Chapter 6

Participatory Engineering:
Promises and Pitfalls

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The perceived crisis of national systems of democracy

Political elites in many established democracies perceive their system of government to be in a state of crisis. This concern is voiced in various ways across European democracies. The spectrum ranges from individual public statements to large scale government sponsored inquiries on the state of democracy, particularly in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden.[1] This rhetoric is driven by the all encompassing assumption that downward trends in established forms of political participation indicate that citizens are turning their backs on democracy and that this system of government is in a state of crisis.[2]

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[1] For an overview and further references see a listing at the OECD-website under http://www.oecd.org/document/42/0,2340,en_2649_33707_33617194_1_1_1_1,00.html, accessed January 2008.

[2] This paper does not aim to discuss actual trends in political participation. It takes the perception and rhetoric of political elites at face value and as a vantage point for its argument.

The rhetoric of crisis is met in many established democracies by actual policy initiatives aimed at finding solutions to stop the downturn of political participation. These initiatives can be understood in systematic ways through the concept of participatory engineering (Zittel and Fuchs 2007). The concept of participatory engineering indicates the *purposive attempt of political elites to positively affect the level of political participation by increasing institutional opportunities to participate*. It can be defined through three characteristic features. It is, firstly, goal directed and purposive. Institutional change can be a by-product of any form of policy change. In the context of participatory engineering, the enactment of new opportunities to participate serves as a policy goal in itself. A second characteristic feature of participatory engineering is its focus on institutional change. Democratic reform can take the form of pilot studies or experiments at an early stage in the process of political change. But such activities eventually imply the enactment of broader and more fundamental changes at the institutional level. A third characteristic feature of participatory engineering is its top-down politics. While moves towards democratic reform are intuitively associated with bottom-up developments and social movements, participatory engineering can be understood as a development primarily rooted in elite politics.

The possible promises and pitfalls of participatory engineering concern two different levels of analysis. The behavioral effects of participatory engineering are one possible area of concern. Theories of participatory democracy emphasize the promises in this respect. Authors such as Carole Pateman

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Obviously, students of political participation unveil a more complex situation when it comes to trends in political participation. They argue, for example, that downward trends in electoral participation are far from dramatic if perceived in the long run (Franklin 2002) that the evidence across multiple types of political participation is mixed (Klingemann and Fuchs 1995) and that many downward trends in the area of traditional forms of participation are offset by new forms of political engagement (Skocpol 1999). However, one can hardly disagree with the argument that traditional forms of participation have decreased to significant degrees during the past decades (Stolle and Hooghe 2004) and that public opinion does signal dissatisfaction and

(1970) suggest that participatory engineering could be an effective means to revitalize political engagement and to bring citizens back in (Zittel 2007). But theories of political participation provide a serious note of caution in this regard and rather emphasize the possible pitfalls. Verba and Nie (1972) stressed in this context the socio-economic basis of political participation and, thus, the fact that institutional structures are of little relevance in explaining the level of participation. Jan van Deth (2000) furthermore emphasizes that individuals are only moderately interested in participation due to their busy schedules and other priorities they might have in their lives.

If we subscribe to the sceptics' view on the behavioral effects of participatory institutions, the pitfalls of participatory engineering are quite obvious. Increasing the institutional opportunities to participate would firstly raise a standard which cannot be met at the individual level and which would serve as a source of further frustration with regard to politics. Even more important, we would secondly increase inequality because we would provide the already active ones with new ammunition to foster their own political interests while leaving the inactive ones empty handed and even further behind.

This paper focuses on a second area of concern when it comes to debating the promises and pitfalls of participatory engineering. It asks about the impact of participatory engineering on the *quality of democracy*. The concept of democratic quality stresses the *relationship between the normative core of democracy and its institutional manifestations*. A high quality of democracy presupposes a perfect fit between the normative core values of democracy and the institutional structures of democracy. This paper asks about the promises and pitfalls of participatory engineering at this second level of analysis. It asks

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frustration with democratic governments (Pharr and Putnam 2000). The current perception

whether democratic reform is able to foster the fit between the normative and the institutional level of democracy and what kinds of strategies are able to do so.

