

Stand-by Citizens:
A Three-level Analysis of Civic Engagement

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International research into democracy has uncovered severe changes in patterns of contemporary political engagement and participation. Even institutions such as voluntary political associations and political parties have undergone major alterations that raise questions about their capacity to uphold traditional socialising and channelling functions (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Inglehart and Catterberg 2003; Norris 2002).

On the European level, both the Council of Europe (Trechsel and Schmitter 2004) and the EU Commission (Ökonomikommisionen [Economics Commission] 1993) have launched major projects to stimulate citizen engagement in the European institutions. The background is not that they believe democratic values have lost their footing; their worry has to do rather with the Europeans' deepening cynicism and lack of confidence with regard to their political institutions. Proposed measures include a number of different reforms such as conferences, hearings, Internet activities, focus groups, lotteries, and bonuses for those who vote. Even within the framework of the most outstandingly ambitious global political project – the Millennium Development Goals – the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are building active civic engagement into their projects in various ways, most often through the increased participation of civil society in policies and projects (Världsbanken [World Bank] 2006).

Scandinavian democracies hitherto have been regarded as exceptionally stable and strong, due to their homogenous qualities of mass-based class politics, strong political parties, a high degree of associationalism, peaceful labour market relations, advanced welfare policies, and a comparatively great amount of social capital (Andersen and Hoff 2001; Rothstein and Stolle 2003). However, at the threshold of the new millennium, three official democratic audits revealed that Scandinavian democracies have also been severely affected by both exogenous and endogenous constraints (Amnå 2006b; Andersen 2006; Selle and Østerud 2006). In addition, they appear to be diverging heterogeneously from the assumed 'pan-Scandinavian' model. Partly because of the quite different ways their political leaders responded to similar processes of threats and pressure, the three democracies showed substantially varying political and democratic consequences in terms of voting, external efficacy, and trust in institutions (Amnå, Ekman, and Almgren 2007; Strandberg 2006).

The proud Scandinavian ideal of an active democracy seemed to be challenged. National cultural treasures were claimed to be weakened by post-modern individualisation and

globalisation as well as by institutional changes such as non-transparent multi-level governance, new public management, medialisation of politics, and professionalised politics. As in most European democracies, the base for widespread civic engagement and continuous political activism could not be taken for granted any longer. The offspring of successful democracies behaved in an increasingly distanced manner, critical and passive either because they were satisfied overall with their country's representative democracy or because they were unsatisfied over the way it operated. European democracies that for decades had shown remarkable successes in terms of human development were severely hit by growing feelings of distrust, frustration, alienation, and cynicism, among citizens as well as among their leaders (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995; Stoker 2006; Trechsel and Schmitter 2004).

But are worry and pessimism actually warranted? Or, are we just registering surface phenomena? Or, do we have reasons to believe in alarmist messages about not only fundamental but continuous erosions of social capital and civic engagement? Could it be true even for one of the widely praised, active citizen-democracies, that of Sweden (Putnam 2000; Putnam 2002)?

Theoretical approach

The Athenian idea of citizenship was based on the citizen's, i.e., the free man's, being active in the governance of common concerns. To embody civic virtue in public life was more important than maximising the possibilities of private life, if in fact any distinction between individual and citizen could even be made. The legitimacy of the laws stood and fell with the citizens' participation in argumentation and debate. Thus the laws were not impositions by others but self-imposed restrictions among political equals with a demonstrated common interest. Freedom thus presupposes equal participation, which is anchored in cooperation around shared issues.

If we want to be free, we must take an active part in the life of our society. If not, others will come to dominate us. This action can be based on principles other than those of equality, perhaps under a religious guise. It is a recurring theme in the republican tradition in political philosophy. For Nicolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) especially, civic engagement stood out as the very key to successful self-government. Citizens, in other words, should take an active interest for their own (freedom's) sake. Otherwise, they are not citizens: they are pursuing individual

worth – for individual development. Outside the political community one cannot live a genuinely fulfilled life.

This is a thought invoked by advocates of a so-called strong democracy with many features of direct democracy. Cooperation and participation are good for the individual's development. They shape and reshape the individual into a more conscious, less prejudiced citizen with a greater ability to keep in sight the common ideal (Pateman 1970).

On the social level, engagement is something that distinguishes the special political culture, the civic spirit, which is superior to other political cultures because it allows individuals to be both citizens and subjects. They are citizens who are prepared to be active in public life in their area of competence. They have confidence in their own resources and their opportunities to make themselves heard, and they believe that they can make a difference. But they are also prepared to be loyal to the social community and to follow the laws the state establishes. In their five-nation study of civic spirit, Almond and Verba observed that the citizens in political cultures of this kind make a practice of both trusting one another and respecting honourable authorities (Almond and Verba 1963).

But to blindly pay homage to all forms of civic engagement can be disastrous. Some engagement rests on undemocratic ideas: xenophobia, for instance. Some engagement, moreover, is expressed through undemocratic means like violence and sabotage, which cannot be tolerated in a democracy. Civil disobedience has value and can be defended as long as it does not violate people. Ultimately, for one who values representative democracy because it is the form of participation that rests on the most equal basis, engagement in other forms is troubling. In that light, engagement is in every instance potentially a force that can outmanoeuvre, disrupt and undermine the representative form of government and its principle of political equality – especially if it concerns engagement that is mixed with ignorance or is the revenge of bad losers. But on the other hand it seems to be the case that the destructive effects of losing are partly annulled if one is taking an active part oneself (Esaiasson 2006.)

For these reasons, civic engagement cannot be embraced just like that. On the contrary, even a democracy may hold strong reasons of principle for dampening, curbing, and combating some civic engagement in democratic self-defence (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005).

With these normative standpoints in mind, this study has been guided by three more empirically oriented questions: (1) What individual considerations and motives underlie the seeming weakening of civic engagement? (2) How do various types of social or political organisations operate in order to transfer civic engagement into political action? (3) What is the impact of the extensive relationships between these organisations and governmental institutions in terms of character and forms of civic engagement? In other words, how is the work of civil organisations embedded in the welfare state ideologically, financially and institutionally?

This study was based on five hypotheses of scepticism towards earlier studies because of their one-sidedness and their tendency to deliver too simplistic answers to the questions raised above. Roughly speaking, the researchers had been either too optimistic or too pessimistic to be convincing. Optimists reported new modes of participation such as political consumerism emerging close to new social movements. Pessimists observed lowering voter turnouts, decline in associational activities and decreased trust in political institutions. Overall, there was a lack of studies trying to integrate diverse approaches into a more comprehensive analysis.¹

More precisely, the point of departure of this study was fivefold. First and foremost, the study was based on a theoretically informed critique against a biased conceptualisation of political engagement. Not least in a Nordic political culture, ‘politics’ is doomed to be connoted with party politics, which in turn may hide more basic attitudes towards common values and obligations (Sörbom 2002). Engagement cannot be locked into a set of institutions or actions, but it is more about a basic spirit encompassing all human cooperation (Asen 2004, p. 196). Therefore, we wanted to develop ways to supplement the frequent survey questions about political interest, consumption of political news, participation in political discussions, etc. In an effort to decouple ‘political’ from its immediate connections with representative political institutions, the concept of ‘civic’ consequently was chosen.

Second, most studies have been intensely occupied with political behaviour. Not least in Sweden, voting behaviour has been a particular focus of the more impressive studies reported over half a century. Thanks to this work, there are extraordinary opportunities for studying changes of behaviour over time, particularly voting. As with comparative studies in political action, the researchers had adjusted their measurements to new modes of participation

emerging from time to time (Barnes, Kaase, et al. 1979; Holmberg 2001; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004).

However, since we were seeking latent rather than manifest dimensions, traditional concepts like political action and political participation had to be supplemented by concepts more sensitive towards basic feelings about civic issues (Barber 1984; Bennet, Flickinger, and Rhine 2000; Dryzek 2000). While action often had been equated with engagement, our goal was to catch latent dimensions of political commitment. A concept of civic engagement (*samhällsengagemang*) was chosen as more appropriate for these basic orientations. More precisely, civic engagement was defined as *an active intellectual or emotional orientation towards conditions not solely concerning the individual or her/his family but issues of relevance for others*.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 about here]

To summarise to this point, we were primarily not interested in manifest political participation but in potential political participation, called civic engagement. We wanted to catch as much as possible of everyday life experiences reflecting civic engagement of human agents (Figure 1).

Third, the meso-level of political action has been put forward too seldom (Norris 2002). And when it has occurred, organisations involving civic engagement seem to have been described as well as valued in too dichotomised a fashion: that is, hierarchical, representative, stable organisations on the one hand, or flat, direct, ad-hoc organisations on the other. Furthermore, the former often were regarded as outdated, while the latter had been launched as innovative prototypes anticipating modes of future political institutions. We wanted to avoid this risk of making unbalanced comparisons between ‘old’ idealised popular movement organisations and factual ‘new’ social organisations. Instead, our goal was to compare factual organisations of various kinds. Due to their shared societal setting, we hypothesised similarities and relationships between as well as within them beyond a stereotyped bipolarisation.

Fourth, participation had been studied mostly by focussing on individual behaviour decoupled from its institutional conditions. For sure, opportunity structures have been analysed. But seldom have civic organisations’ embeddings within specific institutional contexts been

thoroughly studied. We not only have quite strong evidence that Scandinavian civil society is undergoing major transformations in its external relationships towards the welfare states; its current development also includes severe alterations of internal relations (Amnå 2006a; Amnå 2006c). Our hypothesis was therefore that these changes may have an impact on the organisations' functions of fostering, channelling and articulating civic engagement.

Fifth, as a methodological consequence of these four considerations, a combined qualitative and quantitative approach was developed, which will be further explained in the following section on methods.

Methods

The empirical analyses are based on data collected through both quantitative and qualitative investigations. Several different methods were employed for the different questions to receive as empirically rich an elucidation as possible. In addition to analyses of secondary data, we carried out seven quantitative analyses based on six different survey studiesⁱⁱ together with quantitative content analyses of the programmes of the Swedish political parties in 2005.

