality to have a progress report on what's going on...Quite often, there are meetings at the local level. For example, "we are now having a big village meeting Monday evening. All of the people from the village are coming in". This administrator explained that these small community meetings are often related to traffic planning, elderly care and other civil services. In these meetings civil servants from the representative municipalities attend, as well as community leaders and community organizations."You take certain people and go there and discuss what can be done. Then go back to job the day after, and they can come back with an answer." This administrator also explained how meetings have been convened: "In the beginning when we raised the project, it was maybe more of me trying to organize it. Now it is more of the locals that are saying we need to have another meeting because of 5 new questions to discuss...The working locals should not be depending on that. People should say when to have a meeting; it must come from them. It's also important to get that benefit of it, even if the project doesn't continue. I think it's important that the method we work with should not be dependent on another person that is giving orders."

- **County engagement and formalized relationships.** "On the county level, we have a county engagement also in this work for the shops," said a local administrator. "In our tourist work, we have regular meetings with county-level exploring cooperation and developing cooperation with other tourist groups, both public and private.
- **Informal Community committees.** "My part in this is I'm sort of a chairman for a committee that includes members from, say, eight to ten other committees in this small village," said an NGO leader. "We have committees for a lot of things like the football club, the ski slope...So there are a lot of committees and every committee sends one person" to the larger community meeting. This overall committee does "not have a schedule for when to meet. We meet when we have an issue, something that we feel we should take part and do something." And, "as soon as anyone finds it interested to meet, often, they call me and I send out an invitation for the meeting." Often these informal meetings take place in a local cafe, and while these committees are informal in their structure, they are 'legal' and nationally recognized.
- **Formal Meetings.** Community meetings may be organized by a governmental body, or by a local group, said a locally elected official. "If we come, we arrange them, of course. But nearly every time it is a voluntary organization in the village. We have a lot of voluntary organizations in Sweden, both political and sports clubs." The official then said, "All the people who own land in the village, they have special organizations for their own land keepers. When the official is involved in organizing meetings, "we have a local politician with us. And then it is free for all the people who come there to ask or say anything to this man or woman, this local political, to say their meanings." When these public meetings are held "in the afternoon or the evenings that often comes a lot of people. They have many questions to discuss."

Formal meetings and seminars are also successful at the governmental level, according to a state administrator. "I think there is accountability both to the municipality and also to the...people at the governmental level...It is quite useful to have access to that kind of network." This administrator stated that "Once or twice a year, I do have more formal meetings with the locals, politicians, and civil servants. I call them to a meeting and we take in different municipalities each time. Then we go through a project and what's next, or if there needs to be some administration down from the municipalities. They will also inform each other." This formal meeting structure was especially successful during budget formation.

### **Information Sharing**

- **Email, internet, fax, phone, letters.** Interviews with a state administrator indicated that email was the most effective and most common outreach tool. While at the local level communities and administrations still prefer to hold meetings to discuss important topics and to disseminate information, local administrations have witnessed a shift towards using email as a method of information sharing. According to a locally elected official, the use of the internet to send questions directly to members of the local government is not as common as at the national level. Email was described as an effective access point for committee members and other engaged populations, according to one local administrator. This official stated that the internet was an effective tool for sharing reports, agendas and organizing committee/board meetings. This person also uses "the internet, fax, and phone" to connect with people.

### **Community Building and Partnerships**

- **Petition drives.** A local administrator explained that local petition drives served as an important entry point for many people to become involved in local community matters. "It was one year ago I think that they decided to cut down the number of police stations in the countryside, and people got very upset and started to make petitions and even collect money to donate to the police".
- **Legal voluntary organizations.** The role of 'voluntary organizations' or village associations was referenced several times in the context of public participation, specifically as a common access point for residents. A public participation practitioner highlighted the popularity of these voluntary organizations in the facilitation of public participation processes and community dialogues. According to this interview, voluntary organizations serve as the liaison between the villages and the governing municipalities. "We have a very good relationship with the municipality...we have more and more small villages who want to join us." These informal meetings take place almost "always in the school." When the group plans to meet formally, they contact parents and other residents via telephone or email to organize meetings and determine event logistics, including agendas.

## **Who is included and excluded**

Who is included in participatory or deliberative processes reflected the particular roles that project interviewees play.

## **Who is included**

A state administrator has a limited number of people to interact with on an ongoing basis. “Within the project, I’ve got one contact person in each municipality. If there is something, I just call him or her. Once the project has been running, the people that I contact are many more than in the beginning because they have started projects within the projects.” In addition, “I think the general communication for the [organization name] is that people working there speak to the politicians or civil servants at the municipality level. They are not so often in contact locals. It’s more common that they work with civil servants. But when it comes to EU administration, they may speak with locals a little more often.”

There are also more strategic interactions this interviewee has with individuals at different government levels. “In my project, I work quite closely with people like ...[names some people]. One of the ideas with the project is also a sort of working method that locals, politicians, and civil servants shall cooperate or discuss. Sit around the same table and discuss; raise the questions that are the objective for the area. It’s more useful if you talk from all 3 levels. The people from locals, civil servants, and politicians will also be traveling together on status trips to Scotland. It’s been useful seeing how different people – the Scottish people - run the villages. But that traveling time has also been useful for people to talk each other.”

There are “two important benefits from the cooperation between these sectors. For the politicians, it’s also been good to come out to the villages and see and listen to the local people. And for the local people, I think it’s sort of nutrition for them to be seen. It’s like children somehow. They feel that even if they don’t get money or any support, at least someone came and listened to them, or at least tried to get some questions from people.”

## **Rural Populations and Small Villages**

“For the public it is very easy, I think,” to participate, the locally elected official said. “I also think that here in Sweden and other countries, too, but here we often have a meeting and we go together. If it is 100 people who said one thing, then you will listen more than if it is just one people. I think that is very important that you go together.” In fact, this person said, “I think you can say, generally, in the rural areas they are more interested in taking part than they are here in the city.”