The paper addresses its core question in three steps. In a first step, it aims to develop a heuristic frame for the evaluation of strategies of participatory engineering by focusing on the concept of the quality of democracy and the role of participation in this debate. This aim implies the following three questions: 1) What are the core values of democracy? 2) Which institutional structures are considered effective in implementing these goals? 3) Which strategy of participatory engineering is able to bring existing institutions closer to the given normative frame? I will, secondly, provide cursory case specific evidence on the direction of democratic reform in selected European democracies. These case studies should be seen as a first attempt to pre-test the initial frame of research and to provide a preliminary empirical answer to the research question. Thirdly, I will close with a conclusion and some remarks regarding further research questions that arise from my cursory empirical analysis.

Participatory engineering in Polyarchies: more pitfalls than promises

Robert Dahl's (1971) concept of Polyarchy provides a cornerstone for the debate on democratic quality. To be sure, Dahl does not use this concept himself. He is primarily concerned with the problem of distinguishing democracy from non-democracy and with identifying the prerequisites of democracy. His approach, however, not only provided the groundwork for the proceeding discussion on democratic quality in terms of methodology and research design, but also still represents a crucial reference point for the

among political elites is, thus, not without any empirical basis.

debate on democratic quality in terms of substance. Many endeavors to measure democratic quality draw from Dahl's model while aiming at measuring democracy in more fine grained ways and improving Dahl's original indicators for measurement (Kaiser und Seils 2005). The Polyarchy model is, thus, a useful and relevant framework to discuss the question raised above.

Figure 1: **Robert Dahl's model of Polyarchy**
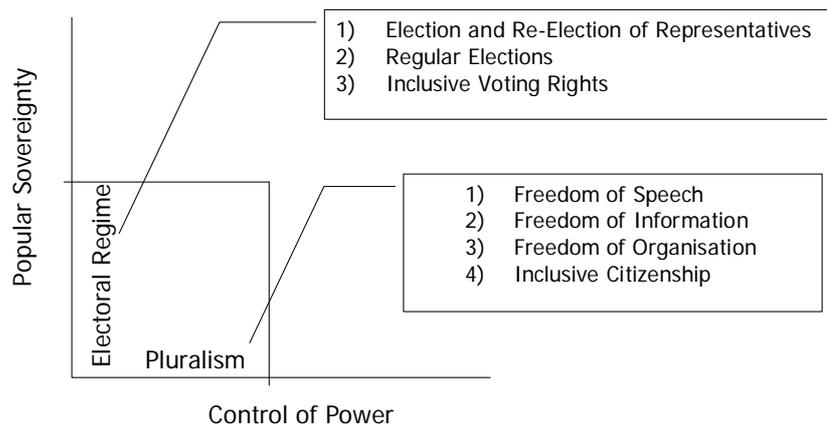
According to Dahl, democracy is defined by two dimensions. As Figure 1 suggests, the first dimension stresses public sovereignty as one of the two basic building blocks of democracy. This principle stresses the need for political decisions to be legitimized by the consent of those who are subject to these decisions. The second dimension of democracy emphasizes the need for the control of political power. This notion suggests that in democracies, power needs to be constantly subjected to critical review and questioning. In Dahl's view, the best possible quality of democracy is achieved, when both core values of democracy are balanced at a moderate level through specific institutional structures. Which are these specific structures and how can we measure them?

Dahl operationalizes the notion of public sovereignty via an electoral regime defined and measured by three empirical indicators: 1) The election and re-election of public officials; 2) The existence of regular elections; 3) The existence of inclusive voting rights. Dahl's second basic dimension of democracy is operationalized via a pluralist regime. Dahl perceives the competition between political groups as the most effective means to implement the notion of the control of power without affecting the exercise of popular sovereignty in negative ways. This concept is specified and measured through the four following empirical indicators: 1) Freedom of speech; 2) Freedom of information; 3) Freedom of organization; 4) Inclusive citizenship. The configuration of these structures defines in Dahl's view the highest possible quality of democracy, namely Polyarchy.

