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Building a Human Rights Culture

South African and
Swedish Perspectives

Karin Sporre &
H Russel Botman [eds.]

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MORE REPRESENTATION OR MORE PARTICIPATION?
CHALLENGES IN SWEDISH DEMOCRACY

BY ERIK AMNÅ

Six citizen types[1]

There are very many different ways of being a Swedish citizen. The research carried out by the Swedish Parliamentary Commission on Democracy shows a multitude of citizen identities, which create rather different and conflicting roles, at least superficially. These different types of citizens can also assume different guises, take on different roles, depending on both outer circumstances and inner motives. Actual citizens make up a fascinating and shifting mosaic of different types of citizens.

The Elector

Most people vote. The Swedish general election in 1998 attracted 81.4 % of those entitled to vote to do so. Swedes are used to thinking of the number of votes cast as fairly constant. It is part of the role of the Nordic citizen to vote. In a society like ours, there are certain duties such as the duty to pay tax, the duty to do national service and the duty to give way. It seems that, even without legal constraint, Nordic citizens consider voting a kind of imperative, social duty. You just vote unless you have obvious and dramatic reasons not to do so. You go to the polling station with a certain amount of pride and self-respect. That is important. You are celebrating the epitome of democracy by admitting to your opinion. It would be almost shameful not to take part.

However, scholars have shown how this democratic ritual is losing its grip on the citizens. In the last election, it was, in particular, the young, the workers, the town dwellers, the single and the divorced who did not show up to

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1   The Swedish Parliamentary Commission on Democracy was set up by the government in 1997 by appointment of representatives from Swedish political parties. It was served by a secretariat led by Erik Amnå as principal secretary. The Commission initiated research activities involving more than 100 scholars from 12 academic disciplines. Their work was published under Erik Amnå's editorship in a series of 13 research volumes and 32 reports, which constitute the general context of this article. The Commission presented its political conclusions in a comprehensive report in February 2000 (SOU 2000:1).

vote. The turnout in the general election dropped by 5 percent units in 1998. Among first-time male voters, the turnout dropped by 14 percent units from 83.3% to 69.3% (Bennulf and Hedberg 1999). Less than half of them voted in the EU election in 1999 (38.8%).

On the surface, it seems that the citizens do not care any longer. The "armchair voter" is the stigmatised name given to these "stay-at-home voters". However, nothing could be more misleading, superficial and deceptive. The norm of going to vote appears to be on the way out. But, the main reason for that is neither laziness nor lack of interest. Both these explanations can be disregarded (Teorell and Westholm 1999). Instead, there are other explanations that weigh much heavier.

To start with, in current democracy research there is an obvious increasing lack of identification with the seven established political parties. The voters feel less affinity with the various political alternatives. Commitment to a party is on the decrease and one result is that the citizens take a step back when it comes to elections.

Secondly, voting norms are crumbling. At least, the norm, when it comes to non-conditional voting figures, is not as strong as it was. Thus, the political choice has secularised the elections. You vote only if there is a point to it. You vote as long as the voting seems to be meaningful (Teorell and Westholm 1999).

But, further on, the election analysts make it possible for us to define the citizens' reasons for not voting. This is particularly obvious when the voting behaviour of youngsters is analysed. However, social interest and political commitment among young people have not decreased during the past few decades, rather the opposite. And the Swedish young people's support for Swedish democracy is in fact greater than that of their parents (Oscarsson 1998). So, on what do they base their decision not to vote?

The young people interviewed in the research project carried out by the Parliamentary Commission on Democracy said that the media and the parties acted, in symbiosis, in such a way that the effect was a "turn-off". They talked about their distance from politics. They do not consider that elections or participation in an election have any meaning. The parties' messages and their plans of action are not clear enough. The efficiency of the election process is unsure. And the way in which the media and the parties treat the young gives them a pacified, stereotyped role with no connection with the person in question or what he or she considers to be important. The attempts of the parties to fake

opposition or to popularise and play down the election movement have rather the opposite effect. Instead, young people talk with disgust about the similarity with the European Song Contest in which the exterior, the performance and the mould are more important than the message and the content. Quite simply, they are ambivalent. Individualisation and secularisation work together to play down the decision to vote and the decision not to vote (Bruhn 1999).

Fewer and fewer citizens feel they have a duty to vote. More and more act exactly as democratic theory thought they would: with curiosity, criticism and disloyalty. The success of democracy entails somewhat paradoxical and increasing difficulties in motivating people to vote. Modern voters look for meaningful political participation. The political parties should never take the ritual elector for granted, either.

The Loyal Servant

Another, but perhaps even more threatened species of citizens are those who dutifully, selflessly, continuously and with commitment maintain their membership of a political party or a popular movement idea-wise, socially and practically. They do not primarily ask what they can, themselves, get out of their commitment. Together, they see themselves as meeting the tasks and performing the practical jobs that someone must do. Why not them? Flouting the post-modern individualistic expressionism, she rather asks herself the opposite: what right have I not to do anything? She is more than that, something other than just a person with a post giro account, the unglamorous hero of mid-term democracy. She feels needed. Her public commitment is not negotiable. Without her, democracy would grind to a halt; at least it would slow down. She is the "brother" and "sister" of many people including the local political leaders.