Similarly, a locally elected official describes working in rural area, and the level of engagement within these communities. “I work with the companies, with the shops, with the people, of course, who live there and with the organizations.” This interviewee also explained that rural populations are committed to problem solving at the local level,

because residents "want to stay in areas. They want to live in those rural areas, and they want to work there, and they want to have their income from working there." Those who are included in this official's work include citizen activists, government employees, consultants and professionals. This may include smaller villages, such as those with between 400 and 800 people. In addition, the politicians or elected officials are also involved in these local dialogues and public participation processes. A local administrator is also involved village committees and activity groups which includes organizational representatives and "individuals from the community." Sometimes the issue at hand prompts involvement: "If a village or the [organization type] makes a case saying that this is important, the municipality responds."

The efforts of a public participation practitioner involves "both politicians and the people who work in the municipality" or civil servants, as well as "Ordinary people in the village" and "families." "Also employment – business people. We have some small other business in the villages."

However, local problem-solving is not always easy, "So, then we have this connection back again to the village or the people that live in there. And sometimes they are not satisfied with that. Then we must start again the process. How can we make something about when we have less money than you want," said the locally elected official.

### **Tourists and Business 'Clients'**

A local administrator works with a range of people and groups: "Clients, companies, other [organization type]s, partners. Those partners could organizations as well as companies and authorities. I try to keep out from contacts with men on the street here. For that, there are other people engaged." According to this interviewee, "Clients are the ones who are buying things from you or using the camping site or the fishing site. I'm dealing with the members of the community [organization type], and I'm dealing with the boards of the [organization type] and the [organization type]." This official also works with public and private tourist groups, and at the county level "in this work for the shops."

### **Cooperatives**

Cooperatives have also blossomed as a means for participation at the local level. "There is a lot of talk about education and about raising the level of competence – that's a very fancy expression," said a local administrator. "From a personal point of view, I don't think that's the main issue. I think it is all about believing that there is a common playing ground, that there are common objectives – and then it is up to the individual. There are villages where people have come together and started their own businesses, cooperative forms or non-cooperative forms, and in those villages where people make a decision, that is where things are happening, where people are giving their responsibility away freely to someone else, of course, they are left behind. Defining the playing field, formulating objectives, and stating the different roles of the players, I think is the most crucial."

## **Government Officials and Village Committees or Councils**

According to the NGO leader, government officials are constantly engaged in public participation practices. "Of course we have contacts in the government politicians to ask for help or support. If we want to do several things and we can ask for them to help us to speak in corridors and lobbying for these things...when they have an issue that we are not satisfied with what the government has done, we also ask them out and have a meeting on-site."

This NGO representative also described the populations that actively participate in village councils or community committees. According to this interviewee "everyone in the village tries to do what they can, sit in a board in one of the committees." However, the interviewee notes, "There are always people that - perhaps they feel that they do not... will bring anything into the committees so they do not care. I do not know. But most of the people, either the wife or the husband do some good for one of the committees, at least."

"I do not think there are any patterns, but often, during a part of your life perhaps you have your children in a kid's football team or aloft in the ski slope, perhaps that is the time that you start to be more active in taking part of other committees as well," the NGO leader said. "And when you reach part of your life that perhaps the children have moved out and so on, I think you... Perhaps there is a pattern that you move back then and try to say, 'I have done what I can and what...' Yes, you say, 'No, it is enough. I will not sit anymore.' So perhaps there is from, say, from 20 to 45, 50. That is the active part, active in the committees as well. But like I said we have one committees stay all the people that organized in the organizations for elder, and they have their own committee and they take part in this as well. Perhaps, it is a gap between 52 to 65."

This person also said: "We try to describe what you are doing in the committee and what good it will bring to the village. If new people who have moved into the village and you asked them to sit, often it is no problem to have them into some committee. But to people already living in the village and know everything, how it works and how much work, perhaps, if you are in a certain committee and then it can be tough. Some other committees do need a lot of effort and hours to do a good job. Some people are not so happy about - or they have more than enough already. Or they are sitting in a couple of committees already, so it can be difficult."

## **Who is excluded**

Interviewees also discussed who is excluded from participating.

### **Young People**

Young people who are not interested in becoming involved are excluded, said a locally elected official. "What I'm a little bit afraid of that is that nowadays young people they do not want to go together in those groups. Then it can be that young people's wishes cannot be heard so much. That is bad because there are lots of young people living in those areas. So we must be even better to listen to what young people say."

“But we must have more young people, more young girls,” this person said. “They must be involved in this to make better process with political decisions. That is important. That is something. I do not know if we mentioned that. This is just a question here in [community name]. It is in the whole Sweden. We have too few young women in the political world. I have no answer how to make it, but we must be more interested and we must listen even more to what do they want.”

### **Village residents**

A public participation practitioner said that “Ordinary people in the village” are excluded, and that “There are a lot of people who never take part.” These individuals include “young people,” the “middle-aged” and “old people.”

By contrast, a local administrator said, “I don’t think they [people] are excluded by any legal means that I am aware of. I think that there are groups of people who feel that they are excluded. I think they would have trouble proving their case....Ethnic minorities maybe, and in general, I think the whole population in the countryside feels that they are left out in bigger political decisions.”

### **Barriers to participation**

Barriers to participation included conceptual as well as more concrete impediments. Among the barriers to participation that Swedish interviewees noted were:

#### ***Community Barriers:***

- **Rumors and lack of information.** People “maybe get negative rumors from people living in the area. One of the difficulties about local work in this area is about spreading information,” said a state administrator.
- **Religion.** “In some areas of [community name], they are quite common with some religious group, but there are many of these groups participating,” said a state administrator. “There are some various religious groups, and some people are not allowed to do things on some days. Maybe it’s hard to coordinate around Christmas activities or something, but that is quite rare.”
- **Expectations.** “In the Swedish way, we are sort of spoiled,” said state administrator. “We have a really great level of service. But now the state and municipalities can’t afford to provide the same amount of service, like in the traditional Swedish model. I think people have lived in that way for many years – a couple of generations. People are so used to the state and government coming to solve it. That bad side of the Swedish model is that it partly ruined the peoples’ capacity to deal with and solve things themselves. It will take quite awhile to learn otherwise. To do it within a project is a very small start, but it’s one way. Maybe because we are used to the state or municipality solving this, it’s more important to have a spider-like person to set up and give nutrition to locals to work with these kinds of questions. The mentality is that we pay taxes; that state should take care of this. Why should we do it ourselves?” “So in Scotland, in small villages, you have a small post office,” said the NGO leader. “They are also selling other things, small things. And I know if we should

have that type of service in this village, the people will demand much more, they will not go there. The selection is not big enough for them. So I think the people in Sweden is a bit spoiled of the services that the government has had for us, but we see that it will not be like that in the future. The government does not have the money to have this whole lot of services like we have had earlier.”

