

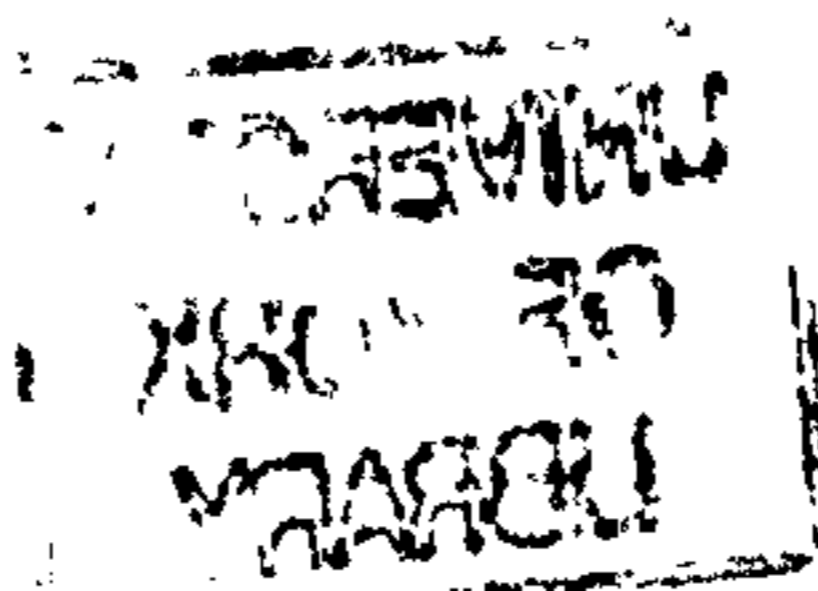
**THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC
INITIATIVES IN MEXICO: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF THREE LOCALITIES**

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Abstract

Citizen participation is an important part of the democratisation debate in Mexico. A wide range of participatory mechanisms, including plebiscites, referenda and neighbourhood committees, has been introduced by different political parties at the local level in Mexico. Why is there such interest from parties in citizen participation? What impact have these participatory initiatives had? To what extent have citizens been genuinely empowered? This thesis addresses these questions, using a qualitative, comparative case study methodology, by examining the implementation of the participatory agenda in three localities – Tlalpan, Puebla, San Pedro – governed by Mexico's three main political parties (PRI, PAN and PRD). The thesis argues that parties have a broad range of political motives in promoting participatory mechanisms. The restricted powers and resources given to these bodies and the top-down implementation process have contributed to the limited extent to which citizens have been genuinely empowered by these participatory initiatives. The thesis makes a distinctive contribution by providing three detailed empirical case studies that bring out the political agendas underpinning these initiatives and the diversity of participatory forms currently in place. It also shows that the literature on participatory democracy underestimates the significance of social class and clientelist practices in shaping the nature of local participatory mechanisms.

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Introduction

Citizen participation has become an important part of the democratisation debate in Mexico. Over the last decade there has been a proliferation of participatory initiatives. While participatory initiatives were promoted during the 1970s and 1980s, most of these schemes were used for the party or political purposes by the then ruling party, the PRI. However, as part of the growing pressure for greater democracy, citizen participation mechanisms were increasingly promoted by pressure groups, social movements and opposition political parties. Currently, local governments of all political parties have been introducing participatory initiatives, in particular referenda, plebiscites and neighbourhood forums. In addition, the recent creation of the *Coordinación Presidencial Para la Alianza Ciudadana* (CPAC)¹ represents an interesting attempt to develop a national participatory strategy.² But why would political parties in a country where government has traditionally been centralised and has displayed little concern about accountability, suddenly become willing to share its decision-making power with citizens? Why are participatory mechanisms now at the core of the political agendas right across federal, state and local authorities? What are the implications of this theoretical transfer of power?

According to political theorists, citizen participation mechanisms offer a means to promote democratic values, accountability and, more importantly, a way to increase the decision-making powers of citizens. In Mexico, as elsewhere, most of these initiatives have been at the local level. This is consistent with the observation by Parry, Moyser and Day that 'there is substantial evidence that people participate much more readily on local issues than on national issues' (Parry, Moyser and Day 1992). To what extent has the introduction of these mechanisms in Mexico produced these kinds of outcome? Have citizens truly been empowered or has their participation been used merely for 'legitimation purposes' by political parties and local authorities?

The overall aim of the thesis is to examine why Mexican political parties and authorities have shown such interest in citizen participation and to explore what these initiatives

have actually achieved. The main research questions of the thesis include, what do political parties hope to achieve by introducing participatory mechanisms? What are the sources of inspiration and principles underpinning these initiatives? What forms of participation have been introduced? What functions and powers have been given to these mechanisms? How far have citizens genuinely been empowered by these participatory mechanisms?

These research questions are addressed by studying the participatory agendas of three localities – Tlalpan, Puebla, San Pedro – governed by Mexico's three main political parties (PRI, PAN and PRD). The thesis contributes to existing debates on the role of local governments in democratisation in Mexico (Cabrero 1996, Ramírez Saiz 1997, Marván Laborde 2000). Furthermore, it also adds to the limited body of research on local citizen participation initiatives in Mexico, including Ziccardi (1994 and 1996) and Zermeño (1999). The thesis argues that parties have a wide range of political motives in promoting participatory mechanisms. In particular, the main aim of the traditional opposition parties – the PRD and the PAN – was to undermine pre-existing PRI local structures of power. Both parties saw participatory initiatives as part of a wider process of democratisation and wished to demonstrate their capacity to govern in a more democratic manner than the old PRI system. However, in practice these mechanisms have been used primarily to legitimate their position by giving a democratic image to their regimes, rather than genuinely share power with the citizens. Consequently, the restricted powers and resources given to these bodies and the top-down implementation process have contributed to the limited impact of these participatory initiatives on ordinary citizens.

It is important here to define what is meant by citizen participation, for there is much debate about what participation involves. At the most general level, participation implies involvement by part or all of those who will be affected by a decision, (in this case a governmental one). This may include: the employees of the organisation making the decision; the persons whom the organisation serves or regulates (the clientele); and, the taxpayers whose wallets will be affected. Nevertheless, participation in a decision-making context is extremely difficult to define, especially because [as it will be shown later in this thesis] it means different things to different people. Defining participation in decision-making should be straightforward. It should involve merely posing the

question – do the people decide? If this is not the case, then they don't participate. But the rhetoric of policy-makers often emphasises the importance of citizen participation when in practice they really mean consultation between decision-maker and citizen. Indeed the idea of sharing the process of decision-making itself is unpalatable to most policy-makers.³ Nonetheless, this thesis will adopt an inclusive definition of 'citizen participation' as those citizens who take part in any of the forums provided by any of the three local authorities studied. However – as this study will show – this participation does not necessarily mean that the citizens will necessarily have the last word. Indeed, this research finds only limited evidence of citizen participation bringing about the kinds of changes anticipated by the participatory literature in terms of genuinely empowering citizens, bringing decisions closer to local level or educating them.

The thesis makes a distinctive contribution to the Mexican democratisation debate by providing three detailed empirical case studies that bring out the political agendas underpinning these initiatives and reveals the diversity of participatory forms currently in place. The study analyses the relationship between political parties, citizens, and authorities and the role that each of these actors has taken in the implementation of different participatory schemes. It also shows that the literature on participatory democracy underestimates the significance of social class and extant clientelist practices in shaping the nature of local participatory mechanisms. Whilst participatory theorists are concerned about the positive benefits of participatory democracy, such as their educative impact on citizens, they have ignored the possibility that citizens from different backgrounds do not necessarily react in the same way to the implementation of participatory schemes. Further, in Mexico, long-standing clientelistic relations between politicians and poorer communities may influence the operation of participatory mechanisms or even bypass them. Nevertheless, the thesis adopts a normative approach to the literature on participatory democracy. The participatory democratic models are used as ideal types; as a benchmark against which to measure the participatory programmes of the three case studies here analysed.

The organisational structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 provides a background to the role of participatory democracy in Mexican local politics. This introductory chapter presents a general overview of some of the most significant recent structural changes to local government, especially those dealing with the introduction of citizen

participation mechanisms. The first section introduces the legal structure of local government, along with some of the most common practices taking place in it. The second part examines some of the most important social movements that have helped to trigger the implementation of participatory opportunities at the local level. The third section provides an historical account of the main participatory initiatives implemented by Mexico's three main political parties, and outlines the current presidential participatory agenda. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the main reasons why these participatory mechanisms have been implemented.

Chapter 2 examines the literature on participatory democracy. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the background, principles and main acclaimed advantages of participatory democracy. The second part analyses the limitations of participatory democracy. The following sections outline the main participatory forms in use and introduce two typologies that have been developed to help measure the levels of empowerment that citizens gain when taking part in participatory processes. The final section examines the reasons why many influential international organisations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are currently advocating greater use of participatory mechanisms.

Chapter 3 introduces the case of Tlalpan. After identifying the main conditions under which the 1998 participatory reform took place, the details of the 1998 citizen participation legislation are introduced. The third section analyses the main strengths and weaknesses identified in this document. The fourth part covers Tlalpan's main characteristics, and the fifth section examines the bureaucratic structure responsible for implementing the participatory agenda. The sixth section analyses how the participatory agenda works. Finally, an overview of all the participatory mechanisms implemented in Tlalpan is presented.

Chapter 4 examines Puebla. It starts with an overview of Puebla's main characteristics, followed by a section that reviews the controversial *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* initiative. The third section introduces the PAN-UN participatory scheme, and the next analyses the implications of the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the implementation of the *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* initiative. The fifth section evaluates both the *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* and the PAN-UN schemes. It then

examines the participatory agenda carried out since the PRI re-gained control of the municipality of Puebla in the 1999 local election. The final section compares the three initiatives.

Chapter 5 analyses the case of San Pedro. It starts with an overview of the conditions of San Pedro, which include a brief history of the main participatory schemes and some constitutional reforms that have been discussed by state authorities. The next part outlines the current citizen participation legislation, followed by a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. The next section examines San Pedro's bureaucratic structure. The fifth section covers the way the participatory agenda has been put in practice and it is followed by a short analysis of other participatory activities that have also been implemented before concluding with an overview of the participatory activities in San Pedro.

Chapter 6 introduces the conclusions of this thesis. The first section covers the sources of inspiration from where these mechanisms were brought and also the main theoretical principles behind the three participatory agendas analysed here. The second section analyses the forms of participation found in each of the case studies. The third part highlights the importance of taking into account the basic infrastructure and the class conditions of each locality before implementing participatory schemes. The fourth section deals with issues of implementation and the fifth with issues of citizen empowerment. The final sections outline the overall argument of the thesis, its distinctive contribution and some avenues for further research.

The methodology used in this thesis involved a qualitative comparative case study approach. The use of qualitative data-gathering allowed the researcher to build trust with the respondents – a crucial aspect when analysing Mexican politics – and thereby to produce an in-depth empirical study. Semi-structured questionnaires were applied to politicians, citizens, and community leaders. In Appendix 1 the research framework and methodology followed throughout this research is presented. Appendix 1 has six sections. It begins by setting out the research questions that shape the study. The second part briefly examines the role of the implementation process in the analysis of Mexican policy and politics. The next sections explain the use of qualitative methods and of the comparative case study method. The fifth section justifies the selection of Tlalpan,

Puebla and San Pedro as case studies. The chapter finishes by outlining the way in which case study findings were presented.

The study is a contribution to the debate of participatory democracy initiated by Mexican academics during the 1990s with such documents as the *Agenda para la Reforma Municipal* (Municipal Reform Agenda). It may also be of interest to a number of governmental actors (i.e. local authorities in charge of the implementation of a participatory agenda) and members of the third sector interested on participatory matters in Mexico.

Notes

¹ Translated as Presidential Co-ordination for the Citizen Alliance.

² This issue is discussed to a greater extent in chapter 1.

³ For example, in Madison, Wisconsin, citizen participation refers to a web site describing the activities of municipal government. Visit: <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/cc.html>.

Chapter 1

Local government and participatory transition in Mexico

Introduction

The political potential of local government was denied for many years in Mexico. Despite being defined as the level of government where people feel most competent and are most immediately engaged (Phillips 1996:26), in the case of Mexico, generally, local government has been perceived as defenceless against the 'totalitarian' domain of state or national authorities – both economically and politically (see Cornelius 1999). However, recently, the perception of local government as an impotent, and capable of little more than following those decisions taken elsewhere, has started to change. Local government has become a generator of political change (Cabrero 1996). Indeed, the current (2000-2006) President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, has commented on the importance of local government, stating, 'we must design policies where the decisions are taken from the bottom to the top of the political structure; decisions that emerge from the social bases to the structures of government. This is why we must promote giving greater power to local authorities, so that they can manage their own budgets, govern, and promote development' (*La Jornada* 30/8/2001).

In several respects local government has been at the core of Mexico's democratic transition. It is at the local level where social movements claiming better living conditions emerged. It is also at the local level where groups of citizens gathered against the *caciquil*¹ practices of the state, and above all, it is at the local level where the cry for fairer elections was initiated. As a consequence of these processes it has been more common for opposition political parties to take office. These administrations – mainly led by the PRD and the PAN – have attempted to implement a different style of management in local governments. One feature at the core of this recent 'new local agenda' has seen the proliferation of a wide range of participatory initiatives in government. Formerly used by the PRI as mechanisms of political control, suddenly citizen participation mechanisms are seen through different eyes, as it is claimed they bring transparency, accountability and democracy at the local level. But must this be the

case? Are these mechanisms the magic solution to the *clientelistic*² environment that has surrounded local government for many years? Are the three main political forces engaged in a genuine democratic (participatory) reform of Mexican politics?

The aim of this introductory chapter is to present a general vision of some of the most significant recent structural changes to local government, especially those dealing with the introduction of citizen participation mechanisms. The first section introduces the legal structure of local government, along with some of the most common practices taking place in it. The second part examines some of the most important social movements that have helped to trigger the implementation of participatory opportunities at the local level, along with the development of movements aiming for free and fair elections. The third section provides an historical account of the main participatory initiatives implemented by Mexico's three main political forces, followed by the introduction of the current presidential participatory agenda. The chapter concludes with a section that identifies the main reasons why these participatory mechanisms have been implemented.

The Structure and Role of Mexican Local Government

It is important to make several general points regarding the way the Mexican political system operates to provide the context to the participatory changes we will be examining. The legal document setting out how the political institutions should operate is the Mexican Constitution. An ambitious document created in 1917 that, since then, has been repeatedly reformed to adapt it to the prevailing social, economic and political circumstances. It draws on many sources:

Mexico's constitution, like those of the other Latin American countries, takes its inspiration from the ideas of the French Enlightenment and the US Founding Fathers; Rousseau's concept of popular sovereignty, Montesquieu's thoughts on the separation and balance of the three powers (executive, legislative and judicial) and the ideas about checks and balances of state power developed by Madison in the federalist papers are the theoretical political bases of the constitution (González Casanova 1970:11).

The constitution states that Mexico is a federal republic divided into 31 states and a federal district, Mexico City, which is the capital. Each state is composed of numerous municipalities. Most of the 2,427 municipalities³ in Mexico have a similar government structure,⁴ which is based on what is known in the constitution as the *municipio libre*

(free municipality). The *municipio* is the official body in charge of carrying out all governmental duties at the local level. Article 115 of the Mexican constitution establishes that each municipality will be governed by a slate led by the Municipal President (mayor) and the number of *regidores* and *síndicos* (local congressmen) determined by each municipal legislation. The slate that wins the local election will occupy the majority of the seats at the *cabildo* (municipal congress) and the losing slates will also be represented at this chamber on a proportional basis. Every three years a municipal election takes place and no individual may be elected mayor for two consecutive terms in office.