In regard to our underlying question, Dahl's model of liberal democracy carries one important argument that needs to be highlighted and discussed. It suggests that any form of participatory engineering, which goes beyond marginal forms of optimizing the existing structures of Polyarchy, produces significant risks for democratic government. This is, first and foremost, due to the very fact that Dahl's measures produce little variance across established democracies: 1) Voting rights are widely distributed and highly inclusive; 2) Information rights as well as the freedoms of speech and organization are fully implemented in established democracies (Jaggers and Gurr 1995). Dahl secondly suggests that Polyarchy defines the best possible form of democracy and that any shift along the two core dimensions of democracy will put the quality of democracy at a balance. I will elaborate on these risks in the following two thought experiments drawing from models of democratic quality and traditional arguments in normative democratic theory.

In a first thought experiment I am assuming a simultaneous shift along both dimensions of democracy in the direction of the upper right hand corner.

The resulting problems become most obvious when focusing on the most extreme point at the upper right hand corner, as depicted in figure 2. This point defines a situation in which sovereignty and the control of power are pushed to their limits. Under this condition, every member of the community would have the right to participate in the sanctioning of policies with an equal voice. This would presuppose implementing the value of popular sovereignty via a direct democratic regime which allows every member of the community to participate in every binding decision to be taken. Under this condition, decisions would, furthermore, have to be taken under strict consensus rule, in order to maximize the control of power. This means that every member of the community would have the right to reject a decision that he or she sees as an infringement of his or her rights. Such a system can be perceived as a hyperdemocratic regime. The exercise of authority is absent under such conditions, everything depends on the voluntary consent of every single member in the community.

Figure 2: **Hyperdemocracy**
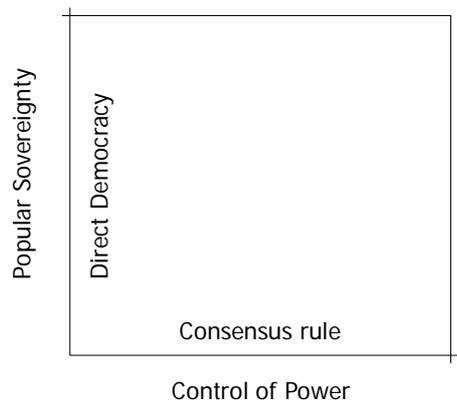
The risks of such a system of hyperdemocracy are obvious. First and foremost, it implies rising decision making costs and, thus, a threat to the

efficiency and problem solving capacity of democratic government. This would be especially true in a complex pluralist society which would be paralyzed under a hyperdemocratic system when it comes to the task of collective decision making and which would produce low output–legitimacy in Fritz Scharpf's (1970) terms. Dahl is, however, more concerned with a quite different matter in his rejection of hyperdemocracy. The tension between input- and output legitimacy does not loom large in his theory. He believes that hyperdemocracy would favor the status quo, enabling tiny minorities to block any kind of innovation and to frustrate emerging new needs and desires (Dahl 1989: 153f.). Dahl remains true to his pluralist creed in his opposition to hyperdemocracy.

A second thought experiment stipulates a one sided shift of the ideal point within Dahl's model. The literature on democratic quality provides examples for the two possible directions this shift might take. Each one of these shifts also carries risks that I shall briefly sketch in the following.

