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Environmental permit processes and local public participation

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S Y K E

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1 Introduction

Representative democracy is the most common foundation which successful societies are built upon. However, during the last decade the elements of direct democracy or citizen participation have received more attention, mainly because there exists a common belief that people in general are becoming more alienated from the societal decision making. Finland is not excluded from the ongoing debate, partly since Finnish citizen participation is weaker than in other Nordic countries (www.om.fi). According to the results of the World Values Survey, active participation in various organisations in Finland is at a lower level than elsewhere in other Nordic countries (www.stat.fi, 05.04.2007). Therefore, active participation in the activities of organizations and the willingness to take in political group activities is substantially less in Finland than in other Nordic countries. As a consequence the government in Finland has launched an initiative promoting active citizenship in civil society and encouraging the exercise of influence by ordinary people and the effective functioning of representative democracy (www.om.fi). The goal of the policy program is a dynamic representative democracy that is complemented by the active participation of citizens and ensures that they are consulted and wield influence.

One mechanism for promoting active citizenship is through public participation. The constitution of Finland establishes the starting point for public participation. It affirms that state authority belongs to the people who are represented by the Parliament of Finland. The state authority of the public includes the individual's right to participate and influence the development of society, the living environment and the decisions that concern him/her. The Ministry of Justice defines in a Pro Memoriam (year unknown) public participation broadly in the sense that it means the possibility for citizens to participate and affect decision-making concerning themselves and their living environment, both generally and in various forms. The constitution also mentions the arranging of referendums. The Administrative Procedure Act generally obligates the authorities to prepare for opportunities for citizens to participate and influence their operation. Participation is particular necessary when decisions have a considerable impact on the participants living environment, work or other aspects.

In general public participation can be divided into two separate categories. The representative indirect democracy typified by elections and more direct forms where the participant is expected to play an active part. Within a democratic decision-making process, representative democracy and direct democracy have different parts to play. The task of the representative democracy, or the task of the elected representatives, is to make the decisions on behalf of his or her constituency, whereas the elements of direct democracy are expected to be found within the process¹ which leads up to the decisions taken by the politicians.

¹ The process consists of an initiation and a preparation process. The initiation is the first step towards a decision, since the idea is to place a problem on the political agenda, whereas the aim of the preparation process is a proposal for a decision to the problem.

There is significant body of legislation² promoting public participation and it can be concluded that the Finnish legislation has become more oriented towards regulating more direct forms of democratic action. However, representative democracy has not lost its significance but rather a greater emphasis has been placed on direct democracy. The benefits of public participation are related to increased knowledge base for decisions, through more constructive input by a greater section of the community, an increased of acceptability of decisions, which may also reduce litigation as participants are more satisfied with the process (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5). Participation encourages an alignment with basic tenets of democracy and theoretically reduces mistrust in government and institutions. Participatory process enable the public to be made more aware of decisions affecting them, giving them more time to complain or take necessary action (or become involved) (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5).

The Finnish municipal governments constitute the basic foundation on which the Finnish welfare society is built upon, as the main objective of the municipalities is to manage, produce and deliver welfare services. The local democracy in Finland has strong historical roots and is of great importance, and accordingly public participation is of special significance at the local level in Finland. However, following the national trend local citizen interest in participation and voting activity has decreased, as has public trust in political administration institutions. The renewal of the Municipal Act (1995) places new demands on hearing citizens and improving participation and creates opportunities for different participation possibilities. However, no law can guarantee participation.

1.1

Aim of the report

This report is a part of a wider research program titled Effective Environmental Management: law, public participation and environmental decision making (EMLE). EMLE is an innovative exploration of the nature, impact and effectiveness of public participation in environmental decision-making. The research program is funded by the Finnish Academy, the Finnish Ministry of Environment and the Finnish Environment Institute. There are five distinct objectives within EMLE: objective 1: legal analysis, objective 2: regional level decision making in Finland, objective 3: see below, objective 4: international case-study comparisons and alternative models, objective 5: evaluating the effectiveness of public participation.

The aim of this report, and simultaneously also the intention of objective 3 within the EMLE research program, is to explore the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes at the local level in Finland. Since our emphasis was to explore the nature of public participation at a local level, there was also a need to understand the complex structures of interaction and influence within municipalities. This report aims to further increase the understanding of various stakeholders'³ participation and influence.

Accordingly, the main focus of the report is on public participation at a local level, and especially within the environmental permit process. Generally, there exist different channels for promoting public participation at a local level. According to the Municipal Act, the channels for promoting public participation are a) choosing representatives of service users to municipal decision-making bodies, b) organizing

² The Finnish Constitution (731/1999), Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), Local Government Act (3657/1995), Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999), Land Use and Building Act (132/1999), Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) and Environmental Protection Act (86/2000)

³ Stakeholder in the Finnish legal context is defined as: those whose right or interests might be concerned (see Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 25)

administration for different parts of the municipality, c) providing information about municipal affairs and organizing hearings and events, d) investigating the opinions of the inhabitants before making decisions, e) organizing cooperation in handling municipal tasks, f) helping inhabitants to make, prepare and plan initiatives and g) organizing municipal referendums. The Municipal Act also obligates municipalities to provide opportunities for participation and influence in municipal affairs. The Municipal Act places the responsibility at the local council to guarantee that the population as well as service users have scope to participate and influence the activities of the municipality.

However, when discussing more specifically public participation in environmental decision-making at a local level, the law on Land-use and building (2000) is relevant. The law on Land-use and building emphasizes public participation. For every plan for land use, for example to build, a plan must be attached for public participation and evaluation. The plan defines the parties or participants and the way the participants are to be heard (Bäcklund et al., 2002; 8). The parties or participants consist of all of those whose life will be affected by the planning. According to the law the parties or participants include all the landowners in the area, the people whose living, working or other aspects the plan might affect, as well as the authorities and communities whose field of work will be handled in the plan. A party might in this case also be e.g. a resident or citizen's organization (Bäcklund et al., 2008; 8).

There exist several challenges concerning public participation at a local level and especially in environmental decision-making. One is related to the general passivity of citizens. In addition, there are parties who consider public participation in environmental decision-making to be a severe hindrance to effective decisions (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5). The main argument against participation, suggest that many decisions effecting the environment are of particular scientific content and therefore the lay public is not sufficiently qualified to understand enough to ensure a fully informed involvement (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5). Subsequently, the concern is that involving lay people in environmental decision-making process results in very much one-sided and simplistic communication. Do lay people have the possibility to actually affect decisions or do they only legitimize the expertise and the power of them (Bäcklund et al., 2002: 10)? Further the bureaucracy and logistics of arranging public involvement is likely to slow the decision-process and delay actions for months or years, particularly if litigation is involved (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 6).

1.2

Selection of case studies

Exploring the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes at the local level in Finland is achieved with the help of case studies. However, since this report is part of a wider research programme, the selection of cases was framed by the research that was part of objective 2⁴ within EMLE. Therefore, in order to find appropriate municipal cases for this particular study there was first a need to select case study regions that had been adopted in objective 2.

The Finnish state environmental administration is comprised of both the Ministry of Environment and regional authorities. The state environmental administration is represented at the regional level by 13 Regional Environmental Centres (REC) and by 3 Environmental Permit Authority regions (EPA). The main task of the RECs is to look after matters concerned with the overloading of the environment, zoning

⁴ Studying public participation in the environmental permit processes on a regional level

and construction, nature and landscape related preservation and nurturing cultural surroundings, whereas the main task of the EPAs is to process applications for permits required under the Environmental Protection Act and the Water Act. EPAs also deal with claims for compensation related to water pollution. The RECs issue environmental permits for medium size industries, waste management, cleaning of polluted soil and small municipal wastewater treatment plants. In addition the RECs give advice to municipalities on their environment duties and constitute the primary link between the national environmental administration and those in municipalities with responsibilities relating to the environment.

The purpose of the case study selection process was to choose three regions; two REC regions and one EPA region. However, in practise this meant that only two REC regions were chosen, because there exist only 3 EPAs in Finland and they overlap the REC regions. Since the emphasis of the EMLE research program is on public participation, it is essential to have an understanding of the complex field of actors who are involved in decisions concerning the environment and particularly the environmental permit process. The actors act within existing structures, and most of all, they interact with each other. The interaction between the various parties may function without problems, but it is presumed that the interaction between the various actors and interests at some point leads to disputes and even larger conflicts. Some theories point out the importance of an “open”, transparent and a participation-friendly society as preventive towards conflicts, while other scholars see conflicts as something natural, which necessarily are not something evil, but instead can lead to positive consequences for society and governance structures. The overall intention in the selection of municipal and REC region case studies was to be able to explore the different possibilities (read different surroundings) that may help explain the nature of public participation in environmental permit processes at a local and regional level. For example, could the level of conflict in some way explain the nature of public participation in environmental permit processes?

Two variables both related to the level of conflict from the FIN2004⁵-questionnaire are used as background for the selection of case studies. The two variables which are used relate to question 22⁶ in the FIN2004- questionnaire. The first variable represents a mean value for an experienced conflict level for each REC region. The value is based on the separate values given for conflicts between the municipality and various actors in the environmental sector as well as within the municipal organization. The question concerned the following actors:

- between the municipality and the Ministry of the Environment
- between the municipality and the national central administration
- between the municipality and the regional environmental centre
- between the municipality and the Association of Finnish Regional and Local Authorities
- between the municipality and possible municipal federation for environmental protection work
- between the local environmental authority and other sectors of the municipality
- between various sectors in the municipality
- between the municipality and various stakeholder groups

⁵ The target group of the FIN2004-questionnaire was the environmental civil servants in the Finnish municipalities. The aim of the questionnaire was to analyze the large administrative changes that were carried out in the mid 1990s in Finland. The answer frequency for the questionnaire was 64 % (N: 284)

⁶ In your opinion, to what extent do conflict situations occur in the interaction between the following actors? Answers on a scale 1 (not at all) – 5 (to a very large extent)

The second variable used as indicator of conflict is the variable on conflict only between the municipality and the regional environmental centre. The reason for using this variable alone is that the selection of municipal case studies is based on to which regional environmental centre the municipalities belong to. Therefore it is important to have some idea of the interaction between the municipality and the regional environmental centre in question. Perhaps a low or high conflict level with the regional environmental centre might say something about the municipal conflict level in general. For example, if there seems to be many conflicts between the local and the regional level, is this also being reflected in the environmental permit processes in the municipality as well? Or do local-regional conflicts have no effect on the general conflict level at all?

The intention is to choose one REC-region with a calculated low conflict level between the municipalities and the REC, and one REC-region with a calculated high conflict level. The variables or indicators used for this selection are the earlier mentioned total conflict level and conflict level between the REC and the municipality, based on the experience from the local environmental civil servant or corresponding.

Based on the figures in the table 1, the following conclusions can be drawn and the following selections can be made. At this stage the variable which is focused more on is the variable two: conflict with the REC. As can be seen from this column, the highest level of conflict between the municipalities and the REC appears to be in Uusimaa and Etelä-Savo, which in comparison to each other are quite different from each other. Uusimaa is the mostly populated region of all thirteen REC- regions with a total population of over 1.4 million people. It is a region of growth with several large municipalities, such as Helsinki (the capital), Espoo and Vantaa – all with the largest populations in the country (from 180 000 in Vantaa to 560 000 in Helsinki). Uusimaa is considered being quite an urban area - 59 % of the municipalities have been classified as either urban or population centre municipalities. However, the region also includes quite rural areas with smaller municipalities which have been classified as countryside municipalities⁷. This means that the region in itself is not necessarily that homogenous. Etelä-Savo on the other hand belongs to the depopulation areas and a total population on slightly over 160 000 people. The largest municipality in Etelä-Savo is Mikkeli with 46 500 inhabitants, however quite small in comparison to Helsinki. Only 15 % of the municipalities in this region are classified as urban municipalities, while the percentage for countryside municipalities is as high as 80 %, which means that the region can be considered as a quite rural region. The difference between the regions could possibly also be seen in the standard deviation for variable two – for Uusimaa we have a high standard deviation of .885, while the corresponding figure for Etelä-Savo is .522.

Something to be noted is that not all municipalities from the REC regions are represented in the table 1, only the municipalities that participated in the FIN2004-survey, while the description of the REC region concerns the region as a whole, including all municipalities. For example Mikkeli did not participate in FIN2004. However, it is significant enough to get a picture of the region as it is.

The next step is to look more closely at the REC regions with lower conflict levels. The region with the least conflicts is situated in the area of Pohjois-Savo, with a mean value of 1.70. Also the region of Kaakkois-Suomi has a relatively low conflict level. However, the standard deviation is higher within the region of Kaakkois-Suomi than in Pohjois-Savo. Consequently, it appears that the sample of municipalities in the FIN2004-survey is more homogenous in Pohjois-Savo than in Kaakkois-Suomi and this could be one reason for choosing the region of Pohjois-Savo. Nevertheless,

⁷ According to the classification made by the Association of Finnish regional and local Authorities (ALFRA)

Table 1. Conflict levels		
	Total conflict level (variable 1)	Conflict with the REC (variable 2)
Uusimaa	M: 2.26 S: .453	2.50 .885
Lounais-Suomi	1.78 .484	2.19 .861
Häme	1.87 .599	2.16 .688
Kaakkois-Suomi	1.69 .474	1.84 .834
Etelä-Savo	1.91 .441	2.50 .522
Pohjois-Savo	1.88 .446	1.70 .675
Pohjois-Karjala	1.96 .494	2.21 .699
Länsi-Suomi	1.84 .555	2.28 .877
Keski-Suomi	1.79 .475	2.11 .937
Pohjois-Pohjanmaa	1.92 .425	2.36 .952
Kainuu	1.86 .280	2.38 .518
Lappi	1.59 .345	2.14 .900
Pirkanmaa	1.77 .597	2.27 .985
Total	1.86 .506	2.22 .849
Scale: 1 (not at all) – 5 (to a very large extent) M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation		

the regions are quite similar to each other, but keeping in mind our indicators for the selection of cases, the level of conflicts, the selection fall on the region with the lowest degree of conflict – Pohjois-Savo.

Like Etelä-Savo, Pohjois-Savo is a quite rural area with a tendency of depopulation. The number of inhabitants in the area is larger than the population in Etelä-Savo – about 250 000 inhabitants in comparison to about 160 000 inhabitants. The number of municipalities is quite similar; both regions have about 20 municipalities and the percentage of urban municipalities is very low, in both cases, not above 15 %, while the percentage for countryside municipalities in both cases is 80 %.

Based on the information received from table 1 and other information regarding the structural settings of the population of the REC regions the conclusion is that the case study regions will be Etelä-Savo as a representative for a high conflict region and Pohjois-Savo as a representative for a low conflict region. The reason not to use the region of Uusimaa as a case study region was partly because the region is less homogenous than Etelä-Savo, but also since there exists a quite good comparison object in the region of Pohjois-Savo. In addition, the REC – regions of Etelä-Savo and Pohjois-Savo belong to the same EPA – the Environmental Permit Authority region of Eastern Finland. The natural comparison region for the region of Uusimaa would be Lounais-Suomi, but the similarities between these two regions are not as clear

as for the two now selected cases. Consequently, the selected regions for the case studies of objective 2 and 3 within the EMLE research program are Etelä-Savo and Pohjois-Savo.

The next task is to select municipalities from the Etelä-Savo and Pohjois-Savo REC regions as case study municipalities for this particular report. The aim is to select six municipalities, three municipalities per selected REC region. The selection of municipalities is based on municipal size as well as level of conflict. Moreover the municipalities are also selected according to background variables (type of municipality, unemployment rate, municipal economic result etc.); the intention is to find three relatively matching pairs of different sized municipalities within the selected REC – regions. Subsequently, the intention is to select two large municipalities, two middle-sized municipalities as well as two small municipalities. Furthermore the selected municipalities must represent both calculated low conflict as well as calculated high conflict surroundings. The overall intention with the criteria for the selection of municipal case studies is the need to be able to explore the different possibilities that may possibly explain the nature of public participation in environmental permit processes at a local level.

Based on the following criteria, the following municipalities were selected. From the high conflict level REC region of Etelä-Savo (ESA) the city of Savonlinna, the municipality of Kangasniemi and the municipality of Puumala and from the low conflict level REC region of Pohjois-Savo the city of Varkaus, the city of Suonenjoki and the municipality of Vesanto. However, despite that the REC regions are labelled as either a high conflict level region or as a low conflict level region there exist one irregularity within ESA and PSA groups of municipalities. The irregularity concerns the middle - sized municipalities in both groups of municipalities. According to the mean values of both variable 1 and 2⁸ in table two, the municipality of Kangasniemi and the city of Suonenjoki appears at first sight to be in wrong grouping of municipalities. This is not the case. The intention with this irregularity is to inform of not only of possible differences between municipalities but also perhaps of the work of the two different Regional Environment Centres.

Table 2. Selection of case municipalities (cities)

	Large municipalities	Middle-sized municipalities	Small municipalities
High conflict level region: ESA	Savonlinna	Kangasniemi	Puumala
Mean variable 1:	2.75	1.43	2.18
Mean variable 2:	3	2	3
Number of inhabitants*:	27 239	6 251	2 807
Low conflict level region: PSA	Varkaus	Suonenjoki	Vesanto
Mean variable 1:	2.13	2.29	1.50
Mean variable 2:	1	3	1
Number of inhabitants*:	23 946	7 766	2 583
* 31.12.2005			

⁸ Variable 1 and 2 refers to the same variables used in table 1. However, in this case the variable represents only a mean value for one municipality.

The following step is to further investigate the selected municipalities, in regard to other aspects than conflict level and size of municipality. The purpose is to view the possible similarities and differences between the selected pairs. The background variables used are the following: Type of the municipality (Type), Population Centre Population (Pop-C-P), Unemployment Rate (Unemp-R), Economic Result (Ec-Res) and Work Self Support (Work-S-S). Most variables represent figures from 2003, which is in line with the material used for the variables on conflict levels, that are taken from the FIN2004-survey conducted in 2004.

Based on the figures in table three there appears to be mostly similarities between the larger urban cities, except when it comes to the economic results for the year 2003. The city of Savonlinna has a positive economic result, while the city of Varkaus has a large negative fiscal result. But, both Savonlinna and Varkaus have quite high unemployment rates in comparison to the Finnish mean municipal unemployment rate (12.35 %). Consequently, both ESA and PSA regions have a slightly higher unemployment rate than many other regions, with exceptions of particularly Kainuu and Lappi with unemployment rates over 20 % and Pohjois-Karjala with 19.12 %. However, both the cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus have more workplaces situated in the city than employed manpower living in the city.

	REC	Confl	Type ¹⁾	Pop-C-P ²⁾	Unemp-R ³⁾	Ec – Res ⁴⁾	Work-S-S ⁵⁾
Savonlinna	ESA	High	U	85.8	17.4	+6	103.3
Varkaus	PSA	Low	U	92.6	15.1	-481	113
Kangasniemi	ESA	Low	R	49.1	17.2	-130	90.3
Suonenjoki	PSA	High	P	70.9	17.5	-277	96.8
Puumala	ESA	High	R	47.6	14.2	-566	87.3
Vesanto	PSA	Low	R	31.2	13.9	-139	86.4

¹⁾ Division according to the population of the population centres in relation to the total population, U=urban municipality, P = population centre municipality, R =rural municipality, The Association of Finnish Regional and Local Authorities, Based on the population count in 2000, a slight revision in 2005

²⁾ Degree of population centre population, Statistics Finland 2000

³⁾ The degree of unemployed population in relation to the total amount of the total manpower in the municipality, Statistics Finland 2003

⁴⁾ The economic result of the municipality in 2003

⁵⁾ Self support when it comes to workplaces, describes the relation between the workplaces situated within the municipality and the employed manpower living in the municipality, Statistics Finland 2003

The middle sized municipalities differ in quite many aspects. Kangasniemi is a rural municipality, while Suonenjoki with a slightly higher population is a population centre municipality. This is also quite visible in the variable of the degree of population centre population, and consequently, Kangasniemi can be described as rural municipality, whereas the city of Suonenjoki can be described as a population centre municipality. On the other hand, both Kangasniemi and Suonenjoki appear to share the same problems; quite high unemployment rate and a quite negative economical situation and especially Suonenjoki seem to show a very bad fiscal result. However, Suonenjoki do have a higher self support degree when it comes to workplaces.