- **Apathy.** A locally elected official said “...we have people who do not care about the society or anything. But there are not so many, a few of them.” An NGO leader said, “There are always people that - perhaps they feel that they do not... will bring anything into the committees so they do not care.”
- **Lack of trust.** “So perhaps villages that do not have this dialogue perhaps do not have the trust that they will have some help when they need it,” said an NGO leader. “But we know that after these conversations with the government, we know now that when we need something, we can always ask and we know almost what they will help us with and what they will not help us with, what we have to achieve on our own.” For example, many communities are “perhaps a bit unique because of how these villages are put together with large companies and not so much people until they have all the problems that perhaps, a place where you have 315 industrial jobs, you should not have a problem if there are only 380 people living there. But still we have the problems, but we also feel that with the companies in our backs, helping us, we should not have these problems. We have to take an active part, see that we will not have problems in the future with the school or groceries, and whatever. Also, we felt that we cannot just sit on our backs and wait and see what the government will do. I feel they will not do what is necessary to bring success to it.”
- **Self-imposed limitations.** “I think the thing which stops some people is their own thoughts about themselves,” said a public participation practitioner. “When we started the work with the school, we are just ordinary people who didn't know a lot about school questions and how to get a school to work. It's a lot of things. Having employees, we have two teachers and one who is working in the school restaurant. There were a lot of different questions, of course. We didn't know a lot of the school. Some people are afraid to do things and get involved in things that they don't know if they can manage from the beginning.”
- **Other commitments.** Some people “have too much to do with themselves or their own life. The most important is their own family or their own house or like that. It really doesn't matter what's happening around,” said a public participation practitioner.

### ***Institutional Barriers***

- **Funding limitations.** “I also think that the municipalities haven't got the same economic capacity as before,” the state administrator said. “They are more ready to work incorporating other ways than they were 25 years ago. Many of the old women say, ‘oh dear little girl, this we have tried in the early 80s. it didn't work then – why do you come with these ideas again? You were at school when we tried this.’ But I think this economical point for the municipalities means that they can't afford the same level of service now. And even if it was the same kinds of questions in the 1980s as it is now, it's also kind of nutrition to see other

countries and this transnational work. It gives extra strength, especially to the local people.” A public participation practitioner said that funding challenges also exist for schools and for elderly care.

- **‘Old-fashioned’ approaches.** “From my political experience and knowledge of how the municipalities work, I think the people living in the area and the political systems are quite old fashioned in these municipalities,” said a state administrator. “I think it should be a completely other structure of politics, because it could be much more useful and you could get more people keen to work with certain questions”. Similarly, “We are not running on any European Union money. In that way, I think that there are lots of examples of fruitful cooperation between us and public bodies. The only problem, though, is that many of those public bodies are still living in this old mental structure of – in Scotland, for instance, many of those volunteer organizations live on grants from the lottery funds, which means that they have a situation where they have lots of money for 3 years and they have really good projects, but when those 3 years are finished, you end up with a situation where everything falls to pieces because there is no funding anymore for the activities. Those public bodies in Sweden, they have a tradition of looking at this kind of work as something that they are donating money. They are donating money; they are giving money. The receiver should be grateful and shut up and do whatever it is they got the money for. That’s a mental pattern that is still hovering over this kind of development work that we are performing here, because now we are leaving time when we were given money in order to be happy and to exist. Now we are moving into a time where we will not be given money. We will be delivering products or services, which means that it is a client-provider situation. The relationship will be based more upon contracts and agreements put on paper, and there will be a legal structure ruling this kind of corporation. And that’s fine. That is exactly what we need, and that is exactly what we want. But, as I said, this whole tradition of giving out money is still there on both parts, and I think that is a hindrance in this development.”
- **Difficulty recruiting new people.** “It is always difficult to - you need new people. Some of them - [indiscernible] now it is enough. I do not want to sit in the committee anymore. Then it is a rather tough job to find new people. They do not stand in line for sitting in the committees. But often they know someone that is already in the committee and that person tries to talk him into it. So often, the sitting committee helped each other to find new people. Like I said, we have a lot of committees and not so many people. So, therefore, it is not so easy,” said an NGO leader. Similarly, as a state administrator described, “Maybe some people moved from outside and don’t feel any belonging”.
- **Need to listen more to young people.** “But I think personally that the political parties must allow young people just to be in a political party, just to work with one question,” said a local administrator. “If you know in a political, you must work from spare time questions to elderly healthcare, but if you must... I think the political parties must allow a young people just to be in these parties just to work with one or two questions, that is, care for young people. We must listen to them even more.”