Figure 3: **Guardianship democracy**
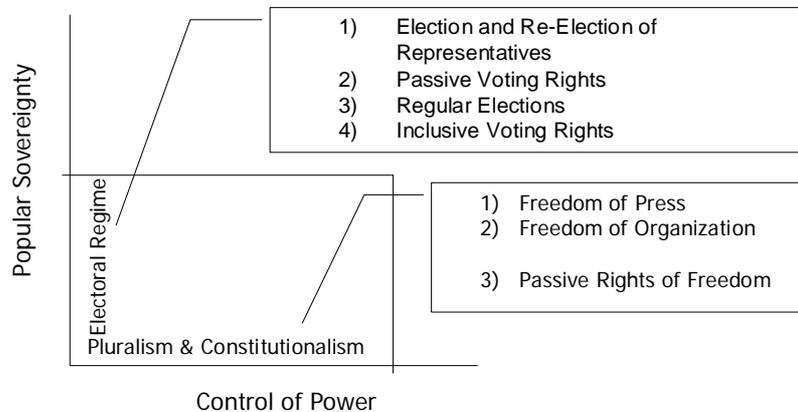
One example of a slightly skewed conception of democratic quality is developed by students of democratic transformation. Authors, such as Guillermo O'Donnell et al. (2004), began to realize differences between their objects of study and established democracies, once the transformation process had come to an end. In an attempt to understand and measure these differences, they do stress Dahl's two dimensions of democracy: popular sovereignty and the control of power. But their vision of democratic quality, nevertheless, results in a skewed shape towards the power–check dimension as figure 3 demonstrates. This skewed shape is due to the emphasis on a constitutional regime as one additional means to implement the value of power control.

Wolfgang Merkel's (2004) model of an embedded democracy reflects the constitutional and legalistic aspect of democracy entertained by transformation theorists. Merkel's model highlights the ideal of an electoral system that is tightly embedded into a pluralist regime (freedom of information, organization and speech) *and* into a constitutional/legalistic regime at the same time. According to Merkel, the core indicator of legal checks on political power is, firstly, the existence of codified laws to ensure civil liberties and to prevent encroachments by the state. These negative rights of freedom, secondly, need to be implemented and secured by independent courts functioning as "custodians" of the legislature. Merkel classifies any system deviating from this ideal as a defective democracy.

The perspective of transformation theorists disturbs Dahl's ideal point of democracy in significant ways, raising problems for the exercise of popular sovereignty. Under these circumstances, courts might become too influential by restricting by definition the democratic process and the exercise of popular sovereignty. Legalistic frames might increase under these circumstances the

rigidity of the system and might paralyze the political game as defined in terms of the development of majorities in the course of public debates (Dahl 1989: 52f.).

The difference between the transformation literature and their definition of democratic quality on the one hand, and Dahl's argument on the other, can be explained by the particular empirical problems raised in the process of democratic consolidation. Transformation theorists perceived the lack of legal guarantees of rights and due processes of law as the most striking difference between developing and established democracies. They, thus, saw it as *the* crucial element needed for a further increase in the quality of democracy within emerging democracies. The perspective of transformation theorists, furthermore, draws from a second source which can be found in the normative debate on democracy. In this debate, theorists of liberal democracy, such as Giovanni Sartori (1987) or Peter Graf Kielmansegg (1977), stress, in contrast to Dahl's model, constitutional safeguards as a crucial prerequisite for legitimate democratic government.

Some students of democratic quality spoil Dahl's ideal by stressing the value of popular sovereignty. Michael Saward (1994), for example, perceives direct democracy as a crucial criterion for democratic quality and, thus, suggests going beyond the mere implementation of an electoral regime. He simultaneously stresses regulations and laws to ensure a fair administrative process, as well as the negative right to freedom of worship. But this falls short of a full fledged constitutional regime. Saward, thus, clearly suggests a one sided shift of Dahl's definition of democratic quality to the upper part in our two dimensional space.