The *qualitative methods* consist of conversational interviews, focus groups and analyses of ideas.ⁱⁱⁱ In personal, semi-structured interviews in four so-called focus groups, between three and eight participants discussed various aspects of civic engagement for about two hours. Two of the groups were recruited among millworkers in a small city: one group was middle-aged, the other group comprised people just over twenty years of age. The third group consisted of students from various educational programmes at a university. Common to these three groups was that they had no associational engagement nor would qualify themselves in any other way as 'active' citizens in the quantitative studies we employed. The fourth group consisted of citizens with an active engagement in party politics. The interviews took about two hours and were conducted by a young male research assistant. They were recorded on tape and transcribed.

Qualitative policy analyses of official documents from Swedish parliamentary, government and state authorities were used to elucidate the relations of the state to the civil society's various organisational forms. This primarily concerned budget proposals, motions and documents appropriating funds to the authorities concerned.

Results

Long-term tendencies of civic engagement

There is no form of action that beats *participation in elections* when it comes to the number of participants. Four out of five qualified voters participate in the general elections. The most voters ever participated in the 1976 elections (92 per cent). The lowest voter participation in the last forty years was in the 2002 elections (80 per cent). Participation in elections is fairly stable in Sweden, even if the development was checked somewhat in the 2006 general elections. But the tendency is that participation in elections has been falling over the last thirty years. As for most other Western democracies, it was mainly during the 1990s that fewer and fewer people made up their minds to go out and vote. First-time voters in 2002 registered probably the lowest election participation in half a century. Our analyses of the Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics panel data for the years 1984, 1992 and 2002, in which people stated subjectively whether they had voted in the 'most recent election', indicated that 88 per cent had taken part in every election, while 2 per cent took part in only one election and 9 per cent in two elections. In other words, only 1 per cent of the panel reported that they had not participated in any of the six elections that were held. The greatest instability characterised the youngest age group, even if the size of the group invites cautious interpretation. Though this type of memory data is uncertain, the results nevertheless point to the same (in part) newly interpreted trend in election participation as Holmberg and Oscarsson's analyses of three-election mobility: above all, it is 'group of citizens that misses an election now and then that is increasing in number' (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004, p. 38).

The proportion of *party members* in the Swedish population has fallen from 12 per cent in 1986 to 7 per cent in 2001, according to the SOM (Society, Opinions, Media) Institute studies (Pettersson 2003). Among the adult population, the proportion of people active in political parties has decreased: from about 4 per cent in 1980-81 to 1.5 per cent in 2004 (www.scb.se). But we can observe from the statements from the Central Bureau of Statistics panel that underlying those figures there is a certain mobility. People go in and out of the political parties, not just in connection with ending the collective association. Older people show the greatest stability in the course of the 16 years to which the studies apply.

With regard to *associational activities*, developments also have a downward tendency, even though still marginal and at a high level. During the 1990s the proportion of Swedes who were

members of at least one association decreased from 92 to 90 per cent. Most notable, though, was that 16–24 year-olds who entered into associational activities decreased from 58 to 42 per cent (Amnå 2006c). That the downward trend in active membership has continued in the first few years since 2000 is possibly indicated by a study of volunteer work (Olsson, Svedberg, and Jeppsson-Grassman 2005).

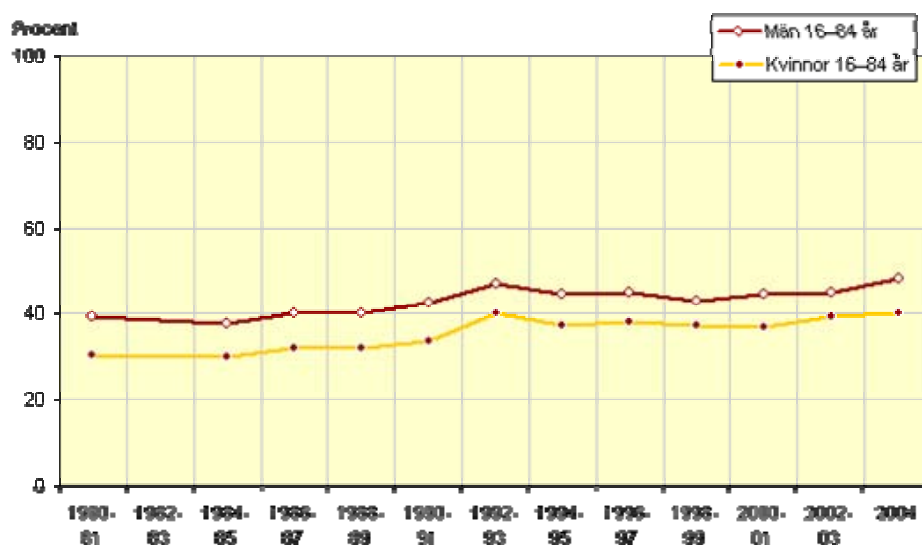
Next after *financial support* of voluntary activities attempts to influence social developments by *signing a petition*. From a comparison between 1987 and 1997 it is apparent that signatures have increased from 37 to 49 per cent (Petersson et al. 1998). Choosing not to purchase certain goods for ethical or political reasons, and buying other goods on similar grounds, is also a way of standing for or against social conditions one wishes to support or oppose (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005). In our study, over one person in three (37 per cent) responded that they had made their consumer choice of a certain product in order to try to influence society, and 30 per cent had used this strategy several times during the most recent year.

One can certainly discuss what answers to questions about *political interest* are actually saying. Much research indicates that, especially in a Scandinavian setting, this interest suffers from a connotation with party politics (O’Toole, Marsh, and Jones 2003). Being politically interested can therefore easily be identified with a party-politics engagement. Yet seen over the last 15 years, there is no tendency to decreasing political interest in the Swedish population. On the contrary, it appears to be increasing, particularly from 44 per cent in 1960 to 54 per cent in 2002, until just recently, when it has fallen somewhat. In other words, approximately every other person questioned says that they are either very or somewhat politically interested. Though it is still the case that men say they are more politically interested than women do, it is mainly the women’s reported political interest that has increased: from 32 per cent in 1960 to 48 per cent in 2002 (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004, p. 268 and n. 15 on p. 268).

A natural way to cultivate one’s political interest is talking about political events and relations with the people one meets in everyday life. Even what does not appear particularly political at the moment may suddenly be of political significance, if only as a platform for continued conversation about politics (Dahlgren 2006, p. 278). Unfortunately, many empirical political science studies have ignored political *discussions* since these studies have limited ‘participation’ only to the kinds of activities that are aimed at influencing decisions and

decision-makers (Milner 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995); see however (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Eliasoph 1998); for comparative studies of political discussion, see for example (Topf 1995). They have been fastidious vis-à-vis political discussions, reserving for themselves the right to drop conversations of a kind that are not for the purpose of political influence (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992). In Scandinavia, Danish and Norwegian researchers have been more interested in the political discussion – as one aspect of political engagement – than Swedish researchers (Andersen and Hoff 2001).

Figure 2. Reported political discussion



iv → Per cent (at top left) / Men 16–84 years / Women 16–84 years]

Through our access to a panel we can describe more closely here how the same people on three different occasions reported on their relationship to political discussion. Almost two-thirds of the men and slightly over half of the women stated that they had sometimes or often taken part in political discussions. But only 10 and 6 per cent, respectively, stated on the same three occasions (1984, 1992 and 2000) that they had never bothered to listen when people started talking politics, or that they had listened but never taken part. The others reported that during one or two of the years of the study they had discussed politics. Those with a low level of education had participated least but reported the greatest variations during the sixteen years (SCB [Central Bureau of Statistics] 2002).

One further dimension of engagement appears to connect closely with political *news consumption* as well as political interest as a condition of manifest civic engagement, namely *political knowledge*. One indicator is a question on whether or not one sees oneself as able to

compose a letter appealing a decision by a governmental authority. Since 1980 about two-thirds of the men have responded 'Yes' to this question. Twenty-five years ago, only every second woman responded 'Yes'; nowadays, two-thirds of the women state that they would be able to do this (SCB [Central Bureau of Statistics] 2002).

If one puts together these different pictures of how Swedish citizens *manifest* their civic engagement alongside the elections, a pattern stands out in which two out of three participate in efforts to influence society, while the third does not participate. Different forms of participation are often combined in the course of a year. The most common are to make use of petitions, Internet/e-mail and consumer boycotts or support-purchases. From the time-sets available it is clear that political participation is fairly stable but is declining notably in two respects: election participation and party activity. Greatest concern is motivated by the increasing political inequality in election participation, which became most apparent in connection with the 1998 election when election participation fell by as much as 5.1 percentage points (Bennulf and Hedberg 1999; Teorell and Westholm 1999; Westholm and Teorell 1999). As for the critical issue of political equality, an analysis of 15 years of SOM data for party membership and party identification yields one positive and one negative message: political equality is not decreasing, but it is still significant when it comes to type of family, age and education (Pettersson 2003).

Throughout the analyses of the political participation of Swedes there is an uneasiness about the future that is concentrated on the behaviour and attitudes of young people. Several years ago, however, when 18-year-olds were given the question of what they imagined themselves doing as adults, 89 per cent began by mentioning that they would be voting, 44 per cent demonstrating and 23 per cent collecting names in an appeal (Amnå 2001). Prognoses are risky, even the subjective ones. But what is interesting about these figures is that there does not appear to be any genuine or general dissociation from taking part in civic work.

Motives

Those who do research on the extent and forms of political participation are faced sooner or later with what seems to be a riddle: when all is said and done, the likelihood that an individual citizen's contributions of time and engagement will have a crucial influence on how a political issue is ultimately decided is rather small. Despite this, the great majority of

people still take part in some sort of political activity. How is that? How can one solve this paradox of participation (Olson, 1965)?