The *cabildo* is the most important official body within the municipality. It is here where all parties are represented and where local projects are discussed and voted upon; it is also where the municipal budget is approved. The only place where *cabildos* do not operate is in Mexico City, where the functions of a *cabildo* in each of the 16 *delegaciones* (local authorities) that constitute the city are performed by the *Asamblea de Representantes del Distrito Federal* (Congress of Mexico City).

The municipality in the constitution is established for two main purposes: service provision and development planning. Both activities are described in article 115, which states that the main services provided by each municipality are:

- 1) Piped drinking water, sewage, treatment of residual water.
- 2) Electricity.
- 3) Collection of rubbish.
- 4) Administration of Municipal Markets.
- 5) Pavement of streets, maintenance of parks.
- 6) Public security.

And the main activities to be carried out by each municipality are:

- a) Formulate, approve and administer all municipal urban development plans.
- b) Participate in the creation and administration of municipal territorial reserves.
- c) Participate in the creation of regional development plans, which must agree in all aspects with plans developed on a national scale.
- d) Authorise and control the utilisation given to the land under their respective jurisdictions.
- e) Intervene to regulate the tenure of the land.
- f) Give licences and construction permits.
- g) Participate in the creation of ecological reserves.
- h) Formulate public transport programmes.

Notwithstanding the powers given to municipal authorities in the constitution, when trying to carry out the activities presented above, things seem not to have worked according to the legislation. According to González Casanova:

Governmental structure and political practice are a far cry from the models used to create the constitution. They will not help us to understand the actual functioning and full significance of Mexico's government structure. The parties, voting patterns, elections, the 'three powers,' the 'sovereignty of the federal states,' and the whole apparatus of traditional democracy generally operate in such a way that political decisions are made in a way having little or nothing to do with the theoretical models of the constitution. The dynamics of the government, the institutionalisation of change, equilibrium, and controls, and the concentration and distribution of power are classical formulations that have become symbolic elements to envelop and sanction novel situations (González Casanova 1970:11).

Although the Mexican constitution states that the unit established to carry out all the actions of government at the local level is the municipality, local governments are widely dependent on those decisions taken by federal (Mexico City based) and state governments. The principle of '*el municipio libre*' (the free municipality) has been questioned by academics, as this is the last condition local governments seem to have.⁵ The authoritarian way in which Mexican politics operate leaves municipal authorities under almost total economic and political control of the federal and state governments.⁶ In the view of Rodríguez, (1997) 'things have not changed that much since the 1970s' and recounts what Fagen and Tuohy, along with other writers,⁷ have detected in Mexican politics:

Each level of government is weaker, more dependent, and poorer than its immediate-superior level. Local government is the least autonomous entity of the Mexican political pyramid. Normally a local government is constituted to the 'taste' of state authorities, it controls a very reduced budget, and it can only perform activities of maintenance and administration (Fagen and Tuohy cited in Rodríguez 1997:83).

Cornelius goes even further, 'traditionally each *presidente municipal* (mayor) has been handpicked by higher-ups within the PRI government apparatus, normally a congressman or the state governor' (Cornelius 1996:30). The fact that local government terms last only three years leaves the careers of local politicians dependent on contacts at the federal or state level. There is an evident clientelist relationship between those groups operating at the upper levels of the Mexican political pyramid and those wanting

to exercise power locally. In particular, these types of relationships were a key element in the operational scheme of the former 'official party,' the PRI:

The Mexican political class is permeated with patron-client relationships, in which the 'patrons'— persons having higher political status —provide benefits such as protection, support in political struggles with rivals, and chances for upward political or economic mobility to their 'clients'— persons with a lower political status. In exchange, the 'clients' provide loyalty, deference, and useful services like voter mobilisation, political control, and problem solving to their patrons within the official party or governmental bureaucracy (Cornelius 1996:39).

Aiming to break with this pattern, a series of democratic reforms have been introduced by federal authorities since the 1990s. Although the PRI lost its first presidential election in 2000 and a wide-ranging democratic reform programme has been promoted by the new PAN (rightwing) administration, there is considerable concern that the same practices that took place under the PRI for more than 70 years will simply be repeated. As commented by Bruhn, 'an opposition government does not mean that it would be more democratic than the preceding one' (Bruhn 2000:145).

One of the major recent disputes at the local level is the cry of municipalities for greater economic resources. Historically, the federal government has controlled 85 percent of public revenues, state governments have controlled less than 12 percent and municipalities scarcely 3 percent. In 1994, the share of total public spending allocated to municipalities rose to 4 percent and at the state level to 16 percent. Yet the federal government still took 98 percent of all public revenues obtained through taxation, while states collected 1.5 percent and municipalities 0.5 percent (Cornelius 1996:32). According to the constitution there are three main sources of revenue for each municipality: firstly, local property tax (which must be negotiated with state authorities); secondly, federal grants (which are set on an annual basis by each state's legislature); and thirdly, revenues derived from the services provided by each municipality. As a consequence of local authorities' claims for greater economic resources, such special allocations of resources as *ramo 33* (section 33)⁸ have been introduced. This branch has been allocated to local projects since 1998 with the aim of reducing the authoritarian way in which economic resources were traditionally managed by federal authorities, as well as reducing the levels of poverty in each municipality.

Some of the effects of the 1998 fiscal reform were identified in a survey carried out by the Mexican newspaper *Reforma* (3/9/2001).⁹ Most of the mayors interviewed agreed that economic resources are unevenly distributed and that they do not arrive in time to solve most of the needs faced at the local level. In the view of the 2000-2003 Mayor of Monterrey, Nuevo León, Felipe de Jesús Cantú, 'the distribution of resources from the federation to each municipality should be increased and improved. We (the municipalities) are like a chair with only three legs, we need the federation's support otherwise the whole thing – municipal government – will collapse' (*Reforma* 03/09/2001). That said, the majority of the mayors said that since the 1998 reform the federal government had intervened less in decisions about how local budget is spent. Only 12 percent of the mayors surveyed still see federal intervention as highly influential in the way the budget is spent.

The scenario depicted above – especially the economic and political dependence of local governments on federal and state authorities – has prompted several attempts at reform. For, as Phillips comments, 'one standard argument for local government is that it disperses over-centralised power' (Phillips 1996:23).¹⁰ Via social movements, NGOs and especially opposition administrations, local government has become the most important source of political change in Mexico. It is at the local level where movements demanding a more democratic distribution of power have emerged and where groups demanding greater transparency and better living conditions have formed. It is also at the local level where opposition administrations had their first opportunities to govern. In the view of Cabrero (1996), 'one of the most important transformations that our societies are experiencing at the end of this century is the realisation of "the local" as the space where new forms of social organisation are developed' (Cabrero 1996:11).

In Mexico, at the core of the discussion for the local 'revolution' is the *Agenda Para la Reforma Municipal*. A document published by some of Mexico's most prestigious academic institutions (e.g. *CIDE* and *El Colegio de la Frontera Norte*) and which aims to bring to academic circles discussions dealing with reforms to improve the operating conditions of Mexico's local administrations. In this document, the role of citizen participation is perceived as essential for increasing the levels of accountability and democracy in local administrations, as well as reducing some of the authoritarian trends identified above. In the view of Alvarez and Castro, (1999) it is mainly opposition

governments that want to promote citizen participation at the local level as a means to bring the government closer to the citizenry, involving them at the same time in decision-making processes (1999:2).¹¹

There are two main sources of pressure in society that have transferred the process of decentralisation and democratisation: social movements and political parties.¹² The next section examines the impact of social movements on the democratisation process that is currently taking place in the Mexican polity, particularly at the local level.

Social Movements: Pressure for Change

In this section the aim is to examine the impact that social movements have had on the long transition to democratic political structures in Mexico. It is argued that social movements have influenced the local political spectrum in four main areas. Firstly, those movements that were created to demand better living conditions. Secondly, movements that emerged to protest against *caciquil* practices of government (i.e. demanding more civil liberties, or fairer treatment by the government). Thirdly, social movements that promoted respect for election processes. Finally, those organisations that aimed to scrutinise election processes and to educate the population on democratic matters. Whether initiated in rural areas, urban areas, by NGOs or other independent groups of citizens, these movements have played a key role in increasing the opportunities for political participation, especially under a political system plagued by corruption, corporatism and undemocratic practices of government.

Social Movements in the Mexican Context

The 'mother' of all social movements in Mexico was the 1968 student movement. As commented by President Fox, 'the 1968 student movement is one of the most important antecedents in Mexico's democratic struggle. Due to that struggle we currently enjoy an environment of freedom, plurality, and greater participation' (*La Jornada* 3/10/01). The student movement of 1968, described by some intellectuals as the 'organised society' (see Monsivais 1987), erupted by demanding greater political openness and the respect of citizens' civil liberties (see Poniatowska 1994). The official response in 1968 was quite different from the sentiments expressed in the recent speech given by the current president, as the government of President Díaz Ordaz allegedly perpetrated the killings of thousands of students at the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* in the neighbourhood of

Tlatelolco (see Krauze 1997). This oppression resulted in the dispersion of student leaders to form different social organisations throughout the country. The 1970-1976 government of President Luis Echeverría in a way, 'authorised' the proliferation of social movements: 'Echeverría responded to the political crisis of the 1960s and early 1970s with a policy of opening up spaces for opposition political action outside of existing PRI-affiliated organisations' (Rubin 1999:181). However, despite this apparent tolerant attitude towards social movements, the state continued using violent means to oppress them, as illustrated by the incident that took place on 6 October 1971 known as the *Halconazo* (the strike of the hawk) where, again, a group of students was attacked by the army. The authoritarian way in which Echeverría dealt with this social pressure promoted the 'desire to struggle' in those who were to become the protagonists of the social movements of the 1980s (Pérez Arce 1980).

One of the starting points in the analysis of social movements deals with the relationship between economic conditions and the insurgence of these movements. For instance, Foweraker comments on the distinguished tradition of historians (Barrington Moore, EP Thompson, James Scott) who have demonstrated the importance of the moral outrage created by unequal economic and social conditions, and popular movements can be seen in part as the organised political expression of such outrage (Foweraker 1990:5). In the view of Zermeño, the economic conditions prevailing in Mexico during the 1980s were crucial for the expansion of social movements:

A feeling of impoverishment, disillusionment, the lower sectors of the population were becoming poorer and poorer and although the official discourse was trying to soften the situation a large majority of the population felt politically, economically and socially excluded, it is in this environment that social movements proliferated (Zermeño 1990:166).

The neoliberal policies implemented by the 1982-1988 Miguel de la Madrid government influenced the flourishing of social organisations aiming to improve their living conditions. The withdrawal of the state, a drop in wages, a reduction in the government's budget for social projects, and the elimination of subsidies are only a few examples of the 'adjustment' policies implemented by the government (see Lustig 1987). Although most protest movements emerged with the clear idea of challenging the state, the neo-liberal policies employed by the De La Madrid administration created the context within which most social movements – regardless of the form of their demands

– would simultaneously become political movements (Tamayo 1990:122). This became evident during two events. Firstly, the 1985 earthquake that affected Mexico City saw the mobilisation of large numbers of organisations (i.e. *Asamblea de Barrios*) that later became politicised. Secondly, the disorganised support – as defined by Zermeño (1990) – that social organisations gave to Cuaúhtemoc Cárdenas in the 1988 presidential campaign, which later became the basis of the leftwing party, PRD. But to have a clearer idea of how social movements have had an impact on Mexico's political scene, it is necessary to take a closer look at how some of these organisations developed.

Citizens wanting to improve their living conditions: Asamblea de Barrios

Asamblea de Barrios (neighbourhoods assembly) was established to protect the interests of groups of neighbours who were threatened by official authorities' projects to remove large number citizens from their original places of residence.¹³ Initially formed by four organisations that operated independently,¹⁴ those citizens taking part in the movement would participate in mobilisations against state housing policies, and would also ask for land to build low-cost housing projects (Nuñez González 1990). An unexpected event – the 1985 earthquake that hit Mexico City – triggered the consolidation of *Asamblea de Barrios* as one of the most successful neighbourhood social movements in urban areas. According to Safa (1997), 'the earthquake proved that the civil community was ready to get involved in those problems affecting their city' (1997:246). The earthquake strengthened the cry for a large reconstruction project, especially in those areas affected by the phenomenon.

The largest social movement that emerged after the earthquake was the *Coordinadora Unica de Damnificados* (CUD) constituted by tenants of 42 neighbourhood organisations. One of the main attributes of the organisation was that via strong internal networks the group did not cede to the *clientelist* practices promoted by the government, which aimed to divide the movement. It was due to this unity that the group managed to include up to 30,000 people supporting the same demands without experiencing any serious internal divisions.¹⁵ The first triumph of the organisation took place when its leaders were received by (1982-1988) President Miguel de la Madrid who, responding to the pressure of these groups, expropriated 5,563 buildings to benefit those affected by the disaster (Tavera-Fenallosa 1999:113). In the view of some analysts (Snow and Benford 1988) this particular citizen movement contributed significantly to Mexico

City's democratic transition. A political effect of the movement caused was that the governor of Mexico City – Ramón Aguirre – announced for the first time in Mexico City's history that public hearings were to take place at Mexico City's central hall (see Tavera-Fenallosa 1999).

Once the reconstruction project led by the CUD was finished in 1987 the group fragmented and most of the organisations that formed it saw no need for it to continue. However, many citizens were still interested in improving their housing conditions, which is how *asamblea de barrios* (Assembly of Neighbourhoods) officially came to existence in 1987. The first *Asamblea de Barrios* meeting took place on 4/4/1987, and more than 4,000 citizens representing 280 neighbourhoods participated (Cuellar and Duran 1990:40). The federal election of 1988 proved to be crucial for the future of the organisation, as *Asamblea de Barrios* became the first urban organisation that expressed its support for Cuauhtemoc Cardenas' presidential campaign. In 1988 the number of people who affiliated to *Asamblea de Barrios* increased considerably, however, after the presidential election the number of members decreased again, only to increase again in the midterm election of 1991. It proved to be an effective magnet during elections, as many organisations saw it as having the potential to represent their particular causes. With the large inflows and outflows of members, the organisation soon acquired a political perspective focused on the issue of building better projects. This political side of the organisation was brought by members who had been quite active within their respective communities and who joined the organisation to strengthen their own communities. Perhaps without intending to do so, *Asamblea de Barrios* became a powerful urban political arm of the PRD. By 1993 *Asamblea de Barrios* was representing more than 100 organisations in Mexico City's metropolitan area and working in similar networks at the international level (see Greene 1997).

Asamblea de Barrios became the most important urban organisation linked to the PRD. Beyond asking for credits to build houses, the movement also developed three political objectives. Firstly, to help candidates representing *Asamblea de Barrios* or the PRD win elections. Secondly, to have a voice within the PRD to manipulate the relationship between the movement and the party. Thirdly, to educate citizens about national and local politics, as well as democratic processes (Greene 1997:214). Due to the large number of political currents that got involved in the movement, and after accusations of

internal corruption, the movement divided in 1993 into two fractions. Both of them are still called *Asamblea de Barrios*, however, each of them has a different ideological approach to the procedures that should be followed to succeed in their housing and political aims (see Greene 1997).

Thus *Asamblea de Barrios* followed the trend highlighted by Tamayo (1990) for social movements to become political movements. The effects of this transition can influence the original aims of social protest organisations, as these organisations can forget the purposes for which they were established and broaden attention to electoral issues, instead of remaining focused on defending the interests for which they were created.¹⁶ But is this inevitably the case?

When social movements promote change from within: The COCEI and the CDP

The notion of institutionalising social movements is at the core of Fowerakers' analysis of social movements in Mexico, in his own words:

Popular movements in Mexico seek institutional recognition in order to get material improvement; and, despite a sometimes radical or revolutionary rhetoric, they pursue these ends through political exchanges and gradualist strategies. The political outcome is a range of particular and differentiated forms of linkage between popular movements and the political system, which the movements will then seek to fix and validate in law (Foweraker 1990:11).

The Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus (COCEI) is a Zapotec¹⁷ social movement that includes peasants, workers and students of the Isthmus. It was initiated in the early 1970s as a leftist coalition in the southern state of Oaxaca, mainly to organise mobilisations against state rice and sugar mills, private enterprise exploitation, landowners, and the state's agrarian bureaucracy. On the other hand, the Popular Defence Committee (CDP) started its activities in the northern state of Durango when a group of students involved in the 1968 student movement created the current known as *política popular* (popular politics). From a Marxist background, its leader Adolfo Oribe aimed to create autonomous movements in deprived areas of diverse cities. Along with its establishment in the state of Durango, cells of the organisation were formed in the states of Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León, Nayarit, Tlaxcala and the State of Mexico (see Haber 1997).

Both of these movements experienced the violent response of the state to their claims, especially when dealing with land issues (see Rubin 1999 and Haber 1997). Nonetheless each organisation gained some influence and respect at the local level, in the case of the COCEI, Martínez highlights how it won battles over labour rights and municipal services and rapidly expanded its political and cultural projects (see Martínez 1985). The CDP, after several unsuccessful attempts to invade land, in 1973 reached an agreement with the INDECO (National Community Development Institute) and obtained 20 hectares to be paid over a five years. It was in this area where the first *colonia popular* (popular neighbourhood) of Durango – the *División del Norte* – was created (see Haber 1997).

A breakthrough for these movements came when they decided to institutionalise their activities. One of the main characteristics of the COCEI is that its members decided relatively soon to take part in election processes (Gutiérrez 1981). Aiming to finish with the *caciquil* practices of the PRI, the COCEI took part in the local elections of 1974 and 1979, but it was not until 1981 that it achieved its first political success. Forming an alliance with the communist party, the COCEI won Juchitán's local election in Oaxaca, becoming the first left wing municipal government of Mexico (Campbell 1990). The political activities of the COCEI expanded during the 1980s, and through political alliances with left wing political organisations managed to have candidates stand for state and federal congresses. In office, the COCEI proved capable of leading efficient and transparent administrations, working with city residents, municipal official repaired streets, built and refurbished local health centres, created a public library and rebuilt the city hall. The COCEI also negotiated agricultural credits with national authorities. In Juchitán, COCEI intellectuals published a literary magazine that became known not only in Mexico's intellectual circles, but also internationally (see Rubin, 1999). This record increased its popularity, but at the same time brought them problems with *priísta* structures, who saw the organisation as a constant threat to their leadership.

In an attempt to diminish the power of the COCEI, groups of *priísta* and businessmen formed right-wing groups to weaken the COCEI.¹⁸ The pressure exercised towards the COCEI 'blew up' in 1983, when the army removed the COCEI administration from office and a new *priísta* government was appointed by state authorities. The years between 1983 and 1989 were characterised by a series of protests, arrests, and constant

ups and downs in their relationship with the federal authorities. It was not until President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994) unveiled in 1989 the *concertación social* project that the movement regained its influential position in Oaxaca. As commented by Rubin: 'this programme offered substantial economic and political support to established oppositions in return for a reduction in militant tactics, along with public acknowledgement of negotiation and coexistence with the regime' (Rubin 1990:193-194).

The fragile political environment that surrounded the controversial 1988 presidential election contributed significantly to the establishment of an 'open-door' policy to the social movements that supported the candidature of Cuaúhtemoc Cárdenas, who allegedly won the election (see Krauze 1997). President Salinas sought to control any social movements that might represent a threat to the governmental agenda. As Zermeño put it, 'the 'system' has the capacity for constant and rapid reaction to political struggle in the civil society; by absorbing or destroying the social identities generated through the struggle it maintains itself intact (Zermeño 1990:18). A good example of this strategy can be found in the way the CDP institutionalised its activities in 1989. Despite supporting the presidential candidature of Cárdenas in 1988 the CDP became the first movement to sign a *concertación social* agreement with President Salinas. In an unprecedented move, the Salinas administration developed a scheme based on the establishment of 'democratic projects'¹⁹ aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting development. The projects foresaw spending huge economic resources to improve the basic infrastructure conditions of neighbourhoods as well as the establishment of small-scale industries where the locals would be self-employed.²⁰

The CDP move opened fractures in the leftist movements that supported the candidature of Cárdenas in 1988, as other leftwing organisations soon decided to follow the steps of the CDP, and even criticised Cárdenas (see Haber 1997). The close relationship between the CDP and federal authorities reached its climax in December 1990 with the formation of a new political party, the *Partido del Trabajo PT* (Work-Party), set up by 22 social movements or organisations, mainly from the north of Mexico. After its creation, the PT was soon 'christened' as the party of Salinas.²¹

In the view of Foweraker (1990), social movements contribute to political change through their continuous attempts to achieve a linkage with the political system, which

tends to change the institutional configuration of the system itself. However, in both cases presented above, it was the state that first stopped these movements and then wanted to institutionalise them, in order to keep them under control. There is some evidence to support Foweraker's claims, especially in the case of the COCEI, where there has been genuine political change due to the transparent and democratic way they have governed the municipality, and the COCEI has won consecutive elections in Juchitán.²² Nevertheless, in both the above examples it is important to highlight the role of the Salinas administration in attracting these movements to the institutional route. Salinas masterminded a strategy to fragment the organisations that supported Cárdenas in 1988, even creating a political party using the former autonomous structure developed by the CDP to become an instrument of the state. A question that emerges after discussing these examples is whether all social movements need institutional recognition to remain in existence. And, secondly, if the political system seems to be obsessed with controlling these grassroots social movements, perhaps the same is happening with the different participatory mechanisms promoted by the state to involve the citizenry in decision-making processes. These issues will be addressed later in this chapter, but the next section examines a movement that has contributed to the increase of democratic practices of government at the federal, state, and local level, especially during election processes.

Political campaigns based on social movements: the case of Salvador Nava

The 1991 mid-term federal election represented an 'acid test' for the Salinas administration. After recognising the triumph of the PAN in the 1989 state election of Baja California, opposition forces saw an opportunity to achieve more electoral victories on other fronts. In 1991 Dr. Salvador Nava initiated one of the social movements that has had most impact in Mexico's democratic transition. Nava's political activities date back to the 1950s, when due to problems with the local cacique (Gonzalo Santos) he ran as an alternative candidate representing a coalition of opposition forces.²³ Nava managed to win San Luis Potosí's 1958 local election and, in 1961, he attempted to do the same for the governor position, but, this time the *priísta* system finished his hopes by using the 'usual' fraudulent methods to win the election.²⁴

Coincidentally, during the years in which President De la Madrid was implementing a wide range of neoliberal policies, the Navista movement for democracy was resurrected

in the shape of the Potosí Civic Front. The movement aimed to challenge the set of dictatorial policies implemented by the 1979-1985 *priísta* governor of San Luis Potosí, Jongitud Barrios. The Potosí Civic Front was supported by different sources of civil resistance in the states of Oaxaca, Durango, Baja California and Chihuahua (Cornelius 1999). Between 1982²⁵ and 1990 the Navista movement went through the same cycles experienced by most social movements of the time: popular mobilisation, electoral victory, control of municipal government, expanded social participation and repression (Calvillo Unna 1999:88). In 1990, members of the Potosí Civic Front decided to form a coalition to support one candidate of the movement in the 1991 governor election. The local leaders of the PAN, PRD and PDM²⁶ decided to form the Open Opposition Movement, aiming to defeat convincingly the PRI at the 1991 state election. On 23 February 1991 Nava was declared the unity candidate both by the PAN and the PRD (Granados Chapa 1992). The opposing candidate appointed by Salinas was Fausto Zapata, a 'man of the system' who had occupied different positions for the Mexican government, mainly abroad (Anderson and Van Atta 1991). The Navistas began preparing the 'battlefield' a few months before the election when they organised a conference entitled '*Challenges in the Transition to Democracy.*' The occasion was attended by some of Mexico's most influential intellectual and opposition political figures.²⁷ The aim was to increase the relevance of the San Luis Potosí's coalition to a national scale and perhaps to plan a future alliance for the 1994 presidential election (see Calvillo Unna 1990).

According to data provided by the government, the result of the election gave Zapata (329,292 votes) a comfortable margin over Nava. Zapata (170,646 votes) (see Aziz Nassif 1992). As soon as the result was announced a press conference led by Nava showed the national and international media that another fraud had been committed. Groups of businessmen, professionals, students, and the press had the opportunity to validate the fraud (Anderson and Van Atta 1991). The fraud committed in San Luis Potosí was not the only one; in the state of Guanajuato the PRI also won using the same old tactics. The defence of the vote started by Nava in San Luis Potosí suffered a major blow when trying to join the resistance movement started in Guanajuato, as the PAN decided to accept the 'political offer' of President Salinas. This deal involved appointing an interim governor of the PAN, instead of keeping the fraudulently elected *priísta* candidate Ramón Aguirre. By declaring as winner neither Vicente Fox nor Ramón

Aguirre, and by selecting Carlos Medina Plascencia (former *panista* mayor of León), the federal authorities presented the arrangement as reasonably fair.

Although Salinas offered a similar deal to Nava, he did not accept and instead decided to start *La Marcha por la Dignidad* (the dignity march). The march consisted of walking from the state of San Luis Potosí to Mexico City, covering a distance of 463 kilometres that 77 years old Nava expected to walk in one month. Salinas ceded to the pressure and two weeks after taking office Zapata had to resign.

Ironically, this authoritarian decision at the centre served to open up democratic space at the local level (Calvillo Unna 1999:102). The democratic effects of the struggle became more evident a few months after an agreement was reached. Calvillo Unna (1999) highlights four achievements of the movement:

- 1) The incorporation from civic organisations and opposition parties into electoral institutions.
- 2) The consolidation of a network of groups serving as observers of the political process and as observers of any attempted authoritarian behaviour.
- 3) Changes within the local PRI, obliging the party to uphold basic rules of democratic conduct and to recognise opposition victories.
- 4) Some preliminary reforms of the local media, which had been widely condemned for its biased coverage of the 1991 electoral process.

Furthermore, as a result of the political fight other organisations also emerged; in 1992 the Citizen's Movement for Democracy was created and led by Nava. The organisation aimed to consider the possibility of a national alliance to defeat the PRI in the 1994 presidential election, however, the movement lost impetus with the death of Nava in May 1992 and could not consolidate an alliance. Nevertheless, the results of the struggle to respect electoral results led to the formation of organisations heavily engaged in electoral and democratic matters. This is how one of the most successful experiments of citizen participation through an NGO was initiated via *Alianza Cívica*. In fact the Civic Front Salvador Martinez Nava is still operating in the state of San Luis Potosi. The movement has kept on fighting for justice, democracy and equality. For instance, in 1998 the movement collected 24,327 signatures to address the issue of the Acteal Massacre. In a document sent to 1994-2000 President Ernesto Zedillo, the organisation demanded that those responsible (s) for the massacre be brought to justice (see www.zonamaya.net 28/1/1998).

Civil society organisations pressing for democratisation: the case of Alianza Cívica

As noted above, it was no secret to most Mexicans that for many years the PRI managed to keep its power through electoral fraud. *Alianza Cívica* (Civic Alliance) was established as a consequence of two political phenomena. Firstly, the fraudulent 1988 presidential election, and secondly, the political events that took place in the first trimester of 1994 (the Zapatista uprising, the assassination of the *priísta* presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, and the internal crisis of the PRI). There were seven organisations involved in the formation of *Alianza Cívica*,²⁸ (AC) all of them with previous experience of monitoring elections in contested states. Initially these organisations signed an agreement promising to dissolve AC after the 1994 presidential election (see Ramírez 1997).

As part of the 1994 programme, *Alianza Cívica* implemented 8 basic actions:

- 1) Surveys about the electoral process.
- 2) The campaign entitled *no se vale* (it is not allowed) against vote coercion.
- 3) Monitoring the media.
- 4) Studying of the total list of electors that would participate in the 1994 election.
- 5) Observation of the federal, state and local electoral institutions.
- 6) Observation of the quality of the electoral process.
- 7) Coordination of international observers.
- 8) Civic education campaign.

For the 1994 presidential election AC trained 37,060 citizens in electoral matters, and placed 18,280 electoral observers in 10,000 voting posts all over the country (see *Alianza Cívica* 1994). AC also implemented a national campaign to educate people on electoral matters, something that had never been done before in Mexico. After the 1994 presidential election the AC drew three conclusions. Firstly, 'it is probable that the deficiencies detected in the 1994 electoral process would have not altered the actual result of the election.' Secondly, 'especially in rural areas there was a lot of pressure exerted on votes, we must question the results obtained in these areas.' And thirdly, 'we can conclude that in Mexico there are not the necessary conditions or elements that can make us say that the 1994 presidential election was balanced, or a fully trustworthy process' (see *Alianza Cívica* 1995).

After the results of the observation process, the members of the seven NGOs that combined to establish *Alianza Cívica* thought that there was still a lot to achieve and decided to maintain the organisation and at the same time expand it to other states. The

main activities that were part of the new agenda were to, a) give voice to public opinion, b) scrutinise public functionaries and c) educate the population regarding their civic duties. This is how the organisation directed three consultation processes in 1995.

In 1995 AC conducted two national citizen consultations and one referendum. The first consultation, on 26 February 1995, aimed to discover the public's opinion regarding the responsibility of public functionaries for the 1995 economic crisis.²⁹ The consultation also intended to find out what the public thought about the economic 'rescue package' that the US was asked to provide for the Mexican economy. There were 666,525 citizens who took part in the process that was coordinated on a national scale by 15,000 citizens divided in 5,600 'opinion collection centres.' A massive 96.68 percent of the participants voted in favour of investigating President Carlos Salinas and his collaborators, for their alleged responsibility for the crisis. Also, 80.56 percent of the citizens that took part in the consultation thought that the congress should reject the economic aid package (Alianza Cívica 1996:6).

Under the topic of peace and democracy, the second consultation organised by AC took place on 27 August 1995. This participation process sought citizens' opinion regarding the possible future of the Zapatistas or the EZLN as a political organisation. The EZLN asked for AC's support to organise a national process similar to the one they had previously coordinated the same year; with the aid of 40,000 volunteers and the participation of 1,570 indigenous communities, 8,245 reception centres were installed all over the country. In this process 1,094,000 citizens participated and 52.6 percent were in favour of having the EZLN participating as an independent political force. While 48.7 percent approved of the possibility that the EZLN participate in politics through forming alliances with other political organisations (Alianza Cívica 1996).

The third consultation process took place between 15 September 1995 and 20 November 1995. The aim of the 'Referendum for Liberty' was to find out whether the population would support alternative schemes of development for the reactivation of the economy, the strengthening of the internal market and a redefinition of Mexico's international agenda. *Alianza Cívica*, along with other 7 organisations,³⁰ organised the consultation in which 428,345 citizens supported the establishment of an alternative agenda to that proposed by the official authorities (see Alianza Cívica 1996).

Thus the AC has maintained its independent status as an organisation that aims to bring greater transparency to electoral processes, consult on controversial issues, and educate the population on democratic matters. These actions have had a positive effect on the political system, as commented by Ramírez, 'the external pressure exercised by the organisation, in a way, 'obliged' the political system to start being more accountable and democratic' (Ramírez 1997). According to Ramírez, the actions performed by AC have had an impact in four different ways, (see Box 1.1).