Figure 4: Populist democracy
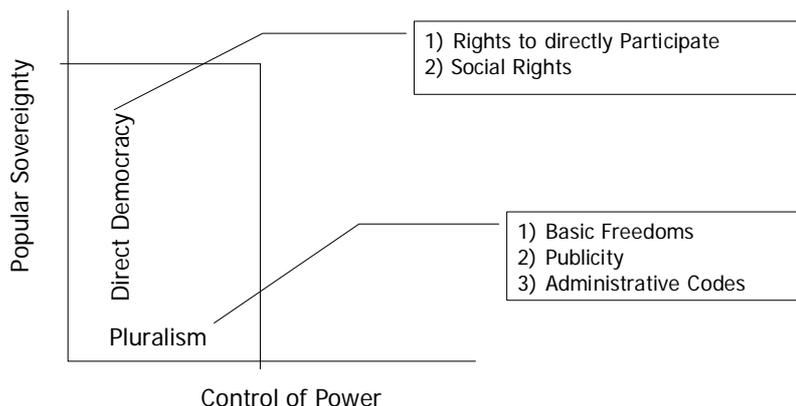
Maximizing popular sovereignty via a regime of direct decision making bears risks for the horizontal dimension of democracy. This one-sided shift could endanger the pluralist process in democratic decision making. Institutions of direct democracy leave less room for processes of deliberation (Cohen 1989) and compromising (Sartori 1987), compared to representative institutions. They, thus, endanger the interests of minorities and allow for a more unrestricted and immediate implementation of majority interests. They can be used by elites to bypass stakeholders and to mobilize individuals for personal power gains by means of communication and easy answers to difficult problems. This model of a populist democracy is, thus, not able to strike a balance between the control of power and participation. It is, thus, of a lower quality compared to Dahl's model of Polyarchy.

The preceeding theoretical analysis suggests in light of Dahl's model of Polyarchy that participatory engineering holds more pitfalls than promises for the quality of democracy. I argue in a next step that participatory theory provides one ray of hope through introducing a third dimension of democracy, namely size. The theory of participatory democracy is, at first, a purely normative project which needs to be developed further at the

institutional level of analysis. Participatory theory suggests that we can solve trade-off problems discussed above by stressing the local level of democracy.

The main focus of participatory theory lies in the critique of the liberal model of democracy for its deficits in implementing the value of political participation. This critique originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the midst of a broader cultural quest for more democracy and social equality. Participatory theory envisions a more radical implementation of the idea of popular sovereignty compared to liberal democracy. Its protagonists claim that this vision can be reached by increasing opportunities to participate in micro-democratic settings (Pateman 1970; Macpherson 1977; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992). According to this perspective, more institutional opportunities to participate in micro-democratic settings will have a positive effect on political behavior and will result in higher levels of participation. The institutional restraints impinging on political participation within the frame of liberal democracy were seen, in turn, as *the* crucial factor lessening political engagement and spawning political apathy (Walker 1966).

The model of participatory democracy does not ignore the tension between the exercise of popular sovereignty and the control of power. It aims to circumvent the dangers of an imbalance between the two basic dimensions of democracy by reminding us of a third dimension of democracy, namely space or size. Participatory theory suggests that developing local democratic regimes go beyond Polyarchy by further maximizing simultaneously public sovereignty and the control of power.

***Figure 5*: Local democracy**
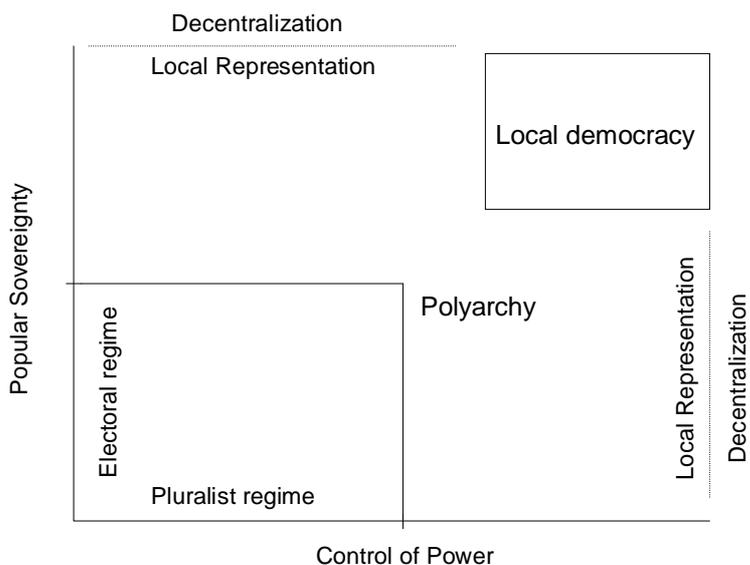
In participatory theory the link between local democratic regimes and macro–democracy is constructed primarily through the micro level of analysis. Local democracy is seen as a school of democracy which could help to turn individuals into responsible citizens. A first assumption is that every citizen will acquire cognitive and strategic skills through participating at the local level. A second crucial assumption stresses that citizens accustomed to participating in the local context will acquire a sense of community enabling them to act in view of the common good rather than their own self interest also at higher levels of politics. If both assumptions hold true, the tension between popular sovereignty and the control of power is abrogated through the process of self-transformation; both values, thus, can be maximized rather than optimized.