The municipalities of Puumala and Vesanto are both small rural municipalities, with an unemployment level higher than the national average. In addition, and especially the municipality of Puumala, show a very negative fiscal result. The municipalities' weak economical situation is neither helped by the fact that both municipalities are not self supported when it comes to workplaces.

One final aspect concerning the municipalities that have not yet been discussed is the question of the population structure. According to statistical data, all six municipalities of the ESA and PSA regions, even the larger cities, have a distorted population structure (www.kunnat.net). When approximately 16 % of the Finnish population is older than 65 years, is the corresponding number considerably higher among the ESA and PSA municipalities. For example, nearly a third (27 %) of the smaller municipalities population is 65 years or older. Therefore, the number of people under 15 years of age and the number of people in the age between 15 – 64 years is smaller within the ESA and PSA municipalities, than the national average.

1.3

Methods

To explore the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes at the local level we collected two different data sets. The first step in the case study investigation at the local level consists of a traditional quantitative data-collection through a survey. The quantitative data-collection broadens the analysis of the respondent's understanding of the concept of public participation as well as the attitudes and implementation of the concept in the every-day activities in the municipality. In addition to this, the survey will also contribute to the understanding of the corresponding information concerning the environmental permit processes in a local setting, which of course still is the main objective of the project.

One reason for including a more general perspective is that in order to be able to say something about environmental permit processes and the actual implementation of public participation in these processes, there is also a need to understand the local setting in itself. Without an understanding of the local administrative culture, both in general and when it comes to the local environmental administration, it is difficult to be able to draw conclusions on the environmental permit processes as a single phenomenon. Another reason for including a more general approach to the investigation is to begin with, that the number of environmental permits issued between the years 2000 and 2006 varies a lot. However, a more significant factor is that the number of environmental permits issued, particularly in the smaller municipalities, is very low and therefore can give us very little information on the environmental permit processes and consequently may tell us very little about the situation of public participation, both when it comes to environmental permit processes and in general.

The quantitative data-collection was divided into two categories, that at least partly includes different sets of questions. The first category consists of what is referred to as municipal actors, or in other words political and administrative representatives of the municipalities. The overall intention with this particular category is to enhance the understanding of the environment in which various actors act and also to give an idea of the general attitudes towards the public and consequently public participation in a municipal decision-making process. The group of municipal actors consists of civil servants as well as local elected officials. The civil servants are represented by the central administration of the municipality as well as of representatives from the social- and health, educational, technical, environmental and agricultural sector. The elected officials consist of members of the municipal council and the executive board. Also the chairmen and vice chairmen of the board of social- and health care, education and agriculture are included. Furthermore, all regular members of the technical and environmental board (including boards with shared tasks e.g. building and planning) are included; since these boards are the likely boards to handle environmental matters and also environmental permits. The total number of posted questionnaires to actors within the municipal organizations is approximately 300.

The second category of the quantitative data-collection is from key stakeholders⁹ in the municipality, which may or may not have been involved or participated in municipal decision-making processes. The intention was to investigate public participation from the stakeholder's point of view, and not solely explore the nature of public participation at a local level from the perspective of municipal actors. However, the selection of stakeholders which may or may not have been involved or participated in municipal decision-making processes was difficult. The information on active stakeholders in the municipal setting is quite inadequate. A list of local associations and businesses can be found – what is harder is to recognize the stakeholders which might have participated in local decision-making processes, including environmental permit processes. However, in spite of these challenges, the selection of stakeholders is carried out according to the principle of which organizations, or other third sector participants or business enterprises that might have had interest of promoting their interest within a local decision-making process, including environmental permit processes. The total number of posted questionnaires to possible stakeholders was 170.

The second set of data is qualitative and based on interviews, at least to some extent planned and conducted drawing on the preliminary survey results. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the situation of public participation in the municipalities. The interviewees consisted of representatives from the target groups for the quantitative data-collection: municipal civil servants, local politicians, and representatives from community organizations and private enterprises.

The interviews were conducted in March and in April 2007. The interviews were recorded and the interviewees were asked to answer different questions. The questions which were asked depended upon the position of the interviewee and also on the preliminary survey results. The overall intention with the interviews was to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of public participation in the municipalities.

The total number of interviews was 24, of which 15 were conducted within the ESA municipalities and 9 within the PSA municipalities. Preferably the number of interviews could have been more even between ESA and PSA municipalities. What sets the ESA and PSA municipalities' apart is the fact that among the PSA municipalities no representatives of the local associations or organisations, or local companies were interviewed. The reason for this was that no one of the local community associations, voluntary organisations or local companies was willing to take part of an interview.

Civil servants were the most common interviewees. There were twelve interviews conducted with civil servants, six from each local setting. Eight interviews were conducted with local politicians, five within the ESA municipalities and three within the PSA municipalities. Furthermore, three third sector associations or organisations and two local companies were interviewed. It should be noted that one of the ESA interviewees acted as both a civil servant and a member of the local council.

Generally, the purpose of the quantitative data-collection (survey) is to paint a picture of the municipalities' and the stakeholders' attitudes to public participation in the decision-making processes in general as well as when it comes to environmental matters and environmental permit processes. The qualitative collection of data (interviews) on the other hand is intended to allow a deeper investigation of the attitudes towards implementation of as well as possible effects and outcomes of public participation generally and when it comes to environmental permit processes. The interviews will also allow a further look on possible problem areas and conflicts in relation to public participation in a local setting.

⁹ Local companies, local organizations, or other representatives from the local third sector

Limitations of the data

The quantitative data-collection was collected during the period of November 2006 – February 2007. The data-collection of the opinions of the municipal actors was carried out during November 2006 and January 2007, whereas the data-collection of the opinions of the stakeholders was carried out during January and February 2007. The qualitative data-collection was carried out in March and April of 2007. The limitation of the data material refers to the low response rates of the quantitative data-collection and subsequently to the reliability of the quantitative data material. Accordingly, the findings from the quantitative data-collection can only be looked upon as qualitative presumptions.

Overall the quantitative data material suffers from relatively low response rates. The response rates among the local politicians and local civil servants vary from 30 to 57 percent depending on municipality, whereas from a regional perspective the response rates vary from 40 to 44 percent. However, the response rates among the local stakeholders are even lower, in some cities as low as 11 and 14 percent. A possible explanation to the low response rates, especially concerning the low answer rates among the stakeholders, is the fact that there exist very few cases of environmental permit processes in the selected case study municipalities.

In order to ease the selection of respondents of the quantitative data-collection, and also in general to receive a better picture of the concept public participation as well of environmental matters in the case study municipalities, a short telephone interview was carried out in the autumn of 2006 with the municipal secretary/corresponding and with environmental civil servants/corresponding in the case municipalities. The results of the interviews were challenging. Placing aside the fact that there seems to

	Total number of local politicians	Answers received by the local politicians	Total number of local civil servants	Answers received by the local civil servants	Response rates per municipality	Total response rate per region
High conflict level region						
Puumala	26	13* (50%)	5	4* (80%)	55 %	40 %
Kangasniemi	44	20 (45%)	13	6 (46%)	46 %	
Savonlinna	61	16* (26%)	12	6* (50%)	30 %	
Low conflict level region						
Vesanto	24	11 (46%)	6	6 (100%)	57 %	44 %
Suonenjoki	36	16* (44%)	8	4* (50%)	45 %	
Varkaus	52	17* (33%)	16	8* (50%)	37 %	
	Total number of local organizations	Answers received by the local organizations	Total number of local companies	Answers received by local companies	Response rates per municipality	Total response rate per region
High conflict level region						
Puumala	14	3 (21%)	5	2 (40%)	26 %	21 %
Kangasniemi	25	7 (28%)	5	1 (20%)	27 %	
Savonlinna	5	1 (20%)	22	2 (9%)	11 %	
Low conflict level region						
Vesanto	32	10 (31%)	3	0 (0%)	29 %	26 %
Suonenjoki	42	13 (31%)	4	0 (0%)	28 %	
Varkaus	7	0 (0%)	7	2 (29%)	14 %	

* Among the respondents were persons who both act as a local politician as well as a local civil servant

be obvious problems in understanding the concept of public participation and that the number of environmental permits each year (2000-2006) seems to be considerably lower and less conflict sensitive than expected, there exist no patterns in the activities of various stakeholders in the municipality. Moreover, the citizen initiatives seem to be quite rare, in larger as well as in the smaller municipalities – the number of initiatives is around two each year.

The results of the short interviews constitute a real challenge for exploring the nature of public participation in environmental permit processes at a local level, as there appears to be no pattern of public participation activity of various stakeholders, and furthermore, there exist few environmental permits processes per year and moreover citizen initiatives are rare. Since there are few environmental permits at a local level and the local community in general seem to be rather passive concerning public participation, the analysis of public participation in the environmental permit processes at the local level in Finland becomes more difficult. The results of the short interviews are also perhaps a partial answer to the question of exploring the nature of public participation in the environmental permit process, as one could consequently draw the conclusion that in general there exists no widespread public participation at a local level as well in the environmental permit processes.

As a consequence it is even more important to understand the local setting in itself and enhance the understanding of the environment in which various local actors act. One of the main focuses of the report will be on trying to explore the general attitudes towards public participation in a municipal decision-making process, however, only from a municipal actors' perspective, since the reliability of the data concerning the stakeholders opinion of public participation is too weak. Still, the qualitative collection of data (interviews) will allow a deeper investigation of possible effects and outcomes of public participation generally and when it comes to environmental permit processes. The interviews will also allow a further look on possible problem areas and conflicts in relation to public participation in a local setting. Therefore the data that will be utilized for the particular report consist only of the quantitative data concerning the opinions of the municipal actors as well as of the material originating from the interviews.

1.5

Report content

The quantitative data (the opinions of the municipal actors) and the qualitative data (interviews with municipal civil servants and local politicians and with representatives from organizations and private enterprises) constitute the basis of this report. The quantitative data comprise the empirical section of this report and will be analysed and discussed in chapters 2 to 4. The overall intention of chapter 2 is to analyse the possibilities to influence and participate in the municipal decision making process. The general purpose of chapter 3 is to chart the attitudes towards public participation. The overall objective of chapter 4 is to analyse public participation within the environmental permit procedure, but also within the planning permit procedures which is also a part of municipal environmental administration.

The presentation of the quantitative data occurs with help of tables. The tables consist of mean values of the opinions of the respondents, as well as of the standard deviations of the mean values. The tables are constructed in a way that enables comparisons between the ESA and PSA municipalities, as well as comparisons between the opinions of the local politicians and local civil servants within these two settings. The quantitative data has been aggregated to make individual municipal comparisons possible, because the respondents per municipality are relatively few, and would

subsequently distort the mean values. Accordingly, the individual municipality is represented by a combination of the opinions of the municipality's local politicians and local civil servants. The tables which present the opinions of the individual municipalities can be found in the appendix section of the report.

Chapter 5 focuses on expanding the general findings of the quantitative data with the results of qualitative data from the interviews. The aim of chapter 5 is also to discuss possible effects and outcomes of public participation generally and when it comes to environmental permit processes. Furthermore the intention is to discuss possible problem areas and conflicts in relation to public participation in a local setting.

The report concludes with a discussion (chapter 6) which places the empirical findings (both quantitative and qualitative) in a broader context, a context that consist of the ongoing debate of raising the importance of direct democracy in order to activate citizens to take part of the democratic decision-making process. The final discussion raises also the question of whether the citizens at large want a greater involvement in politics and in democratic decision-making.

2 Influencing and participating at a local level

The overall intention of chapter two is to draw the outline for the possibilities to influence and participate in municipal decision-making. To achieve this is chapter two divided into different subchapters, which have different aims. Chapter two is concluded by a summarisation with the focus of drawing the outlines for the possibilities to influence and participate in municipal decision-making. All data presented in chapter two originates from the quantitative data and the opinions of the municipal actors. The data is presented with the help of tables.

The starting point of the analysis of influencing and participating at a local level is the examination of the atmosphere between the participating municipalities and different partners which are affiliated with them. The intention of chapter two is also to examine the extent, and the effect of different actors' attempts to influence general municipal decision-making, and environmental decision-making in the municipalities. The objective of chapter two is as well to enhance the understanding of how big effect participation has in different areas which are affiliated with the municipality. Furthermore, the aim is to analyse the extent and effect of different participation methods used to affect municipal decision-making.

2.1

Influencing and participating in a cooperative or conflicting context?

The starting point of the analysis of influencing and participating at a local level is the examination of the general atmosphere between the ESA and PSA municipalities and different partners which are affiliated with them. The foremost idea with examining the atmosphere is to enhance the understanding of the relationships between the municipalities and the different state authorities, between the municipalities and national associations, between different actors within the municipalities' organization, and also between the municipalities and the local companies and organizations, as well as between the municipalities and local individual inhabitants. Having an insight of the relationship between the municipalities and the different partners which surrounds them, contributes to the overall intention of drawing the outlines for the possibilities to influence and participate in municipal decision-making. One can assume that a cooperative atmosphere between different actors constitute a far better foundation in which to influence and participate than in a conflicting atmosphere.

In general, the atmosphere among partners which are affiliated with the ESA and PSA municipalities' activity and among actors within the ESA and PSA municipalities' organization appears to be quite positive. The elements of a cooperative atmosphere seem to be more dominating both among the different partners which are affiliated with the municipalities' activity and among actors within the municipalities' organization,

than the elements of a conflicting atmosphere. As a result there exist overall no large differences of opinion between the ESA and PSA municipalities, as well as among the ESA and PSA municipalities' politicians and civil servants. Nonetheless, some small differences do exist. The least cooperative atmosphere can be observed between the ESA and PSA municipalities and their local individual inhabitants, whereas the most cooperative atmosphere can be found between the ESA and PSA municipalities and the authorities representing the state and the association of Finnish local authorities.

However, when examining the atmosphere between municipalities and partners which are associated with them, from an individual municipality's perspective, is the impression that the larger cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus experience to a certain degree a less cooperative atmosphere in comparison to the smaller and middle – sized municipalities. Especially Varkaus appear to experience some problems among the actors within the city's organization. The big cities relationship with their inhabitants appears also to be somewhat problematic. Moreover, Savonlinna appear to experience a rather complicated relationship with the local associations and organisations. Of

Table 5. The general atmosphere						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Between the municipality and the state authorities	M: 3.66 S: .921 N: 59*	3.57 .972 47	3.93 .799 15	3.56 .915 59*	3.53 .960 43	3.56 .856 18
Between the municipality and the regional authorities	3.66 .902 59*	3.65 .934 48	3.79 .802 14	3.66 .863 59*	3.65 .897 43	3.61 .850 18
Between the municipality and the association of Finnish local authorities	3.86 .736 58*	3.83 .761 47	3.86 .770 14	3.86 .847 58*	3.86 .899 42	3.78 .808 18
Between leading local politicians and leading local civil servants	3.61 .996 57*	3.59 1.024 46	3.71 .994 14	3.53 .941 58*	3.55 .942 42	3.50 1.043 18
Between the leadership of the municipality and the staff	3.22 1.035 59*	3.19 1.056 47	3.40 .910 15	3.29 .948 59*	3.26 .848 43	3.28 1.179 18
Between the political bodies and the local administration	3.46 .837 59*	3.47 .830 47	3.53 .834 15	3.39 .788 59*	3.40 .791 43	3.33 .840 18
Within the different local administration sectors	3.29 .795 58*	3.30 .813 46	3.40 .737 15	3.20 .943 59*	3.12 .981 43	3.33 .840 18
Between the different local administration sectors	3.36 .831 58*	3.30 .840 46	3.67 .724 15	3.40 .836 58*	3.23 .812 43	3.71 .849 17
Between the local municipality and the local business community	3.66 .921 59*	3.62 .968 47	3.73 .799 15	3.44 .866 57*	3.43 .914 42	3.41 .795 17
Between the local municipality and local associations or organisations	3.26 .807 58*	3.19 .851 47	3.50 .650 14	3.24 .779 58*	3.31 .840 42	3.06 .639 18
Between the local municipality and the local individual inhabitants	3.10 .865 59*	3.06 .919 47	3.27 .704 15	3.09 .923 58*	3.00 .963 42	3.28 .826 18

Scale: conflicting atmosphere (1) - cooperative atmosphere (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

the other participating municipalities, only Puumala shows signs of experiencing a conflicting atmosphere, namely between the leadership of the municipality and the staff.

Since the general focus of the report is to understand the nature of public participation in the environmental permit process, is the following step to examine the general atmosphere between the ESA and PSA municipalities' environmental administration and actors which are associated with them. The general atmosphere among partners which are affiliated with the ESA and PSA municipalities' environmental administrations activity and among the actors within the municipalities' organization that interact with the environmental administration seems also to be rather positive and cooperative.

Overall, there appears not to exist any significant differences of opinion between the ESA and PSA municipalities. But, there exist some differences of opinion between the PSA politicians and civil servants. The PSA local politicians experience in comparison to the local civil servants that the atmosphere between the PSA municipalities' environmental administration and the neighbour municipalities as containing some elements of conflicts. The local PSA politicians do also experience that the atmosphere between the PSA municipalities' environmental administration and the local individual inhabitants as including some parts of conflicts.

Table 6. The general atmosphere in the environmental administration						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the regional environment centre	3.56 .915 59*	3.56 .873 48	3.71 1.069 14	3.66 .983 58*	3.52 .994 42	3.83 .985 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the environment permit authority	3.48 .903 58*	3.51 .804 47	3.43 1.284 14	3.60 .917 58*	3.50 .969 42	3.72 .826 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and neighbour municipalities	3.43 .901 58*	3.47 .881 47	3.36 1.082 14	3.12 .965 57*	2.93 .905 41	3.50 .985 18
Between the leadership of the municipality and the municipality's environmental administration	3.69 .940 58*	3.68 .935 47	3.71 1.069 14	3.31 .902 59*	3.24 .906 42	3.39 .916 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and other administration sectors	3.34 .983 58*	3.30 .976 47	3.57 1.089 14	3.36 .831 58*	3.21 .871 42	3.61 .698 18
Within the municipality's environmental administration	3.74 .917 57*	3.70 .866 46	4.00 1.038 14	3.69 .863 58*	3.57 .887 42	3.83 .857 18
Between leading local politicians and leading local civil servants	3.72 .970 58*	3.72 .949 47	3.86 1.027 14	3.40 .877 58*	3.31 .950 42	3.50 .707 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the local business community	3.38 .952 58*	3.43 .878 47	3.36 1.151 14	3.32 .880 59*	3.21 .914 43	3.50 .786 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and local associations or organisations	3.22 .839 56*	3.30 .749 47	3.14 1.099 14	3.19 .798 59*	3.09 .811 43	3.33 .767 18
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the local individual inhabitants	3.12 .839 58*	3.23 .813 47	3.00 1.038 14	3.16 .804 56*	2.98 .800 40	3.53 .717 18
Scale: conflicting atmosphere (1) - cooperative atmosphere (5)						
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents						
* = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant						

In general, the ESA and PSA municipalities' environmental administration appears to have a relatively cooperative atmosphere with the environmental state authorities. Also the internal atmosphere within the ESA and PSA municipalities' environmental administration appears very cooperative. The least cooperative atmosphere can be found between the municipalities' environmental administration and the local associations or organisations and the local individual inhabitants.

From an individual municipal viewpoint, the city of Savonlinna appears in comparison to the other municipalities as experiencing to a certain degree a more conflicting atmosphere with certain partners which are affiliated with Savonlinnas environmental administrations activity. The atmosphere between Savonlinnas environmental administration and neighbouring municipalities, and also with other internal administration sectors as well as with the local individual inhabitants could be described as containing some elements of conflicts. Generally, smaller and middle-sized municipalities demonstrate a more cooperative atmosphere when examining the atmosphere among partners which are affiliated with the municipalities' environmental administrations activity and among the actors within the municipalities' organization that interact with the environmental administration.