Roughly speaking, one can distinguish three different types of explanations for the fact that political participation varies (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004). For the first, there are institutional factors that can explain why participation differs among different political systems. This is a question of how one has chosen to solve certain institutional problems. The second type of explanation concerns the political and social context in which the individuals live. In the third type of explanation it is the differences in the individuals' resources and incentives that are central: socioeconomic status like class, ethnicity, age, sex, career and education, and what it is that motivates participation. One can distinguish here between selective and collective incentives, i.e., dreamed-of rewards only for those who participate and rewards for everyone, passive as well as active. The fact that citizens who regard themselves as having strong reasons to participate actually do so may seem rather obvious. The motivation, as election researchers Holmberg and Oscarsson prefer to call this driving force, turns out to be close to the behaviour itself. When they, like many other behavioural scientists, tested the incentive hypothesis themselves, it nevertheless proved to be fairly powerful for explaining, for example, why poorly educated, single, unemployed workers – despite a lack of the sort of resources that make their election participation probable – still chose to vote (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004, p. 23f.).

Results of Swedish election research are in line with a deepening of the very influential socioeconomic model of explanation (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), which has also been tested in order to explain political participation in various forms in Great Britain (Jones, Johnston, and Pattie 1992). It is assumed in this model that access to time, the feeling that one is able to have an effect, party identification and political engagement increase the probability of participating. In Sweden it has very recently been used on panel data for the purpose of understanding why citizens choose different forms of political participation (Bäck, Teorell, and Westholm 2006; Oscarsson 2006). The results from both studies coincide in one important respect: There are many reasons for citizens' being active or passive. No single factor is able to explain everything. In the British study, the researchers emphasise access to resources, positive expectations about the outcome, participation in association activities, and informal networks. But it narrows down to two factors especially: mobilisation and political engagement (Jones, Johnston, and Pattie 1992; see also Verba,

Burns, and Lehman Schlozman 1997). The Swedish study, among other things, draws the conclusion that the collective and selective incentives play different roles for different types of political participation depending on the attitude towards politics. For example, while demonstrations and contacts with decision-makers appear to be stimulated by both sorts of incentive, election participation and party membership depend on selective incentives, principally norms of civic obligations and whether the action is experienced as fun and exciting (Bäck, Teorell, and Westholm 2006; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004; Oscarsson 2006; see also Westholm and Teorell 1999).

It also appears that a considerable accord prevails around people's participation in politics not being something given and stable once and for all – based on class background, sex or ethnicity, for example. Certainly, social, economic and cultural assets have great significance in the decision of citizens to participate. But the citizens' own conceptions and norms may get them to defy this type of predestined group connection. Thus, the well-off, well-educated Swedish-born citizen may yet abstain from voting, while the unemployed, single, foreign-born citizen with little education may yet choose to vote.

On the individual level, on the basis of large collections of data, researchers have roughly narrowed down the incentives that determine whether there will be any active political participation and what form it will take. The incentives include resources in the form of class, education, career and income, but also social integration like age, country of origin, position in the labour market and networks. Motivation arises from feelings of obligation and of wanting to contribute, calculations of benefit and effectiveness, or just the sheer satisfaction, pleasure or delight of participation. Put differently, there are resource explanations and motivation explanations (Bennulf and Hedberg 1999; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004; Teorell and Westholm 1999; Westholm and Teorell 1999).

Six types of motivation

The point of departure for our own empirical study was actually the paradox that the predominant researchers on participation face: Why participate? And if political participation is the phenomenon: what are the forces that drive it or hold it back?

What we found in the focus groups and the individual interviews were mainly six different inducements: obligation, importance, ability, demand, effectiveness and meaningfulness.

1. *Obligation: 'One ought to'*

Cecilia:

In twenty years, I'll need to know that I tried.

Angelika:

You do want to make your voice heard, anyway you want to try, you can't just quietly stand there letting everything happen.

The two quotations are taken from two women who do not actually have much in common. The first lives out in the country, the second in a large city. The first follows the flood of political news continually through a number of different media and gives the impression of having an 'iron grasp' of developments at different territorial levels. The second reads her local paper and puts at most a few coins in a collection box sometimes. The first devotes the major part of her free time to political activities and has very dedicated political views. The second has only once in her life up to now acted politically beyond voting. This was when she took part in organising a protest against the closing of a day nursery, where she thought the foundation of the political proposals had major flaws and where she saw that her own child would fare badly. In both cases they argue for their civic engagement in defensive terms, in order to maintain their self-respect as a person and a citizen. To let things be would be shameful. But it appears to be about an obligation rather than a right. Accordingly, voting is the minimum requirement – a little effort in order to maintain civic self-esteem – which everyone in fact ought to be able to help out with. But the virtue has also created a sort of late-modernity stress, as Lisa testifies:

Lisa:

It struck me the other day, normally I buy as much organic- and eco-labelled as I can but then, it was probably a few years ago that I understood you can't do everything right. You're always going to do something that does harm to somebody, otherwise it's all over if you don't accept that thought. But the other day I happened to think when I was going to fill the tank, so we started filling up at an STL station that was cheaper than Statoil. All of a sudden it struck me that God, I don't know what kind of label it's got. I have no idea what they do, so then I said that I don't know if I can do this. Then I had to go and check on it.

To sum up, there is no doubt that civic virtue involves civic engagement, especially and at least going to vote. Everyone appears to subscribe to that. At any rate, one does when one finds oneself under observation by researchers. If someone still chooses not to live by this norm, one does so in the awareness at least that it is something one is not proud of.

2. *Importance: 'I have to'*

'Ought to' was the theme of the previous motivation. As a citizen, one should be engaged. This is a powerful and widespread civic norm. But is it primarily of an honorary nature –

something one activates in a somewhat more elevated context, in the highly ritual election, for example? We shall see how some of the citizens we spoke with hold themselves to the norm in practice.

‘Have to’ is not seen as compulsion in the more formal sense, even if the ordinarily passive Robban reminds himself that he has in fact taken part once in a political manifestation – though under compulsion:

Robban:

Well, when I think about it, as a matter of fact I have taken part and collected money in that kind of collection box once in intermediate school but it was probably more just because we were forced to do it. Or it was better than sitting in the classroom, so you got to go around town and uhhh, with that damn box and collect money. I don’t remember where it was... (Focus group 1)

We will listen to Angelika, who has never ever distinguished herself by standing up high on any political barricades. To be sure, she has signed petition lists a few times. But it was when something was going on in her home district that she got really upset. She tried to make contact with the politicians responsible in order to inform them of the consequences of their proposal. But at first they did not respond. They appeared to take no notice of the parent group. Angelika’s commitment to her child aroused her political participation in a protest that she herself took part in organising. Her private parenthood aroused a public citizenship. No one can say if she will ever again participate in politics beyond voting. But she has acquired experience. Presumably she has raised her political preparedness even if she strongly attaches to her motherhood. Her giving money for child cancer research also springs from the same sense of being personally affected, or of being in a position to become so:

Angelika:

Since I have children I think it would be awful if it were to strike me. So you really do want to give so the research can go forward.

When Masoud is given the question about why he is engaged in an organisation that fights for refugees in Sweden, he sees it as a moral imperative in his own identity as a refugee. Roy, too, seems to have been marked by his civic engagement out of a personal experience. It was an experience of an entirely different sort than Masoud’s:

Roy:

I wanted to learn to fight and be able to punch blokes in the mouth just for reasons of self-defence because you got bullied.

The indignation and anger at political developments on a more comprehensive level is conspicuous in many of the engaged people’s stories. It may concern developments at large

but also very concretely, like fighting privatisation in medical services. Finally, it may be an event that one has not foreseen but which, when it happens, exposes a political reality that makes one so upset that one just has to do something. For example, the Gudrun storm, which struck Sweden in January 2005, give rise to a temporary action group called “The Electricity Uprising”

Sixten, *Elupproret (The Electricity Revolt)*:

When I went into it, it was from pure and honourable wrath, a sort of wrath that we had been sold out on a stock market, an international stock market where they don't give a bloody damn for our safety and our security. . . . When I was imagining how for four, five, six years' time they've been robbing us of system fees that haven't been used for any development, protection and safety, then I felt a holy wrath and that wrath was the driving force. I'm not the least ashamed of it. I was so horribly enraged at that company that had been doing that to us, had tricked us, deceived us, and embezzled the money we had been sending in (Sixten, p. 7).

At a somewhat lower political temperature than Sixten's, Michael says that if he isn't there, developments are going to go in one direction. His engagement has more a strategy of prevention about it. Someone has to represent his politics – why not himself?

To sum up, the motivation ‘I have to’ stretches across many different kinds of inducements – feelings that extend from submitting to your fate of being destined from your personal experiences, to your getting terribly angry about a concrete event. For some, the ‘ought to’ lives next door to the ‘I have to’. What you ought to do you also have to do, and so you do it – like links in a chain of socio-ethical argument. But with many more people, it is a matter of a political event happening that cries out for action. A more or less dormant civic engagement is awakened to life and leads to a political engagement. But alongside these citizens there are still those who, placed before hypothetical situations – which generally can be judged as either threatening or full of promise – nevertheless shrink back. Their ‘unrepentance’ has in common that nothing in the situation makes them ‘have to’. No compelling moral duty. No immediate interest at stake. Nothing is able to move their passivity, which they also realise and can answer for. Some offer various arguments – about the time, the duration, the priorities, the degree of concern, etc. Perhaps because it is probably thought that they ought to be active. The burden of proof for remaining passive is perceived to be on them.

3. *Ability: ‘I can’*

It is not enough, of course, in order for one to actually become involved and participate, that there be a moral imperative or a situation inviting action. One also has to have confidence in one's own resources – that what one has to contribute really can make a difference. We know that this dimension of motivation has strongly socio-economic patterns in which education

and home background are factors that promote self-confidence (Bandura 1986; Bandura 1997; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In political behavioural science there is the concept of 'political efficacy', which covers two dimensions: on the one hand, an internal aspect, having confidence in one's own resources, being able to make oneself heard; on the other hand, an external aspect – being listened to (Amnå and Munck 2003).

What is it one can see oneself being able to contribute? There is a great deal: ingenuity, fresh ideas, smartness, free labour, ideology and valuable experience from past missions are personal resources mentioned. With one exception, the self-confidence of women appears to enable them to proffer their contributions a bit more indirectly. Michael is the most cocksure:

Michael, *Green Party*:

I started getting engaged because I had quite a lot of self-confidence. I watched an election debate on TV and thought, they're making their arguments so badly. I've got to get involved and maybe I can do it better. Then during the time I've been doing it, I've been emotionally moved by masses of different political issues and that's why I've continued. As a matter of fact. (Focus group 4, p. 18)

None of the active people have any shortage of self-confidence in their own resources. On the contrary, they believe that they can have an influence. Political participation is not only desirable and possible for them in general. They believe that they possess resources that can mean something. Yet not all who think they have the ability become participants. The engagement of some is only dormant. How is that?