Analyses of the players in local party life present quite a precise picture of what it is like to be that kind of member today. Perhaps one of the most challenging conclusions is that the parties no longer need their members, neither for membership fees nor for the sake of political ideas. Our contemporary parties have distanced themselves from their members. Instead, the state and the public sector have become more important both as financiers and as the producers of ideas. The parties appear to have other things to think about than cultivating political communities and providing arenas for political debate (Gidlund and Möller 1999).

The party meeting now lies in the shadow of the enormous public sector,

where, more often than not, the leading party representatives spend their working days (Gidlund and Möller 1999). where respectable professional bodies produce both problems and solutions. The meeting of members is marginalized into becoming a sage anchor with the task of giving local government political legitimacy. To use Easton's metaphor, there is a kind of "sucking in", a reversed process where the parties become the recipients of local government initiative and ideas.

Are the parties in the process of being transformed from being vital parts of civilised society to excrescences on the resourceful public sector? In that case, that would be a very good reason why the citizens find is harder to identify with the political parties. One might ask if it could also be one of the reasons why more and more new, local political parties are coming into being. Today in Sweden, there are 147 different party seats on the local decision-making bodies in the municipalities.

In local and regional politics, the "old" left-right orientated parties are facing greater difficulties in reflecting the leading, relevant and important lines of conflict among the citizens. Other developments also emphasise the importance of such a dramatic shift in identity, from ideology to pragmatism. The new governance-stamped network politics makes it more difficult, for example, for citizens to differentiate between ideological dividing lines and alternative measures, like demanding that someone should take responsibility for what has been done. Informal negotiating networks play down the role of formal, accountable and transparent decision-making hierarchies (Amnå and Montin 2000).

On the basis of these developments, no one interested in Swedish democracy development has reason to overestimate the staying power of the loyal servant, either. Nor may she be taken for granted. She, too, has quite reasonable demands when it comes to participating. If she is not given an outlet for her political interest, she will not participate. If the meeting of members does not look as if it has a credible chance to mean anything, to make any difference, she will probably choose – even if it hurts – to stay at home.

The Free Passenger

A citizen type who has already decided to stay at home is the consumer. He – yes, he is most often a well-educated, well-paid man – does not do so because he is doubtful about democracy (Petersson and Demokratirådet 1998). Not

at all. He does not support any radical, alternative social system. But for his part, he has decided to stay away from mid-term activities. He has no desire to spend his precious time attending what he considers typical low-speed evening classes with doubtful results.

On the other hand, he acts like a knowledgeable, political consumer. He is well aware of his rights and the services he can get from the public sector's enormous range of services – in exchange for his, in his opinion, very high taxes. Neither is he apathetic or, even less, apolitical. Not at all. If some child-care matter, which he really feels for, runs into problems, he certainly knows which person in the social services to contact. If permission to build a carport is taking an unreasonably long time to obtain, his reflex action is to get on the phone to hurry things along. If he had to, in order to obtain his rights, he would go to court.

This exaggerated political consumer keeps his distance from the political system. Unlike the loyal servant, he does not complain about the new developments. Quite the contrary: he values the professionalisation and the assumption of power of various professional groups that it entails. Like very many citizens, he thinks that it is a good thing that the experts are gaining more influence at the expense of the political representatives (Oscarsson 1999). Democracy needs to become more efficient. The ability to provide must be improved if he is to continue to have faith in the political system. But he, himself, is not prepared to sacrifice very much just for the sake of it.

Faced with his truancy, there is not much one can do. A working democracy must always give its citizens the right to remain passive.

But, on another aggregation level, this individual behaviour means that the division between the public and private sectors will grow considerably. Privately employed people are recruited less often to political commissions of trust. The public sector looks after itself. Civil servants run politics while privately employed people deal with other things. For many, being an elected representative is a life-long career. Politics becomes even more professionalised but also more distanced from the private sector. The understanding of both of the sectors' distinctive characters and their complementary relationship has become weaker. The public debate is carried out in a less enterprising but in a more prejudiced manner.

The Stranger

Unlike the consumer, the stranger has made his exit from mid-term commitment involuntarily. He has also made his exit from election-day commitment.

However, the stranger does not have anything against democracy as a principle either. He feels like a stranger when he sees the distance between the ideal and the reality. Then he feels like abstaining. Distrust of the "politicians" then grows (Bennulf and Hedberg 1999; Teorell and Westholm 1999). The result could be a destructive, passive or active political action.

In one of the studies for the Parliamentary Commission of Democracy, an area on the outskirts of Gothenburg was analysed. Polling there was less than 50%. More specifically, the core of the analysis rested on a group of young Swedish men with immigrant backgrounds. Their families originated in three different continents and they grew up believing in three different world religions. Their opinions of Swedish social development are very critical and alienated. The title of the report is "Alienation is our Nation". They look on the Swedish social state from a cold but not humourless distance, a state which they experience as close to being a police state with its neighbourhood police, narcotics police, criminal police, traffic police and security police all of whom, for some reason or other they have come up against (Sernhede 1999).

But their cynicism is not totally pacifying. They have found each other in the "Rap" culture. They play music and sing together in quite a successful group. The lyrics, representing their own kind of protest, are, on the one hand, about their hatred of the Swedish society in general and of the City of Gothenburg in particular, on the other. They sing of their love of the suburb in which they live but also about the solidarity they feel with the poor and oppressed in faraway countries such as South Africa. They cultivate this recognition in several ways such as through an exchange of music with Johannesburg. The common identity they have with the blacks is important:

– If only we had a Mandela, well..., says one of the young men.