2.2

The extent and the effect of influencing municipal decision-making

The intention of this subchapter is to explore the extent and the effect of different actors' attempts to influence municipal decision-making. The analysis starts with exploring the extent of different actors' attempts to influence the general municipal decision-making. After establishing the extent, is the following step to analyse the effect of different actors' attempts to influence municipal decision-making.

Overall, the most active actors' which try to influence the municipal decision-making in the ESA and PSA municipalities' are the civil servants and the politicians. Different associations within the third sector appear to be relatively passive in their attempts to influence the municipal decision-making. Individual inhabitants in the ESA and PSA municipalities seem also to a certain degree as rather passive in influencing the municipal decision-making.

Generally, there appears not to exist any significant differences of opinion between the ESA and the PSA municipalities. Nevertheless, it appears that the ESA respondents experience at large that the extent of different actors which attempts to influence is somewhat more frequent. And also, in both local settings, the local politicians seem to experience different actors as more active in comparison to the local civil servants. However, the local politicians do experience that the most active actors which try to influence municipal decision-making are the local civil servants, whereas the civil servants consider the local politicians as the most active actors which tries to influence municipal decision-making.

In general, municipal size and surrounding seem not to matter when analysing the extent of influencing the decisions in the municipality. As a consequence, the activity pattern is quite clear; the active actors are the local civil servants and the local politicians, and also to a certain degree the state authorities, whereas different organizations or associations, as well as individual inhabitants are rather passive. But, some small variations do exist between the individual municipalities. For example, the agricultural associations in Puumala and Vesanto appear to be more active when comparing to the agricultural associations in the middle – sized and larger municipalities. The situation is the reverse with associations connected to the local

Table 7. The extent of influencing the decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Regional authorities	3.07 1.086 55*	3.19 1.052 43	2.73 1.033 15	2.97 1.008 58*	3.10 1.008 42	2.50 .985 18
The association of Finnish local authorities	2.67 1.156 55*	2.77 1.043 43	2.47 1.407 15	2.53 1.251 59*	2.67 1.248 43	2.06 1.162 18
Other municipalities	2.62 1.194 55*	2.64 1.209 45	2.77 1.235 13	2.60 1.169 58*	2.74 1.127 42	2.28 1.179 18
The civil servants in the municipality	3.96 .990 56*	4.07 .950 44	3.73 1.033 15	3.84 .998 58*	3.91 .947 43	3.65 1.057 17
The politicians in the municipality	3.85 .960 54*	3.76 .983 42	4.27 .799 15	3.74 .928 58*	3.72 .959 43	3.82 .883 17
The companies in the municipality	2.88 .974 56	3.07 .846 44	2.53 1.246 15	2.81 .963 58*	2.86 .977 42	2.67 .907 18
Local associations within the business life	2.75 1.083 56*	2.91 1.096 44	2.40 .910 15	2.62 .988 58*	2.69 1.047 42	2.39 .860 18
Community associations	2.67 1.091 57*	2.82 1.093 45	2.40 1.056 15	2.58 1.192 59*	2.58 1.180 43	2.56 1.199 18
Environmental associations	2.33 1.171 55*	2.47 1.222 43	2.20 1.082 15	2.10 .986 58*	2.21 1.025 42	1.78 .808 18
Agricultural associations	2.33 1.107 57*	2.49 1.141 45	1.93 .799 15	2.17 1.036 59*	2.25 .954 43	1.89 1.183 18
Senior citizen associations	2.18 1.162 56*	2.25 1.222 44	2.00 .926 15	2.26 .947 58*	2.33 .874 42	2.06 1.110 18
Youth associations	2.05 1.033 58*	2.11 1.100 46	2.00 .926 15	2.10 .959 59*	2.19 1.006 43	1.89 .832 18
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.66 1.149 56*	2.73 1.149 44	2.00 1.121 15	2.40 1.012 60*	2.30 .954 44	2.61 1.145 18

Scale: some questions (1) - very many questions (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

business life and with the companies in the municipalities. Business life associations and local companies are more active in middle-sized and large municipalities.

The extent of different actors' activity in trying to influence municipal decisions is reflected when analysing the effect of influencing municipal decision-making. As a consequence, the local politicians and the local civil servants are most effective in influencing decisions in the ESA and PSA municipalities. Other effective actors are state and regional authorities. Third sector associations and organisations, especially senior and youth associations but also environmental and agricultural organizations have relatively little effect in their attempts to influence decisions in the municipalities. Also individual inhabitants are rather ineffective in influencing municipal decision-making.

Overall, both the ESA and PSA local politicians experience the local civil servants as the most efficient in influencing municipal decision-making, while the ESA and PSA civil servants experience the local politicians as the most efficient actor to influence municipal decisions. But, there exist some differences of opinion between the ESA and PSA respondents. For example, the ESA local politicians experience that state authorities has a relatively big effect in influencing municipal decisions, while the PSA local politicians does not experience that state authorities has such a decisive effect in municipal decision-making. Additionally, it appears that the ESA respondents, in general, experience different actors as more effective in influencing municipal decisions in comparison to the PSA setting and the opinions of the PSA respondents. But, on the other hand the differences are rather small.

Municipal size appears to have some significance when analysing the effect of influencing the decisions in the municipalities. There appears to exist a weak tendency that third sector associations or organizations have even more difficulties to influence the municipal decision-making in the larger cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus. The situation seems to be little of the opposite when analysing the effect of local companies and local associations affiliated with the local business life influence, the larger municipality, and the better appears the possibilities to influence municipal decision. It appears overall, irrespective of municipal size, that local companies have in comparison to third sector organisations and associations, and individual inhabitants more effect to influence municipal decisions.

Table 8. The effect of influencing the decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Regional authorities	3.44 .877 55*	3.58 .879 43	3.13 .743 15	3.30 1.030 53*	3.24 .983 37	3.22 1.263 18
The association of Finnish local authorities	3.07 1.043 54*	3.19 1.008 43	2.79 1.051 14	2.68 1.221 53*	2.78 1.250 37	2.33 1.138 18
Other municipalities	2.81 1.001 53*	2.81 1.008 43	3.00 1.080 13	2.56 1.058 54*	2.68 1.093 38	2.17 .924 18
The civil servants in the municipality	3.82 .993 56*	3.89 .970 44	3.67 .976 15	3.64 1.094 53*	3.70 1.077 37	3.44 1.149 18
The politicians in the municipality	3.72 .998 54*	3.64 1.008 42	4.07 .884 15	3.42 .957 52*	3.38 .982 37	3.47 .943 17
The companies in the municipality	2.93 .970 56*	2.95 1.011 44	3.07 .884 15	2.91 1.005 53	2.86 1.032 37	2.89 .963 18
Local associations within the business life	2.81 .892 54*	2.88 .889 42	2.73 .884 15	2.51 1.031 53*	2.57 1.068 37	2.22 1.003 18
Community associations	2.67 .963 55*	2.72 1.008 43	2.60 .828 15	2.45 1.030 53*	2.59 1.117 37	2.06 .725 18
Environmental associations	2.42 1.016 52*	2.55 1.061 40	2.20 .775 15	2.24 1.045 54*	2.34 1.097 38	1.89 .900 18
Agricultural associations	2.52 1.041 54*	2.64 1.100 42	2.20 .676 15	2.25 1.046 52*	2.42 1.079 36	1.78 .878 18
Senior citizen associations	2.22 .904 54*	2.21 .925 42	2.33 .816 15	2.30 1.030 53*	2.38 1.063 37	2.06 .938 18
Youth associations	2.27 .912 55*	2.32 .909 44	2.29 .994 14	2.13 .900 53*	2.24 .925 37	1.83 .786 18
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.20 .959 54*	2.21 1.025 42	2.40 .828 15	2.35 .894 54*	2.32 .962 38	2.33 .767 18

Scale: no actual effect (1) - a very big effect (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

The extent and the effect of influencing environmental decision-making in the municipalities

The intention of this subchapter is to explore the extent and the effect of different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making in the municipalities. The starting point of this particular subchapter is to analyse the extent of different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making in the municipalities. After establishing the extent, is the next step to analyse the effect of different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making in the municipalities.

From a general point of view it appears that the most active actors which try to influence the environmental decision-making in the ESA and PSA municipalities are the civil servants within the municipalities' environmental administration. Other active actors which try to influence environmental decision making are the regional environment centres and the members of the environmental committees in the ESA and PSA municipalities. Also the members of the local municipal boards and the environment permit authority are rather active in trying to influence environmental decisions in the ESA and PSA municipalities. The least active actors which try to influence the environmental decision-making in the ESA and PSA municipalities are the senior citizen and youth associations. Overall, associations and organizations within the third sector, including environmental associations, are relatively passive in their attempts to influence the environmental decision-making in the ESA and PSA municipalities. Also the local companies and the local individual inhabitants appear to be somewhat passive in influencing environmental decision-making.

However, it appears the actors which are affiliated with the ESA municipalities' environmental matters are in general more active in their attempts to influence environmental decision-making than in comparison to the attempts of different actors which are affiliated with the PSA municipalities. Especially civil servants within the PSA municipalities experience different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making as rather inactive. The PSA civil servants experience in particular that the Ministry of Environment, and the Regional Environment Centre and also the Environment Permit Authority as rather inactive in influencing municipal environmental decisions. The PSA civil servants do also experience to a certain extent that the members of the local council and the members of the local municipal board as relatively inactive. According to the opinions of the PSA civil servants, the civil servants within the PSA municipalities' environmental administration are the only real active actors which attempts to influence environmental decision-making.

But, it is not only the civil servants in the PSA municipalities which experience different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making as rather inactive. Also the civil servants in the ESA municipalities' experience, at least in comparison at the local politicians, that the third sector associations or organisations are very passive in their attempts to influence environmental decision-making. This difference of opinion pattern does also exist between the PSA civil servants and politicians. On the other hand, in both local settings, the civil servants do experience in comparison to the local politicians that the individual inhabitants in the municipality as more active in their attempts to influence environmental decision making.

Municipal size seem to not to be a significant contributor to differences of opinion when analysing the extent of influencing environmental decisions. But, there do seem to exist some small differences of opinion. The respondents representing Vesanto, Suonenjoki, Varkaus (all PSA municipalities) and Puumala experience that the civil servants within the environmental administration as the most active actors to influence environmental decision-making, whereas the respondents representing Kangasniemi and Savonlinna experience the members of the environmental committee as the most active actors. However, as stated above, the differences of opinion are small.

Table 9. The extent of influencing the environmental decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Regional environment centre	3.38 1.051 52*	3.35 1.066 43	3.58 .900 12	3.09 1.169 57*	3.24 1.200 41	2.56 1.042 18
Environmental permit authority	3.06 1.127 52*	3.23 1.043 43	2.50 1.168 12	2.67 1.314 57*	2.96 1.313 41	1.83 .924 18
Other municipalities	2.13 .981 53*	2.25 .943 44	1.92 1.084 12	2.21 .995 57*	2.39 .997 41	1.72 .826 18
The civil servants within the municipality's environmental administration	3.53 1.120 53*	3.55 1.044 44	3.42 1.379 12	3.46 1.070 57*	3.41 1.140 41	3.44 .922 18
Other civil servants within the municipality	2.62 1.060 53*	2.75 1.059 44	2.25 .866 12	2.71 .899 56*	2.71 .970 42	2.61 .698 18
Member of the local council	2.70 1.119 53*	2.80 1.047 44	2.67 1.435 12	2.61 1.003 56*	2.68 1.011 41	2.35 .931 17
Members of the local municipal board	3.23 1.250 53*	3.41 1.106 44	2.75 1.545 12	2.93 1.067 57*	3.12 1.041 42	2.47 1.007 17
Member of the environmental committee	3.52 1.146 52*	3.57 1.087 44	3.45 1.293 11	3.11 1.139 56*	3.15 1.231 40	2.89 .963 18
The companies in the municipality	2.45 1.030 53*	2.64 .990 44	2.00 1.044 12	2.39 .818 57*	2.43 .801 42	2.24 .831 17
Local associations within the business life	2.31 1.039 52*	2.50 1.000 44	1.73 .905 11	2.10 .852 58*	2.21 .871 42	1.72 .752 18
Community associations	2.35 1.008 52*	2.43 1.049 44	2.09 .701 11	2.21 .853 58*	2.24 .850 42	2.00 .907 16
Environmental associations	2.43 1.221 51*	2.60 1.251 42	2.00 .953 12	2.19 1.051 58*	2.24 1.031 42	1.94 1.110 18
Agricultural associations	2.37 1.183 51*	2.56 1.181 43	1.64 .674 11	2.04 .886 57*	2.12 .900 41	1.72 .826 18
Senior citizen associations	1.81 .886 52*	1.84 .939 44	1.82 .603 11	1.83 .841 58*	1.86 .843 42	1.72 .826 18
Youth associations	1.81 .962 53*	1.89 1.005 45	1.73 .786 11	1.79 .825 56*	1.80 .823 40	1.72 .826 18
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.42 1.016 52*	2.39 .993 44	2.73 1.009 11	2.30 .999 57*	2.17 .946 41	2.50 1.098 18

Scale: some questions (1) - very many questions (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Overall it appears that those actors which demonstrate an active level of interest and attempts to influence environmental decision-making in the municipalities are also quite effective in their attempts. The most effective in influencing environmental decision-making are the Regional Environments Centres and the civil servants within the municipalities' environmental administration. The environmental permit authority is also rather successful in influencing environmental decisions, as is also the members of the environmental committees and to a certain extent also the members of the local municipal board. Third sector associations, organisations, especially senior citizen and youth associations, and the local companies as well as the individual inhabitants are relatively unsuccessful in their attempts to influence environmental decisions in the ESA and PSA municipalities.

Nonetheless, there do exist variations in the ESA and PSA respondents' opinions regarding the effect of influencing environmental decision-making. The ESA respondents experience that actors in general, including third sector associations and organisations, are more effective in influencing environmental decisions, at least in comparison to the corresponding opinions of the PSA respondents. One notable difference of opinion concerns the Ministry of Environments effect in influencing environmental decisions in the municipalities. The ESA respondents' experience that the Ministry of Environment have a rather big effect in influencing environmental decisions, whereas the PSA respondents feel that the Ministry of Environment does not have a decisive role in influencing environmental decisions in the PSA municipalities.

Another observation is that there appears to exist a difference of opinion pattern between the opinions of the local politicians and the local civil servants concerning the effectiveness of the non governmental actors (local companies and third sector associations and organisations) influence in environmental decision-making. Both groups of respondents in the different local settings agree upon the fact that non governmental actors have relatively little effect in environmental decision-making. However, the local politicians do experience in comparison to the civil servants, in both the ESA and PSA municipalities, that the non governmental actors are more effective in their attempts to influence. The situation is the reverse, when discussing the success of the individual inhabitants' attempts to influence environmental decisions.

The city of Varkaus stands out in a municipal perspective. It appears that the actors within Varkaus which are successful in influencing environmental decisions are concentrated to a few, namely the regional environment centre and the civil servants within Varkaus environmental administration. It seems that in the other participating municipalities there exist a more diverse variety of successful actors, which are effective in influencing environmental decisions in the municipality.

Table 10. The effect of influencing environmental decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Regional environment centre	3.79 .977 52*	3.77 1.043 43	4.00 .603 12	3.49 1.203 51*	3.46 1.304 37	3.33 1.138 18
Environmental permit authority	3.69 1.076 52*	3.77 1.043 43	3.58 1.165 12	3.15 1.304 52*	3.19 1.327 36	2.89 1.323 18
Other municipalities	2.50 .839 50*	2.61 .771 41	2.33 1.073 12	2.39 .985 52*	2.33 .986 36	2.17 1.043 18
The civil servants within the municipality's environmental administration	3.74 1.022 53*	3.73 .973 44	3.75 1.215 12	3.40 1.148 53*	3.30 1.296 37	3.50 .857 18
Other civil servants within the municipality	2.61 .878 53*	2.89 .895 44	2.58 .669 12	2.83 .879 52*	2.75 .989 36	2.83 .618 18
Member of the local council	2.83 1.098 52*	2.88 1.074 43	2.92 1.240 12	2.73 1.041 51*	2.75 1.105 36	2.59 .870 17
Members of the local municipal board	3.30 1.202 53*	3.41 1.127 44	3.08 1.379 12	2.98 1.111 52*	3.00 1.155 37	2.94 1.029 17
Member of the environmental committee	3.37 1.166 51*	3.40 1.158 43	3.36 1.120 11	3.16 1.106 48*	3.03 1.212 33	3.28 .958 18
The companies in the municipality	2.65 1.055 51*	2.81 .994 42	2.25 1.138 12	2.65 .926 52*	2.59 1.013 37	2.59 .870 17
Local associations within the business life	2.50 1.093 50*	2.69 1.047 42	1.91 .944 11	2.13 1.127 53*	2.27 1.194 37	1.72 .895 18
Community associations	2.41 .983 51*	2.47 1.032 43	2.27 .647 11	2.28 1.007 53*	2.30 1.051 37	2.11 .963 18
Environmental associations	2.53 1.177 47*	2.67 1.119 39	2.18 .982 11	2.26 1.003 53*	2.24 1.116 37	2.17 .786 18
Agricultural associations	2.46 1.164 50*	2.62 1.168 42	1.82 .751 11	2.15 1.036 52*	2.22 1.098 36	1.89 .900 18
Senior citizen associations	1.96 .999 51*	2.05 1.035 42	1.75 .754 12	1.81 .833 53*	1.86 .855 37	1.61 .778 18
Youth associations	1.90 .922 51*	2.00 .926 43	1.73 .905 11	1.74 .836 53*	1.78 .886 37	1.56 .705 18
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.31 .990 51*	2.33 .993 43	2.45 .934 11	2.15 .928 53*	2.00 .943 37	2.33 .907 18

Scale: no actual effect (1) - very big effect (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

The effect of participation in the municipalities

The objective of this subchapter is to enhance the understanding of how big effect participation has in different areas which are affiliated with the municipality. And according to the respondents, participation has a certain effect. It appears that irrespective of area and local setting, whether it concerns the municipality's general strategy, budget, service production, planning and environmental related issues; the effect of participation is relatively the same. As a result the differences of the effect of participation between different areas affiliated with the municipality are relatively small. However, there are some overall differences, and participation appears to have most effect within areas which are associated with the municipalities' service production and with planning related issues. Participation seems to have the least effect in matters concerning the municipality's general strategy.

Despite that participation appears to have a rather similar effect within different areas, there exist a rather noticeable variation between the opinions of the local politicians and the civil servants. In general, local politicians, especially ESA local politicians, but also to a rather great extent the PSA local politicians, experience that participation has a larger effect in comparison to the opinions of the civil servants. But there exist one exception; the PSA civil servants experience in comparison to the ESA local politicians that participation has a greater effect in matters concerning environmental issues.

However, when analysing how big effect participation has from a municipal viewpoint there are some larger differences of opinion. Generally, Vesanto appears to be the municipality where participation has the most effect, while participation has the least effect in Varkaus. As a consequence, the differences of opinion are somewhat greater among the PSA municipalities than among the ESA municipalities.

Table II. How big effect has participation within the following areas?

	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
The municipality's budget	3.00 1.278 61*	3.19 1.299 48	2.69 1.195 16	3.24 1.318 59*	3.42 1.332 43	2.83 1.249 18
The municipality's service production	3.41 1.116 61*	3.56 1.147 48	3.06 .854 16	3.20 .961 59*	3.23 .872 43	3.11 .963 18
Issues within the social sector	3.19 1.090 59*	3.29 1.110 48	2.93 .917 14	3.15 1.111 59*	3.16 1.194 43	3.06 .998 18
Issues within the school sector	3.19 1.106 59*	3.23 1.153 48	3.14 .864 14	3.05 1.151 59*	3.16 1.194 43	2.72 1.074 18
Issues within the technical sector	3.15 1.108 61*	3.27 1.144 48	2.88 .885 16	3.24 1.113 58*	3.33 1.203 42	2.94 .938 18
Planning related issues	3.28 1.019 61*	3.35 1.062 48	3.19 .834 16	3.32 1.058 59*	3.28 1.161 43	3.28 .895 18
Environmental related issues	3.20 1.077 61*	3.29 1.129 48	3.00 .816 16	3.13 1.157 60*	3.00 1.258 44	3.28 .958 18

Scale: very little effect (1) - very big effect (5)

M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents

* = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Furthermore it appears that among the PSA municipalities municipal size does seem have some influence; the smaller municipality, the bigger are the effect of participation. However, this is not the case among the ESA municipalities, where participation has in general the smallest effect in the municipality of Puumala. In Puumala, participation has in particular relatively low effect within issues associated with Puumala's general strategy and budget, whereas participation has relatively big effect in planning and environmental questions.