Box 1.1 The input of Alianza Cívica to the Mexican Society

<i>Reaffirm the importance of the vote as the core element in a democracy</i>	The actions of AC, especially the organising capacity showed during the 1994 presidential election, was crucial in changing the perspective of the Mexican population regarding election processes. For Ramírez, this has had an effect on the political culture of the Mexican Community.
<i>Establishment of Pioneering Direct Citizen Participation Practices</i>	The 1995 plebiscites and referendum are part of a new direct democratic culture recently initiated in Mexico. These actions had a direct effect on the political reform, as none of these practices is part of a legislation; currently there is great concern to legalise them, making them part of the constitution.
<i>Accountability of governors</i>	The main aim of AC was to create sufficient public pressure to make authorities aware of the importance of being accountable to their electorate. The strengthening of citizen power was perceived as essential to start a new relationship between federal, state and local authorities and citizens.
<i>Democratic Education for the people of Mexico</i>	One of the most important functions carried out by AC has been educational. Through the establishment of workshops, the organisation has managed to increase people's awareness of the importance of taking part in political processes. There have been a large number of flyers, posters, pamphlets, radio and television advertisements that have been used as support material to achieve this huge task.

The impact of social movements on the democratic agenda

With their actions at the local level, social movements have helped the population to develop greater awareness of the importance of taking part in political processes. For Diamond, without pressure from the bottom of the political pyramid it would be difficult to introduce any reforms to any political system (cited in Ramírez 2000:32). We can say that social movements influence the political pyramid at the bottom, and as it has already been shown, there is a reaction at the top, through negotiations or introducing policies to satisfy the demands of these groups. Although the government can react violently or try to co-opt the pressure exercised by these groups, as happened in Mexico, in the long run these mechanisms have proved to be important opportunities for promoting democratic values. According to Camacho, 'social movements initiate a dynamic created within the civil society, which purposefully directs itself to the defence

of specific interests. They may partially or totally challenge the prevailing structures of domination and their implicit objective is to transform the conditions for social growth' (Camacho 1987:8).

Although their own internal operational structures are perhaps not that democratic,³¹ these movements still act as 'defenders' of the interests of those taking part in them. Whilst it is dangerous to generalise, one characteristic of social movements is that after succeeding in their claims, they tend to follow the institutional route, as was evident in Mexico during the 1980s, especially throughout the Salinas administration. Some academics argue that this institutionalisation makes social movements lose their innovative capacity. For instance, Aberoni recalls, 'if social movements remain independent, they can keep on accomplishing their objectives. Moreover, it is possible to combine both agendas (institutional and non-institutional) because when social movements become institutional, then it would not be possible to auto-destroy them systematically' (Alberoni 1981:143).

One of the most important inputs of social movements has been their contribution to the transparency of electoral processes. Aiming to end with the 'fraud tradition' so common in Mexican politics, democratic movements struggled to secure fair voting assessments and to educate the population on participatory and electoral matters. It was only after years of pressure that the government realised that the 'opening' of the political system was necessary, and especially under opposition administrations the changes have been dramatic. It seems clear that there has been a link between an active civil society and the implementation of different forms of democracy at the municipal level. The influence of social movements that have institutionalised and that now form part of local administrations has been a crucial factor in ensuring the implementation of more participatory mechanisms at the local level.

Political Parties and Political Change

The role of political parties, especially at the municipal level, has been crucial for the implementation of the mechanisms analysed in this study. With the proliferation of such movements as *Alianza Cívica*, electoral fraud has become harder to commit, and this relative electoral stability has contributed to increasing the levels of electoral competitiveness. It is revealing that the number of municipalities governed by the PAN

and the PRD, the two main opposition parties, multiplied, especially during the 1990s. For instance, in 1996 the PAN was governing 225 municipalities and the PRD governed 181. This opened up the possibility of implementing a considerable number of participatory schemes at the local level (see Rodríguez 1997). Political parties are important means for citizens to express their desire for change. In the view of Ramírez:

Through having fairer election processes is how the citizenry decided to actively take part in elections, instead of not taking part assuming that the PRI was going to win anyway whether they participated or not. Political parties became a sort of reward-punishment mechanism, where if administrations did not perform as expected, they would be punished, while if they performed properly they would be rewarded by citizens who would elect them again (Ramírez 2000:11).

As a result of having a fairer political environment, governments try to be more responsive and accountable to citizens, opening up their agendas to the establishment of a greater number of participatory practices in government. This section presents a historical account of the participatory agendas of the three main political forces of Mexico, covering some of the most common participatory mechanisms used, and examining the agendas currently being implemented.

The PRI

Although the PRI was established in 1929, it was not until the 1940s that the first participatory experiments were carried out under a *priísta* administration. It was Adolfo Ruíz Cortines, as Governor of the southern state of Veracruz, who created the groups for moral and citizen improvement. The aim of Cortines' project was to organise citizens at the municipal level so that they would become useful assistants to their local authorities. Hence, citizens were invited to provide either their labour or construction materials to finish incomplete social projects. The initiative generated such a positive response that some of these boards still operate today (Krauze 1997). Notwithstanding the positive impact of the 'Veracruz experience,' most subsequent citizen participation schemes have been used as organisations of political control or 'social blackmailing' where local bosses or caciques, under the orders of the PRI, play a key role. As Córdova argues, 'the bases of the Mexican political system were placed over a corporatist structure that did not allow citizen participation in an open way. It was only through the corporations created for control purposes that citizens could exercise their political rights' (Córdova 1979:72).

Despite Córdova's description of the way the PRI implemented its 'participatory agenda' there were some exceptions. For instance, a case that did not follow the 'caciquil trend' is found in the municipality of Naucalpan, in the state of Mexico. There, during the 1960s and 1970s, groups of upper middle class neighbourhoods combined to improve the living conditions of the area known as Ciudad Satélite. These organisations negotiated directly with local authorities for diverse schemes in which residents would administer the provision of certain public services in return for a 70 percent discount on local tax (Conde Bofil 1996: 54-55).

During the 1970s the PRI promoted two 'citizen participation' initiatives. Firstly, the Mexico City Citizen Council was established in an attempt to make citizens participate in those decisions taken by the government of the City. However, the lack of a strong legal framework supporting its operations and its mere consultative character condemned it to disappear shortly after it was set up. The main reason for the 'non-consolidation' of this body was that it did not possess the necessary power to solve the problems presented by the citizenry, who continued handing over their demands to local authorities directly (Safa 1997:245).

The second initiative was promoted by the 1976-1982 *Regente* (governor) of Mexico City, Hank González, who advocated the establishment of the local 'participatory' structure denominated *jefes de manzana* (block representatives). Under this scheme, citizens are supposed to inform authorities periodically about the problems faced in their respective communities, and also to search for joint solutions to tackle those problems previously exposed. Despite the good intentions behind the programme, *jefes de manzana* became a mechanism of political bargaining and control, and have been mainly used as a sort of 'apparatus of political approval,' where local bosses occupy privileged positions when politicians visit their neighbourhoods or rural areas of domain (see Lazurtegui 1995). Indeed, most representatives have not been democratically elected, and their work has been closely linked to achieve specific political goals (see Safa 1997).

More recently, at the core of the *priísta* participatory agenda was the PRONASOL or SOLIDARIDAD. During the years of the Salinas administration (1988-1994) the number of participatory initiatives under this scheme were abundant in many Mexican municipalities. Some revealing data about the popularity of SOLIDARIDAD is that by

November 1993 more than 150,000 solidarity committees were operating throughout the country (see Cornelius, Craig and Fox 1994:8). For instance, in the municipality of Charcas, San Luis Potosí, the 1992-1995 mayor, Blanca Sánchez Navarro, representing the PRI, introduced some participatory initiatives to improve women's living conditions. Following the framework of the national programme called *Mujeres en Solidaridad* (women in solidarity), Mayor Sánchez established two participatory projects: firstly, a women's housing committee and, secondly, the creation of a women's underwear enterprise. Through the first scheme, the 700 women who composed the committee participated in the construction of 100 houses. The second scheme also became an important source of jobs, initiated with 12 members, by the end of Mayor Sánchez's administration the underwear enterprise had around 500 members (see Cabrero 1996).

Despite the relative success of SOLIDARIDAD, the whole participatory and democratic sense of the programme was constantly jeopardised by the corporatist practices that characterised the PRI. For example, the bureaucratic apparatus responsible for implementing SOLIDARIDAD limited the distribution of resources for public services through corruption and high administrative costs, and ministries declined to consult and co-operate with each other. These problems were compounded when the state-level agencies replicated the federal pattern, and when they became engaged in conflicts with the federal government over the appropriate responses to community demands (Cornelius, Craig and Fox 1994:12-13). Once President Salinas left office in 1994 and the economic crisis hit the Mexican economy in December 1994 the programme was concluded.

Aiming for a different tone from the clientelistic approach of Salinas, President Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) engaged in a new national participatory exercise. During the first year of his mandate, Zedillo organised several regional forums to discuss the policies that the 1995-2000 National Development Plan should include. Regional forums were organised in Colima (February of 1995) to discuss political aspects of federalism, and in Yucatán (March of 1995) to discuss economic aspects of federalism. A forum also took place in Guadalajara (March 1995) where federal and state bodies discussed diverse aspects of a new federal agenda. In April and May 1995, 32 forums were arranged – one per state plus Mexico City – to discuss political, fiscal and institutional issues, along

with possible reforms that could be made to the relationship between federal and municipal authorities. Whether all the initiatives discussed in these forums were included in the 1995-2000 National Development Plan or not would remain uncertain, however, at least the will to let the public have 'a say' in these decisions was present.

As a result of these forums the National Development Plan 1995-2000 declared that under the banner of *El Nuevo Federalismo* (the new federalism) the state would promote a new relationship with local governments. This relationship would be based on providing opportunities for citizen involvement in decision-making processes at the local level. According to the document, this measure was expected to bring greater participation, and also to strengthen the process of public policy implementation. Nonetheless, in a recent meeting organised by the Mexican newspaper *Reforma*, several mayors expressed criticisms of the decentralisation agenda carried out by federal authorities. According to the *priísta* mayor of Corregidora, Querétaro, Mr. Luis Antonio Zapata, 'we still depend a lot on the federation' (*Reforma* 3/09/2001). Also representing the PRI, mayor of San Luis Potosí, Marcelo De los Santos, expressed similar views, and added, 'a true federalism must respect municipal autonomy, we must finally achieve a full decentralisation of power' (*Reforma* 3/9/2001).

According to the 2001 statutes of the PRI, any strategies dealing with citizen participation or communitarian development would be proposed by the National Committee for Community Development. Article 166 of the statutes of the PRI recommends seven lines of action to promote citizen participation.

- I) Promote citizen participation to solve community problems.
- II) Design strategies to strengthen the information available for the civic education of the family.
- III) Design and promote strategies to promote and strengthen the unity of the families supporting the party and of our leaders, always following the social and political objectives of the party.
- IV) Promote the programmes of the party in accordance with the national policies aiming to protect the rights of children, the old, and the handicapped.
- V) Participate in the development of programmes channelled to promote health, education, community work, self-construction of households, and the protection of the 'family-economy.'
- VI) Promote the formation and participation of community development committees.
- VII) Design programmes that aim to improve the quality of live of deprived groups of the society.

However, there is no clear blueprint for the implementation of this participatory programme. For instance, there is no mention as to whether consultations, referendums or plebiscites would be the best means of achieving these goals. Consequently, local authorities are left practically 'on their own,' allowing them to give citizen participation the interpretation they consider most convenient. As discussed later in this thesis, this loose participatory agenda has resulted in a wide variety of interpretations that range from genuinely open practices of citizen involvement to the repetition of the clientelistic patterns traditionally found in the PRI.³²

The PRD

Founded in 1989 by a combination of the democratic current of the PRI, leftwing political parties, and diverse social movements, the PRD was conceived as a genuine democratic party that could provide an alternative economic and social project to the dominant neoliberal agenda of the late 1980s. Because the party was established around the figure of Cuaúhtemoc Cárdenas – son of General Cárdenas, 1934-1940 President of Mexico – who was born in the state of Michoacán, it was there where the party achieved its first electoral victories. During the 1989-1992 municipal term, the party governed 52 out of 113 municipalities. It was in Michoacán where the PRD attempted to carry out a participatory agenda through 'urban councils.' The aim of these councils was to organise open forums where citizens would propose solutions to urban problems. However, due partly to a lack of a coherent programme, but mainly due to the obstacles put forward by groups of *priístas* trying to destabilise these administrations, the concept of the urban council was soon forgotten (Bruhn 1999:40-41).

Some isolated examples of citizen participation introduced by the PRD occurred in the municipalities of Atoyac, Guerrero and in Xico, Veracruz. In the municipality of Atoyac in 1993, María de la Luz Nuñez Ramos, representing the PRD, based her political campaign around three core proposals: constant interaction with citizens; elaboration of the municipal development plan with the views of all sectors of the community; and making people participant in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the municipal government. Once Mayor Nuñez Ramos took office, with the support of the community she prioritised the local agenda and also the strategies to tackle the problems to be addressed in the 1993-1996 Development Plan (Cabrero 1996).

Along with the involvement of citizens in designing the new development plan, there were also six participatory activities. Firstly, open sessions of *cabildo*, where the public is invited 48 hours in advance to participate in discussions with local congressmen and the mayor. Secondly, through the election of neighbourhood leaders – or its equivalent in rural areas – in open processes, where anyone aiming to work for his/her community can take part. Thirdly, the establishment of joint commissions (composed of citizens and authorities) to scrutinise different local projects. Fourthly, through the election of municipal councillors, who would be responsible for engaging the community in different activities (e.g. planting trees in a park). Fifthly, citizens can take part as auxiliary authorities (these positions are mainly for rural areas) by presenting proposals to local authorities regarding the future development of their respective places of residence. Finally, through the programme *Contribuyente Solidario* (Solidarian Taxpayer) where citizens can provide an agreed amount of economic resources to conclude specific projects (Cabrero 1996:180-181).

In Xico, the *perredista* local authority re-implemented ancient forms of community organisation. After a tight result in the 1991 local election, Mr. González Galvez saw in the *faena*³³ a mechanism that would serve as a trigger for both promoting social improvements and citizen participation. *La faena* is an ancient type of community organisation³⁴ that has prevailed in certain communities – mainly in the rural ones – of Mexico and it is organised along the following lines. Firstly, the inhabitants of an area get together to identify their priority needs, and then elect representatives (a president, a secretary and a treasurer) who will be in charge of organising the whole *faena*. No legal framework supports these previous steps, rather it is based on a kind of ‘social agreement’ where citizen participation is constantly promoted and where each individual develops a feeling of belonging (Cabrero 1996:140). Once these organisational steps are taken, then the ‘*faena* board’ would tell the community what is needed from them. Under this informal participatory scheme, the community takes part mainly by offering their labour, or sometimes their economic support if required (see Cabrero 1996).

The PRD has carried out a more aggressive participatory agenda in Mexico City. Where in 1997 it became the first political party to win governor of the city and immediately launched a participatory programme. *Together! We will govern*, was the slogan used by

Cuaúhtemoc Cárdenas during his 1997 political campaign to become the governor of Mexico City. 'We have to establish a coherent programme so that people can participate in conjunction with authorities to try to solve the main problems affecting their everyday lives' (*La Jornada* 13/6/1998). In the view of Zermeño, this is why Cárdenas, when announcing his public security project, linked three of the main issues that still occupy a paramount position in the agenda of the City: decentralisation, public security and citizen participation. Through the establishment of strong neighbourhood units, public security could be transferred to neighbourhoods, and the nexus between criminal organisations and authorities reduced (*La Jornada* 13/6/1998).

The core 'participatory move' of the PRD since leading the government of Mexico City has been the approval of the 1998 citizen participation legislation. Although this legislation will be analysed in greater depth in chapter 5, it is helpful to present an example of the types of initiatives carried out before the implementation of this participatory document. On 25 July 1998 the government led by Cuaúhtemoc Cárdenas invited the citizenry to participate in consultation about the future of *El Zocalo* (Mexico City's central square). The question of the consultation was to determine whether the population agreed that planting trees on the square would make it look better. In this consultation 12,401 citizens took part and 76.59 percent of them agreed that the square required some green areas (see *La Jornada* 26/7/1998). After the consultation took place, Alejandro Encinas, member of the 1997-2000 government of Mexico City, stated that, 'this is the ideal complement to the democratic development of the City. It has been demonstrated that citizen participation is a real way to democratise the decisions of the city' (*La Jornada* 26/7/1998).