One Tuesday afternoon, they are hanging about the suburban shopping centre at about half past four. They point out the various operational groups from the welfare state to the researcher/reporter who is a music sociologist. These groups are on their way home to various parts of Gothenburg at the end of their working day: social workers, regional social insurance officers, police on the day-time shift and teachers. Suddenly, one of the young men says, with a glint in his eye:

– Look, it's the occupying power going off duty!

The idea of Sweden as an occupying power has little to do with the politically revered picture of the Swedish welfare state. This is also striking: their experience and their perspective of Swedish social development differ markedly from the dominating ones. They do not recognise themselves in the political leaders. When these top party people are talking on the television about how well things are going for Sweden, they wonder: Who makes up Sweden? When the integration minister talks about Swedes and immigrants, they wonder, and not particularly unreasonably, whether she considers them to be Swedes or not.

Even if some of the attitudinal, revolutionary romantic light was removed from these pictures, there remains a clear impression that there are social groups who did not, just relatively, lose out during the 1990's through re-organisation of state finances, savings and cut-backs in the transfer system. They have difficulty identifying with any political leader. They believe that the Swedish democracy is OK for a white, middle-aged, heterosexual wage-earner with a Lutheran background and with roots in the Swedish farming community. But, Swedish democracy is not accessible or available to citizens of other cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds (Dencik 1999).

Has something essential not come up to scratch in the Nordic democratic socialisation mechanism? In the past, there was a golden chain that helped those citizens with less to offer on the economic market to compensate by joining the political, union and religious movements. Now, however, it appears that those who are most dependent on collective politics have put least trust in it. Through its organisations, politics reinforces the feeling, first created by the labour market, of being an outsider (Svallfors 1999).

In this matter, it is incontrovertible that democracy has lost ground. Democratic government is weakening to such an extent that more and more citizens and groups of citizens feel that their ability to influence their own living conditions as well as those of others has weakened. The Parliamentary Commission on Democracy claims that this is the greatest defeat ever for modern Swedish democracy (Demokratiutredningen 2000).

Of course, it is an open question whether this development will lead to the formation of new parties with new demands, which will replace the classic, political ideologies by offering, instead, to represent gender, ethnicity, religion or territory.

The Activist

In many ways, the activist is also critical of Swedish democratic development. Apparently, it lacks sensitivity, responsiveness, dialogue, roots etc. But the activist's protest is more collective, medialised and, perhaps, professionalised.

The activist can be found in the new social movements that put emphasis on different lines of conflict from those which dominate party politics. They also work differently. They are more easily dispersed, have less in common with association democracy and are of a more temporary nature (Thörn 2002).

It may be easy to associate with young citizens who save trees, demonstrate against the transportation of animals and attract attention to the rights of children. And, of course, there is nothing wrong with that. But it is far removed from getting to grips with the whole thing. This type of citizen also includes the "sewing circle ladies" who are also prepared to oppose Swedish law if necessary in order to ease their consciences. If, for example, the Swedish Aliens' Appeals Board decide to deport a family of immigrants, they are prepared to hide them and make a stand against the realisation of the police decision.

This group also includes local development groups, some 400 of them, who work, in particular, in the countryside to prevent their old homesteads from dying out. Directed against the large-scale world in general and the large-scale community in particular, they mobilise the citizens to create a meaningful life in what looks like a condemned countryside. They react against lop-sided territorial representation. It is not unusual for them to turn their backs on party members (Herlitz 1999).

The activist will happily say that, even in a state governed by law, it is legitimate to break the law if higher ethics so demand. He or she sees himself/herself as a guardian, an assessor in the service of the state and democracy.

One example cited by the interviewees was about the Swedish animal protection law (which, by the way, was launched by the politicians as a kind of gift from the nation to the writer, Astrid Lindgren, on her 80th birthday). When they see how it is being implemented they say:

– If it was the intention of the Members of Parliament that the veterinary authorities should circumscribe the law, then it should be re-written. But, if the law mirrors the will of the people, the authorities should be given more precise implementation regulations (Jacobsson and Hebert 1999).

The activists use an assessment perspective based on morals to challenge representative democracy.

The Destroyer

Up till now, the five types of citizens presented here can, in one way or the other, be seen as well behaved, disciplined and the producers of reasonably successful political socialisation processes. But, Swedish democracy, yes representative democracy, also harbours citizens whose aim is to destroy democracy. The destroyer is the kind of citizen who exploits democracy's generous array of freedoms and rights and fills them with gross violations of values central to democracy such as tolerance and equality. The election in 1998 gave the xenophobic Swedish Democrats a total of eight seats in municipal councils around the country. For reference, the 100 seats in the country's municipal counties that were won by the nationalistic National Party in 1936 could be mentioned (Lodenius 1999).

Let me tell you about a fascinating and frustrating experience I had.