- **Lack of awareness.** “The municipality, the county, and the state should be more specific saying actually what they want to do, what they can do, what resources they have, and why they are acting,” said a local administrator. “I don’t think that there is enough awareness of what the state and municipality can do and what they want to do.”
- **Lack of clarity from/between political parties and administrative bodies.** “I don’t think the objectives of the different parties are very well defined,” said a local administrator. “I think that the first thing of making it possible to say that this is the playing field, these are our objectives, this is what we want to do, this is what we can do, and do you want to take part in this or not? Then you have a common ground and then you can start communicating.” In addition, this person said: “I think that in order to make public participation something that is desired, I think that what is confusing the picture is what I said before: the parties have not agreed upon the area where they aren’t to cooperate. They have not defined or try to explain their respected objectives. They have not defined areas of cooperation, playing field, or objectives, which means that they do not understand each other. There is a gap between civil servants and politicians in the level of understanding of the situation.”
- **Lack of initiative.** “I do not know if the government wants a group of people to work towards, let us say, with services,” said an NGO leader. “If the government wants to get rid of something that they feel they have to do in an area and try to have the people living in the area to do it by themselves, I think the government has to create this group of people. And perhaps they can put out a structure for the area and say, ‘Can you organize this committee,’ or ‘How do you want to put it together, and can you do this? We will have a nice dialogue and easy to work?’ I think people in the area will be happy if the government asked for it.”
- **Period of Transition.** A local administrator noted the existence of a political transition period as a barrier to participation. “But I think maybe one thing that is an obstacle here is that people in this area are going through a transition period between where a situation where the municipality and the state took care of a lot of services that they now think that they cannot afford to do, and they are in many cases obliged to provide those services by law,” said a local administrator. “That is one reason why this [organization type] is very interesting. It opens up because villages of local people are taking part in the production of their own services, so they will be some sort of supplier to the municipality. The municipality buys their service and brings it back to the local population. This transition period between expecting the state to take care of it all and suddenly facing the fact that the state says it cannot afford to - this period I think created tension between individuals, as well as associations in this area regarding how to deal with that. In one classic way, people just accuse the state of not doing what they should. Another is to actually try to produce that service yourself by making a deal with the authorities.”
  - Moreover, this person said, “My vision of what I would like to see is awareness from the public bodies of the professional potentiality – the potentiality of local communities becoming professional suppliers and

performing services that are in demand from both the local community and from the public bodies. I would like to expect that the public bodies admit the social value of community companies. By admitting, that implies that they would actually try to restructure taxation and methods of corporation with the local community. It implies evaluating and estimating the value community companies stand for. It also affirms the potentiality of us becoming a professional supplier. That is what I would like to expect. But I do not expect it. I think it will take some time.”

- The local administrator also noted, “The organization that I represent is a new form of that kind of communication here. We are not established. We exist; we have acquired quite a lot during this short time, but this is a field where there will be a lot of changes taking place. Some of them might be rather big. It is a little bit hard to say that we are representative of a model or something like that.”
- This situation also has been affected by the move towards consolidation at the local level:
  - “And if you look at this level, in Sweden municipalities are becoming bigger and bigger. Fewer and fewer there they are bringing them together and they make super-municipalities. In this area for instance I think it was 10 or 15 years ago that they smashed together a lot of small municipalities into one big one and that was all part of the idea for increasing the efficiency of the municipality, saving taxpayers money. At the same time, we can now see that civil servants, when they work, they go back working towards areas consisting of those who are in the municipalities. I think that this is a rather interesting phenomenon, because it means that you are becoming bigger, but at the same time, you have the need to go back to a lower level. I think what is starting to happen now is some sort of reorganization of communication forms between the public bodies and the citizens. This is for sure a transition period. No one knew what would be, but it is exciting that we are in the middle of where we are. I think it was Margaret Thatcher who said about [organization type] when she was visiting a hospital, I think: ‘I don’t know what to say. Is this the worst form of communism or the best form of capitalism I’ve ever seen?’ I thought that was funny. And that is where we are.”

### ***Physical Barriers:***

- **Community size.** A state administrator said, “there can be some cultural difficulties in these areas. If you live in a small area you’re quite aware of that. If you moved out from a big city and are coming into a smaller place, it can be quite tough.”

### 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.

The outcomes of participatory or deliberative processes for Swedish interviews included:

#### *Policy/Decision Making*

- **Potential for more sustainable support for policies**, according to a state administrator.
- **Visibility.** “For the politicians, it’s also been good to come out to the villages and see and listen to the local people,” said a state administrator. “And for the local people, I think it’s sort of nutrition for them to be seen. It’s like children somehow. They feel that even if they don’t get money or any support, at least someone came and listened to them, or at least tried to get some questions from people.”
- **Willingness to try new ideas.** A state administrator said, municipalities “are more ready to work incorporating other ways than they were 25 years ago. Many of the old women say, ‘oh dear little girl, this we have tried in the early 80s. it didn’t work then – why do you come with these ideas again? You were at school when we tried this’. But I think this economical point for the municipalities means that they can’t afford the same level of service now. And even if it was the same kinds of questions in the 1980s as it is now, it’s also kind of nutrition to see other countries and this transnational work. It gives extra strength, especially to the local people.”
- **Local influence on government**, according to a locally elected official.
- **Social audits.** Social audits are “where we try to measure the outcome of our activities, not only in economical figures, but also from a social perspective and ecological perspective. The purpose is to prove that we actually are doing something good for the community. It is also a control instrument for the members – to see that the board is doing what they are supposed to do. But these are all very new things for Swedish people. We have just started it, but we see big potential for this. We like this system very much.”
- **Political action.** “Of course, it is depending on what the issues are. But, otherwise, before we have elections. We try to change it there but of course, we can always try to talk to people and then talk to... I think if the decision the government has taken, if it concerns just our village or this type of village and if it is something that is... we do not think it works well or is good, I think we could put pressure on them to change their minds, I think so. Even if it is not an election year like it is right now,” said the NGO leader.