Participatory theory is not very explicit with regard to the institutional level of analysis which is in the focus of this analysis. The institutional aspect of

local democracy implies two questions or two different levels of analysis. The first level touches upon the type of institutions defining local regimes of democracy. What does a local democratic regime look like in institutional terms and which local regime maximizes the exercise of popular sovereignty at the local level? The specific institutions of local democracy can be seen as mirroring the tool kit that is also available at the national level. The electoral regime can be, first and foremost, made more responsive by increasing the choices of voters through the introduction of particular electoral mechanisms, such as the recall, primaries, personalized voting systems, short election cycles and the direct election of all public officials.

The opening up of the local decision making process through local referendums and local popular initiatives can be seen as the ultimate and most decisive move towards democratization. Because of the small scale of local democracy, the deliberation on policy issues can be made more inclusive in the context of the electoral regime, as well as in the context of direct democracy. The New England Town Meeting is a classical example for deliberative direct democracy. In this scheme, the citizens of a community discuss the issues to be decided in a community assembly and afterwards vote on these issues.

The second institutional problem raised by local democracy concerns the mechanisms that tie local democracy back to national democracy. This is finally the level which is in the focus of any measure of democratic quality. How can we make sense of the institutional linkage between increasing local democracy and increasing the overall democratic quality of a given system? This question is hardly raised in participatory theory. I can think of two plausible lines of arguments with regard to this question. The first line of argument suggests *decentralization* as the magic bullet. This assumes, first and foremost, a transfer of competencies from the national to the local level. This

would allow individual citizens to actually decide important questions in the local context and to, thus, exercise popular sovereignty in a meaningful way. In decentralized systems, sovereign citizens would take a large portion of crucial decisions in their local context.

Not all competencies in a state can be decentralized. Some competencies have to remain at the higher levels of government, which asks for a multilevel system of democracy. Multilevel democracy could be linked in this case via *different means of local interest aggregation*. I can think of three mechanisms, which could be conductive in this context. Local democracies could, firstly, be aggregated via new representative bodies, such as parliaments of regions or localities. Local democracies could, secondly, be aggregated via changing forms of representation within established representative institutions. In this case, the primary focus of representation would shift from parties to localities. Local democracies could, thirdly, voice their concerns at the local level via associations that would lobby national political institutions. This would result in a new system of intergovernmental bargaining and decision making.

Why does local democracy keep the promises of participatory engineering while avoiding the pitfalls? Local democracy, if combined with decentralized governance and institutions to effectively aggregate local interests to the national level, on the one hand increases public sovereignty. More citizens are able to influence more decisions in a more direct way. On the other hand, this shift along the first dimension of democracy does not imply any negative impact along the second dimension of democracy. Moreover, it has a positive impact on a system's ability for the control of political power. The decentralization of government provides a safety valve against any infringements on individual rights and the misuse of power. The violation of rights would concern only a small part of the citizens, rather than the whole

citizenry as such. Decentralization also increases pluralism within a system. The competition between local democracies would, thus, make such violations transparent and would eventually stop the affected community from continuing any kind of policy violating individual rights or the pluralist process as such. The violation of the rights of a small part of citizens would, therefore, only be of a temporary nature.

The analytical framework presented in the preceding remarks can be used to empirically evaluate the actual effect of participatory engineering on the quality of democracy within established democracies. This will be the task of the next section. This section does not aim to be broad, comprehensive and quantitative. It should rather be perceived as a cursory overview to 1) test for the existence of reforms moving into the direction of local democracy; to 2) further specify particular reform measures that fall into this category; and to 3) explore the similarities and differences between national approaches in this regard. This section will focus, for this very purpose, on three established democracies in Western Europe that differ quite significantly in their institutional designs: Germany, the UK, and Sweden.