It was a lovely, sunny Sunday afternoon. ABF (the Workers' Educational Association) in Haninge just south of Stockholm had invited people to an afternoon's discussion on the subject of Democracy. I had just started my lecture when, all of a sudden, the door at the back of the hall opened. In marched six people with steps which were not asking for an excuse, quite the contrary. In a proud and upright fashion, these people walked to the front of the hall and sat down in the six seats which, as fate would have it, had been left vacant. And there was something about them which made it completely clear that they were not the usual kind of person to attend the ABF's discussion afternoons. For example, their code of dress did not quite tally with that of the rest of the audience.

They had just sat down when one of them asked permission to speak:

"What's your political background?" he asked.

Slightly disturbed by this "straight", slightly un-Swedish question, I tried to muddle my way through to an adequate answer.

"Do you believe that we have a democracy in Sweden?" That was the next question.

After I had provided a thorough, well-argumented answer in terms of democratic freedoms and rights, I was about to once more take up the thread of my lecture when another member of the six waved his hand and wanted to say something.

But, at that moment, we heard the thunderous sound of chair legs being pushed across the floor. Right at the back of the hall, a man stood up. He was

about 1.96 metres tall and weighed something like 120 kilos. His appearance did not tally with my prejudiced idea of what ABF members should be wearing for an afternoon discussion on the subject of democracy: he was wearing shiny black motor-bike gear. By his side was his equally well-polished large, black helmet. And he said, in a loud and angry voice:

"If you down there at the front (he meant those six lads, not me) do not shut up, I will personally throw you out!" And he certainly had the physical resources to do so.

And that was just what the six xenophobic non-conformist participants – two were elected representatives on Haninge's local council – had waited so long for. Their reply came like a triumphant arrow, aimed at me:

"Well then. You were just boasting about freedom of speech. But, as soon as someone wants to take advantage of it, someone else comes along and threatens them with physical violence. Do we have a democracy in Sweden?"

There are indeed different ways of being a citizen in today's Swedish democracy. All ways are possible, most highly respectable but only one way is unacceptable. Analytically, they may be seen as a multitude but also as a contradiction. In the light of democratic theory, there is reason to now find out now which more or less alternative model of democracy they represent or promise.

Four democratic models

Obviously, Swedish democracy is suffering from considerable outer pressure, at the moment. It is not just a question of multi-level governance in general. It is not just a question of the considerable growth of administrative levels, from three to, in some cases, seven levels, with politically elected boards. Nor is it enough to describe it as the old amateurishly run political model, complemented by new types of partnerships, networks, alliances etc. A description of that kind could either hide the democratically theoretic challenge or disregard unequivocal anomalies or, in some kind of organic confidence, play down the inherent conflicts.

Instead, I would like to try to describe Swedish democracy in its present form as a mixture of at least four different models of democracy. As I will show later, it has clear implications concerning the kind of citizens that are created. My classification is based on David Held's typology (Held 1987).

Competition-based elite democracy

In all essentials, Swedish democracy is most like a competition-based elite democracy. Within the framework of representative democracy, the "party democrats" are the ones in particular to come out as the winners of the battle, over the responsible democrats but mainly over the participating democrats. The focus on efficiency and leadership has become clearer and clearer. Unbridled citizen participation would also jeopardise stability (Holmberg 1999). The democratic institutions must show overall efficiency in that the system can supply the values it promises and claims to possess (Karlson 1998).

The democratic history of the 20th century is primarily that of the parties. "The representative democracy became a party democracy based on united parties with clean-cut programmes and party discipline" (Holmberg 1999, p 10). The voters entrust the representatives with the task of carrying out the party programme.

As a result of various arrangements, the parties have consolidated. Of the seven national parties, five have existed throughout the entire political history of the 20th century. Only three further national parties came on the scene, one of which had only one election success. Through party support on different levels of representative democracy, the state guarantees the parties' primacy.

But, in the Swedish democracy, there are several worrying features when it comes to party legitimacy. Firstly, election turnout is on the decline, secondly there is less trust in the politicians. Since the first line of development can easily be confirmed, it is also the one that gives most reason for specific, jointly shared concern (Demokratiutredningen 2000). Thirdly, the national parties are threatened both from above – from their own European policies – and below – from the new local political parties. Fourthly, the multi-cultural shift in the Swedish electorate has led to increased stress and strain on the system. The theory assumes that it is the representation of opinion rather than that of groups that is decisive for the legitimacy of the system. That assumption now appears more daring. The voter is being put to the test.

Law-based democracy

Only to a rather limited extent, does the Swedish constitution show signs of a division of power. One of the main signs comes perhaps from the municipal government. But that is also strikingly elastic and can, at any time, be withdrawn by the government and parliament. Another sign comes from the Swedish civil

service, whose servants, in accordance with a central constitutional idea, should not take orders from any political leader, however high up, but only from the Swedish judicial authority.

In a comparative perspective, the Swedish way of democracy historically must by described as a way in which the party representatives have been given great responsibility for safeguarding the rights of individual citizens as well as of groups of citizens. Participation by elected representatives has been the main route to gain political control of both individual and human rights. The lack of a strong judicial review process clearly illustrates the great trust in politicians as a satisfactory guarantee against discrimination.

However, several contemporary developments strengthen the constitutional line of development very markedly. First of all the traditional Swedish institution of the *ombudsman* has been developed. To strengthen individual rights against discrimination of different kinds, several *ombudsmen* were set up during recent decades.