4. Demand: 'I'm needed'

The insight into what one ought to be doing in general and what has to be done in particular instances is not enough to develop action. Not even self-confidence that one really does have something to contribute is always sufficient for engagement to grow into action. In study after study of political engagement it is emphasised what significance recruiting has, and especially that someone offers an invitation (Jones, Johnston, and Pattie 1992; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Active people are full of stories about the importance of being invited:

Daniel:

We have culture week at school and there was a person there who gave a talk on Attac. I thought then that I couldn't let this go by. So I started talking with him. . . . Everything agreed with my understanding of how the world works and what it looks like. I lay gnawing on it for a while, and thought that I had to go at it now. So I did. (Daniel, p. 5)

Staffan, *Red Cross*:

I was thinking for a few years, in fact, that if I'm to engage in something then it should be something with the Red Cross. It was also quite early when you started working. We had a director here at the time; he was then chairman in the district and he influenced me over a long period that I should become involved in the Red Cross and finally that's how it was. So then I went into the adult organization and started taking an active part in the activities.

In a corresponding way, the passive and the uninvolved emphasise throughout that their hypothetical [engagement] more or less stands and falls on whether or not they are asked:

Robban:

If I'd been *asked* I would have done it, but I would never have gone and signed myself up for something. That's, like, how I think.

Angelika:

Yes. There's nobody who needs little me, or why should I help out, isn't that so?

Robban:

No, I don't really know what I would do there. But if you really felt that you could do something so that you didn't just feel you were sitting off in a corner looking dumb. Then I'd probably want to be part of it. . .

Anders:

The least possible effort. If you're asked then it's more trouble to get out of it, so, OK, I guess I can do it.

Pär:

If they go out asking for help I suppose I could imagine helping out but I guess I feel that if they don't ask for help then probably I wouldn't go straight there myself, I don't suppose I'd do that. I guess I'd think that they'll probably fix it themselves with the strength they've got.

Selma:

That's just it, if they don't ask for help then you sort of think that thing's aren't so bad. Though if they do need help then there really is a crisis. Then maybe you help out and such.

Carina:

If they're not asking for help then maybe you feel that you don't have anything yourself to offer or you sort of don't know what you have for them.

In other words, they are saying that one has to hear from someone else that one is needed and that one can do something. Presumably, there will be others who will take action.

Is this the difference between the active ones and the passive ones – that the former are already aware while the latter have to find out that their participation is needed? And, when one is well into the community of participants, in the best case one's self-confidence gets confirmed.

5. *Effectiveness: 'It works'*

Sixten, *Elupproret (The Electricity Revolt)*:

When things aren't working, you say 'Damn society!' instead of saying, "but my God, we've got to do something about this.

So far we have seen that the motivations that distinguish a passive engagement from an active one are hardly a question of the moral dictate. Everyone seems to feel that kind of thing. It is a question rather of how urgent one thinks it is in the particular situation or how important a political issue is for one. It is also a matter of having a sufficient amount of self-confidence, readily manifested in an invitation to come and an inquiry to contribute. But what the informants in both focus groups and individual conversational interviews talk about as well is

a dimension of effectiveness. Understanding the problem is not enough. One must be able to perceive an effective path of action that takes care of the problem – perhaps not in the form of some objective probability calculus, but more in the way Maja formulates the issue:

Maja:
It's a faith.

Daniel saw a political possibility open in connection with the EU summit meeting in Göteborg:

Daniel, *Attac*:
Did you feel that you could have an influence?
Up to the EU summit, you felt, well this is making a little difference. Because then there were so many people. An organisation that was founded in January and in May, June has the central role in organising all this around the protests. Because we landed in this role, we who were engaged in Attac were so few compared with the effort. You slept four, five hours a night at that time because there wasn't more time. Then the demonstration goes, then you saw the ones who joined Attac, 2,000–3,000, it's obvious that it feels bloody good. (Daniel, p. 6)

Masoud sensed in a similar way that something would change:

Masoud, *IMI (No Person Is Illegal)*:
What was the proposed bill you stopped?
They want to take away the new application for asylum-seekers. We didn't want that and it felt like a turning point for the whole right-of-asylum engagement because many years it was just opponents, working in a headwind. But something was opened there, something happened. I think that it turned there in some way.

The passive, like the uninvolved, appear to have in common that they do not credit accessible forms of action with any effect.

'No, I don't think you can have that much of an influence. . . it blows over anyway in a week or two, doesn't it?' (Robert, Focus group 1)

'I'd be afraid, I wouldn't do anything.' (Angelika, Focus group 1)

'Demonstrate a bit, maybe. It wouldn't work.' (Angelika, Focus group 1)

'There isn't that much to do, the damage has already happened.' (Anders, Focus group 1)

'If you could have an effect on anything, then I expect I'd do it.' (Birgitta 2, Focus group 2)

'The companies probably do actually have greater power.' (Peter, Focus group 2)

'Before, in those days there were lots of workers, in other words, then we were who ruled, like. Now the companies have taken over the whole lot of us.' (Kjell, Focus group 2)

It can of course be understood as a consistent posture to be passive if an activity in the forms that are on offer are deemed ineffective. An intellectual position of this kind may even seem more honourable than making believe.

6. *Meaningfulness: 'It gives'*

The theme of the futility of political participation varies as well in terms of 'it doesn't give anything'. The engagement quite likely involves sacrifices. In any case, it demands contributions in the form of time:

Masoud, *IMI (No Person Is Illegal)*:

What sacrifices do you make?

Nothing.

Doesn't it feel like a sacrifice?

No.

What is it giving, then?

I think like this, as long as it's fun and developing me, I'll do it. If it's not, then I'll take a break and do something else.

Long is the list of values that active people invoke in answer to what participation gives them in return. On one level, it is a matter of social relations, of friends and contacts with exciting people. One doesn't have to be alone and one gets appreciation from sympathisers. One also gets a position of power. On another level, it has to do with feedback in terms of cognitive experiences: training and knowledge.

On an almost existential level, the dividend revolves around joy, inspiration and belonging. It does one good to be engaged – also purely egotistically, in de Tocqueville's sense of community spirit or as 'self-interest rightly understood' (quoted from Uslander and Brown 2005, p. 869).

Lisa:

What's the central thing?

I felt that I needed to have something sensible to do that gives something and not just for me personally. . . . it's purely egotistical, I suppose, that I think it's fun to give something. That I want to, partly give something to other people, partly that I want to participate and have an effect. There's some sort of power factor there too, of course. Maybe it was a bit that the activities that I was going to at the time (dance, films, museums, so on) were stimulating but actually just something that I was being fed with and could take in. But what you get in the organisational activities is that you're able, yourself, to think and create. It's also enormously stimulating.

Masoud, *IMI (No Person Is Illegal)*:

I feel, for me, it's . . . I become happy if I'm doing some good for someone, that I'm making things easier and that's regardless of it's not just about hidden refugees, in my surroundings among my friends, everyone. If I can perform some function in the friendship, in social relations on the whole. You make things easier if someone's having a hard time. Then I feel that I have, it's worth something, meaning and my existence. At the same time that it's then that I'm learning things, I'm developing.

Is that also the reason for your being engaged also?

I can't say, I can live in another way too, I've done that. What many people mean by enjoying life, taking just the good things. I have no difficulty doing that, but I feel that I don't get as much out of it in the long run, that I get bored.

You being active in the movement, does that involve any advantages for you as a person?

I have contact with a lot of fantastic people, that's a great treasure in my life.

In the form of what?

In the form of good friends, in the form of people who have ideas that are valuable for me and I can learn from them.

It is time to summarise the six types of motives we have found. With only a few exceptions, the citizens we met in the focus groups not only had knowledge of but were also bearers of the

general *civic duty* to vote. That as a citizen one ought to take an active part is perhaps included in what Jacobsson and Sandstedt call a judgement of moral sensibility that holds Swedish society together (Jacobsson and Sandstedt 2005). In principle. And without exception. But there can be temporary obstructions. Beyond this basic norm that civic duty constitutes, there appear to be a number of groups of motives, or at any rate motivations, that constitute the subjective requirements for an active political participation that goes beyond keeping abreast of what is happening in the society around. The keynote, in other words, is that one ought to be engaged. In the normal case this can motivate going to vote in the general elections and staying informed about social developments. But for a more comprehensive activity, five further types of motivations seem to be of service. The first two deal with (1) an almost ideological appraisal of the issue's *importance* and (2) with an appraisal of one's own *ability* to mean something; (3) one may be willing to but not believe oneself capable; the latter judgement, however, can be changed by (4) a concrete *demand* for one's assistance, a conviction as it were that an *effective supply* exists in the form of there being a just solution in sight; and (5) the final motivation, that it gives something back, is perhaps to be viewed chiefly as the bonus that is assumed to come to those who are engaged.

There are distinctions in these five points that appear to determine whether one is going to actively embody civic engagement, which here includes both a manifest and a more latent political participation. For the majority of those we have spoken with, there is a posture that makes it easy for them to be counted in the civic body. Only a few appear to assume such genuinely passive postures towards social issues that it is hard to imagine anything that could get them to relinquish that passivity, which is scarcely the result of their own lack of self-confidence but has more to do with questioning the profitability of engagement.

This is a question of a very dynamic game, where we were forced, unfortunately, to exclude the more specific resource factors from the analysis. Below the surface, of course, are a number of psychological factors that may determine whether the individual's reaction to the fact that politics works poorly becomes a reason to abstain or a reason to become active.

Organisation

From the preceding section it was apparent among other things that the supply side of engagement is an important aspect. Judgements about the efficacy of various forms of

engagement appear to be important inducements. Since a great deal indicates that they are undergoing changes in our time, there is reason to stop to consider them more closely. It is said, with some oversimplification, that old forms are dying and new ones are coming up.