Since securing a second consecutive term at the government of Mexico City for the (2000-2006), the PRD has continued with its participatory efforts. Furthermore, some reforms proposed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, current governor of the city, foresee an increasing the number of participatory practices sharing such responsibilities as managing a budget with citizens.

The PAN and its participatory agenda

The National Action Party (PAN) was formed in 1939. Intellectuals, businessmen, middle class professionals, and members of the Catholic Church gathered to found this

rightwing party. Like the PRD, the PAN had its first electoral victory in the state of Michoacan, when in 1947 it won the election of the municipality of Quiroga. The first participatory initiatives carried out by the PAN were implemented much later, in 1989, when, for the first time in Mexico's post-revolutionary history, an opposition government triumph was recognised in a state governor election. Ernesto Ruffo was elected governor of the northern state of Baja California, and immediately tried to differentiate his government from previous *priísta* administrations (Espinoza Valle 2000). The Ruffo government promoted citizen participation through two main channels: firstly, the programme called *manos a la obra* (let's get to work) and, secondly, the *voluntad* (will) programme. The declared aim of these programmes was to end the prevailing corporatist *priísta* structure in the state. However, according to Espinoza Valle (2000), these programmes were created to compete with the 'star programme' of the Salinas administration, SOLIDARIDAD.

In a similar vein, citizen consultations have been implemented by the *panista* local administrations of Mérida in Yucatán state. These processes are mainly used to 'legitimise' those actions taken by the local administration. For instance, in November 1994, while discussing reforms to the state electoral legislation, independent citizen organisations in co-ordination with municipal authorities organised a consultation to determine whether Mérida should be represented only by one deputy at the federal congress or by more. In this consultation 20,000 people participated and decided that the capital should have two congressmen (Poot Capetillo 2000: 112).

According to Poot Capetillo, having more transparent electoral processes has motivated greater competitiveness between political parties and has obliged administrations to maintain a constant communication and interaction with their citizens (Poot Capetillo 2000:113). In Mérida, the participatory agenda has four forms. Firstly, open sessions of *cabildo*, where the citizens can express their opinions regarding local issues. Secondly, *Miércoles Ciudadanos* (Citizen Wednesdays), where citizens have the opportunity to talk about their problems directly to the mayor, or those functionaries responsible for a specific issue. The third channel is the women's municipal council, where women can engage in projects for their personal development. Finally, the municipality has decided to change the way rural *jueces auxiliares* (auxiliary authorities) are selected, as before

they were appointed by official authorities and the new scheme foresees an election with the participation of the general public (Poot Capetillo 2000: 114).

In the Jalisco state, it was not until the PAN won the 1995 governor election that participatory reforms were introduced to the state constitution. The participatory initiatives of the referendum, the plebiscite and the popular initiative were introduced to municipal legislation. State authorities promoted what they defined as 'popular consultation forums' where several sectors of the civil society, academics and the citizenry in general are invited to discuss and put forward solutions to local issues. Marván Laborde (2000) suggests that for the first time a genuinely open process has been promoted by authorities. However, as with previous participatory experiences, authorities usually have a draft of the final conclusions to be reached before the consultation process even started (Marván Laborde 2000:74). Another novelty was the introduction of deals that included citizens in the discussion of municipal development plans. Despite the 'democratic-spirit' behind these initiatives, it is argued that these channels are still insufficient to ensure the constant participation of citizens in the issues that affect them: 'political parties use the electorate to get to power, but once they reach a position, they do not seem to be that concerned about providing permanent participatory spaces at the local level. Spaces where the views and decisions of citizens are taken into account for the elaboration of public policies' (Marván Laborde 2000:105).

One of the most common participatory practices implemented by panista administrations is the *Miércoles Ciudadanos* where citizens communicate directly with the mayor and members of the local administration about their problems (see chapter 6). The initiative has been carried out by more than 60 panista local authorities, however, the advantages of the programme have not been clearly explained and there is the risk that the programme could be labelled as mere administrative populism (Ramírez 2000:16). In the view of Ramírez, *panistas* administration fear organised groups, which is why they prefer to deal with citizens as individuals rather than with citizens grouped in organisations. Ramírez identifies three features of these *panista* regimes. Firstly, their aim is to stop corporatist practices. Secondly, they tend to promote an environment under which alternative groups to the pre-established *priísta* structures can develop. Thirdly, they mistrust the existing social groups because they tend to link them with PRI

or the PRD (Ramírez 2000:14). The types of practices identified under *panista* administrations have led some academics to state that ‘the PAN believes that to govern less is to govern better’ (Loaeza 1997:11).

Despite the declared intention of these initiatives to involve the citizenry, some academics criticise PAN governments as lacking a social project, ‘the PAN does not possess an alternative interaction model to involve the civil society’ (Mizrahi1995: 200). For Ramírez, the big issue within the PAN seems to be whether to give any real powers to citizens or not, and the response does not seem to be clear-cut (Ramírez 2000:14).

The Presidential Participatory Agenda

On 2 July 2000 Mexico’s political life changed. For the first time in Mexico’s modern history, the candidate of the PRI, which had ruled for 70 years, was defeated in a presidential election. Vicente Fox, representing the PAN, became the symbol of a ‘new Mexico’ – what many hoped would be a truly democratic Mexico. Once in office, one of the first priorities of the new administration was to give greater importance to citizen involvement in decision-making processes. For these renewed participatory purposes, the *Coordinación Presidencial Para la Alianza Ciudadana (CPAC)*³⁵ was created. This secretariat aims to establish a new relationship between the government and those actors taking part in the civil society (i.e. NGOs), as well as giving advice to other secretariats on how to implement mechanisms where citizens could get involved in decision-making processes. The office has been established to take actions in the following directions:

- 1) To strengthen the legal grounds to promote and improve the relationship between organisations of the civil society and the government.
 - 2) To increase citizens’ participation in the design, execution, supervision and evaluation of public policies.
 - 3) To develop new mechanisms of public expenditure, where the organisations of the civil society take a more active role in the management of resources of these programmes.
 - 4) To promote the professionalisation of the actors of the civil society.
- (*La Jornada* 15/7/2001)

At the core of the current participatory agenda is the National Participatory Programme that aims to create policies to encourage citizens to take an active role in decision-making processes related to public policies. Mr. Elizondo, 2000-2006 Coordinator of the CPAC declares, ‘the aim is to create a ‘pedagogic route’ and a feedback system to

transmit the knowledge and develop a greater participatory culture...this government wants to walk along with the citizenry.’³⁶ During a citizen participation conference held in Vancouver, Canada Elizondo commented, ‘citizens want to be part of public policies, they want to participate effectively. Citizens need adequate mechanisms to take part in decision-making processes, and the Mexican government coincides with this vision and promotes it.’³⁷

Recently, Elizondo stated that there is a project to install pilot citizen councils in 100 municipalities aiming to guarantee the transparency of local administrations. The objective is also to promote citizen participation all over the country. At the core of the CPAC agenda is the revision of existing citizen participation mechanisms. According to Elizondo, ‘the CPAC is developing performance indicators of the different participatory practices taking place in Mexico. We are convinced that the only way to reduce inequality is not through corporatist practices, but through educating the population. All citizens, whether indigenous people, women, or unemployed, must be able to exercise their rights with entire liberty.’³⁸

It seems the present administration believes that citizen participation can be used as a ‘weapon’ to fight poverty. According to Elizondo, ‘the distribution of political power is essential to break the vicious circle of poverty and marginality that is increasing all over the world as a failure of the social policies currently implemented. To re-organise and distribute political power, democracy requires citizen participation...political democracy require citizens’ equality that gives citizens liberties and power.’³⁹ Despite the range of interesting aspects covered in this initiative, it is still too early to analyse the impact that these policies are having in Mexico’s participatory context.

Barriers to participation

Despite the ‘democratic participatory’ intentions that Mexico’s three main political parties seem to display, we must consider that whenever participatory initiatives are implemented there are a series of obstacles that could be faced. In a series of papers⁴⁰ that highlight the barriers to participatory democracy, Professor John Stewart (2001) identifies seven core obstacles. In his view, the first obstacle is the *attitude of some elected representatives* and officers based on the passive conception of representative democracy. It is often assumed that the elected representative speaks for the citizens and

knows what they want or should have and the officer knows what they need. The lesson for developing democratic practice is that the best way of changing attitudes is experience. Stewart establishes that both councillors and officers have been surprised at the potential displayed by citizens in such bodies as citizens juries and the richness of ideas put forward in conferences where the public has taken part.

The second obstacle is the fear of *raising expectations*. According to Stewart, 'if we invite views, we will never be able to meet all that everybody wants (Stewart 2001:2).' The key is to make clear the constraints under which authorities operate. *Apathy* is often seen as the key obstacle, Stewart recalls: 'we have tried to involve the public but they are just not interested (Stewart 2001:4).' That should be seen, however, not as an argument against seeking to involve citizens, but as an argument for exploring innovation in democratic practice as a means of involving citizens. *Lack of information* available to the public can be an obstacle to effective involvement, since it means that views expressed can be discounted by those with expertise in the area. The development of deliberative approaches such as citizens juries, and deliberative opinion polls and visioning conferences help to overcome this obstacle.

There are also *practical problems* in developing citizen involvement, particularly at national level. People naturally find it easier to be involved at the local level (Parry, Moyser and Day 1992). According to Stewart, the problems can be overcome by encouraging the development of multiple approaches to citizen involvement based on initiatives in different regions and localities. Central government could undertake such initiatives itself, but could also draw upon initiatives undertaken by local authorities, or by other bodies such as health authorities at local level.

Democratic exclusion or democratic injustice create problems for citizen involvement, if it tends to mean certain voices are excluded and approaches are dominated by the articulate and the involved. This means special emphasis should be given to approaches focusing on groups not normally involved.

Inappropriate use of particular approaches can be an obstacle to the effective development of citizen involvement. For instance, approaches or participatory mechanisms used for the wrong purposes (i.e. particular political or party intentions) or using a participatory mechanism (e.g. referendum or plebiscite) and not respecting its outcome. Such inappropriate use may cause disillusion, and reduced levels of

participation. The question remains as to whether each of these seven obstacles identified by Stewart can be found in the case studies analysed in this dissertation. Are there any other obstacles peculiar to the Mexican context worth considering in the cases analysed? For instance, what is the role of clientelistic relationships – so common in Mexican local politics – in our three cases?

Costs of Participation

Alongside the barriers to participation identified above, there are also such issues concerning the costs of these mechanisms (time and resource-wise) that must be considered. For instance, according to Crowley:⁴¹

It is undeniable that those who believe in mass participation in policy making always neglect the fact that knowledge is very costly to acquire – it is not a free good. Nor is the time available for deliberation very great, as people's time is valuable. And frankly, most people think they have better things to do with their time than to bone up on the latest operation of the equalisation formula or the financing of medicare or the negotiation of the current international trade agreement. In fact, it is quite rational to want less public participation in policy making, not more. As a wise man once said, the problem with participatory politics is that either you don't show up to defend your interests, in which case people will vote themselves benefits at your expense, or else everybody is there to listen and debate, and you can never get your pipes fixed because the plumbers, and everybody else, are always down at the assembly (Crowley 2001).

Another example which is linked to the quote above introduced deals with the way neighbourhood meetings have taken place in Ceará, Brazil. The implementors of the participatory agenda have identified that:

The main disadvantage of the participatory programme implemented in Ceará is the number of meetings people must attend. As every social program jumps on the bandwagon of participatory management, citizens find themselves overwhelmed with requests to volunteer their time. It is easy to mobilise energy during a crisis, such as a drought, but it is harder to find volunteers to work on more routine matters. Government officials sometimes find it hard to get their work done when they spend so much time on co-ordination meetings (Goertzel 2002).

In addition to time costs we must also consider the economic costs that participatory democracy generates. For instance, the cost of a recent consultation promoted by the government of Mexico City to discuss the construction of a second floor on one of Mexico City's most important motorways was 48 *millones de pesos* (around £ 3.2

million). The economic cost for each of the 420,522 citizens included in the voting list was of 115 *pesos* (around £ 8.30) for a decision that perhaps could have been taken without the consultation process (*La Jornada* 24/9/2002). Taking into consideration these points, it is important to question whether authorities and political parties have considered sufficiently the temporal and economic costs of participatory mechanisms. Have local authorities considered that perhaps the population is not interested in taking part in any of these initiatives unless they are directly affected? Or that perhaps the large sums that are spent on participatory mechanisms could be used more effectively for other programmes? These are open questions that will be answered as this research progresses.

Conclusion

It is difficult to determine the exact reasons why citizen participation mechanisms have been increasingly implemented in Mexico. Certainly, in the past the use of these participatory tools was reserved primarily for political control or blackmailing purposes. However, once alternative forms of participation emerged via social movements, NGOs, and opposition administrations, the aims of participatory practices might – in some instances – have changed. Certainly, the pressure exercised by social movements and political parties throughout the 1970s and 1980s translated into having a wide variety of participatory programmes today. It is undeniable that the ‘democratic outcry’ expressed by social movements in the four areas discussed above played a crucial role in practically forcing politicians and political parties to establish participatory schemes. It can be argued that without the contribution of these movements the participatory agendas carried out all over Mexico would not have happened. Thus, social movements have contributed to perceiving participatory mechanisms as a way of breaking with the past and having more transparent administrations (see Ramírez 2000).

Each of the schemes presented in this chapter is evidence of the recent concern manifested by local authorities – especially those representing the PRI, the PAN and the PRD – to establish participatory initiatives. For instance, in a survey⁴² carried out in September 2001 by the newspaper *Reforma*, 97 mayors were asked about their participatory agendas, and 74 percent of them responded that they engage in participatory activities several times per week (see *Reforma* 3/9/2001). Although the

types of participatory activities implemented by each mayor are not mentioned in the survey, this trend does reflect the importance that participatory initiatives have acquired in Mexico's local context. It seems that some of the factors that have influenced the implementation of these mechanisms reflect the wish of some authorities – especially those belonging to the PAN and PRD – to become more accountable or approachable to citizens. The trend to eliminate all aspects of the PRI seems to be the major concern of several local administrations. Opening up opportunities for discussion and interaction between authorities and citizens is at the core of the local agenda; moreover, at the national level, suddenly citizen participation has been perceived as a possible solution to reduce inequality, or simply to promote more democracy.

Yet how genuine are the declared intentions behind these participatory mechanisms? One aim of this study is to discover their underlying principles and main purposes. With the proliferation of a wide variety of participatory practices, it is important to understand what political parties and governments understand by citizen participation, what types of mechanisms they promote to involve citizens in decision-making processes and what they really hope to achieve. For example, questions emerge about whether these mechanisms are really used to obtain local knowledge to solve specific problems. As commented by Phillips, 'the argument for implementing local decision-making processes is partly an argument for employing local knowledge, and taking maximum advantage of local experience and imagination and expertise' (Phillips 1996:24). Or perhaps these schemes are being used to legitimise controversial decisions? Perhaps the aim is to create official participatory mechanisms with limited decision making power so politicians can argue that they are providing participatory channels, but in reality they are only consulting the population over unimportant, marginal issues. One indication of this might be the way the traditional top-down implementation model of most Mexican governmental initiatives is used for schemes that, if really intended to give greater decision-making power to the general public, should come up from the grassroots. A critical question is whether these mechanisms are really that participative, or whether they are used to legitimise policies that originate from the centre. This seems to be one of the major concerns of those involved in the *Agenda para la Reforma Municipal*, as has already been identified by Alvarez and Castro (1999) 'in most cases, the participatory mechanisms defined in state or local legislation are misleading, bureaucratised, or corporatised and they have become an

illegitimate source of political power' (1999:1). It seems there are certain similarities between the types of issues analysed in this thesis and those studied in the municipal reform agenda.