Participatory engineering in European democracies

The Swedish government established a commission on democracy in 1997, which debated institutional reforms to increase political participation. It submitted a report in 2000, which put a special emphasis on suggestions to strengthen the local basis of democracy. Two years later, in 2002, the government proposed an official democracy policy to the Swedish Parliament. This government bill mainly focused on increasing the responsiveness of representative institutions at the local level. It suggested, among others, *granting ordinary citizens the right to place items on the municipal assembly agenda* and to be *appointed onto standing committees in the assembly*. The

bill also suggested establishing *youth advisory boards,* as well as *citizen panels to aid the municipal assembly in legislative matters* (Jarl 2005).

The Swedish government bill "Democracy for the New Century" was nothing more than a suggestion to the Swedish municipalities. It was neither legally binding, nor did it contain negative or positive incentives to affect institutional policies at the local level. This resulted in a lukewarm reaction on the part of the Swedish municipalities. According to Montin (2007), only 10 out of 290 municipalities implemented a larger number of the measures proposed in the government bill in the context of an overall comprehensive reform strategy. A larger number of communities implemented single measures, such as opening up the municipal assembly agenda to citizen proposals (50%) or introducing different kinds of citizen panels (20%). The Swedish government bill "Democracy for the New Century", thus, brought a marginal change in the responsiveness of existing representative institutions. Erik Amna (2006) pictures the legacy of the Commission on Democracy as mostly rhetorical and mainly focused on increasing the quality of governmental services at the local level. He stresses that the Commission developed bold reform proposals, such as the comprehensive introduction of local referenda. But according to this author, the government bill largely reiterated the traditional service democracy ideal of Swedish democracy in its response to the Commission's Report.

The German case is defined by three reform strategies towards strengthening local democracy. Wollmann (2005) firstly emphasizes the direct election of mayors that was legally implemented in all German communities in the 1990s. This development goes together with the adoption of recall options, which allow citizens to unseat mayors. Scarrow (2001), secondly, detects for the same time span an expansion in direct democracy at the local level in Germany. Kost (2006) stresses that local direct democracy did not exist in

Germany before 1990, with the exception of the state of Baden–Württemberg. Since then all of the remaining 15 states adopted the referendum and the initiative as part of their state constitution. This constitutional change resulted in the frequent use of direct decision making at the local level. Until the end of 2003, approximately 2.700 initiatives and almost 1.400 referenda took place in German communities. Bavaria is the front-runner with 500 referendums taking place between 1995 and 2000 (Kost 2006).

A third area of reform concerns the electoral system of the German states. Kersting (2007) shows that many German states introduced cumulative voting and the panache system during the 1990s, in an attempt to increase opportunities for strategic decision making and participation in the act of voting. Both versions allow voters to disregard the party list by voting for individual candidates. Both systems, however, go beyond the mere introduction of personal voting. Cumulative voting includes the possibility to give more than one vote for one single candidate. The panache permits the distribution of votes over different party lists. This includes the possibility to have more than one vote. Mostly, voters have as many votes as there are seats in the elected assembly.

The UK is an interesting third case in our cursory survey on participatory engineering at the local level. Scarrow (2001) demonstrates that the UK actually reduced opportunities for direct decision making at the local level, in sharp contrast to the German situation. This took place at the beginning of the 1970s when reforms in English local government removed most of the rules providing for referenda. The British case is, nevertheless, also characterized by the proliferation of participatory measures in local government. These measures, however, perceive locals largely as consumers, rather than as citizens. The British development is largely defined by the

concept of New Public Management (NPM) (Peters 2001: 160f.). This concept highlights reform instruments which do not sit well with any normative model of democratic quality and which reflect a troublesome tendency among decision makers to invent and market new models of democracy as they see fit.