2.5

Participation methods used to affect municipal decision-making

The last subchapter of chapter two analyses the extent and effect of different participation methods used to affect municipal decision-making. The analysis of different participation methods follows the same analyse principle used in other subchapters, subsequently the extent of different participation methods is first examined, and thereafter the effect of different participation methods.

From a general point of view the most extensive method used to affect municipal decision-making is through contacting a civil servant who is responsible for a particular issue or by contacting a leading politician. Other methods used to affect municipal decision making is to have a public debate, or having unofficial discussions. The least likely method used to affect municipal decision-making it to participate in citizen forums or by participating within the limits of local user democracy. Collecting names for a petition is also a rather limited method of trying to affect decisions.

When analysing the extent of different participation methods used to affect municipal decision-making from an ESA and PSA perspective, there exist some notable differences. Besides the fact that within both local settings, usually the local politicians experience, in comparison to the civil servants, the use of different participation methods as more frequent. Overall, it appears that the ESA respondents experience that different participation methods are used in a more extensive way, at least in comparison to the PSA respondents. It seems, in particular, that the ESA respondents experience the extent of complaints concerning decisions or the demands for rectifications as considerably higher. This is mainly due to the fact the within the city of Savonlinna the use of complaints and the demands for rectifications are the most common way of affecting the local decision-making, whereas in the other participating municipalities the most common way to affect is to contact a civil servant or local politician. Of the participating municipalities the city of Savonlinna and the municipality of Kangasniemi appears as the municipalities where the use of different participation methods is most frequent.

The most extensive method used to affect municipal decision-making, contacting a civil servant who is responsible for a particular issue or contacting a leading politician, is also the most effective method to affect municipal decision-making. Following the preparation of an issue and influencing it, having unofficial discussions or a public debate, or making suggestions within municipal sessions appears also as rather effective methods to influence municipal decision-making. Collecting names for a petition or making complaints concerning the decision or a demand for rectification are, however, relatively ineffective as a method to affect municipal decision-making. It is also quite difficult to affect municipal decisions through associations or organisations, or via participation in citizen forums or within the limits of local user democracy.

When analysing how effective different participation methods are, there are some overall differences between the ESA and PSA respondents. Generally, it appears that the ESA respondents seem to experience to a certain extent different participation

Table 12. To which extent are the following participation methods used to affect municipal decision – making?

	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Having unofficial discussions	3.05 1.111 60*	3.13 1.096 47	3.00 1.155 16	2.80 .906 59*	2.79 .888 43	2.78 .943 18
Making suggestions within municipal sessions	2.72 1.180 60*	2.83 1.148 47	2.63 1.360 16	2.75 .993 59*	2.86 1.014 43	2.39 .916 18
Making complaints concerning the decision or a demand for rectification	3.08 1.109 60*	3.13 1.115 47	3.06 1.063 16	2.25 .950 60*	2.32 .909 44	2.06 .998 18
Influencing through associations or organizations	2.90 .933 60*	2.91 .905 47	3.00 1.033 16	2.46 .916 59*	2.51 .985 43	2.22 .732 18
Participating in citizen forums	2.12 1.010 60*	2.23 1.068 47	2.00 .894 16	1.98 .965 60*	2.07 .974 44	1.72 .895 18
Participating within the limits of local user democracy	2.37 1.011 57*	2.48 .983 46	2.21 1.122 14	2.07 .954 60*	2.14 .930 44	1.83 .985 18
Having a public debate of the issue	3.16 .934 61*	3.21 1.010 48	3.19 .655 16	2.95 1.048 60*	3.00 1.078 44	2.72 .958 18
Collecting names for a petition	2.62 .969 61*	2.67 1.018 48	2.69 .873 16	2.22 1.043 60*	2.25 1.037 44	2.11 1.023 18
Contacting the civil servant who is presenting the issue	3.28 1.058 58*	3.33 1.022 45	3.19 1.109 16	3.07 1.023 60*	3.02 .927 44	3.17 1.200 18
Contacting the leading politicians	3.52 .906 61*	3.48 .967 48	3.75 .577 16	3.46 .971 59*	3.51 .910 43	3.33 1.085 18

Scale: narrow use (1) - very extensive use (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

methods as more efficient in comparison the opinions of the PSA respondents. Furthermore, in both local settings, it appears in particular, that the civil servants experience that collecting names for a petition or making complaints concerning the decision or demands for rectification as ineffective methods to affect municipal decision-making.

Of the participating municipalities, Kangasniemi emerges as the municipality where different participation methods overall seem to have the most effect when trying to affect municipal decision-making. However, it ought to be emphasized that the differences between the municipalities are rather small. One interesting observations is the case of Savonlinna, where the most common method of affecting the local decision-making is through the use of complaints and the demands for rectifications. However, the use of complaints and the demands for rectifications is experienced by Savonlinna's local politicians and civil servants as a rather inefficient method to affect municipal decision-making.

Table 13. How effective are the following participation methods in affecting the municipal decision making?

	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Having unofficial discussions	3.38 1.128 61*	3.40 1.144 48	3.50 1.095 16	3.16 .933 58*	3.14 1.002 43	3.11 .758 18
Making suggestions within municipal sessions	3.10 1.069 60*	3.10 1.057 48	3.27 1.163 15	3.07 1.024 58*	3.17 1.057 42	2.78 .878 18
Making complaints concerning the decision or a demand for rectification	2.49 1.135 61*	2.67 1.173 48	2.19 1.047 16	2.33 .968 60*	2.45 .999 44	2.00 .767 18
Influencing through associations or organizations	2.93 .981 61*	2.98 1.041 48	2.94 .772 16	2.71 .966 59*	2.74 1.093 43	2.61 .502 18
Participating in citizen forums	2.77 1.101 61*	2.88 1.142 48	2.56 .892 16	2.47 1.165 59*	2.51 1.261 43	2.28 .895 18
Participating within the limits of local user democracy	2.75 .995 56*	2.78 .951 45	2.71 1.069 14	2.71 1.130 59*	2.70 1.225 43	2.67 .907 18
Having a public debate of the issue	3.32 .892 60*	3.47 .905 47	2.94 .680 16	3.32 .990 59*	3.30 1.124 43	3.22 .732 18
Collecting names for a petition	2.52 1.026 61*	2.67 1.078 48	2.19 .655 16	2.32 1.020 57*	2.40 1.106 42	2.00 .707 17
Contacting the civil servant who is presenting the issue	3.56 .958 .61*	3.56 1.029 48	3.56 .629 16	3.52 1.000 60*	3.45 1.022 44	3.61 .979 18
Contacting the leading politicians	3.62 .934 61*	3.65 1.021 48	3.63 .500 16	3.65 .917 60*	3.66 .963 44	3.56 .856 18

Scale: very ineffective (1) - very effective (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

2.6

The possibilities to influence and participate at a local level

The aim of the summary of chapter two is to draw the outlines for the possibilities to influence and participate in municipal decision-making, and simultaneously answer the overall question at issue in chapter two. The starting point for drawing up the outlines is to discuss the context in which to influence and participate. After the establishing the context, is the following step to examine which actors are the most active and effective, and also which are the least, in their attempts to influence general municipal decisions as well as environmental decisions at a local level. The summary is concluded by a discussion of the effect of public participation at a local level and which participation methods are used to affect municipal decision-making.

Influencing and participating in a cooperative context

Despite that the participating municipalities represent two different local settings; it appears that the prerequisites to influence and participate in municipal decision-

making are generally rather supportive, whether it may concern the general atmosphere in the municipalities or the general atmosphere in the environmental administration. By and large, the elements of a cooperative atmosphere are more dominating than the elements of a conflicting atmosphere. And one might assume that a cooperative atmosphere between different actors constitute a far better foundation in which to influence and participate than in a conflicting one.

Nonetheless, some differences do exist, and moreover the differences follow two distinctive patterns. The first pattern, irrespective of local setting, and whether it might concern the general atmosphere in the municipalities or the general atmosphere in the environmental administration, is that the most cooperative atmosphere can be observed between municipalities and the authorities representing the state and also to a certain extent within the municipal administration, while the least cooperative atmosphere exists between the municipalities and local authorities or organisations and local individual inhabitants. The second pattern is characterised by the fact that smaller and middle-sized municipalities usually demonstrate a slightly more cooperative atmosphere in comparison to the cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus, when examining the atmosphere among partners which are affiliated with the municipalities' general and environmental administrations activity.

Local civil servants and local politicians are active and effective, while different organizations or associations, as well as individual inhabitants are rather passive and ineffective in their attempts to influence municipal decision-making

The activity and effectiveness pattern is quite clear when analysing the extent and effect of influencing municipal decision-making; the active and effective actors are the local civil servants and the local politicians, and also to a certain degree the state authorities, whereas different organizations or associations, as well as individual inhabitants are rather passive and ineffective in their attempts to influence municipal decision-making. Municipal size is also a contributor to the level of how much effect different associations and organisations have on municipal decision-making. There is a tendency towards that a third sector association or organization have even more difficulties to influence municipal decision-making in the larger cities.

There exist some general opinion variations between the ESA and PSA respondents. The ESA respondents experience at large that the extent of different actors which attempts to influence is somewhat more frequent, and the ESA respondents experience also different actors as more effective in influencing municipal decisions. However, it should be emphasised that the differences are rather small.

Environmental decisions-making in the municipalities is primarily concentrated to state authorities and to local civil servants

Civil servants within the municipalities' environmental administration and the regional environment centres are the most active and effective actors to influence environmental decision-making. Other rather active and effective actors to influence environmental decision making are the members of the environmental committees in the participating municipalities. Also the members of the local municipal boards and the environment permit authority are to some extent active and effective in their attempts to influence environmental decisions in the participating municipalities. Generally, associations and organizations within the third sector, including environmental associations, are relatively passive and rather unsuccessful in their attempts to influence the environmental decision-making in the participating municipalities. Also the local companies and the local individual inhabitants appear to be somewhat passive and inefficient in influencing environmental decision-making.

Actors which are affiliated with the ESA municipalities' environmental matters are in general more active and also more effective in their attempts to influence

environmental decision-making than in comparison to the attempts and effectiveness of different actors which are affiliated with the PSA municipalities. In particular, the civil servants within the PSA municipalities experience different actors' attempts to influence environmental decision-making as rather inactive. According to the opinions of the PSA civil servants, the civil servants within the PSA municipalities' environmental administration are the only real active actors which attempts to influence environmental decision-making.

Participation has a certain effect in the municipalities

According to the local politicians and the civil servants, participation has a certain effect. Irrespective of area and local setting, whether it concerns the municipality's general strategy, budget, service production, planning and environmental related issues, participation has an effect. Although participation has a rather similar effect within different areas, there exist variations between the opinions of the local politicians and the civil servants. In general, local politicians, especially ESA local politicians, but also to a rather great extent the PSA local politicians, experience that participation has a larger effect in comparison to the opinions of the civil servants.

The most extensive and effective method to affect municipal decision-making is through unofficial contacts with civil servants or local politicians

The most extensive and effective method used to affect municipal decision-making is through contacting a civil servant who is responsible for a particular issue or by contacting a leading politician. Other rather extensive and effective methods used to affect municipal decision making is to have a public debate, or having unofficial discussions. On the other hand, a rather narrow method and also a relatively ineffective method used to affect municipal decision-making is to participate in citizen forums or by participating within the limits of local user democracy. Collecting names for a petition is also a rather limited and ineffective method of trying to affect municipal decision-making.

The use of different participation methods is somewhat more extensive and also in some ways more effective within the ESA municipalities. In particular, the level of complaints concerning decisions or the demands for rectifications is considerably higher among the ESA municipalities. This is mainly due to the fact that within the city of Savonlinna the use of complaints and the demands for rectifications are the most common way of affecting the local decision-making. However, the use of complaints and the demands for rectifications is experienced by Savonlinna's local politicians and civil servants as a rather inefficient method to affect municipal decision-making.

Influencing and participating at a local level is a rather rare occurrence for the ordinary local inhabitant

According to the opinions of the local civil servants and the local politicians in the participating municipalities, the ordinary local inhabitant influences and participates hardly ever in municipal decision-making, whether it might concern general municipal decision-making or environmental decisions-making. Also third sector associations or organisations are relatively passive and ineffective in influencing and participating in municipal decision-making. Local decision-making involves primarily state authorities and local civil servants and local politicians.

The prerequisites to influence and participate at a local level exist, and participation also has a certain effect in the municipalities. However, official participation methods appear rather ineffective and are also relatively rarely used. To try to affect municipal decision-making one has to take direct contact, usually unofficially, with civil servants or local politicians.

3 Attitudes towards public participation at a local level

The general purpose of chapter three is to examine the attitudes towards public participation at a local level. The analysis of the attitudes towards public participation is carried out in the same manner as the analysis of influencing and participating at a local level. Accordingly, the data presented in chapter three originates from the quantitative data and the opinions of the municipal actors, or in other words the local politicians and the local civil servants. The data is presented with the help of tables.

The basis for the examination of the attitudes towards public participation at a local level consists of two different sets of evaluations. The first evaluation concentrates on different aspects concerning the local democracy, while the second evaluation focuses on public participation at large. Chapter three is concluded by an outline of the attitudes towards public participation at a local level.

3.1

Evaluation of local democracy

The aim of this subchapter is to examine different aspects regarding the local democracy. The idea with analysing various statements relating to the local democracy is to establish a wider view of the prerequisites for an active public participation at a local level. The evaluation of local democracy starts with analysing how powerful citizen initiative is as a way of influencing. And, at large, it appears that citizen initiative is perhaps not the most effective way of influencing. Irrespective of local setting and municipal size, citizen initiative seems not to be a powerful method of influencing.

There exist some small differences of opinion between the ESA and PSA respondents when analysing if a referendum should be arranged in important matters. Overall it appears that the ESA respondents are somewhat more positive to the idea of arranging a referendum in important matters. Moreover, in both local settings, the local politicians are more eager than the civil servants to arrange referendums in important matters. Of the participating municipalities, Kangasniemi, Savonlinna and Suonenjoki appear to be more open to the idea of arranging referendums, whereas Puumala, Vesanto and Varkaus seem to be more of the opposite opinion.

According to the respondents, and especially the ESA respondents, it is in general relatively important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections. And it is in particular the ESA and PSA local politicians that experience that it is quite important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the elections. The PSA civil servants appear to be somewhat more of the opinion that it is perhaps not so important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections. Municipal size appears to be of some importance when examining if it is important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections. The respondents in the smaller municipalities experience to a lesser degree the need to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants, whereas the

respondents in the larger municipalities are more eager to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections.

All participating respondents, irrespective of local setting and municipal size, and whether the respondent is a local politician or a civil servant, are relatively unanimous upon the fact that it is very important for the local democracy that the local inhabitants receive enough and relevant information, and that the local inhabitants should have the right to participate in decisions that concern their living environment. Despite that all respondents are rather unanimous, the ESA respondents appear in general even more positive than the PSA respondents to that local inhabitants should receive enough and relevant information and that the local inhabitants should have the right to participate in decisions that concern their living environment.

Irrespective of local setting and municipal size, there is also at large a rather common understanding that the municipality should frequently arrange discussion opportunities for participants involved in different matters. Nevertheless, the ESA and PSA local politicians appear generally more willing to arrange discussion opportunities for participants involved in different matters than the ESA and PSA civil servants.

According to the ESA and PSA respondents the opinions of the municipal service users has overall not to big significance, but, the demands of municipal users are to a certain extent unreasonable in comparison to the real possibilities. In particular,

Table 14. Evaluation of local democracy						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
In important matters a referendum should be arranged	3.05 1.407 61*	3.21 1.336 48	2.63 1.500 16	2.83 1.404 60*	3.02 1.486 44	2.28 .958 18
It is important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections	3.48 1.064 58*	3.64 1.009 47	3.00 1.038 14	3.28 1.091 60*	3.43 1.129 44	2.89 .900 18
It is very important for the local democracy that the local inhabitants receive enough and relevant information	4.42 .850 60*	4.36 .845 47	4.63 .806 16	4.25 .728 60*	4.27 .788 44	4.17 .514 18
The local inhabitants should have the right to participate in decisions that concern their living environment	4.11 .985 61*	4.13 1.003 48	4.19 .911 16	3.90 .995 59*	3.84 1.067 43	4.00 .767 18
The municipality should frequently arrange discussion opportunities for participants involved in different matters	3.84 .969 61*	4.00 .945 48	3.38 .806 16	3.73 .899 60*	3.89 .895 44	3.28 .752 18
The opinions of the municipal services users has to big significance	2.26 .998 61*	2.29 1.051 48	2.13 .719 16	2.15 .917 60*	2.07 .974 44	2.28 .752 18
The demands of the local citizens are unreasonable in comparison to the real possibilities	3.20 1.138 61*	3.08 1.145 48	3.56 1.094 16	3.13 1.142 60*	2.93 1.129 44	3.72 .958 18
The local citizens participate too little in the discussion that concerns municipal affairs	3.64 1.155 61*	3.67 1.155 48	3.56 1.094 16	3.73 1.023 60*	3.80 1.091 44	3.61 .778 18
The real decision making power has the civil servants, not the local politicians	2.79 1.318 61*	2.98 1.345 48	2.06 .854 16	2.93 1.112 59*	3.07 1.142 43	2.72 1.074 18
Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees totally (5)						
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents						
* = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant						

the ESA and PSA civil servants experience to a larger degree that the demands of the local citizens are unreasonable in comparison to the real possibilities. It appears that especially in Savonlinna and Vesanto, but also to a certain degree in Varkaus and Puumala the demands of the local citizens are unreasonable in comparison to the real possibilities.

The ESA and PSA respondents experience overall that the local citizens participate too little in the discussion that concerns municipal affairs. Especially the local politicians and civil servants in Vesanto experience that the local citizens in Vesanto participate too little in the discussion that concerns municipal affairs. The statement regarding that the real decision making power has the civil servants, not the local politicians does generally not receive widespread support. However, it appears that the local politicians do in comparison to the civil servants to be somewhat more supportive towards the statement. It appears that the statement regarding that the real decision making power has the civil servants, not the local politicians does receive some support in Puumala, Suonenjoki and Varkaus, but not in Kangasniemi, Savonlinna and Vesanto.

3.2

Evaluation of public participation

The intention of this particular subchapter is to explore the local politicians and local civil servants opinion of public participation at large. This will be done with the help of analysing different statements regarding public participation at a local level.

Overall it appears that public participation is experienced by the participating respondents in the ESA and PSA municipalities as something positive for the municipality. Public participation increases the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions. Moreover, new angles are received to old issues through public participation. Public participation reduces the level of conflict at large in the municipalities, and also between the municipality and other administration levels and between the municipality and the inhabitants as well.

However, public participation seems to increase the civil servants workload and also increases the demands at the local politicians. But, the quality of the decisions does not suffer as a consequence of public participation, nor does public participation, at large, slow down the decision making – process. Nor does public participation seem to increase bureaucracy as well. In general, it appears also that public participation does not create problems because of lack of sufficient recourses. And the aim of public participation seems not to be to delay the municipal decision making process.