By examining three municipalities governed by each of the three main political forces of Mexico, this study will analyse such aspects as the legal basis of the participatory mechanisms they implement, the actual input of citizens to the outcome of the policies carried out at the local level, and the decision-making power that citizens have when taking part in these processes. In short, how far are citizens genuinely empowered? We aim to understand more about citizens' reactions to these initiatives. Does the public still follow the traditional local *caciques* or have citizens decided to participate in the structures recently developed by local authorities? How do people respond to these new participatory opportunities? What roles have social movement leaders and local bosses played in these participatory initiatives? Of course, by establishing participatory schemes, political parties such as the PRD aim to eliminate the involvement of local bosses who have traditionally been linked to the PRI, but has this actually happened?

An important consideration is the social context in which the participatory schemes are implemented. In particular, it is clear that there are great differences between the local needs of the upper and middle classes and those of the working classes. One question this raises is whether the same types of participatory schemes are appropriate for different socio-economic groups?

This chapter has highlighted the contemporary political significance of local participatory initiatives in Mexico. But, of course, participation is not a new idea, and there is a long history of attempts to increase public participation in local government all around the world. Why has participation attracted so many adherents? What claims are made on behalf of participatory policies? How, if at all, might have these approaches have shaped the Mexican local participatory agenda? The next chapter examines the participatory democratic literature, to see what light can be thrown on the current enthusiasm for participatory policies in Mexico; and to explain what lessons can be drawn about the aims, implementation and impact of participatory policies in local government.

Notes

¹ According to the Latin American Political Dictionary, *caciquismo* is the system of local rule by a strong political boss. *Caciquismo* is derived from the Indian word 'cacique' meaning Indian Chief of the village or tribe. During the colonial period of Spanish America, Spaniards ruled through Indian *caciques*, who were given special privileges and were used as local bosses. After independence, the term *cacique* referred to a strong local leader, and *caciquismo* became a way of life in rural areas (LAPD 1980:143-144). In contemporary times, *caciquismo* is not only widespread in rural towns but also in urban slums where rural migrants have congregated. A *cacique* maintains himself/herself in power by a complex system of nepotism, patronage, for his clients, control over government services, illegal activities and the use of force. In this research, we will define a *cacique* as an informal leader who performs any of the activities presented above, a leader who bases his/her operations on a series of coercive practices to keep the population under his/her domain.

² Clientelism is defined as the personal relationship that links patrons and clients together in a system where favours and protection are exchanged for labour, support, and loyalty (LAPD 1980:60). Although clientelism is mainly found in agricultural regions, patron-client relationships are also found in urban areas. In such circumstances, employers, bosses, political leaders and government figures provide opportunities for loyal employees and followers. The system of clientelism is related to the cultural trait of personalism, which stresses personal relationships rather than institutional ones. One of the main characteristics of clientelistic relationships is that bosses seek to expand their networks of well-placed friends, relatives, and patrons to maximise their opportunities (LAPD 1980:60). Clientelism takes place in most sectors of Latin American societies (i.e. government, business, politics, agriculture and commerce). Under such conditions, face to face contacts and connections with friends are more important than any personal merit or professional achievement (LAPD 1980:60). In this research clientelism will refer to any relationship that puts authorities or informal leaders in an advantageous position over the citizenry, providing aid or jobs in exchange for political support.

³ The figure of 2,427 municipalities does not include the 16 *delegaciones* (local governments) of Mexico City, which function like a municipality but which are not recognised as such in the constitution. Currently the government of Mexico City is attempting to conclude a political reform that will give the 'official status' of municipality to *delegaciones*.

⁴ Although this may vary, especially in regions inhabited by groups of indigenous people, see Monjardín and Rebolledo (1998).

⁵ For further discussion of this matter, see Merino (1994) and Cabrero (1995).

⁶ Analyses of the authoritative nature of the Mexican political system include, Purcell (1973), Reyna and Weimert (1977), Harvey (1989) and Garrido (1993).

⁷ See also Grindle (1977) and Almond and Verba (1980).

⁸ Other branches that have been introduced or strengthened are *ramo 26* and *ramo 28*. Both of these special budgets are allocated through the social development secretariat.

⁹ In this survey 76 mayors and 80 treasurers of 97 different municipalities were interviewed between 28/2/2001 and 20/4/2001 and was co-ordinated by *Reforma* journalist Maria Antonia Mancillas.

¹⁰ For similar discussions see Borja (2000).

¹¹ Some of the debates included in the *Agenda para la Reforma Municipal* will be discussed throughout this dissertation.

¹² See Alonso (1972), Arriaga (1981), Ashby (1967), Cohen (1985) and Melucci (1988).

¹³ Some of these projects are discussed by Cuellar (1990) and Tirado Jiménez (1990).

¹⁴ These organisations are the Unión Popular de Vecinos y Colonos de la Colonia Guerrero, Unión Popular de la Colonia Pensil, Comité de Lucha Inquilinaria del Centro and Coordinadora de Cuartos de Azotea; see Greene (1997).

¹⁵ See Cuellar (1990), Massolo (1986), Ziccardi (1986), Mecat, Michel and Ziccardi (1987).

¹⁶ For further discussions see Alvarez (1990), Boschi (1987) and Castells (1983).

¹⁷ Mexican indigenous group from the south of Mexico.

¹⁸ Via the distribution of different pamphlets, these protest groups accused the COCEI of promoting a 'communist-paradise and anarchy,' also they were accused of performing obscene sexual acts at the municipal palace. A group of businessmen even accused the groups as being 'sandinismo on a smaller scale' (see Rubin 1999:190).

¹⁹ Most of these projects were part of a national agenda organised through the PRONASOL or SOLIDARIDAD and implemented by the Secretariat of Social Development.

²⁰ The proportions of the first agreement signed by the CDP and the Salinas administration were divided as follows: 65 percent federal resources, 5 percent state resources and 30 percent CDP resources which could be provided either via cash, construction materials, or labour (see Haber 1997:63).

²¹ See Hernández (1991) and Haber (1997).

²² Juchitán exhibited a vibrant democratic politics in the early 1990s including honest and competitive elections, a responsive administration, efficient administration of social welfare funds, and active and innovative Zapotec cultural institutions. In the face of obstruction by successive Mexican administrations, the COCEI had stimulated political debate, dramatically increased voter turnout, and improved living and working conditions. Juchitecos secured these gains, furthermore, during a period of increasing inequality and considerable manipulation of elections nationwide (Rubin 1999:194).

²³ Dr. Nava was then a member of the PRI, however, because of his dispute with Gonzalo Santos, he decided to run as an independent candidate representing a wide coalition of political forces, see Caballero (1992).

²⁴ See Calvillo Unna (1999) and Pansters (1997).

²⁵ In 1982 Dr. Nava won again the election for the municipality of San Luis Potosí, representing the PAN and the PDM (Mexican Democratic Party). However, his mandate was severely undermined by budget restrictions and political pressure from the governor.

²⁶ The *Partido Demócrata Mexicano* (Mexican Democratic Party) had an important presence in the state and was a crucial ally for the coalition.

²⁷ The conference was attended *inter alia* by José Ortiz Pinchetti, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Rolando Cordera, Francisco Paoli, Diego Fernández de Cevallos, Jorge Alcocer, Carlos Monsivais, Lorenzo Meyer, Miguel Granados Chapa, Jorge Castañeda, and Luis Javier Garrido (see Calvillo Unna 1990).

²⁸ Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, Acuerdo Nacional por la Democracia (ACUDE), Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia (Convergencia), Consejo por la Democracia, Fundación Arturo Rosenblueth (FUNDAR), Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia (MCD) and Instituto Superior de Cultura Democrática. See Alianza Cívica (1994).

²⁹ During the 1995 crisis such groups as *El G-100* composed of 100 prominent intellectuals of Mexico were established to scrutinise the actions of government performed by public functionaries at the national level. The organisation is still operating and recently they expressed their disagreement with the decision to build Mexico City's new airport in the former Lake of Texcoco (see *Reforma* 25/10/2001).

³⁰ These were Asociación Nacional de Industriales de la Transformación (ANIT), Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Cafetaleras (CNOC), Foro Permanente de Acción y Resistencia Contra la Crisis, Foro de Cambio Empresarial, Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), Unión de Productores Agrícolas Industriales, Comerciantes y Prestadores de Servicios El Barzón, and Unión de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas (UNORCA) see Alianza Cívica (1996).

³¹ See Rubin (1999), Tamayo (1990), and Cohen (1985).

³² This point is discussed in depth by Alvarez and Castro (1999).

³³ *La faena* can be translated as a working day.

³⁴ According to some authors it has been taking place since pre-hispanic times, see Cabrero (1996).

³⁵ Translated as Presidential Co-ordination for the Citizen Alliance.

³⁶ Elizondo cited in www.presidencia.gob.mx 4/10/2001.

³⁷ Elizondo cited in www.presidencia.gob.mx 21/8/2001.

³⁸ Elizondo cited in www.presidencia.gob.mx 14/10/2001.

³⁹ Elizondo cited in www.presidencia.gob.mx 30/10/2001.

⁴⁰ This paper is entitled 'Citizen Involvement: Opportunities and Obstacles' and it is part of a series of three papers where Professor Stewart describes the developments of Innovation in Democratic Practice and that have been submitted to the Citizen Participation Committee of the House of Commons.

⁴¹ Quote from the paper 'Putting the "Public" Back in Public Policy' given by Dr. Brian Lee Crowley, President of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies. Private Foundations of Canada Member Seminar Toronto, February 2001.

⁴² See footnote 9.

Chapter 2

Participatory Democracy

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, the number of participatory initiatives implemented in Mexico has increased considerably in recent years, however, Mexico is not the only country where such processes have taken place. There has been a widespread utilisation of participatory mechanisms in such countries as the US, Germany, Britain and Sweden (Stewart 1996); in the Latin American continent countries like Brazil or Uruguay have taken the lead in the implementation of such participatory policies (Zermeño 1999). These initiatives draw their inspiration from the range of theoretical approaches advocating greater involvement of citizens, especially underprivileged groups, in decision-making processes at the local level that have emerged since the late 1960s. These participatory democratic models are underpinned by a critique of the liberal representative democratic system for its promotion of social inequalities and its failure adequately to represent the views of the citizens. This chapter analyses this body of literature which has influenced most local participatory schemes of democracy. To help tackle the research questions this thesis addresses, the chapter aims to unearth any linkages between the theoretical underpinnings of the Mexican participatory agenda and the wider themes of participatory democracy. The chapter draws on several currents within the participatory literature, mainly the 'neo-classical' proponents of participatory democracy, notably, Carole Pateman, as well as more recent writers, especially those that identify the links between the civil society, NGOs, and government as crucial for carrying out participatory projects, such as those approaches promoted by the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section presents the background, principles, and main acclaimed advantages of participatory democracy. The second part analyses the limitations of participatory democracy. Thirdly, we introduce the main types of units where participatory initiatives have been implemented, and the penultimate part covers two typologies that have been developed to help measure the

levels of empowerment that citizens gain when taking part in participatory processes. Finally, we recount some of the main arguments that have been used for the implementation of participatory democracy; here, the policies of such international organisations as the WB or the IMF are at the core of the discussion. This chapter plays a critical role in this thesis, as it is from the theoretical principles discussed here that a relationship with the participatory initiatives implemented in Tlalpan, Puebla and San Pedro will be made. It is important to look at the participatory literature as most participatory schemes carried out in different parts of the world have – explicitly or implicitly – taken as them as their sources of inspiration. So lessons can be learnt about the thinking underpinning the Mexican initiative, the choice of mechanisms and the impact they may leave on citizens.

Participatory democracy

Background

Participatory democracy has a long history, going back to the Greek city of Aristotle, where every (free) male was involved in all public decisions.¹ It was from these principles that classic writers of the participatory tradition such as Rousseau got their inspiration:

As long as several men in assembly regard themselves a single body...the common good is everywhere apparent, and only good sense is needed to perceive it...When, among the happiest people in the world, bands of peasants are seen regulating affairs of state under an oak, and always acting wisely, who can help scorning the ingenious methods of other nations? A state so governed needs very few laws; and as it becomes necessary to add new ones, the necessity is universally seen (Rousseau 1968).

Unlike the Greek participatory model, Rousseau visualised a state where ‘no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself’ (Rousseau 1968:96). Rousseau’s model of democracy was inspired by the idea of ‘assembly politics’ where individuals would get involved in the creation of the laws that regulate their lives. From this perspective, all citizens should meet together to decide what is best for the community to enact the appropriate laws; it is a system where the ruled should be the rulers. The main asset which citizens must have in Rousseau’s model is that citizens must enjoy political and economic equality in order that nobody can be master of another and all can enjoy equal freedom and development in the

process of self-determination for the common good (Held 1997:61).² Furthermore, Rousseau perceived that participatory democracy played a crucial role for the development of each individual, as Pateman notes:

Rousseau's entire political theory hinges on the individual participation of each citizen in political decision-making and in his theory participation is very much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements; it also has a psychological effect on the participants, ensuring that there is a continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them (Pateman 1970:22).

Writers from a different philosophical perspective, such as John Stuart Mill, have also advocated participatory democracy. In his view, 'it is only within the context of popular, participatory institutions that an "active," public-spirited type or character would be fostered' (see Mill 1963). For Mill, the effects of participating in community decision-making processes were expected to have a positive impact not only for increasing citizens' political awareness, but also for each individual's psyche. Mill argued that 'where the individual is concerned solely with his own private affairs and does not participate in public affairs then the "self-regarding" virtues suffer, as well as the capacities for responsible public action remaining underdeveloped' (Mill 1910:217).

One key point where both Rousseau and Mill coincide is in the educative importance of participatory democracy, a point that will be discussed to a greater extent later in this chapter. Rousseau and Mill are two of the most prominent proponents of participatory democracy, and their works have been an important source of inspiration for contemporary participatory theorists. The next section addresses some of the main principles in recent participatory democratic approaches.

Principles of Contemporary Participatory Democracy

During the 1960s and 1970s the widespread political and economic problems confronting liberal democratic systems led to a renewed interest in participatory democracy, albeit adapted to the needs of modern society. The liberal representative model was attacked on two fronts. The first front questioned the 'free and equal' status of citizens promoted by the liberals, and the second challenged the effectiveness of representative democracy. The period 1968-69 represents something of a watershed (Hall et al 1978). The student movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and a vast

variety of groups associated with the new-left erupted during this period (see Pierson 1986). These groups wanted greater equality, peace, better rights for workers, the emancipation of women, and an end to racism. These events shocked the foundations of representative liberal democracies and opened new avenues of democratic thought. The protest movements of an 'awakening society' even prompted such previously pluralist writers as Lindblom (1977) and Dahl (1985) to admit that the constraints imposed by the requirements of private accumulation must limit policy options. For instance, Dahl acknowledges that the most fundamental challenge to liberty derives from the inequalities that derive from the power of corporate capitalism. The way in which the markets are managed in the current world economy has led to the development of several forms of inequality:

Ownership and control contribute to the creation of great differences among citizens in wealth, income, status, skills, information, control over information and propaganda, access to political leaders and on the average, predictable life chances, not only for mature adults but also for the unborn, infants, and children...differences like these help to generate significant inequalities among citizens in their capacities and opportunities for participating as political equals in governing the state (Dahl 1985:55).

Just as Rousseau believed that socio-economic inequality would prevent citizens from equal political rights (Sorensen 1998:8), a key issue for the new-left was to what extent the concept of the 'free and equal' individual praised by the liberal theory of democracy actually exists. For participatory theorists like Carole Pateman, the 'free and equal individual' is a person that is harder to find than liberal theory suggests (Pateman 1985: 171). The trouble with liberalism is that it only encourages a 'thin democracy' based around self-interested bargaining (Barber 1984).