## ***Transparency and Responsiveness***

- **Responsiveness to local concerns.** “I mentioned now that we will have a discussion about this elderly healthcare,” said a locally elected official. “We have different thoughts about that. Sometimes they say it is better to elder people to live at home and sometimes they should live in elder healthcare centers or something. A couple of years ago in Sweden, they said that it is much better to stay if you live in your own house. Generally, in Sweden we closed down this elderly centers, but here in [community name] we had a lot of wild discussions about that. It is not so good if you live in the rural area by yourself; it is not so easy. We have this homecare but it is not so good. And most children to the elder people that say this is not good. We have to open up these elderly healthcare centers. Last winter, the local politicians said that it had made some fault in this. Now, we are open up again for elderly to this health center stuff. I think it is a very, very important that you can talk to those who decide ... and tell them, ‘This is wrong,’ and they listen and change their mind.” The official provided a second example: “We had that discussion in one bigger village here with the local companies about the roads. They said that there were bad roads that they could not deliver their goods, their stuff. And then the local government said that we must do something about those roads. One year later they have this new macadam...” In addition, “even there were two new businesses coming to settle down in that area because the routes were to go there.”
- **Enhanced trust,** according to a locally elected official.
- **Accountability.** “We will have that kind of report, yes, when we elect,” said a locally elected official. “If they have not done before what they have said, they do not have any votes.” For example, this interviewee said: “If we have a meeting done in the village and then decide that it should improve some questions and then we go back to the way it is offered and said, ‘Was it like this, you mean?’ Then we have ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ So, that is the kind, but it is not a regular formula we do. Of course, we check again, ‘Is this you mean?’ Every time, we must go back when it costs something. Maybe this requirement they have, it costs, let’s say £10,000 or something like that, but we do not have that money. Then we must go back and say that we have just £5000 ... in health, or something like that. So, then we have this connection back again to the village or the people that live in there. And sometimes they are not satisfied with that. Then we must start again the process. How can we make something about when we have less money than you want.”

## ***Information Sharing/Dialogue***

- **Information sharing.** Following a community breakfast meeting, “there were 20 or 30 questions and you cannot answer everyone,” said a locally elected official. “You must go back and you must try to find the answer back home in the office then. It was quite voluntary to write down the e-mail addresses and then we send out the answers by e-mail and to everyone who wanted them. Then we send down even the answers we knew on the meeting. So, we answered every question to everyone. But it is not in every meeting. If it is just one question, we discuss them then we do not have that back again. But if it is many questions

then it is... if you ask a question and you do not have the answer on the meeting, then you must have an answer. We try to answer it to everyone, not just one person. The most common is the e-mail." In addition, these answers are available in the local media. "And then we have the local press here, the local newspaper here. It is nearly a monopoly. I think it is 85 percent of all inhabitants read that paper. So, they are very, very good in writing on these questions. So, you can read the answer in the local newspaper, too. Nearly every day they write about decisions that were taken by the local government, and that is very good."

- **Improved dialogue, awareness of needs.** "I think it is a better dialogue between local government and people living in the areas," said a locally elected official. This person also said, "We have to have these discussions with all people living here in this municipality. The local political or people like me working for the government, we do not know anything. We do not know the needs and what people need. I know what I need, personally, but I cannot say that people living in the rural areas, what are their needs."

### ***Process and Service Delivery***

- **Streamlined administrative processes that also lead to other benefits.** "Once you partner or cooperate in this way, I think it's easier to work through an application," said a state administrator. "An application can also lead to cultural benefits. Maybe it's about the culture in the area. I think it's useful in many ways."
- **Improved local services.** "In one of the villages, there is a shop open and also a restaurant connected to the elderly houses and the schools," said a state administrator. "The local people have been active. There are a few politicians in the village, of course, that have been involved. Now the restaurant is open for all the citizens and has much better food. The turnover is not minus; it's plus now because of the new way of working with cooperation between the actors in the village. The shop that has opened in [regional area of Sweden] I think there were some restrictions. They needed to have an elevator up to the office, or the business that was supposed to be there. I don't know if it's really solved yet, but they are trying to solve it in a better way." "In the culture, we have very difficult things to improve with the culture," said a locally elected official. "We have those 160 villages. They are rather small, most of them. But we try to have libraries in the bigger ones. It costs to have libraries. Now, we have found a new thing. You know, you have this - when you collect money from the hole in the wall, what is it called? [Interviewer: Cash machine.] Cash machine, yes. We shall try to put a book machine. It works in the same thing like cash. But you put in your card, but you will get a book instead of it."
- **Create alternative funding mechanisms.** "You asked for where participation from the public bodies has been welcome, initiated by us, and where they have taken place," the local administrator said. "I think that, for instance, this whole [organization type] was from the beginning a European Union project. One of the objectives was to create an organization for the local community to continue to develop the tourist infrastructure in the area when the EU funding was over...We

are not running on any European Union money.” The organization is now “moving into a time where we will not be given money. We will be delivering products or services, which means that it is a client-provider situation. The relationship will be based more upon contracts and agreements put on paper, and there will be a legal structure ruling this kind of corporation. And that’s fine. That is exactly what we need, and that is exactly what we want.”

- **Effective democratic processes.** “If you look at it almost every people in the village are somehow member in some other committees,” said the NGO leader. “And if the committees work like they should, that people bring questions to their committee board, and brings up ‘We want to do this or that,’ and the chairman of that committee takes it to our committee, the umbrella committee, so to say, the democracy process works. And if it works in every one of these committees then we can say 100 percent of the village - if we say we want to have a new bakery, or something, and we agreed on that, we can say the whole village is behind it. And the companies as well because in the board of this committee we have two or three people from the companies in the village sitting there as well.”

### ***Collaboration***

- **Relationships, local cooperation.** “I think one of the most important benefits is that it’s easier for a local to just pick up the phone and ask a question,” said a state administrator. “How shall we deal with this? I think you come much closer to action about a question when you have that kind of cooperation. And once the politicians and civil servants meet the locals, I think it’s easier to take responsibility for the action, issue, or question that is a problem or possibility around the area. One important key that I see in the villages that have been more successful than others is that they’ve had 1 or 2 politicians that are involved in the municipality council. It’s been quite useful for the village, and it’s not depending on what kind of party belonging. It’s more important that it’s a politician involved and has access to the councilors.” “They know how we are organized in the village,” said the NGO leader. “They know we are quite strong together. They also know that, for example, this company [company name], this is an important company for the community. They know they back us up. So if we want something they know they are behind us and, of course, that is... the government knows that so they always listen to what we want. And then hopefully tries to do what they can, but...” Moreover, relationships can also benefit the individual. “I do not think it is so difficult to, but I do not think the average person tried to contact the highest positions in the government, they who have the power to say yes or no or to what you want,” said the NGO leader.
- **Cooperative efforts.** “There are villages where people have come together and started their own businesses, cooperative forms or non-cooperative forms, and in those villages where people make a decision, that is where things are happening, where people are giving their responsibility away freely to someone else, of course, they are left behind. Defining the playing field, formulating objectives, and stating the different roles of the players, I think is the most crucial,” said the local administrator.