Yet, there exist some difference of opinion between the local politicians and the civil servants. The ESA and PSA local politicians are at large more positive towards public participation than the local ESA and PSA civil servants. For example, the civil servants experience to a certain degree that public participation slows down the decision-making progress and that public participation creates problems because of lack of sufficient resources. Moreover, the civil servants are also more likely to experience that public participation increases the civil servants workload and the demands at the local politicians.

There does not seem to exist any significant opinion variations from a municipal point of view, besides the fact that the respondents in Savonlinna and Varkaus appear to a relatively large extent experience that public participation slows down the decision-making progress and that public participation creates problems because of lack of sufficient resources. Also the respondents in Suonenjoki seem to experience to a certain extent that public participation creates problems because of lack of sufficient resources.

Table 15. Evaluation of public participation						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Participation increases the trust for the decisions	4.02 .885 61*	4.06 .885 48	3.94 .854 16	3.97 .787 59*	3.98 .801 43	3.94 .725 18
New angles are received to old issues through participation	4.08 .822 61*	4.13 .841 48	3.94 .680 16	4.00 .844 60*	4.05 .806 44	3.89 .900 18
Participation reduces conflicts in the municipality in general	3.80 .928 61*	3.85 .899 48	3.56 .964 16	3.75 .801 59*	3.77 .812 43	3.72 .752 18
Participation reduces conflicts between the municipality and other administration levels	3.62 1.003 61*	3.71 1.010 48	3.25 .856 16	3.69 .793 59*	3.73 .872 44	3.65 .493 17
Participation reduces conflicts between the municipality and the inhabitants	3.82 .854 60*	3.91 .830 47	3.50 .816 16	3.77 .738 56*	3.85 .792 41	3.47 .624 17
The quality of the decisions suffer as a consequence of participation	1.75 .675 61*	1.75 .668 48	1.81 .655 16	1.83 .905 60*	1.73 .817 44	2.17 1.043 18
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.75 1.220 61*	2.63 1.160 48	3.25 1.238 16	2.83 1.152 60*	2.66 1.160 44	3.39 .979 18
Participation increases bureaucracy	2.46 1.205 61*	2.46 1.271 48	2.38 .885 16	2.52 1.127 60*	2.39 1.104 44	2.94 1.110 18
Participation increases the civil servants workload	3.28 1.213 61*	3.17 1.226 48	3.69 1.014 16	3.49 .972 59*	3.35 1.021 43	3.94 .725 18
Participation increases the demand towards the politicians	3.78 1.043 60*	3.72 1.136 47	4.13 .619 16	3.58 .787 60*	3.57 .873 44	3.72 .575 18
Participation creates problems because the lack of sufficient resources	2.78 1.166 60*	2.62 1.114 47	3.31 1.138 16	3.08 1.119 59*	2.98 1.144 43	3.50 1.043 18
The aim of the participation is to delay the decision making process	1.82 1.008 61*	1.75 1.021 48	2.13 .957 16	1.95 1.093 57*	1.93 1.135 42	2.13 1.088 18

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees totally (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

3.3

Attitudes towards public participation at a local level

The purpose of the summary of chapter three is to draw the outline of the attitudes towards public participation at a local level. The basis for drawing the outline is to analyse the prerequisites for an active public participation at a local level. This will be carried out by a summation of the examination of the municipal actors' attitudes towards different statements regarding local democracy. How municipal actors' experience different aspects of local democracy is absolutely imperative for public participation at a local level. After establishing the attitudes towards different aspects regarding the local democracy is the final step to summarize the findings of the municipal actors' attitudes towards public participation at large.

Important that the local inhabitants receive enough and relevant information, and have the right to participate in decisions that concerns their living environment

All municipal actors experience generally that it is very important for the local democracy that the local inhabitants receive enough and relevant information, and that the local inhabitants should have the right to participate in decisions that concerns their living environment. Furthermore it is quite important, especially according to the local politicians, to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the elections and that the municipality should frequently arrange discussion opportunities for participants involved in different matters.

The local citizens participate too little in the discussions that concerns municipal affairs

The municipal actors do agree upon the fact that the local citizens participate too little in the discussions that concerns municipal affairs. Moreover, the general experience among the municipal actors is that the opinions of the municipal users (local inhabitants) have rather little significance. However, the municipal actors, and especially the civil servants, feel that the demands of municipal users are to a certain extent unreasonable in comparison to the real possibilities.

Public participation is important for the municipalities

Public participation is experienced in general by the local politicians and the local civil servants as something important for the municipalities, since public participation increases the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions. Moreover, new angles are received to old issues through public participation. Public participation reduces also the level of conflict at large in the municipalities, and also between the municipality and other administration levels and between the municipality and the inhabitants as well.

Despite the relatively unanimous support of public participation at the local level, the local politicians are overall more positive towards public participation than the local civil servants. The civil servants on the other hand experience to a certain degree that public participation slows down the decision-making progress and that public participation creates problems because of lack of sufficient resources.

Public participation increases the civil servants workload and raises the demands at the local politicians

The general opinion is that public participation increases the civil servants workload and increases the demands at the local politicians. But, the quality of the decisions does not suffer as a consequence of public participation, nor does public participation increase bureaucracy. And the common understanding is that the aim of public participation is not to be to delay the municipal decision making process.

4 The nature of public participation within the environmental permit process

The aim of chapter four, and simultaneously also the overall intention of objective 3 within the EMLE – research program, is to explore the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes at the local level in Finland. However, since the planning permit procedures is a vital part of the municipal environmental administration, is it also included. Hence, the analysis of the nature of public participation consists of two different settings; the environmental permit process and the planning permit process. The analysis of the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes, and also the analysis of the planning permit processes is carried out with the help of the opinions of the municipal actors. The municipal actors' opinions are presented with the help of tables.

Chapter four is divided into different subchapters. The first subchapter analysis what kind of decisions taken within the municipal environmental administration involves the local participants. The second and third subchapter focuses on the most and the least influential participants in the environmental permit procedure respectively in the planning permit process. The following two subchapters within chapter four investigate statements concerning the environmental permit procedure and the planning permit process. Chapter four is ended by a summary which tries to give an outline of the nature of public participation in the environmental permit and planning permit processes.

4.1

Local participants' activeness in decisions taken within the environmental administration

The intention of the first subchapter is to examine what kind of decisions taken within the municipal environmental administration involves the local participants. Hence, the idea is to receive a better understanding of the local participants' enthusiasm to be involved in the environmental decisions-making. However, it seems that different decisions taken within the environmental administration does not generally involve a large number of local participants, with the exception of planning matters at large and environmental problems. Decisions concerning the municipalities' environmental strategy or environmental permits for the agricultural and the business sector and also to a certain extent environmental protection appear to involve only some local participants. On the other hand, especially planning matters but also environmental problems seem to involve rather many local participants.

In general it seems that both the ESA and PSA local politicians experience in comparison to the local civil servants that there are more participants involved in the decisions taken within the local environmental administration. However, there exists one exception, and that is related to planning decisions taken in the environmental administration. Especially the ESA civil servants experience that there are quite many

local participants involved in the planning decisions taken in the environmental administration.

From a municipal perspective, the municipality of Kangasniemi stands out in a general comparison to the other participating municipalities. The local politicians and local civil servants in Kangasniemi appear to experience that different environmental administration decisions involves rather many local participants. For example, environmental permits concerning the agricultural and business sector appear to involve rather many local participants, environmental problems seem also to attract attention. Also in planning matters the local participants appears relatively active, however, the most active local participants in planning matters can be found within the big cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus.

Table 16. What kind of decisions taken in the environmental administration involves the local participants?						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Environmental permits concerning the agricultural sector	2.50 1.254 42*	2.63 1.239 35	1.89 1.054 9	2.46 1.072 39*	2.67 1.074 27	2.00 .961 14
Environmental permits concerning the business sector	2.76 1.078 42*	2.89 1.078 35	2.22 .833 9	2.90 .968 39*	3.04 .854 27	2.57 1.089 14
Planning matters in general	3.74 .928 43*	3.61 .903 36	4.44 .726 9	3.55 .904 40*	3.50 .882 28	3.50 1.019 14
Environmental problems (including garbage, waste, air, noise...)	3.40 1.061 42*	3.43 1.008 35	3.22 1.202 9	3.35 .770 40*	3.39 .737 28	3.21 .802 14
Environmental protection	2.98 1.058 43*	3.03 1.108 36	2.89 .782 9	2.67 1.121 36*	2.54 1.208 26	2.83 .937 12

Scale: only few participants (1) – many participants (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

4.2

Different participants' influence within the environmental permit procedure

The next subchapter analyses which participants are the most influential participants in the environmental permit procedure, and which are the least. And it appears that the regional environment centre, the environment permit authority and the local civil servant who is responsible for presenting the environmental permit issue before the political bodies are in general the most influential participants in the environmental permit procedure. The political and administrative leadership appears to have also some influence, especially according to the local politicians and in particular the local ESA politicians. The associations or organisations and the companies in the municipality, as well as the individual inhabitants appear to have somewhat little influence in the environmental permit procedure.

Examining different participants influence within the environmental permit procedure from a municipal perspective does not give evidence of any larger varieties among the participating municipalities. However, some small differences can be found. For example, it appears that the local political leadership seems to have some influence within the environmental permit procedure in all municipalities, with

the exception of Puumala. It seems that in Puumala the local political leadership has relatively little influence within the environmental permit procedure, even the individual inhabitants have more influence. Generally, the local politicians and the local civil servants do also experience that local companies have relatively little influence in the municipalities. However, in Savonlinna it appears that the local companies have in comparison some influence within the environmental permit procedure.

Table 17. How big influence does the following participants have on the environmental permit procedure?

	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
Environmental permit authority	3.89 .798 38*	3.97 .728 33	3.71 1.113 7	3.61 1.022 36*	3.62 1.061 26	3.50 1.000 12
The political leadership in the municipality	3.42 .976 38*	3.48 .795 33	2.86 1.773 7	2.97 .910 36*	3.12 .952 26	2.83 .937 12
The administrative leadership in the municipality	3.53 1.006 38*	3.61 .827 33	2.86 1.773 7	3.19 .967 37*	3.35 .936 26	3.08 1.115 13
The civil servant who is responsible for presenting the environmental permit issues before the political bodies	4.00 .899 39*	3.94 .919 34	4.14 .690 7	3.78 .723 37*	3.73 .827 26	3.85 .376 13
The associations or organisations in the municipality	2.59 .832 37*	2.69 .821 32	2.29 .756 7	2.41 .725 37*	2.50 .762 26	2.15 .689 13
The companies in the municipality	2.76 .795 38*	2.79 .820 33	2.43 .976 7	2.57 .850 35*	2.63 .875 24	2.31 .855 13
Individual inhabitants	2.46 .869 37*	2.50 .916 32	2.29 .951 7	2.53 .825 34*	2.57 .896 23	2.38 .650 13

Scale: no influence (1) – very big influence (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

4.3

Different participants' influence within the planning permit procedure

The following subchapter examine which participants are the most and the least influential within the planning permit procedure. And based upon the empirical findings the participants within the planning permit procedure can be divided into two different groups; one group that have a rather big influence within the planning permit procedure and a group that has relatively little influence within the planning permit process. To the former group belongs the regional environmental centre, the political and administrative leadership in the municipality, and the civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies. The latter group includes associations and organisations, local companies and the individual inhabitants.

Moreover it appears in general that the ESA respondents experience at large, at least in comparison to the PSA respondents that different participants have more influence within the planning permit procedure. This is also reflected when analysing

the different participants influence within the planning permit procedure from a municipal perspective. Hence, the regional environmental centre, the political and administrative leadership in the municipality and the civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies have a big, if not a very big influence within the planning permit procedure in the municipalities of Puumala, Kangasniemi and Savonlinna. This is not to state that these actors do not have a big influence in the PSA municipalities, they have, but it appears that especially in Vesanto and Suonenjoki the influence within the planning permit procedure is to a certain extent concentrated to a narrower group. It appears that in Vesanto the regional environment centre has compared to other participants a rather big influence, whereas in Suonenjoki the civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies has considerable influence. The city of Varkaus has more similarities with the ESA municipalities than the other PSA municipalities.

There exist also some differences between the municipalities when analysing the associations and the organisations, the local companies and the individual inhabitants influence within the planning permit procedure. Savonlinna appears to be the exception where the associations and the organisations, and especially the local companies and the individual inhabitants have some influence in the planning permit procedure. Also the local companies in Varkaus seem to have a saying in the planning permit procedure. In all other municipalities the third sector associations, the local companies and the individual inhabitants have rather little influence within the planning permit procedure.

Table 18. How big influence does the following participants have on the planning permit procedure?						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
The political leadership in the municipality	3.95 .740 41*	3.86 .733 35	4.38 .518 8	3.53 .751 40*	3.46 .793 28	3.71 .726 14
The administrative leadership in the municipality	3.98 .689 41*	3.97 .707 35	4.00 .535 8	3.59 .741 41*	3.59 .682 29	3.64 .842 14
The civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies	3.95 .805 41*	3.91 .818 35	4.00 .756 8	3.80 .813 41*	3.83 .889 29	3.79 .579 14
The associations or organisations in the municipality	2.74 .818 39*	2.76 .867 33	2.75 .463 8	2.49 .683 39*	2.46 .744 28	2.38 .650 13
The companies in the municipality	2.93 .932 41*	2.91 .981 35	3.00 .756 8	2.88 .853 40*	2.86 .932 28	2.71 .825 14
Individual inhabitants	2.66 .883 41*	2.69 .932 35	2.63 .744 8	2.53 .751 40*	2.45 .783 29	2.62 .650 13
Scale: no influence (1) – very big influence (5) M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant						

The environmental permit

The objective of the next subchapter is to analyse the environmental permit procedure. This is done with the help of different statements regarding the environmental permit procedure. Overall, it seems that the respondents are rather satisfied with the current environmental procedure, as the majority of the respondents' seem to experience that there are enough oral, as well as written hearings and that usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making within the environmental permit procedure. Only some of the PSA local politicians experience to a certain extent that there are perhaps not enough oral hearings and that a written hearing does not necessary create an adequate base for decision making within the environmental permit procedure. And it is especially the local politicians in the city of Varkaus which experience to a degree that there are perhaps not enough oral hearings within the environmental permit process, while the local politicians in Vesanto represent the group which are slightly concerned that a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making within the environmental permit procedure.

It appears that participating in the environmental permit procedure is of some significance for the position of the individual, as well as for the environment. However, it appears also to a certain extent that participating in the environmental permit procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment. Only the local civil servants within the ESA municipalities appears slightly to disagree that participating in the environmental permit procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment. And this is mainly due to the respondents within the municipality of Kangasniemi. However, it appears also that the respondents in the small municipality of Vesanto disagree to a degree to the statement that participating in the environmental permit procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment.

The ESA local politicians and especially the local civil servants appears quite likely to experience that the authorities' participation in the environmental permit process is more important than the citizens' participation. The PSA local politicians and local civil servants seem however more likely to be of more of the opposite opinion. This is mostly due to the respondents in Suonenjoki and in particular Varkaus.

Generally, the ESA and PSA respondents, and in particular the local politicians at large seem to experience that participation does not slow down the decision making process in the environmental permit process. However, some of the civil servants in the ESA and PSA municipalities appear to experience to a certain extent that participation slows down the decision making process in the environmental permit process. From a municipal perspective, Varkaus distinguishes from the other municipalities. Varkaus is the only municipality where the respondents at large experience that participation, to a certain extent, slows down the decision making process in the environmental permit process.

Table 19. Statements concerning the environmental permit procedure						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
There are enough written hearings	3.64 1.063 39*	3.56 1.078 34	4.29 .756 7	3.49 .978 41*	3.31 1.039 29	3.79 .802 14
Usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making	3.34 1.072 38*	3.33 1.021 33	3.43 1.272 7	3.17 .946 41*	2.93 .961 29	3.79 .579 14
Participating in the environmental permit procedure is of significance for the position of the individual	3.46 .913 39*	3.47 .929 34	3.57 .787 7	3.53 .960 40*	3.50 1.106 28	3.36 .842 14
Participating in the environmental permit procedure is of significance for the environment	3.36 .932 39*	3.38 .985 34	3.48 .535 7	3.38 1.005 40*	3.46 1.138 26	3.00 .784 14
Participating in the environmental permit procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment	3.05 1.213 39*	3.06 1.229 34	2.86 1.069 7	3.05 1.037 40*	3.04 1.138 28	3.14 .770 14
The authorities' participation in the environmental permit process is more important than the citizens' participation	3.21 .894 39*	3.12 .880 34	3.71 .750 7	2.70 .966 40*	2.54 .962 28	2.98 .997 14
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.58 1.222 38*	2.45 1.227 33	3.14 .900 7	2.87 1.281 39*	2.79 1.258 28	3.31 1.377 13

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees completely (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

4.5

The planning permit procedure

The intention of the last subchapter is to analyse the planning permit procedure. To be able to accomplish this are different statements regarding the planning permit procedure analysed. Generally it appears that the respondents are quite satisfied, especially the local civil servants, with the current planning permit procedure, as the majority of the respondents' appear to experience that there are enough oral, as well as written hearings and that usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making within the environmental permit procedure. The respondents in Vesanto are the only ones who to some extent are not at large satisfied with the planning permit procedure as they to a certain degree disagree that there are enough oral hearings in the planning permit procedure.

Overall it appears that participating in the planning permit procedure is of some significance for the position of the individual, but also of some significance for the environment. There appears to be some truth in the statement that participating in the planning procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment, with perhaps the exception of the opinions of the local politicians and local civil servants in Kangasniemi.

The ESA local politicians and local civil servants do experience to a certain degree that the authorities' participation in the planning process is more important than the citizens' participation, whereas the PSA local politicians and local civil servants, in particular within Suonenjoki and Varkaus, do appear to disagree somewhat with this particular statement.

Table 20. Statements concerning the planning procedure						
	High level conflict region (ESA)			Low level conflict region (PSA)		
	All	Politicians	Civil servants	All	Politicians	Civil servants
There are enough written hearings	3.80 1.005 41*	3.69 1.022 35	4.50 .535 8	3.58 1.107 40*	3.39 1.133 28	4.00 .877 14
Usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making	3.44 1.097 41*	3.29 1.100 35	4.13 .641 8	3.21 .923 39*	3.07 .940 28	3.62 .768 13
Participating in the planning procedure is of significance for the position of the individual	3.66 .883 41*	3.71 .893 35	3.50 .756 8	3.74 .818 39*	3.70 .912 27	3.79 .579 14
Participating in the planning procedure is of significance for the environment	3.51 .978 41*	3.57 1.008 35	3.38 .744 8	3.36 1.013 39*	3.41 1.118 27	3.07 .917 14
Participating in the planning procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment	2.93 1.010 41*	3.00 1.057 35	2.75 .707 8	3.21 .905 38*	3.08 .935 26	3.57 .852 14
The authorities' participation in the planning process is more important than the citizens' participation	3.12 1.053 41*	3.11 1.105 35	3.38 .916 8	2.69 1.004 39*	2.63 1.006 27	2.86 .949 14
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.60 1.172 40*	2.53 1.105 34	3.00 1.069 8	3.09 1.311 34*	2.88 1.262 24	3.73 1.348 11

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees completely (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

From an overall overview the local politicians appears not to experience that participation slows down the decision making process. However, it seems that the local civil servants do to a certain extent experience that participation slows down the decision making process. It is in particular in the bigger cities of Savonlinna and Varkaus but also in Kangasniemi where there exist a wider opinion of that participation slows down the decision making process.

4.6

The nature of public participation within the environmental permit process

Chapter four is ended by a summary which has the intention of drawing an outline of the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes. And since the planning permit processes is a vital part of the local environmental administration, has the summary also the purpose to describe the nature of the planning permit process as well. The basis for the summary is to summarize the findings in the subchapters of chapter four. Hence, the summarization starts with analysing the local participants' eagerness to take part decisions taken within the environmental administration.

Decisions taken within the environmental administration does not generally involve a large number of local participants, perhaps with the exception of planning matters at large and environmental problems

Different decisions taken within the environmental administration does not generally involve a large number of local participants, with the exception of especially planning matters at large and also to some extent environmental problems. Decisions

concerning the municipalities' environmental strategy or environmental permits for the agricultural and the business sector and also to a certain extent environmental protection appear to involve only some local participants.