It would be unhistorical, however, to discuss the new social movements without pausing for a moment to consider the old Swedish popular movements, in particular the labour movement, the peasant farmers' movement, the Free Church movement and the temperance movement. They too were marked by a trait of conflict vis-à-vis the State and the powers that be, ideologically as well as organisationally. Their struggles dealt not only with the great political and economic issues, but also everyday culture, behaviour and values. They were mass movements with a wide geographic spread across the country. They were democratically organised, with voluntary membership. They also stood independently in relation to the State (Axelson and Pettersson 1992; Lundkvist 1977). But they now appear, as we have seen, to be stagnating with regard to membership.

In the theory building that is now going on around social movements, associated especially with Alberto Melucci and his theories about 'nomads of the present', social movements are regarded as complex network systems that are temporarily put together for specific actions for change. It is also characteristic of them that their principal anchoring cannot be found in any collective acts in the general public but only in those networks that are operating, more or less hidden, in the everyday lives of citizens but which can be quite rapidly mobilised. Their composition is more variegated than that of the Swedish popular movement, which was based on relatively unambiguous values and classes. But exactly like the classic popular movement, they have high internal solidarity, a clear opponent and a thoroughly defined political purpose through the fact that they are critically testing the boundaries of the political system (Melucci 1989; Thörn 2002).

The definitions of a social movement also bear a strong resemblance in certain respects to the ideal image of the Swedish popular movement:

A social movement is a collective, organised, lasting, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural conceptions and practices. (Goodwin and Jasper 2003, p. 3)

Piven and Cloward, and West and Blumberg, respectively, see them as:

Conscious, organised and collective actions for the purpose of creating or obstructing social change. (Quote taken from Kuumba 2001, p. 4)

Sometimes, there is reference to the 'new' social movements. 'New' stands for at least four different characteristics beyond the attribute of age itself. Some researchers maintain that the explanation for their growth is to be sought above all in political and economic *problems* in the society. Another theoretical point of departure concerns new *values* developing and being manifested. Others, however, think that it is to be understood primarily as a *mobilising of resources*. Yet another group of researchers is giving attention to the significance of the existing social *networks* as a new mode of operating, i.e., that the genesis should rather be seen organically, from inside (Goodwin and Jasper 2003).

Differences between 'old' and 'new' movements

The general point of departure for this study is that there should be a difference between 'old' and 'new' movements or organisations. This difference would pertain to a number of factors. Here, more precisely, the following ten will be further analysed: recruiting, resource mobilisation, working methods, cooperation with the State, attitude towards representative democracy, cooperation with other organisations, media relations, conceptions of public welfare, general focus and duration. The interview data have been analysed for each of these factors, beginning with the so-called new movements.^v These data have then been compared with information that has been furnished about the old ones.

The main impression from our analyses of interview data is that the similarities between old and new movements stand out as greater and more pronounced than the differences between them. The new movements transmit to a very large extent the ideal of the Swedish popular movement. They are action-oriented in the sense that they react to external political events that have timetables beyond their control, while the older movements have more routine and are more characterised by internal logics, for example, in the form of self-generated annual and organisational meetings that can be planned and scheduled. The older ones, too, react to external political events to a certain degree, but with delay and not as nimbly. Also, among old as well as new movements there is by and large a relatively positive attitude towards civil disobedience. Third, with the younger movements there is a lesser degree of formalisation of the work's internal governance processes, something that can be understood as an effort to strengthen the deliberative elements of the work. The older movements are almost without

exception democratically organised, with a board and elected members who are granted discharge from personal liability.

Respondents from the new movements provide no clear picture of how the decision-making actually functions. One says that the person who is most engaged, clever, and has ‘weight’ has more influence. Another has some form of board where decisions about the movement’s direction are taken, at the same time that great freedom of action and decision-making is offered to the members themselves. With other movements, on the other hand, the distribution of power and responsibility is kept more obscure. From our study, of course, the organisational forms of the new movements cannot be categorically dismissed as undemocratic or criticised generally for suffering from a lack of democracy.

The greatest divergence between the old and some of the new movements concerns the membership-based internal democracy of the former, which starts out from the local association and extends via representative organs to the county and regional levels, up to the national level and possibly further. A strict hierarchy binds the local with the national, but interestingly enough, two-way learning goes on between older and younger movements. This holds for ideas, internal organisation and external relations. It also expresses itself in the form of cooperation between them, even though the movements ordinarily seem to sort themselves into two different clusters: a public-movement cluster and a new-movement cluster.

Older and younger movements appear to differ in that the number of active members in the former is not always – or any longer – evaluated as something crucial for the movement. For the new ones, however, the number of active sympathisers is assigned a more vital significance. Forcing the point somewhat, one might say that engaged sympathisers are of greater concern to new movements than to the older ones. The sympathisers constitute the movement in a more direct way for the new movements than for the old ones. The numerical size of the new movements, however, is hard to estimate, due among other things to a significant fluctuation in active engagement over time. At a guess, the numbers of ‘mobilisable’ sympathisers registered via mailing lists are significant, not just in relation to the number of formal members. Even among the old ones there exists a hidden collection of engaged people, even if their membership is possibly even more dormant, due among other things to its having been a long time since they committed themselves to their membership. But this should not obscure the fact that people certainly do occasionally visit outward-

directed gatherings of older movements or donate money within the framework of their fundraising activity.

A pervasive theme in the new movements is their call for deliberation. They unanimously criticise the political establishment for its unwillingness to talk, to meet openly for debate and to take in new information. This is an apparently unrequited desire to converse. But it also shows that the movements, regardless of age, are deeply embedded in the Swedish political culture, which expresses itself in a conspicuous faith in political institutions, Swedish representative democracy and the Swedish State. The similarities hold for ideas about and attitudes towards representative democracy and the importance of voting in general. Both old and new movements see themselves as complementary. Possibly, engaged people in new and old movements may reflect somewhat different views of politics. With occasional exceptions, the new movements give expression to a broader view of what politics is. One respondent, for example, replies quite simply, 'Life'. That politics goes beyond the institutionalised, representative, conflict-resolution procedure is also evident when another person defines politics, in a politics-of-life direction, as 'living your purpose'. But if a difference does exist, it may possibly have more to do with generations and perhaps education than which movement one chooses to be engaged in. There can also be a connection between them. This question will be elucidated in the next section on embeddedness.

Embeddedness

Occupy a factory in Germany and you will be dragged to court; do the same thing in Italy and the police will let your wife bring your lunch in. Throw the fish in the street in Britain and people will tut-tut at the waste of good food; do the same thing in France and the government will raise your subsidy; do it in Sweden and the government will appoint a commission. (Tarrow 1994, p. 10)

Civic engagement must be understood in its context. A political act has both different preconditions and different meanings in different political environments. The political culture supplies a particular setting:

Institutions, defined as webs of interrelated rules and norms that govern social relationships, comprise the formal and informal social constraints that shape the choice-set of actors. (Nee 2001, p. 8)

Cognitively, culturally, politically and economic-structurally, the institutions set the boundaries for legitimate conduct (Zukin and DiMaggio 1990). Through learning processes, custom, political structures and social networks, different actors are assigned different roles and positions. Through similar processes is also formed the social capital that decreases the costs of cooperating and makes it more expensive to abstain (Nee 2001; Putnam 1993; Putnam 2002).

In this section we will therefore study some aspects of the embeddedness of engagement in the Swedish social model. When political behaviour in other countries has been compared, it appears to fit into specific institutional ecologies, which in turn are determined by the 'cultural patterns that are embedded in institutional limits and policies' (Fourcade and Schofer 2004, p. 48). Ronald Jepperson has developed a two-dimensional concept in which four models can be distinguished, based in part on the degree of corporatism of the social organisation, in part on the degree of state centrism of the collective actions. Through responding to the questions about what the organisation of corporativistic and of state-centred politics is like, four varieties of social structure are obtained: a social-corporative (the Nordic countries), a state-corporative (Germany and Japan), a liberal (Britain) and a state-national (France). The particular institutional differentiation of the Nordic countries would thus be characterised on the one hand by a more societal (than statist) character in common activities, and on the other by a more corporativistic (than liberal) associational society (Jepperson 2002).

From this outlook, the differences in the organisation of civic engagement become intelligible in their turn: the fact, for example, that many citizens in Nordic countries are members of a union but not as active as union members in more state-centred systems, or that the odds that a Scandinavian will resort to house squatting are about one-third of the odds for a French citizen. Boycotts are significantly more likely in combined non-state-centred, non-corporative systems, like the American, than in state-centred, corporative systems, like the German or Japanese. The forms of expression of engagement harmonise, in other words, with the country's overall political character, regardless of whether the formal membership there is at a lower level (Fourcade and Schofer 2004).

In what way might Swedish civic engagement be viewed as embedded in the Swedish political culture? One simple way to answer the question is to bring out the integration of the organisations, the popular movements and other forms of engagement with the welfare state.

This integration, among other things, makes the distinction between state and society blurred, not to say difficult to perceive. The state is seen more as a coordinating and administering structure than a governing one. The state is regarded more as benefactor than oppressor (Jepperson 2002). An expression of this attitude can be found in the comparison we have made between 21 European countries: it is the Nordic citizens who have the greatest confidence in their political institutions (Amnå 2006a).

The older social and political organisations in the Nordic countries have been developed within that political culture, of which they have also, to a high degree, been the bearers. Through ingenious institutional systems they have been linked up to the national state's political and administrative management (Selle and Østerud 2006). They have been on boards in the civil service department; participated, sometimes as members, sometimes as experts, in parliamentary investigations; been involved in more informal reference groups and emergency preparedness agencies in the government offices; and been the bodies to which proposed measures are submitted for consideration with reference to new legislation within their respective areas of activity. They have also been involved in the execution of policies by government authorities, even been given powers to make decisions in place of the authority, in accord with the *Constitution Act's* special statutes to this effect (Lindgren 1996).

Since the state's governance of the movements has been managed largely by state authorities, we have grounds for broadening the perspective on the institutionalisation of engagement to encompass administrative policy development as well. The government's control of the state authorities has undergone major changes, however. The authorities have been exposed to a harsher, more economic control in line with what is called 'New Public Management (NPM)' philosophy (Sundström 2003). At the same time, they appear to have lost part of their hard, legally-oriented system of control. Instead, they have come to use and be incorporated into increasingly soft control instruments within the frame of what is called network management and governance (Bogason and Toonen 1998).