First and foremost the membership of the EU brought with it, both directly and indirectly, institutional changes in that direction. EC law has automatic priority over Swedish law. National rules must be put aside if they conflict with EC law (Wiklund 1999). Thus, the EU membership has, de facto, been given a greater element of power division than that which has, of tradition, characterised the Nordic model of democracy The Swedish constitutional framework now show a larger streak of political decision-making by courts and lawyers instead of elected politicians (Holmström 1999). Somewhat critically, one could say that there are no longer any national legislation projects (Nygren 1999). In that way, the democratic reach of the EU-affiliated Nordic states has, without doubt, been restricted while the constitutional state has expanded (Holmström 1999).

The transformation of the Bank of Sweden is also going in the same direction. By granting it increased political independence, the politicians have, de facto, reduced the(ir) democratic, political government of monetary policy and given executive experts increased elbowroom. The deregulation of the telecommunications market and the electricity market seems to be moving in the same direction. Or, perhaps, it is rather a question of a "re-arrangement" with new, non-political, authoritative standard-setters and by means of, for example, professional standardisation. The guiding force of these standards lies somewhere between those of the norms and the directives (Brunsson 1998). However,

the state has not abdicated. Not least through internationally operating legal firms, global private or semi-public players obtain a global control monopoly with the consent of the national states (Sassen 1999).

However, and to a considerable degree, the transfer of these powers to both national and trans-national courts of law means that popular power is curbed (Hermansson 1999). The point of being politically active is lost. The consumers become more numerous. It is, however, an open question what the reforms will mean for the individual and for human rights.

New-pluralistic democratic theory

But Swedish democracy also has, to a considerable extent, well-organised pressure groups and a social order characterised by activities. Even the state civil servants are lobbyists and fight for their interests in specialised organisations, directed against the national politics they are there to serve (Demokratiutredningen 2000).

Corporatisation is characterised by the presence of state-authorised groups in decision-making assemblies. On public committees and on the boards of the civil service. That order has been abolished in several respects. But what seems to arise in the place of decorporatisation is that the same old corporate interests are appearing in the shape of lobbyists (Hermansson et al. 1999). There seems to be no division of power. There is still obvious inequality with regard to political participation. The former, or at least formal, openness – under the terms of the Freedom of the Press principle – has been replaced by a lobbyist culture, which is hard to fathom. Resourceful lobbyists operate quite freely and without hindrance within the whole spectrum offered by multi-level governance for effective decision-making, from local decisions about the location of a hyper-market to global decisions concerning the conditions governing the participation of African farmers' associations in world trade. This development seems to harmonise with the medialisation of politics. The socio-economic imbalance of politics is reinforced. Strangers are created.

Important citizen groups have more and more faith in their own ability to act and select, more or less autonomously, from the public services. As a result of the independence and autonomy created by democracy, the citizen seems to want to throw off his representatives and go it alone. Marketisation has entered the arena, if only in an embryonic form for the time being. Undeniably, this has meant a limitation of democracy in the sense of the possibility of being able to achieve insight, influence and public debate (Lundquist 1999).

Deliberate participating democracy

While these enormous, dramatic but ephemeral transfers of power are being made, a spectrum of democratic experiments is being carried out in other parts of the multi-level governance, a spectrum probably never seen before (Montin 2002). On the local level, they often test, with the help of IT, hearings about traffic planning and advisory voting on the subject of tax. This creates a new arena for the citizens. Even cabinet ministers take part in the chat. The population of one particular district is given the opportunity to put direct questions to members at sessions of the district council. Researchers too carry out experiments to see what deliberation means in practice.

But perhaps the most interesting thing is what the citizens do with IT. Without being asked, without being forced, they come to grips with the instrument. Sometimes this is done to destroy democracy. But, on other occasions, it is done to fill the public space left empty by globalisation (Barber 1999). Discussions are started, facts presented, actions planned and opinions are formed. Whatever was supposed to be secret is now made public. It is difficult to describe this as anything other than an important achievement for a deliberate democracy. Activists, even previous loyal servants are tempted to "come out of the closet".

User-influence is also arranged along new channels, such as parent and pupil influence in schools. Operations are transferred to various associations in civic society. General education organisations invite the public to talks, not seldom on the subject of democracy, sometimes in old, actual rooms, sometimes in new, virtual spaces. Adult education lives, comparatively, a very active life – like a relatively autonomic, undemanding form of cultural quest in both individual and collective education and development (Larsson 1999). This must, of course, be weighed against the backward move of the temperance and free church movements which were formerly strong democratic movements but which are now losing members and seem to be unable to recruit young members as they did before (Vogel et al. 2003). The informal way of taking human, loyal and joint responsibility for people outside your own family and relations does not, however, show any signs of weakening (Jeppsson Grassman and Svedberg 1999). But there is a threat from the state's and the municipalities' economic-administrative inability to leave things alone, which threatens the freedom of these associations. In this way, social values run the risk of being diminished by a number of individual and independent arenas for mutual conversation (Demokratiutredningen 2000).