State and local authorities have large influence in the environmental and planning permit procedures, while associations or organisations, companies and individual inhabitants have little

The participants within the environmental permit procedure and planning permit procedure can be divided into two different groups; one group that have a rather big influence within procedures and a group that has relatively little influence within the processes. To the former group belongs state authorities who are represented by the regional environmental centre or the environmental permit authority, and the civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies, but also to a degree the political and administrative leadership in the municipality. The latter group include associations and organisations, local companies and the individual inhabitants.

Local politicians and local civil servants are satisfied with the current environmental and planning permit procedures

Overall, it seems that the respondents are rather satisfied with the current environmental and planning procedures, as the majority of the respondents' seem to experience that there are enough oral, as well as written hearings and that usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making within the environmental and planning permit procedure.

Participating in the environmental and planning permit procedures is of significance for the position of the individual as well as for the environment

In general, participating in the environmental and planning permit procedure is of significance for both the position of the individual, as well as for the environment. However, it appears also to a certain extent that participating in the environmental and planning permit procedure is of more significant for the position of the individual than for the environment.

Divided opinions whether the authorities' participation in the environmental and planning permit process is more important than the citizens' participation

There exist opinion differences between the ESA and PSA respondents. The ESA local politicians and the local civil servants appears quite likely to experience that the authorities' participation in the environmental and planning permit process is more important than the citizens' participation, while the PSA local politicians and local civil servants are more likely to disagree that the authorities' participation in the environmental and planning permit process is more important than the citizens' participation.

Participation does in general not slow down the decision making process in the environmental and planning permit process

Generally, and in particular the local politicians at large seem to experience that participation does not slow down the decision making process in the environmental and planning permit process. However, some of the civil servants, and in particular in the bigger cities, does experience that participation slows down the decision making process in the environmental and planning permit process.

5 Understanding the nature of public participation at a local level

The report has hitherto focused on presenting the results of the local politicians and the local civil servants opinions regarding public participation at large at a local level. However, to be able to understand the general findings of the local politicians and the local civil servants opinions concerning public participation are the conducted interviews within the EMLE- project utilized. Consequently, the overall intention of chapter five is to explain the general findings of the quantitative data with the help of the conducted interviews. But, chapter five aims also at having a discussion of the possible effects and outcomes of public participation generally and when it comes to environmental permit processes. Furthermore the intention in chapter five is to discuss possible problem areas and conflicts in relation to public participation in a local setting. Material originating from the interviews (qualitative data) constitutes the basics of chapter five.

Chapter five begins by a discussion which has the intention of trying to explain the general findings of the quantitative data. This discussion is followed by a discussion of possible effects, outcomes and problems areas of public participation generally and when it comes to environmental permit processes. Chapter is concluded by a summarisation of the discussions in chapter five.

5.1

Explaining the general findings of the quantitative data

The overall idea with chapter five is to try to understand the results of the general findings of the quantitative data. Why did the general findings turn out the way they did? Are there perhaps any clear reasons? In the search of an understanding of the general findings are the interviews conducted within the EMLE – project utilized, or in other word, the search of an understanding of the general findings of the quantitative data is accomplished with the help of the conducted interviews. However, before starting to discuss and analyse the findings of the interviews which contributes to the understanding of the general findings, is it in order to review the general findings of the quantitative data which is presented in chapter two to four.

Based upon the findings of the quantitative data one can easily draw the conclusion that one can hardly speak of public participation as a wider phenomena at the local level. Influencing and participating at a local level, with the attempt to influence municipal decision-making (concerning also environmental decision-making), is a relatively rare occurrence for the ordinary local inhabitant. This is not only true for the local individuals, but also for the local associations and organisations within the third sector as well as for the local companies. And if there are any attempts to influence municipal decision-making it is most likely to occur through unofficial contacts with municipal actors. However, usually any attempts to influence municipal decision-making are likely to have rather little effect on the actual decision-making.

Adding different local settings (level of conflict and different regional environment centres) and different municipal sizes to the discussion of public participation at a local level does not alter the general findings of the quantitative data. There exist some variations, but one could not describe these variations as general and as significant. As a consequence, regardless of local surrounding and municipal size, the results are the same; there is little evidence of public participation at the local level.

Public participation is nonetheless important for the municipalities, since public participation increases the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions. New angles are also received to old issues through public participation. Furthermore public participation reduces the level of conflict at large in the municipalities, and also between the municipality and other administration levels and between the municipality and the inhabitants as well.

Hence, public participation as a phenomenon is of significance for the municipalities, the problem however appears to be the lack of public participation at a local level. For example, decisions taken within the environmental administration does not generally involve a large number of local participants. Only planning matters and also to some extent environmental problems appears to involve local participants. However, individual inhabitants, as well as local associations and organisations and local companies have relatively little influence when they try to influence the environmental and planning permit procedures. Local decision-making does apparently not involve other participants than the usual local civil servants and local politicians. State authorities emerge as especially important in environmental and planning permit procedures since matters concerning the environment are quite strictly stipulated in the law.

Based upon the review of the general findings there are two findings which emerges as central and hence needs to be further discussed and analysed with help of the interviews. The first and foremost result is the apparent lack of public participation at a local level. Why are especially individual inhabitants, but also third sector associations or organisations along with the local companies relatively passive in their attempts to influence general as well as environmental decision-making at a local level? The second result relates to those individuals who actually attempt to participate in municipal decision-making and in particular within the environmental decision-making. Consequently, why does planning matters and also to some extent environmental problems seem to activate individual inhabitants? Are there any particular reasons for this? Basically the question that emerges could be summarised by asking; why the majority of the individual inhabitants do not even attempt to participate in local decision-making and what motivates some people to participate, in particular, in municipal planning related decision-making?

Trying to answer why the majority of the individual inhabitants do not even attempt to participate in local decision-making is difficult. Trying to find an exact answer with the help of the interviews is not possible, due to the fact that no one of the interviewees can exactly pinpoint a reason(s) to the overall passivity of the individual inhabitants, as well as for the passivity of the third sector and local companies. However, some suggestions that might explain to a degree why there is no widespread public participation at a local level can be made with the help of the conducted interviews.

But, attempting to answer the question of the reason(s) why there is no widespread public participation at a local level must start with finding an answer to why individual inhabitants do participate – hence, what motivates some people to participate, in particular, in municipal planning related decision-making. Since, having information of why certain people are active and attempts to participate does simultaneously also explain to a certain extent of why people choose not to participate; knowing the reason(s) that encourages individual inhabitants to be active, notifies also what the

majority of the individual inhabitants' lack. Consequently the answer, or more likely a partly answer, to the question of the reasons(s) for overall passivity of individual inhabitants at a local level can be drawn with the help of analysing the reasons of why certain individual inhabitants are active.

According to the interviews there emerges one rather significant reason to why certain individual inhabitants are active and attempts to influence municipal decision-making. That reason is: a personal interest. Public participation occurs if there is a personal interest, individual inhabitants who are directly affected by a municipal decision are more likely to attempt to influence municipal decision-making. Furthermore it appears also that public participation is concentrated to a few individuals at the local level. These individuals usually attempt to influence municipal decision-making through writings in the local newspaper and sometimes through different local associations or organisations. The active local individual inhabitants are most likely older persons; young people are more unlikely to be active.

Consequently, the reason for why the individual inhabitants are rather active and attempts to influence either land use planning or environmental permit process in the municipality is usually related to individual inhabitants' own agenda. Local people are especially interested in taken part in the procedure since the planning or environmental permit concerns their own living environment, or as one interviewee stated: "envy is a stronger driving force than the need to propagation". The interviewee suggested that envy among neighbours results in public participation. Accordingly, the reason to public participation is often personal. Interviewees connected this also to the nature of planning and permit procedures, as the basis of participation is procedural hearing and appeals constructed to the rights of landowners.

However, the reasons to public participation do not always have to be personal. The quantitative data showed that environmental problems also seem to activate some individual inhabitants at the local level. But, the reason for that environmental problems appears to activate individual inhabitants are more altruistic than personal. According to the interviewees there is a need among certain local inhabitants to act for the common good. These individuals act on behalf of their beliefs and their attitudes. Consequently, there are several reasons for why certain individual inhabitants decide to influence municipal decision-making. But the reasons seem to be connected. The reasons for why people are active originate from their own needs to shape their living environment.

Based on the reasons why certain individual inhabitants are active, one could draw the assumption that the reason to why the majority of the individual inhabitants at a local level do not even attempt to participate in the local decision-making is that the majority seem to lack the need or interest to shape their living environment. Apparently the majority of the individual inhabitants at a local level experience that their duty is only connected to the more traditional forms of representative democracy, i.e. voting in local elections, if even that as the general tendency is that less people nowadays take part in an election.

5.2

Effects, outcomes and problem areas

The quantitative data demonstrated that public participation has generally and also within the environmental matters rather little effect on the actual municipal decision-making. The results of the interviews are less straightforward. Different forms of public participation appear to have little effect; writing letters to the editor, collecting names for a petition and citizen initiatives has according to the interviewees little effect on the municipal decision-making. Depending on the municipality and the case the most effective form of affecting municipal decision-making is to contact a

local politician unofficially, before the decision is made, i.e. in the preparation phase of the local decision policy process. However, also formal way was assessed effective as the legislation does not allow ignore that. As one interviewee put it “right kind of approach increases effectiveness”, but one needs to recognise right approach.

Theoretically the outcome of public participation is valuable for the local society as public participation increases among other things the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions, and reduces the level of conflict at large in the municipalities, and also between the municipality and other administration levels and between the municipality and the inhabitants as well. However, since there is no widespread public participation at large at a local level it is rather difficult to analyse the outcome of public participation. But, the interviewees mention that public participation especially contributes with new perspectives to different matters, and that through public participation participants get a chance to be heard.

There are many problems in connection to public participation at a local level. These problems comprise of both general as well as of specific problems. The general problems include the general passivity of the majority of the local individual inhabitants that appears not be too bothered by municipal decision-making. Explanations to general passivity include trust on the sufficiency of representative democracy or the lack of civil courage. More specifically related to municipality structures it was stated that in a small community a large employer creates the feeling that public participation does not have influence thus increasing passivity. Participation on processes was considered as unwanted resistance of a significant employer in a region or as futile attempt to influence more powerful actor.

Moreover the general problem is also that the people who try to be active are seldom successful in their attempts to influence municipal decision-making. Discontent increases as efforts to make change are continually fruitless. Sometimes the people who are active and try to influence are also a problem, as there are certain people who are active only because their intention is to stall the municipal decision-making and simultaneously the general development of the local surroundings. Their agenda is usually personal and their doings usually results in different conflicts frustrating other participants. For example as one interviewee said: “80 percent of all municipal decision complaints are carried out by five persons”. These persons are driven by their own beliefs and their beliefs do not necessary have to represent the view of the general public.

Another problematic area according to the interviewees appears to be the fact the there is hardly any dialogue between the municipality and the individual inhabitants. Naturally the municipalities do inform of their activities based on their lawful obligations, and the municipalities have arranged different meetings in connection to different errands of the municipality. The problem is that the turnouts for these meetings are generally low because of the general passivity of the individual inhabitants at a local level. Despite the general passivity of the local inhabitants experiences quite many of the interviewees that the municipalities should be more active in informing, for example using the Internet. Subsequently, some of the interviewees mentioned that improved communications (informing) is needed in the future to increase public participation.

There are also more specific problems which concerns in particular public participation within the environmental decision-making. Public participation within environmental permit procedures differs from other public participation at a local level. The nature of public participation within environmental permit procedures is more official, because the permit procedures demand it as the proceedings within the permit process are highly stipulated in the law. Accordingly, the participants within the permit process have to be experts in order to participate and understand the environmental terminology. Since environmental decision-making is often quite

complicated, environmental matters demands expert knowledge, something not every individual inhabitant or perhaps every local politician possesses. This aspect was emphasised in several interviews. One interviewee stated that “the participators in the environmental decision-making do not speak the same language”. Perhaps local politicians make environmental decisions which they necessary do not fully understand.

Moreover, municipal size appears to a certain extent to be a problematic area when discussing environmental permit procedures. In small municipalities same people are often involved in public matters in different roles. Expectations of one role muddle up with other roles causing confrontation in participation. Participants also carry their participation history with them: valid views might be ignored due to past actions. An interviewee suggested that some parts of the environmental decision-making should be regionalised, as small municipalities have relatively few civil servants with a lot of tasks on their hands. Subsequently, civil servants in smaller municipalities might experience that their have not enough time to deal with complicated environmental permit proceedings or that they perhaps lack the general knowledge to deal with environmental permit proceedings.

5.3

Summary

Explaining the general findings of the quantitative data is not an easy task. This chapter has tried to give an overall picture of the reasons why there is hardly any public participation at a local level. Moreover the chapter has also discussed the effects and the outcomes of public participation, and examined in general and in particular the problem areas within the environmental permit processes.

The ordinary local inhabitants appears not to experience any need or desire to shape their living environment

Public participation is not a wide phenomenon at the local level, mainly because the passivity of the local individual inhabitants. It appears that the majority of the local inhabitants seem to lack the need or interest to shape their living environment. Apparently the majority of the individual inhabitants at a local level experience that their duty is only connected to the more traditional forms of representative democracy, i.e. voting in local elections, if even that as the general tendency is that less people nowadays take part in an election.

Public participation at the local level is usually the result of personal agendas, or of personal beliefs or attitudes

Public participation is concentrated to few individuals at the local level. Their attempts to influence municipal decision-making are usually motivated by personal agendas, or because of their personal beliefs or their attitudes. Hence, public participation occurs if there is a personal interest, individual inhabitants who are directly affected by a municipal decision are more likely to attempt to influence municipal decision-making. However, the reason for public participation can also be altruistic. Certain local inhabitants act for the common good. These individuals act on behalf of their beliefs and their attitudes, however, their beliefs and their attitudes do not necessary have to represent the view of the general public.

There are many problems in connection to public participation at a local level; general passivity of the individual inhabitants, furthermore public participation has usually little effect on the actual municipal decision-making, and it appears also there is hardly any dialogue between the municipality and the individual inhabitants

There are many problems in connection to public participation at a local level. The majority of the local individual inhabitants are not too bothered by municipal decision-making and people who try to be active are seldom successful in their attempts to influence municipal decision-making. Public participation can also result in conflicts. People who are active and tries to affect municipal decision-making does not necessary have the same opinions as other local participants, and as a result public participation can stall municipal decision-making. Moreover, the communication between the municipality and the local inhabitants is in need of improvement as an attempt to increase public participation at a local level.

Public participation in environmental permit procedures requires above all expertise. Emphasis of participation is on appealing and resistance, which reduces space for other reasons for participation, e.g. learning.

Public participation within environmental permit procedures differs from other public participation at a local level as the nature of public participation within environmental permit procedures is more official and complicated. Official because of the procedures within the permit proceedings are highly stipulated in the laws and complicated because of the complex nature of environmental decisions. Hence, public participation within environmental permit procedures demands expert knowledge. Official participation modes also suggest a more concrete position for the participants hindering participants with a less strong interest to take part. This might exclude viewpoints that would be relevant and beneficial for the contents of permit although not essential for the decision as such. Consequently public participation in environmental permit proceedings is somewhat problematic for local individual inhabitants at large.

6 Conclusions

Attempts to promote the public to be more active in the societal decision-making have become more frequent. The government in Finland endorses citizen participation and have prepared a policy program aimed at promoting active citizenship. The main reason for supporting active citizen participation is the belief that people in general are becoming more alienated from the societal decision making. Accordingly, the endorsement of active citizen participation is used as a method of battling the lack of engagement of the general public.

However, is active citizenship or public participation the appropriate method to respond to the unwillingness of citizens to take part in societal decision-making in Finland? Or are there any alternative routes to activate the general public, or, is the entire idea of promoting people to be active in the societal decision-making justified? This report concludes with a discussion that engages with these questions. Furthermore the discussion offers an explanation for one of the general findings of the report; namely why the majority of the local individual inhabitants seem not to exhibit any need or desire to take part of local decision-making.

The idea of promoting the public to be more active in the societal decision-making is part of a wider hypothesis. For at least 150 years, theorists have believed that popular involvement in the political process would lead to better decisions, better people, and a more legitimate political system (Hibbings and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 5). However, none of these improvements should be expected. Moreover, none of these outcomes seem to occur (Hibbings and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 5). Empirical work suggests that participation has a negative effect on decisions, the political system, and the people. Evidence of people's desire to avoid politics is widespread, but most observers still find it difficult to take this evidence at face value (Hibbings and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 5).

What Hibbing and Theiss-Morse actually state is that contrary to the prevailing view that people want involvement in politics, most citizens do not care about most politics and therefore are content to turn over decision-making authority to someone else (Hibbings and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 5). Their findings would seem to accord with one of the general findings of this report; that ordinary local inhabitants appear not to exhibit any need or desire to take part of local decision-making. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse suggest that the reason for the low level of political participation is because people do not like politics even in the best of circumstances; in other words, they simply do not like the process of openly arriving at a decision in the face of diverse opinions. They do not like politics when they view it from afar and they certainly do not like politics when they participate in it themselves (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 3).

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that people's most intense desire for the political system is that decision-makers be empathetic and, especially non-self-interested, not that they be responsive and accountable to the people's largely nonexistent policy preferences or, even worse, that people be obligated to participate directly in decision-

making. The last thing people want is to be involved in political decision-making (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 1). They do not want to make political decisions themselves; they do not want to provide much input to those who are assigned to make these decisions; and they would rather not know all details of the decision-making process.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse state that people care at most about one or two issues; they do not care about the vast majority of politics addressed by the government. They want to see certain ends – such as a healthy economy, low crime rates, good schools – but they have little interest in the particular political process that lead to those ends (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 13). When people are moved to involve themselves in politics, it is usually because they believe decision-makers have found a way to take advantage of their position. Thus, political participation in United States is often connected to resentment, dissatisfaction, and puzzlement rather than to legitimacy, trust and enlightenment (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 13).

Political participation is not the universal solution advocates often aver (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 5). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse believe that stronger political involvement will not make people more trusting, more tolerant, more other-regarding, or more supportive of government. In fact, it may even be the case that such involvement, in and of itself, will make people more upset by immersing them in the very political arena they dislike so much (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 184). The findings of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse suggest exactly the opposite set of expectations as those offered by normative theorists. Normative theorists believe increased interaction with other people will boost political capital and otherwise enhance people and the political system. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse believe increased interaction will not boost political capital at all and may very well do damage (2002; 184).

Rather than wanting a more active, participatory democracy, a remarkable number of people want what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse call stealth democracy. In a stealth democracy, governmental procedures are not visible to people unless they go looking; the people do not routinely play an active role in making decisions, in providing input to decisions makers, or in monitoring decisions makers (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 143). The goal in stealth democracy is for decisions to be made efficiently, objectively, and without commotion and disagreement. Supporters of stealth democracy believe debate is not necessary or helpful, they do not view compromise favourably, and they are willing to turn decision-making over to entities that are largely, perhaps completely, unaccountable but that promise efficiency and an absence of contention (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; 143).

According to the findings of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse one could argue that different attempts to promote the public to be more active in the societal decision-making is somewhat ineffective, since people do not care at all about most public policies and people seem to prefer a process that allows them to keep politics at arms length. The results of the report seem also to support the fact that different attempts to inspire people to be more active in societal decision-making is a struggle. The few participants who actually decide to influence societal decision-making are usually driven by personal agendas, or by personal beliefs or attitudes, or as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse described public participation, as something driven by resentment, dissatisfaction, and puzzlement.