How valuable are the organisations to the development of democracy, and how troubled does one then need to be about a decline in numbers of members if, for example, the state needs the organisations more than the citizens do? Here we may anticipate an explanation for the tendency which was uncovered in the fact that the older organisations, especially, do not seem to need their members. Both organisations and members are up to more important things than

creating channels for civic engagement. As one of the largest organisations wrote in its annual report, 'We have a membership organisation.' It did not write: We *are* a membership organisation.

In this section we elucidate these issues first through an empirical analysis of the regulation of the state's grants to organisations, which in a very concrete way presumably makes the character of the embeddedness clear. We then examine the parties' outlook on the various forms of engagement.

According to certain calculations, grants by the state and the municipal districts to non-profit and idea-bearing organisations exceed ten billion kronor annually (Wijkström, Einarsson, and Larsson 2004). This is a substantial increase since the beginning of the 1990s (Johansson 1991; Statskontoret [Swedish Agency for Administrative Development] 2004). As a rule, there are five different kinds of state grants: organisational grants (generally grants to an organisation), activity grants (for identified activities), project grants (for time-limited activities), commission remuneration (remuneration for activity according to an agreement) and grants for premises. Seen in terms of the number of grants, organisational subsidies are the most common type and constitute almost half the number of grants. Calculated in terms of money, the activity subsidy is the largest (Statskontoret [Swedish Agency for Administrative Development] 2004). The Swedish National Audit Office survey shows that almost all religious, youth, temperance, special interest, and outdoor organisations, also the political youth leagues have been receiving grants since the period before 1980. The situation is otherwise. for example, for organisations that rest on an ethnic base and have had high turnover, and which have either fallen in and out of the grant system or disappeared completely (Riksrevisionen [Swedish National Audit Office] 2005, pp. 27ff.)

Seen from the perspective of the organisations, the various state authorities and political regions offer many different possibilities for the financing of activities. The Red Cross, for example, has a large number of different public sources of financing, with the majority of grants going directly to the central organisation. But more critical to our analysis, of course, is to find out the conditions attached to the grants. What does the state expect? The rules for selecting an organisation for the award of a grant are governed primarily by ordinances and the official documents appropriating funds to the authorities concerned. A compilation of the conditions laid down by five important grant-distributing authorities shows that these

conditions are remarkably clear and precise. The most frequently occurring requirements, if an organisation is to receive grants, are that it be democratically organised, be rooted in several counties or regions, have a minimum number of members and conduct sustained activity. About one-fifth of the state's grants are covered by structural conditions of this type (Statskontoret [Swedish Agency for Administrative Development] 2004, pp. 6ff.).

When Wijkström and associates tried to find a pattern for the state's mode of relating to the civil society by focusing on state contributions to non-profit organisations, they found four different traditions of ideas. The difference between them is two-dimensional: on the one hand with regard to degrees of autonomy and integration in relation to state power, and on the other with reference to what it is about the organisation that it is desirable in the eyes of the state, which is a blend of existence for the sake of intrinsic value or activities for specific ends (Wijkström, Einarsson, and Larsson 2004). The four idea-traditions were as follows:

- (1) *Free-standing public movements* – the state understands and acknowledges the organisations in the civil society as their own actors with their own worth. The state is not to interfere in the affairs of the organisations but is kept 'at arm's length';
- (2) *Integrated organisational life* – the organisations are a part of the civil society and are regarded as 'good in themselves'. In contrast to the first idea-tradition, the organisations and the state apparatus have developed a close collaboration with state and municipality. The organisations are doing things that previously depended on the state, and public responsibility and agreements between the state and the organisations about responsibility are a relationship that has come to be 'institutionalised';
- (3) *Semi-public market* – the organisations compose parts of the state administration or function as actors in some form of 'market'; and
- (4) *Actors in a market* – in line with the ideas behind New Public Management.

Government authorities are articulating more and more clearly their expectations about what the organisations are to do. Certainly, the form will always be traditionally associational-democratic with open membership and will display a certain permanence. The National Board of Health and Welfare expects, in addition, that the organisations will back up the social efforts of the public sector. The National Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institute of Public Health hope for public educational effects in terms of a certain kind of outdoor life, interest in the outdoors and knowledge about the outdoors in a broad sense, and improved public health, respectively. In a more direct mode, they are both arranging

associational activities in the spheres of their governmental authorities, while SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and the National Board for Youth Affairs appear to be striving instead for a strengthening of the civil societies of the cooperating countries and for Swedish associational activities, respectively. In certain cases, however, organisations can be awarded support even for activities other than those stated. The National Board of Health and Welfare, for instance, can give funds to organisations that do not wholly fall under their conditions if there is a need for renewal work in the area in which the organisation is active. The authority is thus able to give support to an association that is working for a limited target group or area of activity (SFS [Swedish Code of Statutes] 1998). The National Environmental Protection Agency as well can give grants to cooperating organisations or organisations 'that contribute to renewal in the area of outdoor life' (SFS [Swedish Code of Statutes] 2003).

Staffan Johansson states that the grants may still be used rather freely but sees a tendency towards increased control, from the state's side, of the grants' use (Johansson 1991). The conditions have proved to have had a limited effect on the organisations' choice of goals and basic values, and they have not contributed to increased splits within the organisations. On the other hand, they had a clearly negative effect on the strategic conduct of the organisations. Many of them thought that the requirement to present an action plan for the next three years was difficult to align with the organisations' own democratic processes. Without exception, however, the organisations are positive towards the support and have a relatively high level of understanding of the state authorities' intentions with the grants. Grants make it possible to realise activities that both the state and the organisations see as desirable but which can hardly be pursued without tax revenue (Johansson 2003). There is a tendency to focus increasingly high expectations on the organisations and their function in society. Of late, the majority of studies have dealt with the government's requirement of *management by results*, that is, what the government gets for its money. The government's requirement of management by results increased throughout the 1990s, to become less obvious in the years following 2000. A turning point is supposed to have occurred in connection with the state budget for 2001, when the Popular Movement Policy was inaugurated as a new policy area. After that, no general guidelines for management by results are supposed to have been formulated (Statskontoret 2004).

But increasingly, the organisations are tending to shoulder the role of ‘service producers’ and entrepreneurs, and their role as critical observers of society and politics suffers as a result. Public forms of support quite simply infringe on the behaviour of the organisations, which increasingly look like ‘public subcontractors’ of welfare (Johansson 1991). This has been particularly noticeable in the care of substance abusers and in elder care, where non-profit organisations are increasingly present (Johansson 1991; Olsson, Svedberg, and Jeppsson-Grassman 2005; SFS 1998).

The designing of a grants system is a delicate balancing act between the freedom and integrity of the organisation on the one hand and the benefit to the State on the other. This apparently ingenuous ‘giving with one hand and taking with the other’ becomes both symptomatic and remarkable when a state committee (consisting of party representatives) has viewpoints on how the parties ought to work with citizen contacts, ideological profiling and nominations of different civic groups (Kommundemokratikommittén [Committee on Local Democracy] 2001, pp. 20f. and 530). There are also historical precedents for these kinds of ambitions for political control. During the 1920s the political parties took over the influence in the Church of Sweden with the aim of pushing aside the ambitions of the national church in favour of a more ethnic-national project. The church became a public authority (Thidevall 2000). The Swedish temperance movement let itself be bought for the purpose of exposing citizens who broke the state’s alcohol laws (Hübinette 1999).

The symbiosis of associational activities with the public sector is conspicuous. One might think that on the whole it is harmless. The organisations probably have themselves to blame. If their members allow an adaptation to state grant regulations, that’s their business. If the organisation wants to live on, it has to make the best of it so as to keep the public grants, in the way Roy talks about, when the martial arts club opens a women’s section:

Roy, *Mifuné Martial Arts Club*, 2005:

We noticed this: that there was an awful lot of violence that was happening, then there was an awful lot of violence against women. Everyone thinks this is bloody rotten, so then of course it was when the new system came that they changed the grant bit and made the grants disappear and so then it was that the ones that promoted women’s activities, they got grants. So we were more or less forced to start a section because the grant part had been changed (Roy, p. 10)

The evolution of administrative policy towards governance and network management should be incorporated into the analysis of the organisation of civic engagement because it most likely has a very palpable effect on the conditions for civil society’s actors in relation to the various stages of the policy process (Bang and Sørensen 1999; Bogason 2000; Bogason and

Musso 2006). The conditions for representative democracy are being changed. The elected representatives are invited to become 'meta-managers' with three different possibilities for governing: designing the networks, participating in them, or in some other way shaping the frameworks via discursive, financial, juridical or political means (Sørensen and Torfing 2005).

From the perspective of traditional liberal democracy, an immediate threat arises against the democratic potentials in civil society. If everyone has been involved and has come into accord, perhaps only a vast silence will set in as the governing of society passes into what Bang calls 'culture governance' (Bang 2003). The very conception of civil society as an autonomous sphere or actor is challenged. Through political measures, civil society is to be engaged for the purpose of becoming more active in the political governance of the society's life – assuredly with possibilities for influence and insight. But democracy lives by elucidated antagonisms. The Millennium Policy's general patterning of authorities, voluntary organisations and companies exemplifies such a way of attempting to create and mobilise a collective governance in a world that to an increasing extent is becoming complex, impossible to take stock of, and with several different centres of power. Through the Swedish Millennium Campaign, the Minister for Development Assistance has initiated collaboration with about 80 Swedish organisations, companies and authorities around Swedish cooperation in development and the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Through the Popular Movement Forum, the State is trying to set up an assembly with the organised Popular Movement–Sweden (Folkrörelse–Sverige). Through the reference group for children and young people of the Minister for Children and Families, the Minister wants to broaden contacts with young citizens. With the help of its website on democracy, the Government and the Ministry of Justice want to offer a meeting place for debate, discussion and information about democratic issues – a place where everyone 'must' be supported and communicate with each other in order to compensate for everyone's individual weakening of control, power and legitimacy (Regeringen [The Government] 2003/2004).