Attention must also be given to the importance of the media. There is reason to be critical of how the work of many journalists, probably unconsciously, contributes to further distrust of our elected representatives. The tendency towards media monopolies and the concentration of ownership entails a threat to the multitude of angles to the perspective (Weibull and Gustafsson 1999). The forming of opinions and free debate, fundamental to democracy are threatened by "a lot of episodic chat but few enlightening and thoughtful conversations", (Demokratiutredningen 2000, p 76). Stereotypes are reinforced instead of modulated pictures. Journalists can revel in the "well-being of political distrust" (Ekström 1999). A healthy scepticism concerning the political wielding of power could easily turn into cynical contempt. The media are now relatively isolated as media these days; popular movements and parties have, in many respects lost their historically strong positions as important forms of media.

When it all boils down, school is important for what it teaches and what it stands for. At the moment, in Sweden, work is being carried out on basic values questions with democracy at the centre. Socialisation processes, the critical training of citizens now appear even more important in globalised and medialised political communication. A school of this kind is, at the same time, the result of deliberate democratic theory and one of its prerequisites (Englund 1999).

Four analytical concepts of citizens

It should now be apparent that democratic development in Sweden is marked by a meeting of different kinds of democracy. It could also be described as a confrontation between different, incompatible concepts of citizens. I will, therefore, return to the four models mentioned above but now to pose the question: what concepts of citizenship do they represent?

Law-based democracy: Reactive citizenship

Law-based democracy implies unambiguously, reactive citizenship. People react to some injustice and take the matter to court. They act when necessary as long as the process is on-going. They do it out of self-interest to assert their rights. Their actions are based on authoritative documents such as regulations, conventions and standards. If they object to the court's decision they still have a chance to protest. They can appeal to a higher court of law if they feel an injustice has been done. The procedure requirements are strict and familiar.

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They are also blind: it should not matter who you are or who your opponent is.

Competition-based elite democracy: Active citizenship

The moment of voting is the moment of truth in a competition-based, elite democracy. Here too, people utilise their rights after a fixed period of time. Here too, the procedure is predictable. Election participation gives the political system and its leaders the legitimacy to act on my behalf until the next election. The alternatives available are more or less set, even though a citizen can try to add another one to the list. If he/she does not have faith in the parties or the system, the citizen will not vote at all. But the citizen acts anonymously. The secrecy of the ballot is protected.

New-pluralistic democracy: Hyper-active citizenship

Here the ever wakeful political consumer is introduced. He is forever checking the price and quality of what he gets, including various added values of a symbolic, ecological and global type of justice. That ensures the best possible efficiency. In the short term, what is offered is set here too, just as preferences are. Discretion is a virtue. The flow of funds is de-personified, even though, in principle, there is a chance to negotiate.

Deliberative participating democracy: Pro-active citizenship

The most important element in the citizenship of deliberate democracy is, perhaps, preparation, the intellectual preparation for the decision. People continuously take part in communication with other affected parties, on the basis of a feeling for the general good, a kind of dutiful responsibility. The aim is to reach a consensus. The common "responsibility" is based on a kind of conception of a deeper justice, a meeting face to face.

These different types of citizenship can be summarized in various dimensions: the place, the frequency of activity, the role, the motives, the final product and rationality and in terms of a fundamental, democratic direction to form what could be called civic virtues.

Civic virtues

Finally, I would like to draw some normative conclusions based, on the one hand, on a participatory democratic ideal and, on the other, on the findings of the research that was carried out by the Commission on Democracy in

Sweden, 1998–2000. I will address what could be seen as three civic virtues which ought to be reinterpreted in the light of the democratic development in Sweden during the last few decades.

Involvement

Involvement is the central hallmark of civic spirit. It constitutes the citizens' interpretations of their experiences of participating in and wielding power. No one is left out in advance. Everyone's knowledge, experience and opinions are required if the decisions are to be good ones. Everything should be done to demolish the reasons for not inviting someone to join in, for example, mental, physical and linguistic reasons.

But, individual obligations to be committed, involved, included and interested correspond to the institutionalised right to participate. In this way, a social organisation is kept together, value-wise, and the growing differentiation and fragmentation are neutralised.

There are good reasons to attach greater respect to the common character of citizenship. For the sake of both the collective and the individual, the civic imperatives to take responsibility and make a contribution must be stressed, cultivated and demanded. Democratic, participatory theory argues that it can prevent elitism, powerlessness and estrangement from growing in Swedish society (Barber 1984). A democracy of citizens who, in various ways and in different situations, take responsibility for more people than just themselves is both the goal and the only way of reaching that goal.

This perspective is not just, or perhaps not in the first place, based on an abstract public interest. In the long term, if not before, it will be in every citizen's interests to try to solve the common problems and ensure that they are solved in a civilised way. Where no confidence-inspiring meeting places for collective problem solving exist, the seed will be sown for the undemocratic social development of cynicism, intolerance and violence.

To be involved in, and have access to, discussions and decisions which determine your fate is, however, a prerequisite for even wanting to participate. That calls for both physical and mental availability. It is important that political democracy, regardless of the extent of its mandate, should correspond to the citizens' expectations of involvement. Everyone's experience and knowledge are required if a democracy is to work.

In this specific respect, researchers have seen some signs of worrying deve-

lopments. Confidence in the political institutions is on the decline especially among those who are most dependent on them for their welfare. Many citizens waver in their trust in the political institutions because they cannot see the value of involvement in their routines and actions. It is understandable that the discord between civic virtues and the ethical practices of the institutions can lead to citizens losing their trust in the institutions of democracy. It is not certain that this would result in an activist desire for revolt. It could also result in a retreat due to powerlessness, a kind of estrangement.