## **Community Benefits**

- **Employment.** “On the county level, we have a county engagement also in this work for the shops,” said a local administrator. “In our tourist work, we have regular meetings with county-level exploring cooperation and developing cooperation with other tourist groups, both public and private. Yes, we have been able to provide employment to some people by cooperation with employment agencies. I think that the number of issues where a corporation will take part will just increase. It is my intention to have established at least one more before this year is finished. That means that we are setting up a contract – something that we are selling to them. In this case, it will be that we will function as a service provider. I think that the options are many and that they will just become more and more.”
- **Self-confidence.** “I think if you are in a situation that you think that you are unable to do anything about your situation in the village, then you get quite helpless,” said the public participation practitioner. “When you think that I can't do anything to change my situation or my life, then you have given up. You can never give up. Even if sometimes you think there's no money, no one is listening to me or to us. But for instance the school, when we had a lot of cleaning and fixing days in the school, almost all parents are coming together. You get quite nice days and you have a lot of fun, laughing. You get together.”
- **Social cohesion.** An NGO leader described a local project to bring broadband to the community, which “was a real success socially.” This leader said, “We did it in a short time. It is a lot of - it is a very wide area we dug it in. But it brought a lot of people together that do not socialize, normally. We were posted in small groups by five to six people in each group and started with this job. We did not just dig outside our door or house. We were at other places around the village and worked with this. Some said you felt that you were working for your neighbor or for someone else in the village...This was very successful and it was a successful project according to the government as well. They brought the concept how to do it to a lot of other villages.” The public participation practitioner described how working together at the community level is beneficial. “Also these people who maybe never meet each other, they come together and learn to accept and work and it's not boring work you're doing. Even if it's boring, you can have a lot of fun, if you're a lot of people helping each other. That's even around the store, we had a lot of people who should never know that they are helping. They come and say, oh, this is fun and this is so good. If we talk about the store, now we are trying to get like the service point, when we can take a lot of service in the same place. A small store and maybe a library and café, a point where people can meet. We have seen the last month that you have to get your milk and your butter and bread, but the most – it's also very much a social thing, that many of the old people in the little village never meet another friend or they don't even know what's happening around the village. But if you can go to the store, then you can meet another friend and you talk a few words and maybe you have to go to the store and get milk five times a day.”

- **Community action.** A public participation practitioner described a local effort. “For a couple years ago they wanted to close the school. We did not want to see that happen. So last year about this time, in October, we started a free school. The parents of the children are all together and we are taking care of the school. We have, of course, teachers and we have employed teachers.” This interviewee also said: “I think that is a good thing to show government or other politicians that we're not giving up, even if we live in a small village. We are still working on and we are very strong. When we get together, we are very strong. Then during all these years we have had a very positive relationship with the municipality and the politicians.”

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

There were a range of feedback mechanisms that interviewees reported that were used to share decisions or other information with participants.

**Reports** - A state administrator said reports are used; “People can see what was talked about at the last meeting and was decided.” There are also progress reports. However, for these reports, “It’s hard to have the figures. You need to mention that the stuff has been cooperated....it’s hard to put it in figures in general. Similar things have happened, but when you see it more clearly it’s also different things that have happened.” Once the progress report is completed, the document is sent “out to the people involved in the project.”

**Informal Dialogues** - Other feedback is more informal, such as the use of dialogue between local government and residents, as noted by a locally elected official. Similarly, a local administrator said, “If a village or the [organization type] makes a case saying that this is important, the municipality responds.”

“The [organization type] constantly” updates the public in this community, this interviewee said. “The [organization type] does it in that way and sometimes they ask for voluntary participation – unpaid work. All the time, the [organization type]’s work is a victim of revision and discussion. It is an ongoing process, hopefully two steps forward and one backward and not the opposite.”

### **Efforts to balance opinions**

Efforts are made to balance differing opinions across these communities. A state administrator described this effort in the following way: “I think the issue we always raise is quite concrete for the locals. I think you need to put what’s important in order. The benefit to the local people of getting better service is the most important. The people connected to this matter we are working for in the area need to adjust to that matter. I don’t know how I should tell it, but I think that was one of the main things we talked about when the municipality wanted to participate in a project. It would come down to questions at the local level when we talked about rules around staff involved in the school and the elderly care, and maybe some environmental policies cannot be so

restrictive if we want to try it in this area. It's been tough sometimes, but generally I think it's been going quite easily. The traditional way of working with different kinds of questions is restricted to different sectors in Sweden."

For example, "maybe one of the most difficult questions – to see that the elderly care have one bag of money, and the school has one bag of money. If we cooperate and use the same stuff, both sectors can save money. Sometimes with the traditional way of working, the elderly politicians have more difficulty seeing new ways."

At the local level, mechanisms such as the 'parliament of ideas' can be useful for balancing opinions, as noted by a local administrator.

Balancing opinions at the community level for the public participation practitioner represents a large 'soup making exercise' of sorts. "When we work in [community name] in the whole municipality, you have very different priorities. But then we are a big group, then we can work with a lot of big questions. It's also a good thing that you can get experience from each other in the group or you have in the group are people working with different things, both younger and older people. Some have a lot of life experience and there's always someone who knows more of different questions. Of course, you're interested in different things."

And balancing opinions draws upon different decision criteria, according to this interviewee. For example, "In school you have some kind of priority list. You have to of course make the right decisions in very big questions. But during the work, starting a school, you have from the questions about the building – are we going to buy the building or rent it? Or from the fences, are we going to buy the fences (i.e., from large to small decisions)? All of this is – you have to take all these questions and make decisions in it. Maybe decisions can be, even if it is a small thing or not an expensive decision, you have to make a good and right decision about it."