The general disengagement of citizens is not the only problem concerning public participation. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that participation has a negative effect on decisions, the political system, and people. Davies, Kumpula and Similä illustrates that there are certain parties who consider public participation in environmental decision-making to be a severe hindrance to effective decisions (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5). The main argument against participation, suggest that many decisions

effecting the environment are of particular scientific content and therefore the lay public is not sufficiently qualified to understand enough to ensure a fully informed involvement (Davies, Kumpula and Similä, 2006; 5). The results of this report suggest also that public participation within environmental decision-making is somewhat problematic, since public participation in environmental permit procedures requires above all expertise. Hence, the concern is the laymen in the environmental decision-making process, are they sufficiently qualified to understand enough to ensure a fully informed involvement, or do the laymen only legitimize the expertise and the power of them (Bäcklund, Häkli and Schulman, 2002: 10)?

Should the government in Finland stop promoting people to be active in the societal decision-making, because of the general passivity of the people that derives from their antipathy towards general politics, or by the fact that public participation, especially in environmental decision-making, can sometimes be challenging? Based upon the findings of this report, the answer is no. According to the local civil servants and local politicians public participation is important because public participation increases the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions, as well as reduces the level of conflict at large in the municipalities. Participation also enables better informed decisions. However, the findings of the report do not represent the opinions of the general public nor the third sector associations or organisations.

But, what is the alternative, stealth democracy? Stealth democracy does not seem like the obvious alternative for replacing the representative democratic system where the representatives are responsible for their actions. Instead the government should work towards better prerequisites to participate in the societal decision-making. The premise for public participation must be rather straightforward and involve a minimum level of bureaucracy. The practices of environmental planning need to be developed so that they support interaction and participation. Planning is often influenced both by formal and informal participation (Staffans 2004), thus these both aspects need to paid attention to.

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Appendix

Table 5a. The general atmosphere in the municipalities						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Between the municipality and the state authorities	M: 3.81 S: .655 N: 16*	3.76 .831 25*	3.39 1.195 18*	3.65 .862 17*	3.89 .676 18*	3.25 1.032 24*
Between the municipality and the regional authorities	3.88 .719 16*	3.80 .816 25*	3.28 1.074 18*	4.06 .556 17*	3.83 .857 18*	3.25 .897 24*
Between the municipality and the association of Finnish local authorities	3.81 .655 16*	4.08 .640 25*	3.59 .870 17*	4.12 .781 17*	4.11 .676 18*	3.48 .898 23*
Between leading local politicians and leading local civil servants	3.69 1.078 16*	3.92 .759 25*	3.06 1.063 16*	4.00 .612 17*	4.06 .873 18*	2.78 .671 23*
Between the leadership of the municipality and the staff	2.44 .892 16*	3.60 .816 25*	3.39 1.092 18*	3.65 .931 17*	3.56 .922 18*	2.83 .816 24*
Between the political bodies and the local administration	3.31 .873 16*	3.64 .860 25*	3.33 .767 18*	3.82 .529 17*	3.67 .840 18*	2.88 .612 24*
Within the different local administration sectors	3.50 .632 16*	3.42 .776 24*	2.94 .873 18*	3.41 .870 17*	3.50 .924 18*	2.83 .917 24*
Between the different local administration sectors	3.25 .683 16*	3.42 .929 24*	3.39 .850 18*	3.56 .629 16*	3.67 .907 18*	3.08 .830 24*
Between the local municipality and the local business community	3.44 .892 16*	4.12 .781 25*	3.22 .878 18*	3.63 1.025 16*	3.72 .752 18*	3.09 .733 23*
Between the local municipality and local associations or organisations	3.38 .806 16*	3.56 .768 25*	2.71 .588 17*	3.35 .862 17*	3.33 .840 18*	3.09 .668 23*
Between the local municipality and the local individual inhabitants	3.00 .816 16*	3.28 1.021 25*	2.94 .639 18*	3.41 .712 17*	3.53 .874 17*	2.54 .833 24*

Scale: conflicting atmosphere (1) - cooperative atmosphere (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 6a. The general atmosphere in the environmental administration						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the regional environment centre	3.50 .632 16*	3.84 .850 25*	3.22 1.114 18*	3.94 .748 17*	3.44 1.097 18*	3.61 1.033 23*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the environment permit authority	3.38 .806 16*	3.75 .794 24*	3.22 1.060 18*	3.82 .636 17*	3.56 .984 18*	3.48 1.039 23*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and neighbour municipalities	3.81 .655 16*	3.63 .647 24*	2.83 1.098 18*	3.38 .957 16*	2.94 .725 18*	3.09 1.125 23*
Between the leadership of the municipality and the municipality's environmental administration	4.00 .966 16*	3.92 .584 24*	3.11 1.079 18*	3.59 .870 17*	3.33 .907 18*	3.09 .900 23*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and other administration sectors	3.63 .885 16*	3.58 .776 24*	2.78 1.114 18*	3.53 .800 17*	3.33 .840 18*	3.26 .864 23*
Within the municipality's environmental administration	3.88 .957 16*	3.83 .717 23*	3.50 1.098 18*	4.06 .659 17*	3.78 .808 18*	3.35 .935 23*
Between leading local politicians and leading local civil servants	4.13 .719 16*	3.92 .776 24*	3.11 1.132 18*	3.65 .862 17*	3.59 .870 17*	3.08 .830 24*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the local business community	3.56 .727 16*	3.58 .881 24*	2.94 1.110 18*	3.41 .795 17*	3.44 .922 18*	3.17 .917 24*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and local associations or organisations	3.25 .931 16*	3.33 .816 24*	3.06 .802 18*	3.35 .862 17*	3.17 .924 18*	3.08 .654 24*
Between the municipality's environmental administration and the local individual inhabitants	3.19 .834 16*	3.13 .900 24*	3.06 .802 18*	3.38 .885 16*	3.19 .834 16*	3.00 .722 24*

Scale: conflicting atmosphere (1) - cooperative atmosphere (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 7a. The extent of influencing the municipal decision making						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Regional authorities	2.53 1.187 15*	3.57 .788 23*	2.88 1.111 17*	2.76 1.251 17*	3.00 1.061 17*	3.08 .776 24*
The association of Finnish local authorities	2.47 .915 15*	2.96 1.147 23*	2.47 1.328 17*	2.76 1.447 17*	2.61 1.378 18*	2.29 1.233 24
Other municipalities	2.71 1.069 14*	2.67 1.274 24*	2.47 1.231 17*	2.82 1.380 17*	2.47 1.179 17*	2.54 1.021 24*
The civil servants in the municipality	3.69 1.302 16*	4.13 .694 23*	4.00 1.000 17*	3.94 1.144 17*	3.94 .802 18*	3.70 1.020 23*
The politicians in the municipality	3.40 1.056 15*	4.09 .668 23*	3.94 1.124 16*	3.69 1.078 16*	3.78 1.060 18*	3.75 .737 24*
The companies in the municipality	2.53 .834 15*	3.00 1.022 24*	3.00 1.000 17*	2.76 1.033 17*	3.00 .791 17*	2.71 1.042 24
Local associations within the business life	2.27 .799 15*	2.88 1.204 24*	3.06 1.029 17*	2.65 1.115 17*	2.41 .795 17*	2.75 1.032 24*
Community associations	2.93 .884 15*	2.68 1.180 25*	2.41 1.121 17*	2.65 1.222 17*	2.21 .855 19*	2.83 1.370 23*
Environmental associations	2.73 1.100 15*	1.83 1.029 23*	2.65 1.222 17*	2.00 .866 17*	2.38 1.138 18*	2.00 .953 23*
Agricultural associations	2.67 1.113 15*	2.32 1.069 25*	2.06 1.144 17*	2.82 1.185 17*	2.33 .840 18*	1.58 .717 24*
Senior citizen associations	2.33 .724 15*	2.17 1.308 24*	2.06 1.298 17*	2.47 1.125 17*	2.11 .832 18*	2.22 .902 23*
Youth associations	2.75 1.000 16*	1.76 .879 25*	1.82 1.015 17*	2.24 .903 17*	1.83 .857 18*	2.21 1.062 24*
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.40 .828 15*	2.67 1.308 24*	2.88 1.166 17*	2.53 1.068 17*	2.00 .816 19*	2.63 1.056 24*

Scale: some questions (1) - very many questions (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 8a. The effect of influencing the decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Regional authorities	3.50 1.019 14*	3.63 .647 24*	3.12 .993 17*	3.41 1.064 17*	3.36 .929 14*	3.18 1.097 22*
The association of Finnish local authorities	3.14 .949 14*	3.29 1.042 24*	2.69 1.070 16*	2.94 1.144 17*	2.79 1.311 14*	2.41 1.221 22*
Other municipalities	3.07 .997 14*	2.78 1.043 23*	2.63 .957 16*	2.82 1.015 17*	2.27 1.163 15*	2.55 1.011 22*
The civil servants in the municipality	3.80 1.146 15*	3.96 .859 24*	3.65 1.057 17*	3.76 1.200 17*	3.93 .917 14*	3.36 1.093 22*
The politicians in the municipality	3.29 1.204 14*	4.08 .776 24*	3.56 .964 16*	3.69 1.138 16*	3.50 .941 14*	3.18 .795 22*
The companies in the municipality	2.50 1.019 14*	3.12 .927 25*	3.00 .935 17*	2.88 1.111 17*	3.00 .961 14*	2.86 .990 22*
Local associations within the business life	2.43 .756 14*	3.00 .853 23*	2.88 .993 17*	2.53 1.179 17*	2.29 .914 14*	2.64 1.002 22*
Community associations	2.93 .829 14*	2.92 .929 24*	2.12 .928 17*	2.71 1.160 17*	2.07 .884 15*	2.52 .981 21*
Environmental associations	2.79 1.051 14*	2.29 1.007 21*	2.29 .985 17*	2.29 1.105 17*	2.27 1.100 15*	2.18 1.006 22*
Agricultural association	2.62 .870 13*	2.75 1.032 24*	2.12 1.111 17*	2.88 1.166 17*	2.43 .852 14*	1.62 .669 21*
Senior citizen associations	2.36 .633 14*	2.26 .864 23*	2.06 1.144 17*	2.65 1.169 17*	2.07 .997 14*	2.18 .907 22*
Youth associations	2.87 .915 15*	2.09 .793 23*	2.00 .866 17*	2.29 .920 17*	2.07 .997 14*	2.05 .844 22*
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.21 .893 14*	2.26 .915 23*	2.12 1.111 17*	2.65 .931 17*	2.20 .752 22*	2.23 .752 22*

Scale: no actual effect (1) - a very big effect (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some responden

Table 9a. The extent of influencing the environmental decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Regional environment centre	3.38 .961 13*	3.50 .964 22*	3.24 1.251 17*	3.00 1.366 16*	3.33 1.085 18*	2.96 1.107 23*
Environmental permit authority	3.23 .927 13*	3.09 1.151 22*	2.88 1.269 17*	2.59 1.372 17*	3.00 1.500 17*	2.48 1.123 23*
Other municipalities	2.23 .927 13*	2.13 1.058 23*	2.06 .966 17*	2.19 1.047 16*	2.17 1.200 18*	2.26 .810 23*
The civil servants within the municipality's environmental administration	3.43 1.016 14*	3.55 1.101 22*	3.59 1.278 17*	3.19 1.167 16*	3.78 1.166 18*	3.39 .891 23*
Other civil servants within the municipality	2.71 1.069 14*	2.64 .953 22*	2.53 1.231 17*	2.65 .931 17*	2.83 .924 18*	2.65 .885 23*
Member of the local council	2.29 .825 14*	2.77 1.110 22*	2.94 1.298 17*	2.59 1.004 17*	2.88 1.088 16*	2.43 .945 23*
Members of the local municipal board	3.07 1.072 14*	3.50 1.336 22*	3.00 1.275 17*	2.76 1.033 17*	3.47 1.068 17*	2.65 .982 23*
Member of the environmental committee	2.93 1.073 14*	3.81 1.078 21*	3.65 1.169 17*	2.83 1.015 17*	3.65 1.222 17*	2.91 1.065 22*
The companies in the municipality	2.23 .599 13*	2.70 1.185 23*	2.29 1.047 17*	2.29 .920 17*	2.47 .717 17*	2.39 .839 23*
Local associations within the business life	2.33 .651 12*	2.35 1.229 23*	2.24 1.033 17*	2.12 .993 17*	2.17 .857 18*	2.04 .767 23*
Community associations	2.23 .832 13*	2.36 1.236 22*	2.41 1.004 17*	2.47 .943 17*	1.94 .802 18*	2.22 .795 23*
Environmental associations	2.54 1.127 13*	2.19 1.250 21*	2.65 1.272 17*	2.29 1.263 17*	2.11 .832 18*	2.17 1.072 23*
Agricultural associations	2.58 .996 12*	2.50 1.263 22*	2.06 1.197 17*	2.47 1.007 17*	2.11 .758 18*	1.64 .727 22*
Senior citizen associations	2.00 .603 12*	1.74 1.010 23*	1.76 .903 17*	2.06 1.029 17*	1.72 .826 18*	1.74 .689 23*
Youth associations	2.31 1.032 13*	1.52 .790 23*	1.82 1.015 17*	2.12 .993 17*	1.65 .786 17*	1.64 .658 22*
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.00 .603 12*	2.61 1.234 23*	2.47 .874 17*	2.41 1.064 17*	2.24 1.033 17*	2.26 .964 23*

Scale: some questions (1) - very many questions (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 10a. The effect of influencing the environmental decisions in the municipality						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Regional environment centre	4.00 1.044 12*	4.00 .796 23*	3.35 1.057 17*	3.35 1.412 17*	3.53 1.187 15*	3.57 1.076 21*
Environmental permit authority	3.67 1.073 12*	3.87 1.100 23*	3.47 1.068 17*	3.29 1.359 17*	3.29 1.326 14*	2.95 1.284 21*
Other municipalities	2.45 .820 11*	2.55 .912 22*	2.47 .800 17*	2.59 1.121 17*	2.13 1.060 15*	2.25 .786 20*
The civil servants within the municipality's environmental administration	3.54 1.198 13*	3.91 .798 23*	3.65 1.169 17*	3.24 1.200 17*	3.67 1.234 15*	3.33 1.065 21*
Other civil servants within the municipality	3.00 1.000 13*	2.70 .765 23*	2.82 .951 17*	2.88 .928 17*	2.67 1.047 15*	2.90 .718 20*
Member of the local council	2.38 .768 13*	2.87 1.058 23*	3.13 1.310 16*	3.12 .993 17*	2.62 1.121 13*	2.48 .981 21*
Members of the local municipal board	3.38 1.044 13*	3.39 1.234 23*	3.12 1.317 17*	3.35 1.115 17*	3.14 1.099 14*	2.57 1.028 21*
Member of the environmental committee	2.92 1.115 13*	3.67 1.065 21*	3.35 1.272 17*	3.38 1.025 16*	3.21 1.369 14*	2.95 .970 19*
The companies in the municipality	2.17 .835 12*	3.05 1.046 22*	2.47 1.068 17*	2.82 .951 17*	2.43 .938 14*	2.67 .913 21*
Local associations within the business life	2.08 .793 12*	2.76 1.179 21*	2.47 1.125 17*	2.18 1.185 17*	2.20 1.082 15*	2.05 1.161 21*
Community associations	2.08 .669 12*	2.68 1.171 22*	2.29 .848 17*	2.71 1.105 17*	2.00 .926 15*	2.14 .910 21*
Environmental associations	2.78 1.302 9*	2.52 1.167 21*	2.41 1.176 17*	2.35 1.115 17*	2.07 .884 15*	2.33 1.017 21*
Agricultural associations	2.55 .820 11*	2.77 1.307 22*	2.00 1.061 17*	2.76 1.200 17*	2.20 .941 15*	1.60 .598 20*
Senior citizen associations	2.17 .835 12*	2.00 1.155 22*	1.76 .903 17*	2.18 .951 17*	1.80 .941 15*	1.52 .512 21*
Youth associations	2.42 .793 12*	1.77 1.020 22*	1.71 .772 17*	2.06 .996 17*	1.80 .910 15*	1.57 .598 21*
Individual inhabitants in the municipality	2.18 .874 11*	2.57 1.121 23*	2.06 .827 17*	2.53 .874 17*	2.07 1.033 15*	1.90 .831 21*

Scale: no actual effect (1) - very big effect (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 11a. How big effect has participation within the following areas?						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
The municipality's budget	2.88 1.147 16*	3.00 1.327 26*	3.11 1.370 19*	3.44 1.094 16*	3.37 1.300 19*	3.00 1.474 24*
The municipality's service production	3.00 1.155 16*	3.77 1.070 26*	3.26 1.046 19*	3.56 .727 16*	3.21 1.084 19*	2.96 .955 24*
Issues within the social sector	2.94 1.124 16*	3.27 1.079 26*	3.29 1.105 17*	3.69 .946 16*	2.95 1.079 19*	2.96 1.160 24*
Issues within the school sector	3.06 1.124 16*	3.19 1.132 26*	3.29 1.105 17*	3.38 1.088 16*	3.00 1.106 19*	2.88 1.227 24*
Issues within the technical sector	3.19 1.276 16*	3.19 1.096 26*	3.05 1.026 19*	3.56 .892 16*	3.26 1.098 19*	3.00 1.250 24*
Planning related issues	3.38 1.035 16*	3.15 .967 26*	3.37 1.116 19*	3.38 .806 16*	3.42 1.017 19*	3.21 1.250 24*
Environmental related issues	3.50 1.033 16*	3.15 1.156 26*	3.00 1.000 19*	3.29 .920 17*	3.16 1.214 19*	3.00 1.285 24*
Scale: very little effect (1) - very big effect (5)						
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents						
* = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant						

Table 12a. To which extent are the following participation methods used to affect municipal decision – making?						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Having unofficial discussions	2.60 1.183 15*	3.27 .874 26*	3.11 1.286 19*	3.00 .866 17*	2.61 .850 18*	2.79 .977 24*
Making suggestions within municipal sessions	2.31 1.302 16*	2.85 .881 26*	2.89 1.410 18*	2.59 .939 17*	2.78 1.003 18*	2.83 1.049 24*
Making complaints concerning the decision or a demand for rectification	2.88 .957 16*	2.81 1.059 26*	3.67 1.138 18*	2.06 1.088 17*	2.00 .745 19*	2.58 .929 24*
Influencing through associations or organizations	2.81 1.047 16*	2.84 1.028 25*	3.05 .705 19*	3.06 .680 16*	2.11 .809 19*	2.33 .963 24*
Participating in citizen forums	1.81 1.047 16*	2.20 1.080 25*	2.26 .872 19*	1.94 1.088 17*	2.05 .780 19*	1.96 1.042 24*
Participating within the limits of local user democracy	1.88 .806 16*	2.71 1.160 24*	2.35 .786 17*	2.12 1.054 17*	2.05 .970 19*	2.04 .908 24*
Having a public debate of the issue	2.94 1.063 16*	3.19 .939 26*	3.32 .820 19*	2.94 .966 17*	2.53 .964 19*	3.29 1.083 24*
Collecting names for a petition	2.50 1.095 16*	2.50 .906 26*	2.89 .937 19*	1.94 .899 17*	1.89 .737 19*	2.67 1.204 24*
Contacting the civil servant who is presenting the issue	3.13 1.310 16*	3.67 .868 24*	2.89 .900 18*	3.18 1.015 17*	3.16 1.015 19*	2.92 1.060 24*
Contacting the leading politicians	3.38 .806 16*	3.73 .919 26*	3.37 .955 19*	3.59 .939 17*	3.56 .856 18*	3.29 1.083 24*