The liberals take for granted that a series of relationships between men and women, blacks and whites, working, middle, and upper classes would enjoy the same rights, however, reality showed that these situations would not necessarily occur (Hart 1972). An assessment of freedom must be made on the basis of liberties that are tangible, and capable of being deployed within the realms of both state and civil society. If freedom does not have a concrete content – as particular freedoms– it can scarcely be said to have profound consequences for everyday life (Held 1997:264-265). For Held,

Under the circumstances that liberal democracies operate, it would not be difficult to discover that massive numbers of individuals are restricted

systematically –for want of a complex mix of resources and opportunities– from participating actively in political and civil life. What were referred to earlier as vicious circles of limited or non-participation directly illustrate this point. Inequalities of class, sex and race substantially hinder the extent to which it can legitimately be claimed that individuals are ‘free and equal’ (Held 1997:265).

The importance of establishing mechanisms where citizens could have ‘a say’ in those decisions affecting their lives was identified by some writers as a possible way of reducing the prevailing inequalities. For instance, Stoker states, ‘opportunities for political participation also matter because they help reduce inequalities in the redistribution of power and encourage a responsiveness to individual and collective needs’ (Stoker 1996:188). Furthermore, new-left writings have stressed the importance of a two way process that involves governments, political parties and citizens. In the view of these writers,³ the state should be democratised to make it more open and accountable to citizens, while citizens (through diverse organisations) must ensure that society and the state are subject to procedures that ensure accountability (Held 1997:266).

The second main concern of the participatory democrats is to determine the extent to which a representative democracy genuinely represents the interests of voters. Participationists reject the elitist views of Schumpeter, who believed that the citizenry should only get involved in voting processes to keep the electoral machinery working. Moreover, Schumpeter is convinced that the most important aspect of any representative democracy is the issue of electing those who would decide for the masses (Schumpeter 1943: 383).⁴

Since Rousseau, the issue of ‘representativeness’ has been put under scrutiny. He argued that, ‘once you transfer your right of self-government to someone else, even if that person is deemed to be your ‘representative,’ you are no longer free’ (see Rousseau 1968). More recently, Arblaster establishes that when analysing the results of representative democracy we can conclude that, outside the electoral process, the people, those who are represented have strikingly little control over what their representative(s) actually do in their name. He argues that it is hard to resist the conclusion that the distinction between a representative and a delegate, although real enough, is posed in misleading terms. A true representative is surely someone who is authorised to speak and act on behalf of those he/she represents, and who has been

authorised to do so by them. In other words, a true representative is a delegate, carrying a mandate and acting under instructions (Albaster 1987:84). Bevan also adds,

A representative person is one who will act in a given situation in much the same way as those he represents would act in that same situation. In short, he must be of their kind...Election is only one part of representation. It becomes full representation only if the elected person speaks with the authentic accents of those who elected him...he should share their values; that is, be in touch with their realities (Bevan 1978:35).

From a different angle, but in the same tone, Phillips criticises the representative model arguing that politicians retain considerable powers of manipulation in the timing of their most unpopular policies and this often undermines their accountability to their electorate (Phillips 1996:29). How can citizens be sure that their representatives are taking the right decisions on their behalf? Arblaster concludes that even if we stated that a representative democracy was the best that could be achieved under modern circumstances, the idea or principle of representation is far from being fully or effectively embodied in existing political arrangements (Arblaster 1987:89).

Benello and Roussopoulos define decision-making in the context of a participatory democracy as, 'the process whereby people propose, discuss, decide, plan and implement those decisions that affect their lives. This requires that the decision-making be continuous and significant, direct rather than through representatives, and organised around issues instead of personalities' (Benello and Roussopoulos 1971:3). This is why Sorensen believes that a participatory democracy would make the common man 'better able to assess the performance of representatives at the national level, better equipped to take decisions of national scope when the opportunity arose to do so, and better able to weigh up the impact of decisions taken by national representatives on his own life (Sorensen 1998:8).

These two core ideas – the issues of inequality and representativeness – underpin the participationists theoretical platform. The main argument is that perhaps the only way in which citizens can really control those decisions that affect them would be if they are able get directly involved in those decision-making processes.

Perspectives on Participatory Democracy

Etymologically speaking, participatory democracy is based on two terms: the Latin *partis* (part) and *capere* (to take), and the Greek *demos* (people) and *kratien* (to rule) which together suggest taking part in rule by the people (Cook and Morgan 1971:2). Amongst the many works of the participatory theorists of democracy those of CB Macpherson and Carole Pateman have been particularly influential. Both Macpherson and Pateman have argued that Rousseau's ideas are compatible with modern society and that representative government can be combined with elements of direct participation and, indeed, *ought* to be if democracy is to be more than merely formal (Sorensen 1998:8). According to Macpherson and Pateman, structures of participation in local society and in the workplace will vastly improve the quality of representative democracy. In the view of Pateman, 'the theory of participatory democracy stands or falls on two hypotheses: the educative function of participation, and the crucial role of industry'⁵ (Pateman 1970:44). C.B. Macpherson (1977) argues that participatory democracy is the key to a more democratic future. For him, liberty and individual development can only be achieved by the direct involvement of citizens in activities that regulate both society and the state. He bases his perception of participatory democracy on the work of John Stuart Mill.

Theories of participatory democracy are built around the central assertion that: individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another (Pateman 1970:42). Pateman considers that the establishment of diverse channels of interaction (between authorities and citizens) is essential to increase people's awareness of participatory matters. Put differently, participatory theory is an articulation of the principle that in a democracy people rule themselves rather than being ruled by others (Graham 1986: 152). Pateman believes that in a participatory theory, 'participation' refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions, and 'political equality' refers to equality of power in determining the outcome of decisions:

The justification for a democratic system in the participatory theory of democracy rests primarily on the human results that accrue from the participatory process. One might characterise the participatory model as one where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual, so that there is 'feedback' from output to input (Pateman 1970:43).

From Pateman's perspective, 'the existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all the people at that level socialisation, or 'social training,' for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed' (Pateman 1970:42). Thus participation entails more than the periodic expression of preferences; it must involve continuous interaction between the participant and his environment – including, of course, other participants (Keim 1975:16).

Macpherson recognises the complications involved in implementing face-to-face discussions on every issue that affects a community, especially in large and complex societies. He believes that political transformation could be achieved through a combination of competitive parties and establishing organisations of direct democracy. In contrast to Pateman's perspective, at the core of Macpherson's approach is the re-organisation of the political party system. In his view, the party system should be reorganised on a less hierarchical basis with the aim of making political leaders more accountable to their membership. If these reformed parties were involved in parliaments or congresses at the workplace or local community level, then under such a political system citizens would be aware of the liberal democratic value of the equal right to liberty and self-development (see Macpherson 1977).

Once the ideas of contemporary participatory democracy theorists began to spread, different lines of thought sharing the same principles were developed. For instance, the interaction of institutions and citizens in participatory bodies was defined by some political analysts as the *liberal* perspective to the theory of participatory democracy. In the view of Hain (1980), the liberal perspective is primarily concerned with reforming the structures of representative democracy, making it more responsive to the individual citizen, hence, improving the quality of democracy. These theorists (i.e. Pateman) aim to have a more open government where information and government decisions are shared with citizens and where the secrecy with which much public data is managed is reduced. A reduction in the number of bureaucratic barriers to participation should occur whilst the government should promote instruments where the public could express and receive feedback from the authorities (Hain 1980:18).

By contrast, the *radical* perspective of participatory democracy includes those theorists and activists who seek to confront and replace representative democracy with a more active and independent citizenry (see Lynd 1972 and Cowley 1977). These theorists highlight the relevance of small structures of government and argue that the role which citizens should play within these structures should be an active one. The radical interpretation of participation stresses the concept of 'community control' that would involve a complete re-distribution of power and its location at the neighbourhood level (Hain 1980:19, Green 1970 and Altshuler 1970). Radical advocates of participation believe that the poor and minorities constitute an 'underclass' or a 'forgotten' class that has been deprived of the rewards of the capitalist system, therefore, these groups potentially represent a source of radical change (see Kotler 1969, Gitlin 1970, Piven and Cloward 1971). This approach also highlights the way in which 'modern communities' interact and how the establishment of appropriate channels of communication (e.g. neighbourhood boards) could contribute to the promotion of democratic values and communitarian development.

... the problems faced by big cities (i.e. urban disorder, inadequate housing and transportation) could be solved by organising the citizenry into groups to tackle urban problems. It is argued that the results that can be achieved through these bodies could be more successful, when compared to the results that the established system could deliver (Kotler 1969).⁶

For these radical theorists, citizen participation is perceived as an invigorating, personally fulfilling, strategy that poses an alternative to a mechanised, bureaucratised, dehumanised society (Lasch 1970:180). The main idea driving the work of the radical advocates of participatory democracy is the re-establishment of a self-governing community that might give citizens a sense of identification, which has been diminished in contemporary societies. Special stress is placed on the size of communities, as small communities are seen as the basis for regenerating democracy, and also face-to-face discussion is paramount for these theorists.⁷ By promoting 'direct action' policies, the radical theorists would initially involve deprived groups in securing community control, with the long-term aim of transforming the capitalist system.⁸

David Held, in his 1997 categorisation of models of democracy, summarises participatory democracy as follows:

An equal right to liberty and self-development can only be achieved in a 'participatory society,' a society which fosters a sense of political efficacy, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a sustained interest in the governing process (Held1997:271).

According to Held, the following key features are essential for the development of participatory democracy:

- 1) Direct participation of citizens in the regulations of society, including the workplace and the local community.
- 2) Reorganisation of the party system by making party officials directly accountable to membership.
- 3) Operation of 'participatory parties' in a parliamentary or congressional structure.
- 4) Maintenance of an open institutional system to ensure the possibility of experimentation with political forms.

An interesting point to discuss is to determine whether these conditions are present in the Mexican political system. Because in case these characteristics are not present, perhaps we might expect the creation of participatory mechanisms of a different nature or used for different purposes than to those discussed in this chapter.

The case for participatory democracy

a) Impact on the locality

Participatory democratic theorists all attribute great importance to the locality as an arena where citizen participation should be fostered. For instance, Mill argues that it is no use having universal suffrage and participation in national government if the citizen has not been prepared for this participation at local level; it is at this level that he learns how to govern himself. A political act, such as voting carried out only once every few years, and for which nothing in the daily habits of the citizen has prepared him, leaves his intellect and his moral dispositions very much as it found them (Mill 1963: 229). For Mill, local participation is crucial for 'educating' individuals to take better decisions when taking part in elections or in political matters. In his view, 'it is at the local level where the real educative effect of participation occurs, where not only do the issues dealt with directly affect the individual and his everyday life but where he also stands a good chance of himself being elected to serve on a local body' (Mill 1910: 347-348). It is by participating at the local level that an individual 'learns democracy.' 'We do not learn to read or write, to swim or ride, by being merely told to do it, but by doing it, so it

is only by practising popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger scale' (Mill 1963:186).

According to Carole Pateman, 'it is only if the individual has the opportunity to participate directly in decision-making at the local level that, under modern conditions, any real control over the course of everyday life can be achieved' (Pateman 1970:100).

Furthermore, Arblaster believes that:

If we move away from the national level to consider the smaller local communities, or particular institutions such as factories and offices, colleges and schools, it is quite clear that there are no problems of either size or communications which stand in the way of their being governed according to the principle direct participatory democracy. There may well be –there always are– other grounds for resisting the implementation of such a principle; it would be time-consuming, it would be costly, it would not work well –and so on. But it cannot plausibly be said that it is wholly impracticable (Arblaster 88-89).

Pateman is convinced that the locality is the main area where citizens could have a true impact on politics. In her view, 'in an electorate of, say, thirty-five million, the role of the individual must consist almost entirely of choosing representatives; even where he/she could cast a vote in a referendum his/her influence over the outcome would be infinitesimally small. Unless the size of national political units were drastically reduced then that piece of reality is not open to change' (Pateman 1970:109). For instance, Barber establishes that the involvement in a flourishing array of local and regional assemblies would transform the very way people think and behave (Barber 1984). The argument for local decision-making is partly an argument for employing local knowledge, and taking maximum advantage of local experience and imagination and expertise (Phillips 1996:21). Indeed, in many countries, including Britain, (Parry, Moyser and Day 1992) and Mexico (Cabrero 1996 and Ramirez Saiz 2000), it is at the local level where people are traditionally more likely to get engaged in political issues.

The relevance of participatory democracy to local government and democracy is especially attractive because it involves a decentralisation of power and the opportunity to use local knowledge to meet local needs (Stoker 1996:188). Furthermore, local governance should be open so that people are recognised as having the right and the opportunity to act in local public life. There should be a capacity for deliberation about the key issues both on the part of civic leaders and 'ordinary' citizens (Stoker 1996:189). According to Wolman:

Local democracy consists of the expression of and conflict among diverse views and values held by contending groups attempting to shape local government decisions to meet their ends, with all important groups having the ability to gain access to and exercise some degree of influence over decision makers. Local government's role is thus with...the authoritative allocation of values or in ...classic language, 'who gets what, when and how' (Wolman 1995:137).

More recently, some authors have recognised the potential of local government as a 'cradle' from where actions that could have a national and international impact emerge. For instance, Ward (1993) argues that behind the slogan 'act locally, think globally' is the idea that actions at the local level could trigger national and international reactions that could help improve environmental problems.

b) Educating through participating

Participatory theorists argue that participation produces a sense of community for individuals which, given the circumstances of modern mass society, is not otherwise easily achieved, and fosters an identification with a collective and its enterprise (Bachrach 1975:40). Although Pateman identifies a series of advantages that citizens would enjoy when taking part in mechanisms of participatory democracy (i.e. it fosters human development, enhances a sense of political efficacy, reduces a sense of estrangement from power centres, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of an active knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a more acute interest in government affairs) the main advantage she highlights is the educative process in which citizens engage when taking part in such mechanisms (see Pateman 1970 and Dahl 1985:95ff). According to Pateman, 'the major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is therefore an educative one, educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures' (Pateman 1970:42). Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so (Pateman 1970:42-43).⁹ Similarly, Cook and Morgan (1971) argue:

Participatory activities taking place at the local level can be compared to attending school and learning about maths or history, only that when the individual engages in participatory activities at the local level, he/she learns to be a better citizen. Many theorists have argued that the experience of direct

participation can shape a new man, since it socialises people into new beliefs, attitudes and values (Cook and Morgan 1971:7).

Mill, too, claims that if individuals were provided with the opportunity to participate in public affairs, then they would be more concerned about collective issues and take the public interest into account, rather than merely worry about their personal issues Mill (1963). Pateman agrees with Mill in the sense that the main function of citizen participation is an educative one.

In addition to the educative process, there is also the perception of citizen participation as an activity that can help improve a citizen's negotiating abilities. Subsidiary hypotheses about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective decisions. When citizens realise that they are able to influence the outcome of the policy process, then they could develop greater awareness and a desire to be more informed about the political issues affecting them. In an age of bigness and bureaucratisation, people experience a feeling of helplessness, of being 'administered' in the complexity of a 'Kafkaesque' world (Cook and Morgan 1971:7). Perhaps the primary change in the participants as a consequence of their direct involvement might be an increase in their sense of effectively manipulating their environment through political participation. The main idea is that people can learn to become effective political agents on the basis of experience in more limited contexts, and that this will provide them with the capacity to act in the wider political domain, as well as encouraging a tendency to identify with the group in which they actively participate, thus reducing the problem of disparate views and conflicts of will (Graham 1986:150).