The expectation of involvement inherent in the civic identity must be nurtured, respected and complied with. On occasion, these legitimate civic demands have been accorded too little importance. There is a pattern of political negligence with regard to the people's general expectations of political authority. Reforms with major implications for democracy have been staged without sufficient analysis being made within the political parties of what they may entail for democracy. The resultant debates, such as the one following the referendum about Swedish membership of the EU and municipal decisions about cut-backs, have revealed a deeper rift between civic expectations and the ability of elected representatives. Decision-makers have failed to judge both the decision-making process and the content on the basis of what they indicate in terms of involvement and inclusion. They have sometimes taken important political decisions and passed them on to places other than the party and political arenas. Sometimes, they have not taken responsibility for the actual decisions they have made. As a result, political power is now obscure and the subject of distrust.

In other words, the fact that civic virtues are changing is not necessarily or particularly the fruit of outer, general, global shifts in values but may also be the result of inner changes of ideas, forms and actions. So, instead of blaming either the citizens or the politicians for democracy not working as intended, one might look for new forms in which openness and discussion can safeguard the prerequisites of the meaningful participation of political equals realised by the first century of popular government.

Participation

In the Swedish popular government tradition, the far-reaching and, at the same time, deep participation of the citizens is to solve common concerns centrally. Participating democracy has sometimes been translated as popular movement

democracy. Swedish democracy has been a layman's democracy. In many small municipalities, amateurs have taken on positions of trust which, for a long time, meant that they also implemented the decisions. The extent to which the citizens are active in various kinds of associations has been an important gauge of Swedish popular government, and it still is. The communicative search for what is best for everyone increases the quality of decisions; it encourages participation and also increases political awareness.

The citizens should not just be offered the opportunity of participating when the often-complicated questions of common interest must be dealt with. It is taken for granted that they really do so – for several reasons. By participating, the citizens develop fundamental qualities in society. Mutually respecting citizens generate a large amount of human and social capital, which all spheres of society can enjoy and benefit from. Those who do not receive the equivalent training in creating trust by being tolerant towards people with different opinions, lose out on schooling and self-development. Those who practise co-operation, positive criticism and tolerance are an asset both to themselves and to society in general, for both the private and public spheres. Democracy is the life-style or disposition which both constitutes the prerequisite for and is the result of the consciously designed and living form of government. It cannot just be theoretically acquired. Only when it is applied and asserted in word and action, will it be credible.

If one wishes the citizens to participate when matters of common importance have to be solved, on different levels of the social administration and during different times of their lives, they must be offered a variety of opportunities. Otherwise, democracy will not be a part of their life experiences and a joint project of meaningful and effective ways of action. From a participative democratic point of view, the opportunity structure for involvement plays a crucial role for the quality of democracy. Here, schools, general education and other non-profit making organisations must generously allow or offer different forms of participation which the citizens will consider meaningful and effective. Sometimes, there is reason to try out other forms of democratic government.

Without, for one moment, abandoning the endeavour to democratise these institutions, there is sometimes reason for the state and the municipalities to pass it on to associations, companies and other, not just local association, forms to administer their own business in the spirit of democracy. From a more autonomy-seeking way of democracy there is reason to be rather critical

of the well-meaning but self-centred desire for expansion and the ambition to wield control which authorities and decision-making assemblies often prove to have since they are built on monopolistic and self-centred conceptions of how democracy can best be ensured and promoted. A strong state and strong municipalities do not necessarily indicate democratic strength.

However, it would be irresponsible to claim that it is democratically valuable to participate in all kinds of associations where problems are solved jointly. Not all collective activity is actually characterised by democratic ideals. Some of the (un)civic associations sometimes use violence and threats and must therefore be repudiated, for example some militant groups of animal rights activists. There are organisations, whose working forms are anti-democratic, for example totalitarian religious sects. And there are also associations of destroyers, for example, neo-Nazi movements, whose aims or means can never be tolerated from the point of view of democracy.

Democracy is also developed by the citizens, in decisive situations, acting with courage to stand up for their beliefs. But this courage must be built on empathy and solidarity. It must have its roots in respect for the equal value of all people in order for it to constitute an asset to democracy.

Is it just as democratically valuable to participate in solving major common concerns as in dealing with the minor ones? And is it also reasonable to consider all kinds of participation in solving common concerns as being of equal democratic value? Somewhat critically: is a road association as important for democracy as a municipal district committee or board? The answer is simple: it is the process and the discussions held between several involved parties that are valuable. That is where and that is when civic virtues are developed. Therefore, there is a need for many public spheres in which citizens can meet. This is nothing new in the Nordic tradition of democracy of strong educational aspirations. The American political scientist, Putman, almost confirms a collective experience (Putnam 2002).

So-called deliberate democratic theoreticians criticise a minimal democratic perception that focuses on the right to vote and the right to make decisions and interpret democracy as a way of effectively reaching a majority decision. And, of course, the many mid-term talks and discussions and attempts to solve common problems are really central democratically. Just to participate is not enough. In that way it can be ensured that, in different public spheres, several

opportunities for the common considerations of separate political solutions and their consequences are offered.