Scale: narrow use (1) - very extensive use (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 13a. How effective are the following participation methods in affecting the municipal decision making?						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Having unofficial discussions	3.06 1.063 16*	3.69 1.050 26*	3.21 1.228 19*	3.18 .883 17*	3.29 1.047 17*	3.04 .908 24*
Making suggestions within municipal sessions	3.06 1.181 16*	3.32 1.030 25*	2.84 1.015 19*	3.06 1.029 17*	3.12 1.269 17*	3.04 .859 24*
Making complaints concerning the decision or a demand for rectification	2.25 1.000 16*	2.62 1.235 26*	2.53 1.124 19*	2.41 1.228 17*	2.21 .787 19*	2.38 .924 24*
Influencing through associations or organizations	2.88 1.088 16*	2.92 .891 26*	3.00 1.054 19*	3.24 .752 17*	2.56 1.149 18*	2.46 .833 24*
Participating in citizen forums	3.13 1.025 16*	2.85 1.120 26*	2.37 1.065 19*	2.76 1.300 17*	2.33 1.138 18*	2.38 1.096 24*
Participating within the limits of local user democracy	2.75 1.183 16*	2.96 1.065 23*	2.47 .624 17*	2.88 1.269 17*	2.61 1.243 18*	2.67 .963 24*
Having a public debate of the issue	3.25 1.000 16*	3.48 .963 25*	3.16 .688 19*	3.41 .939 17*	3.16 1.068 19*	3.39 .988 23*
Collecting names for a petition	2.38 1.147 16*	2.65 1.129 26*	2.47 .772 19*	2.19 1.047 16*	2.56 .856 18*	2.22 1.126 23*
Contacting the civil servant who is presenting the issue	3.38 1.025 16*	3.88 .864 26*	3.26 .933 19*	3.53 1.068 17*	3.53 .905 19*	3.50 1.063 24*
Contacting the leading politicians	3.38 1.025 16*	3.92 .796 26*	3.42 .961 19*	3.71 1.047 17*	3.68 .885 19*	3.58 .881 24*

Scale: very insufficient (1) - very sufficient (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 14a. Evaluation of local democracy						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
In important matters a referendum should be arranged	2.81 1.276 16*	3.08 1.495 26*	3.21 1.437 19*	2.76 1.480 17*	3.16 1.425 19*	2.63 1.345 24*
It is important to examine the opinions of the local inhabitants between the local elections	3.13 .957 16*	3.58 1.060 24*	3.67 1.138 18*	2.94 .827 17*	3.42 1.261 19*	3.42 1.100 24*
It is very important for the local democracy that the local inhabitants receive enough and relevant information	4.19 1.047 16*	4.48 .653 25*	4.53 .905 19*	4.12 .857 17*	4.26 .733 19*	4.33 .637 24*
The local inhabitants should have the right to participate in decisions that concern their living environment	4.00 1.033 16*	4.23 .951 26*	4.05 1.026 19*	3.94 .998 16*	4.05 .848 19*	3.75 1.113 24*
The municipality should frequently arrange discussion opportunities for participants involved in different matters	3.75 1.000 16*	3.85 .967 26*	3.89 .994 19*	3.82 1.015 17*	3.74 .933 19*	3.67 .816 24*
The opinions of the municipal services users has to big significance	2.13 1.088 16*	2.31 1.050 26*	2.32 .885 19*	2.29 .849 17*	2.42 1.017 19*	1.83 .816 24*
The demands of the local citizens are unreasonable in comparison too the real possibilities	3.19 1.167 16*	2.88 1.107 26*	3.63 1.065 19*	3.53 .943 17*	2.68 1.250 19*	3.21 1.103 24*
The local citizens participate to little in the discussion that concerns municipal affairs	3.50 1.095 16*	3.77 1.336 26*	3.58 .961 19*	4.12 .857 17*	3.63 1.116 19*	3.54 1.021 24*
The real decision making power has the civil servants, not the local politicians	3.13 1.544 16*	2.65 1.335 26*	2.68 1.057 19*	2.76 1.091 17*	3.00 1.029 18*	3.00 1.216 24*

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees totally (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 15a. Evaluation of public participation						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Participation increases the trust for the decisions	3.94 .929 16*	4.15 .881 26*	3.89 .875 19*	4.18 .809 17*	3.89 .832 18*	3.88 .741 24*
New angles are received to old issues through participation	4.13 .719 16*	4.19 .849 26*	3.89 .875 19*	4.24 .970 17*	3.84 .834 19*	3.96 .751 24*
Participation reduces conflicts in the municipality in general	3.81 .911 16*	4.08 .935 26*	3.42 .838 19*	4.12 .928 17*	3.61 .698 18*	3.58 .717 24*
Participation reduces conflicts between the municipality and other administration levels	3.56 .892 16*	3.96 1.076 26*	3.21 .855 19*	4.00 .791 17*	3.74 .653 19*	3.43 .843 23*
Participation reduces conflicts between the municipality and the inhabitants	4.06 .772 16*	3.92 .954 25*	3.47 .697 19*	4.12 .781 17*	3.71 .686 17*	3.55 .671 22*
The quality of the decisions suffer as a consequence of participation	1.88 .719 16*	1.73 .724 26*	1.68 .582 19*	1.65 .606 17*	1.95 1.129 19*	1.88 .900 24*
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.56 .964 16*	2.69 1.320 26*	3.00 1.291 19*	2.35 1.057 17*	2.74 1.147 19*	3.25 1.113 24*
Participation increases bureaucracy	2.06 1.181 16*	2.65 1.294 26*	2.53 1.073 19*	2.24 .831 17*	2.32 1.293 19*	2.88 1.116 24*
Participation increases the civil servants workload	3.06 1.124 16*	3.35 1.325 26*	3.37 1.165 19*	3.06 1.197 17*	3.32 1.003 19*	3.96 .475 23*
Participation increases the demand on the politicians	3.88 .957 16*	3.88 1.092 25*	3.58 1.071 19*	3.06 .966 17*	3.84 .602 19*	3.75 .608 24*
Participation creates problems because the lack of sufficient resources	2.44 .964 16*	2.80 1.323 25*	3.05 1.079 19*	2.59 .939 17*	3.22 1.166 18*	3.33 1.129 24*
The aim of the participation is to delay the decision making process	1.63 .806 16*	1.73 .962 26*	2.11 1.197 19*	1.50 .632 16*	2.29 1.312 17*	2.00 1.103 24*

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees totally (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 16a. What kind of decisions taken in the environmental administration involves the local participants?

	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Environmental permits concerning the agricultural sector	2.00 1.183 11*	3.40 1.056 15*	2.00 1.033 16*	3.20 1.033 10*	2.54 .877 13*	1.94 .998 16*
Environmental permits concerning the business sector	2.09 1.136 11*	3.40 .737 15*	2.63 1.025 16*	2.70 1.160 10*	2.77 .599 13*	3.13 1.088 16*
Planning matters in general	3.73 1.009 11*	3.69 .873 16*	3.81 .981 16*	3.30 1.160 10*	3.36 .842 14*	3.88 .719 16*
Environmental problems (including garbage, waste, air, noise...)	3.00 1.000 11*	3.69 1.195 16*	3.40 .910 15*	3.10 .876 10*	3.57 .646 14*	3.31 .793 16*
Environmental protection	3.09 1.136 11*	2.88 1.088 16*	3.00 1.033 16*	2.43 .787 7*	2.38 1.044 13*	3.00 1.265 16*

Scale: only few participants (1) – many participants (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 17a. How big influence does the following participants have on the environmental permit procedure?

	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
Environmental permit authority	3.90 .738 10*	3.67 .724 15*	4.15 .899 13*	3.70 1.059 10*	3.50 1.000 12*	3.64 1.082 14*
The political leadership in the municipality	3.20 1.033 10*	3.53 1.060 15*	3.46 .877 13*	2.70 .675 10*	3.08 .900 12*	3.07 1.072 14*
The administrative leadership in the municipality	3.50 1.179 10*	3.53 1.060 15*	3.54 .877 13*	3.00 .816 10*	3.25 .965 12*	3.27 1.100 15*
The civil servant who is responsible for presenting the environmental permit issues before the political bodies	4.10 .876 10*	4.00 .845 15*	3.93 .997 14*	3.40 1.075 10*	4.00 .603 12*	3.80 .414 15*
The associations or organisations in the municipality	2.50 .527 10*	2.64 1.008 14*	2.62 .870 13*	2.70 .483 10*	2.25 .622 12*	2.33 .900 15*
The companies in the municipality	2.30 .675 10*	2.80 .775 15*	3.00 .816 13*	2.60 .699 10*	2.33 .651 12*	2.77 1.092 13*
Individual inhabitants	2.22 .667 9*	2.47 .640 15*	2.62 1.193 13*	2.78 .667 9*	2.45 .934 11*	2.43 .852 14*

Scale: no influence (1) – very big influence (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 18a. How big influence does the following participants have on the planning procedure?						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
The political leadership in the municipality	3.91 .701 11*	3.81 .834 16*	4.14 .663 14*	3.20 .789 10*	3.36 .633 14*	3.88 .719 16*
The administrative leadership in the municipality	3.82 .751 11*	3.94 .680 16*	4.14 .663 14*	3.45 .820 11*	3.36 .842 14*	3.88 .500 16*
The civil servant who is responsible for presenting the planning issues before the political bodies	3.91 .701 11*	4.06 .854 16*	3.86 .864 14*	3.36 1.027 11*	4.21 .699 14*	3.75 .577 16*
The associations or organisations in the municipality	2.82 .603 11*	2.47 .516 15*	3.00 1.155 13*	2.56 .527 9*	2.29 .611 14*	2.63 .806 16*
The companies in the municipality	2.45 .522 11*	2.81 .834 16*	3.43 1.089 14*	2.73 .905 11*	2.79 .802 14*	3.07 .884 15*
Individual inhabitants	2.55 .688 11*	2.44 .834 16*	3.00 1.177 14*	2.64 .924 11*	2.21 .579 14*	2.73 .704 15*

Scale: no influence (1) – very big influence (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 19a. Statements concerning the environmental permission procedure						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
There are enough written hearings	3.60 1.174 10*	3.56 .964 16*	3.77 1.166 13*	3.27 .786 11*	3.50 1.286 14*	3.63 .806 16*
Usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making	3.50 1.354 10*	3.27 1.033 15*	3.31 .947 13*	2.82 .872 11*	3.21 1.051 14*	3.38 .885 16*
Participating in the environmental permission procedure is of significance for the position of the individual	3.50 .707 10*	3.25 1.125 16*	3.69 .751 13*	3.45 .934 11*	3.62 .768 13*	3.50 1.155 16*
Participating in the environmental permission procedure is of significance for the environment	3.10 .730 10*	3.31 1.014 16*	3.62 .961 13*	3.27 .786 11*	3.38 1.044 13*	3.44 1.153 16*
Participating in the environmental permission procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment	3.40 .966 10*	2.81 1.328 16*	3.08 1.256 13*	2.64 .809 11*	3.23 1.013 13*	3.19 1.167 16*
The authorities participation in the environmental permission process is more important than the citizens participation	3.20 .789 10*	3.06 .854 16*	3.38 1.044 13*	3.18 .751 11*	2.62 .870 13*	2.44 1.094 16*
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.30 1.160 10*	2.73 1.387 15*	2.62 1.121 13*	2.44 1.130 9*	2.71 .870 13*	3.25 1.238 16*

Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees completely (5)
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents
 * = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant

Table 20a. Statements concerning the planning procedure						
	High level conflict region			Low level conflict region		
	Puumala	Kangasniemi	Savonlinna	Vesanto	Suonenjoki	Varkaus
There are enough written hearings	3.82 1.079 11*	3.76 .831 17*	3.85 1.214 13*	3.20 1.135 10*	3.64 1.216 14*	3.75 1.000 16*
Usually a written hearing creates an adequate base for decision making	3.18 1.168 11*	3.65 .996 17*	3.38 1.193 13*	3.30 .675 10*	3.23 1.013 13*	3.13 1.025 16*
Participating in the planning procedure is of significance for the position of the individual	3.64 .924 11*	3.47 1.068 17*	3.92 .494 13*	3.20 .789 10*	4.00 .707 13*	3.88 .806 16*
Participating in the planning procedure is of significance for the environment	3.27 .905 11*	3.53 1.179 17*	3.69 .751 13*	3.20 .789 10*	3.46 1.127 13*	3.38 1.088 16*
Participating in the planning procedure is of more significance for the position of the individual than for the environment	3.09 1.044 11*	2.65 1.057 17*	3.15 .899 13*	3.11 .782 9*	3.23 .725 13*	3.25 1.125 16*
The authorities participation in the planning process is more important than the citizens participation	2.91 .831 11*	3.18 1.131 17*	3.23 1.166 13*	3.30 .675 10*	2.54 .967 13*	2.44 1.094 16*
Participation slows down the decision making process	2.09 .701 11*	2.50 1.211 16*	3.15 1.281 13*	2.71 1.380 7*	3.00 1.414 11*	3.31 1.250 16*
Scale: disagrees completely (1) – agrees completely (5)						
M: Mean, S: Standard Deviation, N: Number of respondents						
* = Some respondents act both as a local politician and as a local civil servant						

DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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<i>Author(s)</i>	Sam Grönholm and Pauliina Jalonen			
<i>Title of publication</i>	Environmental permit processes and local public participation			
<i>Publication series and number</i>	Reports of the Finnish Environment Institute 5/2009			
<i>Theme of publication</i>				
<i>Parts of publication/ other project publications</i>				
<i>Abstract</i>	<p>This report is a part of a wider research program titled Effective Environmental Management: law, public participation and environmental decision making (EMLE). EMLE is an innovative exploration of the nature, impact and effectiveness of public participation in environmental decision-making. The research program is founded by the Finnish Academy, the Finnish Ministry of Environment and the Finnish Environment Institute.</p> <p>The aim of this report is to explore the nature of public participation in the environmental permit processes on the local level in Finland. Since emphasis is to explore the nature of public participation on a local level, there is also a need to understand the complex structures of interaction and influence in the municipalities. This will further increase the understanding of various stakeholders' participation and influence.</p> <p>Both quantitative and qualitative approach was utilized in research data. Data was collected from six municipalities on two Regional Environmental Centres (REC) -areas with diverse conflict levels.</p> <p>The key findings of the study were that there are many problems in connection to public participation on a local level; general passivity of the individual inhabitants, furthermore public participation has usually little effect on the actual municipal decision-making, and it appears also there is hardly any dialogue between the municipality and the individual inhabitants. The ordinary local inhabitants appear not to experience any need or desire to shape their living environment. Public participation on the local level is usually the result of personal agendas, or of personal beliefs or attitudes. Public participation in environmental permit procedures requires above all expertise. Emphasis of participation is on appealing and resistance, which reduces space for other reasons for participation, e.g. learning.</p> <p>However, according to the local civil servants and local politicians public participation is important because public participation increases the acceptability and the trust for the local decisions, as well as reduces the level of conflict at large in the municipalities. Participation also enables better informed decisions. Therefore a general conclusion is that the government should work towards better prerequisites to participate in the societal decision-making.</p>			
<i>Keywords</i>	Civic activity, participation, environmental policy, municipalities			
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Tekijä(t)	Sam Grönholm ja Pauliina Jalonen			
Julkaisun nimi	Environmental permit processes and local public participation (Tähän nimen käännös Suomeksi laihalla sulkuihin)			
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Julkaisun teema				
Julkaisun osat/ muut saman projektin tuottamat julkaisut				
Tiivistelmä	<p>Tämä raportti on osa laajempaa tutkimusohjelmaa ”Ympäristöpolitiikan tehokkuus: oikeus, kansalaisten osallistuminen ja päätöksenteko (EMLE)”. EMLE:ssä tarkastellaan innovatiivisesti kansalaisten osallistumista ympäristöä koskevaan päätöksentekoon, sen luonnetta, vaikutuksia ja vaikuttavuutta. Hanketta rahoittavat Suomen Akatemia ja Suomen Ympäristökeskus.</p> <p>Tässä tutkimusraportissa tarkastellaan kansalaisosallistumista ympäristölupaprosesseihin paikallisella tasolla. Koska tarkastelun kohteena on kansalaisosallistumisen luonne paikallistasolla, on tarpeen ymmärtää vuorovaikutuksen ja vaikuttamisen monitahoisia rakenteita kunnissa. Tämä lisää eri sidosryhmien osallisuuden ja vaikuttamisen ymmärrystä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin sekä kvantitatiivista että kvalitatiivista tutkimusta. Aineisto kerättiin kuudesta kunnasta kahden alueellisen ympäristökeskuksen alueelta, joissa oli erilainen konfliktitaso.</p> <p>Keskeisimpiä tuloksia oli, että kansalaisosallistumiseen paikallisella tasolla liittyy monia ongelmia, asukkaiden yleistä passiivisuutta, osallistumisen vähäistä vaikuttavuutta varsinaiseen päätöksentekoon sekä kunnan asukkaiden välisen dialogin puuttumista. Paikalliset asukkaat eivät näytä tarvitsevan tai haluavan muokata elinympäristöään. Paikallistason kansalaisosallistuminen on henkilökohtaisen agendan, uskomusten tai asenteiden tulosta. Osallistuminen ympäristölupaprosessiin vaatii erityistä asiantuntemusta. Osallistuminen painottuu valittamiseen ja vastustamiseen, mikä vähentää tilaa muilta osallistumisen tavoitteilta kuten oppimiselta.</p> <p>Kuitenkin paikallisten viranomaisten ja poliitikoiden mukaan kansalaisosallistuminen on tärkeää, sillä se lisää hyväksyttävyyttä sekä luottamusta paikallisiin päätöksiin, sekä vähentää yleisesti konflikteja kunnissa. Osallistuminen mahdollistaa myös paremmin perustellut päätökset. Yleinen johtopäätös onkin, että hallinnon tulisi kehittää osallistumisen edellytyksiä yhteiskunnallisessa päätöksenteossa.</p>			
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Sammandrag	<p>Denna rapport utgör en del av forskningsprogrammet Miljöpolitikens effektivitet: lagstiftning, medborgardeltagande och beslutsfattande (EMLE). EMLE är ett innovativt forskningsprogram som granskar karaktären hos, påverkan och effekterna av medborgardeltagande i beslutsfattandet gällande miljöfrågor. Projektet finansieras gemensamt av Finlands Akademi, Miljöministeriet och Finlands Miljöcentral.</p> <p>Syftet med denna rapport är att undersöka medborgardeltagandets karaktär inom miljö tillståndsprocessen på en lokal nivå i Finland. Eftersom tyngdpunkten är att undersöka medborgardeltagandets karaktär på en lokal nivå, finns också ett behov av att förstå de komplexa strukturerna av interaktion och påverkan inom kommunerna. Detta bidrar till att öka förståelsen av olika intressenters deltagande och inflytande i miljö tillståndsprocessen.</p> <p>Forskningsdata till rapporten insamlades både genom kvantitativa och kvalitativa metoder. Rapporten använder forskningsdata insamlat från sex olika kommuner verksamma inom två regionala miljöcentralers arbetsdistrikt. De regionala miljöcentralernas arbetsdistrikt kännetecknas av varierande grad av konflikt.</p> <p>De huvudsakliga resultaten av undersökningen påvisar att det existerar många problem i samband med medborgardeltagande på en lokal nivå. Individuella lokala invånare kännetecknas av en generell passivitet, den vanlige lokala invånaren verkar inte uppleva ett behov eller begär av att påverka sin levnadsomgivning. Och om det förekommer medborgardeltagande på en lokal nivå, är det oftast ett resultat av en personlig agenda, eller av personlig övertygelse eller attityd. Medborgardeltagande på en lokal nivå har vanligen liten effekt på det verkliga kommunala beslutsfattandet. Det förefaller även att dialogen mellan kommunen och de individuella medborgarna är till en stor del frånvarande. Medborgardeltagande inom miljö tillståndsprocessen kräver framförallt kunskap och expertis. Tyngdpunkten i medborgardeltagandet är på överklagan och motstånd, vilket reducerar utrymmet för annan typ av medborgardeltagande, t.ex. utbildning.</p> <p>Medborgardeltagande är dock betydelsefullt enligt lokala tjänstemän och lokala politiker, eftersom medborgardeltagandet förstärker de lokala beslutens godtagbarhet och trovärdighet. Medborgardeltagandet bidrar dessutom till att reducera den allmänna konfliktnivån i kommunerna och möjliggör beslut baserat på bättre information. En allmän slutsats är därmed att regeringen borde arbeta gentemot bättre förutsättningar för medborgardeltagande i det samhälleliga beslutsfattandet.</p>			
Nyckelord	Medborgaraktivitet, deltagande, miljöpolitik, kommuner			
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