The public participation practitioner observed, "Some of the decisions we have made in the last year, some of the decisions were taken – it went like this so fast. Now when we have had school in one year, you have to take another decision in some questions. We know it and we have to say it was not the right decision. We have to see if we can make it better." These discussions involved volunteers and also parents, and votes sometimes would be taken.

## **Expectations**

Expectations for public participation or deliberative activities reflect the kinds of relationships that interviewees saw between stakeholders or the public and those organizations interviewees represented.

A state administrator expressed the view that service delivery was ultimately important for local people. "I think the issue we always raise is quite concrete for the locals. I think you need to put what's important in order. The benefit to the local people of

getting better service is the most important. The people connected to this matter we are working for in the area need to adjust to that matter.”

In addition, “I don’t know how I should tell it, but I think that was one of the main things we talked about when the municipality wanted to participate in a project. It would come down to questions at the local level when we talked about rules around staff involved in the school and the elderly care, and maybe some environmental policies cannot be so restrictive if we want to try it in this area. It’s been tough sometimes, but generally I think it’s been going quite easily. The traditional way of working with different kinds of questions is restricted to different sectors in Sweden. That’s maybe one of the most difficult questions – to see that the elderly care have one bag of money, and the school has one bag of money. If we cooperate and use the same stuff, both sectors can save money. Sometimes with the traditional way of working, the elderly politicians have more difficulty seeing new ways.”

The locally elected official has more of a macro orientation. “In every question we will have this that goes on and on and on to improve, to be better. We can be better as a society. We can be better in everything that we do, but we cannot be better if there is not... we must have this dialogue with all the people living here in this municipality. We have to know what is the next step and that takes the local political together with all inhabitants here.”

For example, “we have 50 schools in this municipality, 50 from these primary schools. We compare what the children learn, and then we must compare to different schools so that they are on the same level.” This means that “we must have this discussion, these contacts, these meetings to improve. And even if we have a lot of meetings, we have to have even more because their needs changes nearly, not every day, but it changes their needs. If it is more elderly people living in an area, then they have special kinds of needs, if it is young people, if it is students. So we have to have those contacts so we can learn and so we can improve, too, and we must know what we should make with all this tax money. They said that we have high taxes in Sweden and we must give back for those tax moneys. So, I think that it is very important.”

A local administrator expressed the expectation that there should be more transparency on the part of government about why programs or policies are pursued. “The municipality, the county, and the state should be more specific saying actually what they want to do, what they can do, what resources they have, and why they are acting. So they should be a little bit more outspoken. But I guess that is a political decision. That’s asking for a politician to state his opinions. Maybe that is asking too much. What I’m saying is that maybe it’s because of this transition period, but I don’t think that there is enough awareness of what the state and municipality can do and what they want to do.”

There is also a political dimension to these expectations, the local administrator said: “I don’t think the objectives of the different parties are very well defined. I think that the first thing of making it possible to say that this is the playing field, these are our objectives, this is what we want to do, this is what we can do, and do you want to take

part in this or not? Then you have a common ground and then you can start communicating.”

Finally, this administrator also expressed a desire for more experimentation. “My vision of what I would like to see is awareness from the public bodies of the professional potentiality – the potentiality of local communities becoming professional suppliers and performing services that are in demand from both the local community and from the public bodies.” In addition, “I would like to expect that the public bodies admit the social value of community companies. By admitting, that implies that they would actually try to restructure taxation and methods of corporation with the local community. It implies evaluating and estimating the value community companies stand for. It also affirms the potentiality of us becoming a professional supplier. That is what I would like to expect. But I do not expect it. I think it will take some time.”

By comparison, the Swedish NGO leader offered a negative expectation. “I do not know if the government wants a group of people to work towards, let us say, with services,” said this person. “If the government wants to get rid of something that they feel they have to do in an area and try to have the people living in the area to do it by themselves, I think the government has to create this group of people. And perhaps they can put out a structure for the area and say, “Can you organize this committee,” or ‘How do you want to put it together, and can you do this? We will have a nice dialogue and easy to work?’ I think people in the area will be happy if the government asked for it.”

This interviewee also stated the expectation of electoral accountability. If there is a lack of responsiveness, there is the chance of political leaders not being re-elected. “It should be like that. I do not see it any other way. They know... in every 4 years, the possibility. If you do not listen to the people then they will be removed.”

A further reflection of the role this leader plays in coordinating the umbrella committee for this community, this individual expressed an expectation for involvement. “We have to take an active part, see that we will not have problems in the future with the school or groceries, and whatever. Also, we felt that we cannot just sit on our backs and wait and see what the government will do. I feel they will not do what is necessary to bring success to it.”

### ***Capacity to Participate***

Effects on capacity to participate were discussed by interviewees. A state administrator said that once a partnership or cooperation has occurred, “I think it’s easier to work through an application.” This person also expressed some frustration with the lack of capacity development:

In the beginning when we raised the project, it was maybe more of me trying to organize it. Now it is more of the locals that are saying we need to have another meeting because of 5 new questions to discuss. I’ve been a spider, and I want to make myself less useful. The working locals should not be depending on that. People should say when to have a meeting; it must come from them. It’s also

important to get that benefit of it, even if the project doesn't continue. I think it's important that the method we work with should not be dependent on another person that is giving orders.

Having said this, though, the state administrator also remarked, "I think it's important to have some formal aspect as well, and also to give the local people – the small groups - access to work in the kind of direction they come up with, even if the whole village doesn't know every step they take."

A local administrator spoke positively about a new initiative to encourage local people to take "part in the production of their own services, so they will be some sort of supplier to the municipality. The municipality buys their service and brings it back to the local population." However, the "transition period between expecting the state to take care of it all and suddenly facing the fact that the state says it cannot afford to - this period I think created tension between individuals, as well as associations in this area regarding how to deal with that," which in turn may affect local capacity.

As a result, some people may not take 'ownership' of the initiative. "In one classic way, people just accuse the state of not doing what they should. Another is to actually try to produce that service yourself by making a deal with the authorities," the local administrator said.