In general, we can establish that contemporary Swedish civil society is being transformed in a manner that has great relevance for its ability to stimulate, attract and organise the civic engagement of its citizens. Swedish civil society is now coming back as a significant producer of welfare and security. This is happening first of all due to the shortcomings of the welfare state. Either directly or indirectly, it is being invited to become a partner, thanks to its cost-

effectiveness and prestige. But it is a new mix of civil societies that is returning. On the one hand, we recognise its production of welfare services among children, old people, people with functional disabilities, and so forth. It returns and shoulders the role it played before the welfare state. And that contribution is highly significant and somewhat growing. On the other hand, civil society has now been turned from an institution that gives weaker citizen groups a clear voice into one that preferably provides them with the level of social services that the welfare state is unable to deliver. It has been sucked out of the input side of the political system – from opinion-building, articulating and visioning – to the output side – to a contracted service entrepreneur. It has become an important cog in the public governance structures for contributing to trust and safety. It is, however, a political-administrative culture of a kind that is deceptively cosy (Amnå 2006c).

Still, no one should think that the change is stirring only on the surface. It is the volunteers – not members – who are returning. An important part of civil society, of course, consists in large part of voluntary social work. More and more people are being involved. Most Swedes are making contributions of this kind. But fewer of them are members, and more and more they lack a connection to the work of any democratic organisation. The singular Nordic, democratic combination of being both members and volunteers is weakening. Voluntary social activities are self-organised; member-based and non-professional associations are now making way for service-oriented, client-oriented organisations of salaried professionals. It is possible that the quality of service may be raised, but large parts of the membership mechanism of participation, influence and requirement of accountability are eliminated. This is partly an effect of contracting, where state and municipality require a professional standard in exchange for tax revenue. But at the same time, the pluralism that is one of the key points of volunteer work is being threatened. From one angle, it is understandable that the National Board of Health and Welfare calls the IOGT-NTO (International Order of Good Templars) in for discussions of development, but when the agency says it is dissatisfied with the goal formulations of the movement's Swedish section, this becomes not only ridiculous but alarming.

Large parts of Swedish civil society are undergoing a remarkable metamorphosis. Civil society is returning as a replacement for the political parties, which now seem to be busy leaving civil society so as to grow together with the public sector. As we have seen, this is logically consistent. This is because the parties actually do not need their members any more,

as they can shed their skins from 'membership parties to voter parties' (Bäck and Möller 2003).

Yet at the same moment that parts of civil society are, figuratively speaking, being sucked up by the public sector, an interesting regrouping is occurring among the old popular movements. Some of them are in the process of being radicalised. Their genuine love for the welfare state appears to be more and more subject to conditions. We remember last year's so-called Easter protest, in which around 150,000 people in 64 organisations and 25 religious communities successfully demanded amnesty for refugees. This has to do in turn with the globalisation of Swedish civil society, the result of which is that as it is now returning, it has learned a new language: human rights. Seen historically, civil society has had a stronger international anchoring than the institutions of the welfare state. Several of them have sprung from foreign organisations. Now we see clearly how BRIS (Society for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Community), patient organisations, Save the Children and others defy political-majority democracy and its municipal self-government with political representatives. Instead, they invoke international conventions and are prepared to take its elected representatives to court. The law will resolve the problem of policy. And civil society, in parallel and at a rapid pace, is capitalising on developing relations with the market as well. Sometimes the market creates the civil society it thinks it needs; the pharmaceutical industry, for instance, is forming a organisation of patients that demands totally free access to their medicines.

It is easy to agree with Eva Sørensen and Jacob Torfing that we must await the definitive conclusion about what the new form of isomorphic embedding of engagement means for democratic development. This needs not only more empirical study but also development of a theory in which the new features of development can be better understood than they were in the old ones, which were developed under other practical political conditions (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). One of the important questions to try to shed light on, then, concerns what opportunities these much-vaunted movements have to offer contemporary citizens in the way of interesting paths of action for political participation. The hypothesis with which this section concludes is negative, however. From the point of view of democracy, nothing indicates that there is a decline in democratic value in terms of access to public records, equal participation, requirement of accountability and liberation because of the new type of embedding which the old movements particularly, but with increasing age the new as well, undergo. Stated differently, new movements will need to be built to stimulate and channel civic engagement.

Hardly surprisingly, it is evident from the programs of the political parties that, first of all, they are all 'for' civic engagement. This is not so remarkable, perhaps. What is not said is all the more worth noting: none of the political parties raise a warning finger. They might have spoken, for instance, about the general risks of inequality or whipped-up opinions, or about negative variants like Christian, Jewish or Muslim fundamentalism. We find the one suggestion of withheld euphoria about civic engagement is the use of civil disobedience.

In their programs the political parties express their general appreciation of engagement. Astonishingly enough, however, the lines of argument are dominated by a strikingly collectivist lopsidedness. If the individuals are seen, they are perceived as bricks in the collective social structure. In general, however, engagement is good for democracy as a whole and for the particular goals that each of the parties seeks to achieve. To put it briefly, civic engagement is a universal means for building a society of responsible citizens, but is also necessary for realising the profile-creating ideological project. Engagement also furthers the factual political efforts of the party. But most notable is the general tendency that the political parties themselves appear to be defining themselves out of civil society. They cry out for an engagement that they themselves apparently have lost but see existing 'out there' in civil society.

Without exception, the parties have a fairly conflict-free outlook on the relations between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary movements. This is not the dangerous, unevenly distributed engagement at which the concerns of the political leaders and the political parties seems to be aimed. Not even 'the disturbances in connection with the European Union's summit meeting in Göteborg on 14-16 June 2001' (Göteborgskommittén 2002, p. 3) gave the Göteborg Committee any reason to adjust this basically positive stance. The problems that undeniably came up are possible to resolve through conversation and dialogue.

When the political engagement, like the political arena, is changed, new channels for dialogue and influence are required. . . . It is our opinion that anger, protests and dissidence must find new constructive pathways, especially when increasingly fewer people are choosing to channel their engagement into political parties.
(Göteborgskommittén 2002, pp. 699f.)

Finally, the parties have great confidence in forms as solutions to the problems (cf. Fridolfsson 2004). This faith in forms as the solution is in keeping with the concern that

engagement is not being channelled through the established forms. It is rather the absence of engagement that occupies the discussions of the political leaders. More precisely, this is about the absence of engagement around those projects on which the leaders themselves take a stand. They want to get hold of civic engagement, at times retroactively, to infuse popular power into those institutions that they consider to be suffering from insufficient legitimacy. This is first of all a matter neither of developing a societal civic spirit or civic obligations nor of increasing the self-government of the citizens as a whole. It has to do with decreasing the gap between the people and the élites with regard to the support behind the established political institutions. From the local to the global level, this is the stabilising function of civic engagement to which political leaders no longer really feel they have access.

Conclusions

The message for students of empirical democratic theory is that there is no shortcut to true civic engagement. Neither tweaking institutions nor promoting volunteerism is likely to help. Ordinary people understandably do not want to get involved in politics, and most voluntary groups are essentially apolitical. Although this conclusion may seem depressing, it does not have to be. We firmly believe that by starting from the empirical realities, social scientists can reach a now, more appropriate, and therefore more useful set of recommendations for improving civic engagement. The key is letting people know that becoming active in their favourite clubs does not fulfil their citizenship obligations. The route to enhancing meaningful civic life is not badgering people to become engaged because politics is fun and easy; it is asking people to become engaged because politics is dreary and difficult. (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005, pp. 244f.)

It is easy both to agree with and take exception to this vehement diatribe against various efforts to give more citizens chances for political participation. It is certainly true that no shortcut for strengthening civic engagement exists – not even the generally overrated associational activities offer a universal solution. But precisely for that reason it also does not work to believe in the notion that someone should come and demand that people take part because it is boring and hard. This line of argument rests on a very narrow, in a sense typically American, view of what politics and civic engagement are about. That people should shun politics in a broader sense than party politics is in the best case a silly, in the worst case an almost populist, argument, to judge from our studies. ‘Politics’ must be understood in its context.

With such a reading one can understand why, for example, the Social Democratic Party continues to maintain that democracy presupposes active citizens (Misgeld 2001, p. 126). In the democratic-political proposition, the government identifies two main dangers in today's democratic developments: that fewer people are taking part in elections and parties and that the engagement that does exist is not being put to use. In this light it maintains that '[o]ne prerequisite for a functioning democracy is broad citizen participation' and that '[w]ithin the frame of representative democracy there thus ought to be broad citizen participation in the political process and in the life of society as a whole' (Regeringen [Government of Sweden] 2002, p. 28).

Stand-by citizenship, in other words, appears as a fairly consistent emanation of what Premfors calls 'the Swedish model as democracy' (Premfors 2000, pp. 157ff.). Four of his model characteristics harmonise particularly well with a conditional civic engagement of this kind. First, it applies to the tendency towards a social-democratic hegemony. This comes through most obviously, perhaps, with respect to the widespread reluctance and inability to legitimise a more individualistic engagement. This is also what in turn results in the fact that the nervousness around the stagnation of the popular movements is so great, and possibly also that the potentials for individual liberation cannot be (or are not allowed to be) put to use in civil society. In another respect, too, the contemporary character of civic engagement can be understood very well in the light of the Swedish model of democracy, namely its character of democratic effectiveness within the framework of welfare-state democracy and its output orientation. Above all, with the expansion of social rights and the welfare state, citizenship came to involve a reduced social role (Strandberg 2006): 'The emphasis is on what the society can do for the individual, not what the individual can do for society' (Petersson et al. 1998, p. 17). Normally, no active citizenship is actually needed, other than in the form of a readiness to step in, for '[t]he good citizen in today's Sweden is a happy consumer of services' (Petersson et al. 1998, p. 16). Considering the public sector's effectiveness, no real activity, beyond the act of voting, can reasonably be expected other than as an exception. Adding to that the fact that three out of four citizens are, on the whole, very or fairly satisfied with how democracy is functioning in Sweden (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004, p. 251), it is activity rather than passivity that cries out for analysis.