But it is not always possible or desirable to reach a consensus like the so-called communitarian school. Neither blood relationships nor common opinions or any metaphysical contracts form the foundation of citizenship. At a time of growing differentiation, it is even more necessary to emphasise and cultivate the pluralistic features of democracy. It is even more important, in all these situations, to discuss more or less private matters in public on the basis of various norms. It is in civil society – outside the market, state and family – that we, the people, can recognise and confirm, adjust or abandon our opinions and our approaches. But, to prevent civil society from becoming just islands for like-minded people discussing special issues, the state must also create arenas where people can meet and ask questions concerning common premises.

In my case, this argument leads to an attempt to partly detach the discussion on Swedish democracy from its dominant liaison with state, municipality and representative democracy in order to attach it more firmly to civil society. Every citizen should have equal opportunities to participate in the wielding of power. The ideal of democracy should characterise all social situations.

In the light of this change, which will also probably characterise the near future, the ideal of participating democracy has to be both defended and deepened. The claim that democracy is an institutional arrangement characterised by the fact that it gives its citizens the opportunity of electing their leaders should not be dismissed. But that is not sufficient, since some parts of the Swedish popular government have tendencies which harmonise with the fact that election behaviour is the only expression of citizenship. Voting is the only method of expression for the citizens. When a conception of this kind gains ground in the various political organisations, the natural reaction of the citizens is to consider the mid-term period as a period between two elections when responsibility is delegated to the elite of the elected parties. If there is the opportunity to participate democratically on matters common to everyone, both the quality of the decisions and the legitimacy of popular government will increase. But in that case, there is a need for a special kind of participation.

Influence

In the words of the Swedish Power Study, democracy can be seen as a "set of criteria concerning society's distribution of power" (Maktutredningen 1990, p 11). Therefore, it is noteworthy, but also, symptomatic, that the word "power" does not appear in either of the two directives of the Parliamentary Commission on Democracy (other than in the digest of the Power Study). Furthermore, the term "influence" is used only once (about the influence of the citizens of the EU). A view of democracy is hiding here which only, or mostly, attaches importance to involvement and participation but ignores what popular government can contribute towards the social, cultural and economic result.

In other words, it is not just any kind of participation that a deliberate democratic opinion refers to but participation with real possibilities of opportunity to wield influence in the long term, processes able to provide influence over a decision. It is worth stressing that democratic processes can never promise any influence, just promise the participant that he/she will be listened to. A democracy is in often in desperate need of good losers. Indeed, a democracy is the only procedure that is able to create good losers, since it takes every person's argument under equal consideration.

Of course, one may assert that political participation is valuable because it develops the personalities of the participants. In this way, a public spirit and feeling for the common good are created. The kind of democracy which gives participation itself a central role should be strongly defended because it means that indispensable civic virtues are bred. When individual citizens or companies come out of their private spheres in order to talk and co-operate with others, they create, bit by bit, the public culture necessary to solve common problems, properly and legitimately. But can this be considered to be sufficient inspiration for people to participate?

To disregard the fact that the point of involvement and participation is to solve common problems appears too risky and idealistic. It would be more reasonable to consider civic virtues and public spirit as "desirable side effects of an activity encouraged by another instrumental purpose" (Hermansson 1992, p 99). The unprecedented success of democratic movements, Swedish popular movements, for example, can probably, in many ways, be explained in the sense that their operational concepts and form of operations link theory to practice, thought to action, participation to result.

One large and growing problem concerning Swedish popular government is closely connected to the fact that participation in the traditional forms of politics does not entail any wielding of influence. The available forms are not good enough; they do not inspire confidence and are not considered meaningful either. Therefore, bit-by-bit they lose out on credibility and the power of attraction in the eyes of the citizen who wants to achieve something. When the traditional forms are no longer considered effective, other, more purposeful forms of influence are preferred. The voter and the loyal servant will, at best, become activists.

To the highest degree, the Swedish confidence crisis is based on the fact that citizenship does not entail any influence over social development. Just as a consumer would, people do not see the connection between participation and result. The fact that democracy seems to lack the ability and power to act, yes, the fact too that its agenda is far too restricted and unassuming have constituted a main point in the activists' criticism expressed in the new social movements (Hadenius 1999; Thörn 2002) That criticism must be taken seriously without any further weakening of representative democracy.

In the same way, if the institutions are to be considered legitimate, the result must be morally acceptable and meaningful. Those who participate must feel that their participation is important and that the decisions made have fair consequences. In other words, the citizens have quite reasonable expectations that their participation or non-participation will make a difference. One of the popular government's most important problems is civic criticism of the democratic institutions' lack of popular government. A deliberate democracy assumes that elucidating political leadership exists that can personify and politicise, and that democracy is based on both volition and conflict.

Therefore, there are neither any passive nor any active citizens per se. One becomes active or passive on the basis of one's virtues, one's needs and one's experience. Fortunately, citizenship is dynamic, instead. Not all citizens will become active. But that is no reason to lower the level of ambition. On the contrary, the institutions must be designed so that every citizen is offered the opportunity to participate meaningfully. The potentials of participation have not yet been fully utilised. When a society is undergoing increased diversification and where specific groups of people suffer from involvement and influence, the Swedish tradition argues for more participation in a strategic belief that collective action is preferable to more representation.

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