This person also commented, "I think it is all about believing that there is a common playing ground, that there are common objectives – and then it is up to the individual. There are villages where people have come together and started their own businesses, cooperative forms or non-cooperative forms, and in those villages where people make a decision, that is where things are happening, where people are giving their responsibility away freely to someone else, of course, they are left behind. Defining the playing field, formulating objectives, and stating the different roles of the players, I think is the most crucial."

The local administrator detailed an effort to formalize cooperative efforts through a contract. "It is my intention to have established at least one more before this year is finished. That means that we are setting up a contract – something that we are selling to them. In this case, it will be that we will function as a service provider. I think that the options are many and that they will just become more and more."

This person also provided another example of developing capacity: "You asked for where participation from the public bodies has been welcome, initiated by us, and where they have taken place. I think that, for instance, this whole [organization type] was from the beginning a European Union project. One of the objectives was to create an organization for the local community to continue to develop the tourist infrastructure in the area when the EU funding was over."

The NGO leader spoke about cultivating capacity through the way this particular organization is organized. "They know how we are organized in the village. They know

we are quite strong together. They also know that, for example, this company [company name], this is an important company for the community. They know they back us up. So if we want something they know they are behind us and, of course, that is... the government knows that so they always listen to what we want. And then hopefully tries to do what they can, but..."

The structure of the NGO itself is designed to facilitate capacity-building. "I do not know if this - to have this committee that is like an umbrella over the other committees, I'm not sure if that is unique, if it is special somehow. I do not know. But we thought it was an easy way to say that if this committee where everyone has a part in, if we say we want to do something and bring that into the government, you can say that almost 100 percent of the people in the village stand behind it because you have your membership in this football committee and a couple of other committees who serve you. If you look at it almost every people in the village are somehow member in some other committees. And if the committees work like they should, that people bring questions to their committee board, and brings up 'We want to do this or that,' and the chairman of that committee takes it to our committee, the umbrella committee, so to say, the democracy process works. And if it works in every one of these committees then we can say 100 percent of the village - if we say we want to have a new bakery, or something, and we agreed on that, we can say the whole village is behind it. And the companies as well because in the board of this committee we have two or three people from the companies in the village sitting there as well."

This leader provided a realistic assessment of the locality's own capacity and the NGO's corresponding own capacity: "I know that the government is very satisfied with the work we are doing because they feel that they cannot do the service as good as we want them to. Therefore, they are very supportive with everything we want to do to improve the services in the village. And I think in the long-term it would be for most of the governments around Sweden where you have these areas outside of the largest cities, you have to have people to do a bit more by themselves if they want to maintain the services that they are used to having."

In a similar vein, the public participation practitioner expressed a view that capacity had grown as a result of publicity about this particular group's efforts. This interviewee said, "...if we think around the school, we have been almost from the beginning of this, let's say five years ago, we had the newspapers were very curious about our work. We got a lot of positive PR from the newspapers and from the television. Now when we are out and showing our school and work, they're all organised like that."

## Summary

<b>Sweden</b>	
<b>Common Terms For P2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community activist</b></li> <li>• <b>Lokalemböhr</b> [phonetic], which means that “people at the grassroots level are participating”</li> <li>• <b>“Fire souls,”</b> meaning that people “are burning for interest for the locals”</li> <li>• “Public participation” is <b>not an expression in the Swedish language</b></li> </ul>
<b>Conceptual Definition For P2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local participation</b> that supports “a good network of civil servants and politicians”</li> <li>• <b>Political heritage</b></li> <li>• <b>A dialogue between people and public servants, where</b> “the public and those civil servants sit down, listen to what laws and regulations state, and discuss the present condition and the objectives of the different parties”</li> <li>• <b>Invitation to participate, implement</b></li> <li>• <b>Expression of wants</b></li> </ul>
<b>Select Barriers To Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community size</b></li> <li>• <b>Rumors and lack of information</b></li> <li>• <b>Leaders themselves</b></li> <li>• <b>Religion</b></li> <li>• <b>Funding limitations</b></li> <li>• <b>‘Old-fashioned’ approaches</b></li> <li>• <b>Expectations that</b> “the state and government coming to solve” problems</li> <li>• <b>Apathy</b></li> <li>• <b>Difficulty recruiting new people</b></li> <li>• <b>Need to listen more to young people</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of awareness</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of clarity from/between political parties and administrative bodies</b></li> <li>• <b>Old mental models</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of trust</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of initiative</b></li> <li>• <b>Self-imposed limitations</b></li> <li>• <b>Other commitments</b></li> </ul>
<b>Select Examples Of Best Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parliament of ideas.</b> At the local level, small community committees or informal boards participate in a “parliament of ideas”, where community members are asked to actively take part in local decision making through a facilitated discussion of priorities</li> </ul>

	<p>and interest areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Breakfast meetings</b> as an informal and effective tool for inviting local village leaders to participate in regional conversations regarding services, policies, and funding</li> </ul>
<p><b>Select Outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relationships, local cooperation</b></li> <li>• <b>Potential for more sustainable support for policies</b>, according to a state administrator</li> <li>• <b>Visibility</b></li> <li>• <b>Streamlined administrative processes that also lead to other benefits</b></li> <li>• <b>Willingness to try new ideas</b></li> <li>• <b>Existing government structure promotes dependency, limits involvement, not cost effective</b></li> <li>• <b>Improved local services</b></li> <li>• <b>Local influence on government</b>, according to a locally elected official</li> <li>• <b>Responsiveness to local concerns</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhanced trust</b>, according to a locally elected official</li> <li>• <b>Accountability</b></li> <li>• <b>Information sharing</b></li> <li>• <b>Improved dialogue, awareness of needs</b></li> <li>• <b>Cooperative efforts</b></li> <li>• <b>Social audits</b></li> <li>• <b>Employment</b></li> <li>• <b>Create alternative funding mechanisms</b></li> <li>• <b>Effective democratic processes</b></li> <li>• <b>Social cohesion</b></li> <li>• <b>Political action</b></li> <li>• <b>Community action</b></li> <li>• <b>Self-confidence</b></li> </ul>