Third, civic engagement, and the concerns about it, can be understood in the light of the corporatism in the Swedish model. In practice, this means a favouring of the popular

movements over other forms of collective and individual civic engagement (Micheletti 1995). For many people the popular movements are synonymous with the social democracy close to the popular movements. A fourth and final element in the Swedish model as democracy is its strong emphasis on the political parties. This is something that also reinforces the feature of the Swedish democracy model as collectivist or socially oriented (Olsen 1990). It is the size that is a problem: a strong public sector fosters political participation. If anything, the unilateral institutionalisation of collective and socially oriented values militated against (or alternatively, made unnecessary) civic engagement of another brand. When the political leaders now complain about the fact that civic engagement in the traditional forms looks to be decreasing, they forget that they themselves – in great party-political unity – have prepared the ground for just such a development. They were the architects behind the social structure in which a different civic engagement was in fact rationalised away. Even when civil society was being discussed most intensively in the 1990s, it was never really a question of any individual liberation project (Amnå 2005a). Even then it was mainly about the public sector, a kind of irony of history (Trägårdh 2006, p. 252).

In Hibbing and Morse's study, the American people say 'no thanks' to all sorts of ideas about getting more channels for influence (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; for an empirical critique, see Dalton 2004, p. 178). If one peels away the American (anti-)political culture, they have a point: the desire of many people to keep politics at arm's length – not wanting to be involved (cf. Eliasoph 1998; Gilljam 2003, especially pp. 190ff.) Several of our informants in the study embodied that sort of fundamental attitude.

But the fears that civic engagement is generally in the process of sinking can be rejected. Party membership, election participation and membership in associations are among the types of political participation that show a diminished power of attraction. And as far as can be judged, they are dependent on one another. The choice of manifest forms of participation does, however, look to be shifting markedly over time, and applying to different spheres of the citizen's life. More so-called seriality than continuity seems to characterise participation; that is, community spirit, belonging and identity around an engagement arise in particular, transitory situations (Ahrne 1990; Hirschman 2002). But there is a genuine staying power with regard to the more latent political participation in discussions, dissemination of news and political interest. Common to all studies of participation and engagement, however, is class

inequality. Expanding the welfare state so that everyone is provided with resources to be engaged – if they want to – is therefore primary.

Why a latent participation develops into a manifest participation for some people, for others not, seems to be a question of a dynamic play among five types of motivation: the importance of the salient interest, the self-image of one's own ability, the sense of being needed, the assessment of the effectiveness of the path of action and judgements about the meaningfulness of the participation. In future studies of what this interplay among inducements looks like, the resource factors ought to be included.

The comparison of old and new channels for civic engagement points to more similarities than differences. To a striking extent, the older ones without exception cultivate the ideal of the Swedish popular movement, among others things in the form of a positive view of the political system and even the Swedish state. Also worth noting is the frequent learning that takes place between new and old movements, both directly and more indirectly. The biggest difference between them concerns membership. Formally, it is important for the old movements, but to a decreasing degree in reality. For the newer movements the opposite seems to apply: the engagement is the point, while membership and organisational techniques stand out as more and more negligible. Advocates of the new movements call for deliberation, for representative politics to listen to them by virtue of their knowledge, ideas and engagement.

The survey of the grant systems and the management-policy environment yields a picture of fairly compact embedding. Autonomy in the civil sphere's engagement appears highly debatable. Rather than being a critical public, the engagement establishments appear as the extended arms of the Swedish governmental authorities in policy area after policy area. Swedish society's institutionalisation of engagement at the national level may be effective policy in terms of impact and economising on resources. But for that very reason the civil society can be questioned in a traditional liberal-democratic light with regard to its potential to contribute to pluralism, openness and an alternative public. The partnership policy of multi-level governance, moreover, makes it more difficult to guarantee the openness and the requirement of accountability that representative democracy presupposes. The situation becomes aggravated by the fact that the mechanisms for meaningful democratic membership in the organisations are weakened.

All in all, it is difficult of course to say whether these features of development are to be interpreted not just as important indications of qualitative changes regarding the organisation of civic engagement, but also as a weakening of the democratic infrastructure (Demokratiutvecklingskommittén 1996). The more-than-formal marginalisation of members does not just constitute a weakness from the standpoint of socialisation. If one relates this to the spread of professional groups and the increasing emphasis on volunteer service producers in the movements, we get weakened powers of integration around fundamental civic conflicts with regard to the inflow side of the political system.

My generic image of the changes in latent participation on the individual level is, even so, that of a Stand-by Citizen. No one is born unengaged. Very few people are truly passive, in the sense of being both manifestly and latently passive, during the entire course of their life. The great majority stand prepared to participate – if it is needed and they themselves are needed, as long as there is not just an important problem discovered but a solution already in view that is both effective and meaningful. They stay alert to what is going on and what is being done and keep watch over the political commons.

The sheltering of engagement is a much more open question now than in the past. For two reasons above all: In the first place, because educational policy, changes in values and the loss of the parties' popular-movement character, in combination, cause the feasibility of the principle of representation to be called into question. Who am I, to represent you? – Who are you, to represent me? are two questions that have been below the surface in several conversations. This is a somewhat counterproductive consequence of what is in many respects a successful individualising liberation from blind faith in authority, unthinking habits and increased mobility.

This era may be one where conscious and critical reshaping of politics is more possible than ever before, meaning that individuals and societies need never resign themselves to fate in the form of events and discourses beyond their control. (Dryzek 2000, p. 163)

Hesitation in the face of representation does not appear to be primarily a symptom of any contempt for representative democracy in general or the representatives in particular. There is an uncertainty and fear about pleading the case of other citizens. Maybe there is an awareness

that a stronger emphasis on the individual, as cited in the introductory section, might possibly rebound on oneself.

The outcome of successful democratisation results paradoxically in fewer and fewer people wanting to go in and take personal responsibility for it as representatives. This speaks for an individualisation of engagement. It may also have to do with an unconsciousness or ignorance of the central, energising significance of conflicts in a democracy (Lewin 2002) – not least in a political culture that is consensus-oriented and in which social capital, too, may well have a strongly conflict-taming effect, and where one would sooner step into line than give voice to a dissenting opinion.

The second reason why questions about how future engagement will be channelled appear so uncertain concerns the shadow of vagueness with respect to responsibility that the multi-level governance structures are casting over the social order (the principle of free access to public records and strong media notwithstanding). ‘*Quo vadis?*’ wonders the latent political participant on the threshold of manifesting his or her civic engagement. The third reason is the uncertainty around what is happening with the so-called new social movements. Our analyses indicate that they too are ageing, perhaps even more rapidly than the old ones did. The Internet is one of the factors that reinforce the mobility of the organisational landscape. Possibilities of organising one’s engagement with more people are reinforced. The question is: Who is going to make use of them?

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Notes

ⁱ This article summarises major findings presented in Amnå, Erik. forthcoming 2007. *Jourhavande medborgare. Samhällsengagemang i en folkrörelsestat*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

ⁱⁱ SOM-undersökningarna vid Göteborgs universitet {The SOM (Society-Opinions-Media) studies at Göteborg University}; Statistiska Centralbyråns levnadsnivåundersökningar {Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics studies on level of living} 1978–2002 SCB. *Sysselsättning och arbetslöshet 1975–2001* 2002 [cited. Available from <http://www.scb.se/statistik/am0401/GUL2001.pdf>.]; Ungdomsstyrelsens värderingsstudie Ungdomsstyrelsen. 1998. *Ny tid - nya tankar? Ungdomars värderingar och framtidstro. Ungdomsstyrelsens utredningar, 10*. Stockholm: Ekblad, Ungdomsstyrelsen. 2003. *Unga medborgare*. Stockholm: Ungdomsstyrelsens skrifter 2003:2.; IEA Civic Education Study 1999/2000 Amadeo, Jo-Ann, Judith Torney-Purta, Rainer Lehmann, Vera Husfeldt, and Roumiana Nikolova. 2002. *Civic Knowledge and Engagement. An IEA Study of Upper Secondary Students in Sixteen Countries*. Amsterdam: IEA (The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement), Amadeo, Jo-Ann, Judith Torney-Purta, John Schulle, and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. 1999. *Civic education across countries : twenty-four national case studies from the IEA Civic Education Project*. Delft: Eburon Publishers for the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.;European Value Studies/World Value Survey; Inglehart, Ronald, Loek Halman, and Christian Welzel. 2004. Introduction. In *Human Beliefs and Values. A cross/cultural sourcebook based on the 1999/2002 values surveys*, edited by R. Inglehart, M. Basáñez, J. Díez Medrano, L. Halman and R. Luijkx. Delegación Coyoacán: Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico.European Social Survey ESS. The European Social Survey, 2002/03 [cited. Available from <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>].

ⁱⁱⁱ Three groups of a total of 30 citizens (women + men): 17 active (6 + 11): 10 representatives, of whom 4 were municipally elected (1 + 3) and 3 were leaders in political party local organisations (2 + 1); 7 (2 + 5) activists and leaders in other organisations with primarily political aims; and 3 (1 + 2) directors of associations in other organisations not having primarily political aims; 13 passive (6 + 7), of whom 8 (3 + 5) were workers, 3 aged 22-25 years and 5 between 40 and 58 years old, and 5 (3 + 2) students.

^{iv} Figure 2 indicates the percentage of respondents who selected option (4) in answer to the question: ‘What do you usually do if you are in a group of people where the conversation gets on to political issues? Which of these descriptions fits you best?’

- (1) Usually I don’t bother listening when people start talking about politics.
- (2) Usually I will probably listen, but I never put myself into the discussion.
- (3) It sometimes happens, but not that often, that I say what I myself think.
- (4) Usually, for the most part, I participate in the discussion and state my opinion.’ (Source: SCB [Central Bureau of Statistics] 2002/ULF [Living Conditions Survey])

^v The following ‘new’ organisations were included: Attac, Elupproret (the Electricity Revolt), Ingen människa är illegal (No Person Is Illegal), Mariestadspartiet (the Mariestad Party), Miljöförbundet jordens vänner (Friends of the Earth environmental group) and Sjukvården inte till salu (SITS) (Medical Services Not for Sale).