According to Wilson (1999), conservative governments from 1979 onwards promoted public involvement in service use. The consumer-oriented notion of accountability was exemplified by a Minister for the Public Services at that time, who boldly argued that representative democracy via the ballot box was not necessarily the best way of securing efficient, accountable and responsive public services: the crucial point was 'not whether those who run our public services are elected, but whether they are producer-responsive or consumer responsive' (Wilson 1999: 249). This very idea provides the cornerstone of recent New Public Management policies in the UK, designed to approach citizens as users and to consult and monitor public services in far reaching ways. Pratchett (2002) stresses in this context electronic service delivery, the so called Best Value program, introduced by the Local Government Act 1999, and a large array of consultation mechanisms suggested by various Government White Papers such as the Blair Governments White Paper *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* (July 1998).

Bonney (2004) points at *citizens' juries* as one key element in the British consultation policy regime. Such juries enable small numbers of representative citizens to engage in in-depth discussion and debate about major issues affecting their communities. These bodies function as advisory boards to local communities. They are frequently used in the UK but they are purely consultative and lack any legal basis. They deliberate only on issues suggested by the community and are essentially at its disposal. *People's panels*

are large-scale representative samples of citizens who subject themselves to the regular evaluation of local authorities services and policies. They again are used on a consultative ad-hoc basis, lacking a legal and secure basis.

Does participatory engineering improve the quality of democracy?

The previous case studies suggest that decision makers in European democracies are moving into the right direction in the course of participatory engineering. This is because of the strong focus of their activities on local democracy. The previous report on the literature on democratic reform for three countries highlighted a number of specific reform policies focusing on the local level. The previous survey, however, also stresses strikingly different approaches towards local democracy. The German approach towards local democracy appears to be most far reaching compared to the Swedish and the British approach. While Germany emphasizes direct decision making, changes in electoral laws, and the introduction of direct decision making, Swedish authorities implement only marginal changes in the communities' representative structures. British policy makers, in turn, emphasize New Public Management initiatives which are hardly related to the notion of democracy at all.

These findings raise three crucial questions for further research. They, firstly, suggest a more comprehensive comparative analysis on local democracy which would cover a greater number of cases. The crucial question here is whether the German case can be considered an outlier in the European context or whether the three cases represent three equally salient reform strategies among European governments. A second question concerns the politics of participatory engineering which could provide explanations for the observed differences between European nation states. How can we explain

the quite far reaching developments in Germany compared to the more hesitant approaches in Sweden and the UK?

A third question concerns the vertical dimension of local democracy, that is the institutional linkage between local and national democracies. The literature on democratic reform hardly touches upon this subject. It is largely silent on the question how democratization at the local level can be linked with democratic decision making at the systemic level and notions of democratic quality. This is an important issue in the context of the question raised in this analysis. If communities have few competencies and are only loosely aligned with the national level, participation at the local level is hardly meaningful in terms of enhancing the quality of democracy as such.

I shall conclude this analysis by pointing to a third perspective on participatory engineering, which shows a significant overlap with the framework developed in the previous remarks but which, nevertheless, needs to be kept distinct from it. This perspective emphasizes the European level and the problem of a European transnational democracy. Beate Kohler-Koch (2004) has emphasized earlier that European policy makers, especially the European Commission, are quite active in terms of participatory engineering, too. At the European level, a fair amount of attention is given to the goal of "bringing the citizens in" by means of institutional reforms.

Dahl's model of Polyarchy can be quite useful for evaluating and discussing the efforts to further develop a European transnational democracy. I believe that it conveys three important messages to European policy makers in this regard that I shall conclude with. Firstly, it suggests not to develop expectations for a European democracy, which cannot even be met at the national level. Dahl's model of Polyarchy, secondly, suggests that the combination of federal structures and democracy, maybe in a new and

innovative way, should be in the focus of European constitution making (Kielmansegg 1996). Dahl, thirdly, suggests to be more cautious about constitutionalism as a means of controlling political power and to rely more on political pluralism. This is an argument which should be taken seriously given Dahl's own life experiences with a compound republic that has managed to survive more than 200 years so far.

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