Summary

This first section has outlined the case of the theorists of participatory democracy. The core principles of the participatory democrats are based on a critique of the liberal model of representative democracy. Participatory democrats believe that through improving liberal representative democracy (the liberal reformers) or by transforming it (the radicals) the 'have-nots' in society could gain some decision-making power by taking part in those decisions affecting their respective localities. Participatory democratic practices are expected to have a positive impact both on the locality, and in an 'educative way' on each individual. The issues raised in this section are of great

relevance for Mexico, especially after analysing some of the participatory practices presented in chapter 1. For instance, such initiatives as the *miercoles ciudadano* established by the PAN or the approval of a new citizen participation legislation in Mexico City appear to be examples of the attempts that political parties are making to involve the have-nots in those decisions that affect their daily lives. Is the aim to educate the population on democratic matters through these types of initiatives, or to foresee local government as a cradle that could bring democratic change? Or do these parties have a different political agenda in mind when introducing participatory reforms? An important question concerns the relationship between the participatory practices carried out in Mexico and the ideas of the participatory democrats presented above. This point acquires relevance when we analyse the conditions for participatory democracy raised by Held; do these conditions prevail in Mexico? Are political parties even concerned about finding a correlation between the issues discussed in this chapter and their participatory agendas? If not, are their participatory reforms doomed to fail? Further questions concern the political effects (s) of participatory policies in Mexico's local context or, more widely, on the nature of Mexican democracy. However, before addressing them, it is important to identify some of the limitations identified by the critics of participatory democracy.

The Limits of Participatory Democracy

The first problem with the citizen participation debate deals with the definition of participation itself. According to Keim, 'one of the main problems when defining participation is the ambiguity of the term; to some participation means choosing leaders, to others it means actually deciding policy' (Keim 1975:2). Clearly, where direct participation is possible then the definition is relevant but it is not clear (Pateman 1970:44). The core of participatory theory contains the idea of the ordinary citizen taking part in political decisions to far a greater degree than at present, but with no attempt to quantify the precise degree of involvement (Graham 1986:160).¹⁰

Gould argues that the main idea of participatory democracy, which is sharing authorities' power with citizens, opposes the basic principle of authority.

The requirements for participation and for authority in political life appear to stand in contradiction with each other. Participation requires the full exercise of the agency of each of the participants in making decisions, whereas

authority seems to connote that some individuals have the right to exercise power over others to make decisions for them, (based on the model of representative democracy) to which these others are bound. This suggests that any democratic theory that takes participation as a central value would have to exclude any concept of authority; or alternatively, if some form of authority is seen to be indispensable to civil or political life, then the theory would have to recognise that limits on the freedom or agency of individuals can justifiably be imposed by an authority external to them (Gould 1988:215).

What the participationist has to confront is that we live – in the case of Mexico – in a representative democracy and that even if their preferred idea of democracy involves a higher amount of citizen control, this control would still require the recognition of citizens' local or national representatives (e.g. governors or mayors). As Graham (1986) observes in reference to the establishment of participatory bodies at the local level, 'the major decisions affecting the nature of any community frequently do not emanate from within. They come instead, from some central authority whose knowledge of the community in question may be relatively poor' (Graham 1986:151). Moreover, in the view of Sartori, the participatory theorists of the 1960s and 1970s were more concerned about establishing assemblies, which would attract a considerable number of citizens from the inert masses, without considering any clear boundaries between the roles that authorities and citizens would assume (Sartori 1997:75). Eckstein (1966) highlights the importance that establishing clear boundaries between the roles of official and unofficial bodies has for achieving proper levels of interaction. In his view, stability requires a congruence between authority patterns in government and those in other social institutions, since otherwise a kind of psychological strain results from being subjected to conflicting normative demands in different contexts (Eckstein 1966:234, 255-256). Thus, we can conclude that it is important to establish the boundaries between participatory bodies and the role of authorities to distinguish the functions held by the respective bodies.

A second problem concerns the claim that democratic participation can transform individuals into more-public spirited, tolerant, knowledgeable, attentive and more assertive citizens (Warren 1992:8). Held observes that, 'while the evidence certainly indicates that we learn to participate by participating and that participation does help foster –as Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and JS Mill all contended– an active and knowledgeable citizenry, the evidence is by no means conclusive that increased participation *per se* will trigger a new renaissance in human development' (Held

1997:313). Less sympathetically, Sartori argues that 'the call to participate more is perceived by the participationists as a tentative solution to all the problems of democracy. It is a childish and dangerous perspective that foresees a citizen that lives to serve the democracy' (Sartori 1997:76). Held also states that:

Participatory theorists can be criticised because their approach leaves them vulnerable to the charge that they have attempted to resolve prematurely the highly complex relations among individual liberty, distributional matters (questions of social justice) and democratic processes. By focussing squarely on the desirability of collective decision-making, and by allowing democracy to prevail over all the considerations, they tend to leave these relations to be specified in the ebb and flow of democratic negotiation (Held 1997:272).

Another concern is that participatory democrats assume that citizens will always be interested in participatory processes, yet as Sartori asks, 'if the average citizen is generally uninterested in politics, why do the participationists believe that individuals are going to change' (Sartori 1997:77)? Participationists want to establish units where citizens would be willing to engage in communitarian activities, mainly dealing with discussion of their daily problems in search of the most appropriate solutions. However, we have to be realistic in accepting that perhaps not all citizens are interested in participating. It might be the case that citizens have better things to do such as watching TV, playing football or reading a book and the whole portrait of an interested, active citizenry which is enthusiastic about participating is simply too idealistic. The following lengthy extract captures these points effectively:

In a world where the main part of citizens' lives is devoted to earning enough to satisfy their material and other needs, it is unlikely that they will develop a deep interest in public affairs. That, we might surmise, will largely be left to those with the leisure and the resources to become expert in the matter, while the rest of the populace will continue to interest themselves in various forms of relaxation in the hours that they are not earning their living. But even if citizens do so, there is something absurd, it may be felt, in the idea that they might equip themselves successively, in all the different areas where expertise is required, with the knowledge needed for any meaningful contribution to decision-making. Over a large area or our lives, it may be concluded, we simply have no alternative but to defer to experts. This is why there is a problem for participation theory not only with respect to motivation but also with respect to expertise and social organisation (Graham 1986:159).

Indeed, Macpherson perceives the motivational factor as one of the main problems facing participatory democracy. He argues that the puzzle is not how to run a participatory democracy but how to reach it (Macpherson 1977:98). However, even if

the people were motivated to participate, their influence over 'final decisions' would be minimal. In the view of Sartori, 'if participatory approaches conceive an active citizen participating in those decisions affecting his/her environment, then this participation would be restricted to the number of people taking part when each individual participates.' He continues, 'if one participates in a group of five, then this participation is worth one fifth, and this participation could be reduced to a lower fraction as more citizens get involved' (Sartori 1997). One conclusion to draw from this is that if participatory schemes give little real power to citizens, and specifically do not give individuals a sense that they are personally influencing decisions, then disillusionment might quickly set in.

Following on, another point that the participationists seem to ignore is to determine whether participation should be an obligation. If the participationists are so convinced that participation would bring a series of positive advantages for those citizens taking part in such processes, it is worth questioning the coercive side of these actions. Prior to the development of participatory democratic theory, extensive participation was perceived as something that would inevitably lead to increased social conflict, undue disruption and fanaticism (see Berelson 1952; Parsons 1960). A lack of political involvement was interpreted quite positively: as it probably suggested widespread trust in those who govern (see Almond and Verba 1980). Or, as Lipset put it, 'political apathy may reflect the health of a democracy' (Lipset 1963:32). There are those who believe that participation should remain as an autonomous decision for each individual. Participation would express to a certain extent the level of freedom that a particular society has and also the commitment that authorities should provide opportunities for the self-development of the individual. Gould sums up the argument well:

I would argue that participation in joint decision-making remains an exercise of autonomy, inasmuch as the individuals have freely chosen to participate in the activity and in the determination of the shared ends, and since participation in common activity is itself a general condition for their freedom and self-development, and finally, since the decisions to which they thus bind themselves freely have the authority of their own mutual self-determination and not an external imposed to one (Gould 1988:233).

Surely then it would be wrong to make participation an obligation? Citizens should have the possibility to discuss the issues that effect them at the local level in forums where their views are respected and taken into account before a governmental decision is

taken. However, maintaining high levels of participation could be difficult. Thus, the aim of these forums should be to provide an opportunity for citizens to influence decisions related to issues that affect their daily lives. But, Mansbridge observes, 'convinced that their interests are already well protected, in determined circumstances citizens may decide that their participation is not necessary' (see Mansbridge 1983).

Held links the issue of autonomy to the possibility of citizens participating in public affairs.¹¹ The issue of autonomy and the right to participate are directly related to the ideal of an active citizen who participates at all times in decision-making processes, however, it is one thing to recognise a right, and quite another to say that everyone must, irrespective of choice, actually participate in public life. Participation is not a necessity (Held 1997:325).

These criticisms raise a broader question about participatory mechanisms of democracy. Should we be justified in introducing large changes in people's lives, by setting up institutions that they might feel bound to participate in, when they might be chemists or astronomers or church workers, whether living a life of selfless pursuit of knowledge or of the welfare of their family who would in any case prefer to leave 'politicking' to others (Pennock 1979:463-464)? According to Held, what participatory democracy requires is, 'a detailed theory of the "frontiers of freedom," and a detailed account of the institutional arrangements necessary to protect them, if it is to be defended adequately' (Held 1997:303). In fact, and as a consequence of this lack of an appropriate definition, one of the main questions raised by Sartori is whether participatory democracy can be labelled as representative democracy or as direct democracy. In his view, 'it is quite worrying that participatory theorists have managed to stay in the middle, without defining which way they will take' (Sartori 1997:75).

Although participatory democracy themes have been extensively criticised, nevertheless some of their principles are the basis upon which a large number of participatory initiatives take place today. Significantly, in an era where the withdrawal of the state is evident and where inequalities¹² (especially economic ones) have increased on a global scale, the implementation of participatory mechanisms for the less developed groups of the population has become an increasingly popular policy. Participatory democracy provides inspiration for authorities trying to solve a wide range of problems in less

developed countries, but they need to be wary, as there is no guarantee it will produce the desired outcomes.

This analysis of the main weaknesses found in the participatory democratic literature raises a number of questions relevant to the Mexican context. For instance, what has been the role of local authorities in the implementation of the participatory agenda? Are local authorities enthusiastic about participatory democracy or do they have no intention of letting go of power? How far have real powers been given to these participatory mechanisms? Have authorities ceded some real power over resources or just over minor decisions? To what extent are ordinary citizens encouraged to take part in these initiatives and how much power do they really receive? More importantly, what is the true intention behind their implementation? Also, what is the 'citizen motivation' for taking part in participatory processes and what role do *clienteslistic* relationships continue to play? At the very least, the discussion of limitations suggests that it would be unrealistic to expect participatory mechanisms to deliver everything promised by their proponents. Crucially, there is likely to be a direct relationship between the reason why participatory practices are introduced and how they are implemented; we will return to this discussion later in the dissertation.

Types of participatory units

Having discussed some of the conceptual principles underpinning participatory democracy, this section examines it in practice, by reviewing some of the most common forms found around the world. Although there is a wide range of participatory practices, this section focuses on five – neighbourhood organisations, citizens' juries, consensus conferencing, standing citizens' panels and referenda – as these are all found in the case studies.

Types of Participatory Democracy

The theorists of participatory democracy identify two main areas where participatory democracy could be practised: the local community and the work place (see Pateman 1970). As the focus of this research is community institutions in Mexico, the discussion here concentrates on the former. The forms of participatory democracy vary from country to country, nonetheless, they share several operational principles. According to

Cook and Morgan (1971) there are two basic types of participatory structures: co-determination models and self-determination models.

The co-determination type involves joint decision-making by amateurs and non-amateurs, (formally trained experts or regularly elected officials) and it usually provides for the election or appointment of amateur representatives by or some immediate intimate grass-roots constituency of other amateurs. Ordinarily new positions for amateurs are created with existing structures in which they were previously excluded from any direct participation. Whenever amateurs move beyond consultation to voting, they may acquire a minority, parity, or even majority of amateur and non-amateur seats (Cook and Morgan 1971:5).

Some examples of co-determination models of participatory democracy are citizen juries, opinion polls, consensus conferences and standing citizens' panels (see Stewart 1996). When these initiatives are carried out, citizens are invited to participate and could even occupy a seat on permanent advisory or discussion bodies; however, each of these institutions would be entirely led by authorities.

In contrast to co-determination structures, a self-determination body 'is a participatory unit with a sphere of power at least formally reserved for amateurs alone, not to be shared with elective or appointed officials of the political structures' (Cook and Morgan 1971).

Examples of self-determination structures include the town governments of New England and the Swiss cantons. The extreme form of the self-determination unit is that of the sovereign direct-democracy city-state of ancient Greece and Rome, and the extreme is projected as well in the anarchists' ideal—the fragmentation of nation states into myriad community-control units (Cook and Morgan 1971:5).

A further aspect, not raised by Cook and Morgan, is that another subdivision can be identified within self-determination participatory units. Which reflects the origins of a self-determination body. Two divisions can be identified: those created entirely by individuals without any governmental intervention, and those established by governments for citizens to participate in them. An example of the former would be those associations highlighted by Robert Putnam (1993) where social capital is developed without any governmental intervention, such as sports clubs or cooperatives. An example of the latter, are those associations such as neighbourhood boards, established by local authorities but which are internally run by citizens (see Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994).

Benello highlights some of the advantages of involvement in self-determination bodies.

When people come together to form a group, they perceive that their problems are in fact shared problems, about which something can be done. Thus, the image of the individual helpless against the all-powerful of society is replaced in the members' minds by the image of the group, working for a shared sense of social need, and capable of modifying the social environment that has caused the problem. But for the group to be effective it must develop a sense of the political dynamics that affect it- the workings of local power structures, and ways in which they can be moved (Benello 1971:42).

Cook and Morgan suggest that to have a better understanding of the types of participatory democracy units covered in the citizen participation literature, we must keep in mind the following four basic models:

- 1) A co-determination structure confined to rule-implementation authority.
- 2) A co-determination structure including rule making authority.
- 3) A self-determination structure confined to rule-implementation authority.
- 4) A self-determination structure including rule-making authority.

An example of a co-determination structure confined to rule implementation is the volunteer fire department, where such units will have the authority to implement rules that originate elsewhere. Co-determination structures with rule making authority are frequently found in co-determination arrangements in judicial decision-making, in which amateurs join legal experts (Cook and Morgan 1971:5-6). Examples of self-determination structures are neighbourhood or town governments, which, depending on the circumstances, could be established as self-determination structures with either rule-implementation or rule-making authority. A criticism that can be made of Cook and Morgan's categorisation is that there are also participatory bodies that are established merely for the discussion of community issues and not necessarily to implement or make rules, as will be discussed in the next section.

A last sub-division of participatory units, which is absent from Cook and Morgan's categorisation, is the distinction that can be made between permanent and non-permanent types of participatory units. Permanent participatory units, such as neighbourhood associations, meet on a regular basis to discuss community issues. Non-permanent types of units (i.e. consensus conferences) may be organised by authorities to discuss a particular matter as a 'one-off' event, and for a specific period of time. Once the matter is discussed and the course of action decided, then the structure created for

this particular purpose is dismantled. To have a clearer perspective of the different types of participatory units that are commonly implemented, the next section examines some of the most common forms of participatory democracy currently in operation around the world.

Neighbourhood organisations

Neighbourhood organisations are one of the most common permanent forms of participatory democracy and they are to be found in several countries. Although the concept of the neighbourhood¹³ is not the same in every country, however it is defined, it still represents the nearest 'opportunity' that many citizens have for interacting with their fellow citizens and governors. When these participatory democratic bodies were developed in the late 1960s, they were established as an attempt to regain self-rule and representation in local government (Kotler 1969:27). The radical theorists of participatory democracy were the first to develop and promote these structures. Most of the neighbourhood organisations promoted by them were conceived as entirely independent, and set up mainly in deprived areas in order to change the oppressive domination of the poor (see Alinsky cited in Kotler 1969).

The trend to develop neighbourhood organisations in deprived areas was followed in diverse countries, and in most cases these organisations were structured under strict government supervision. In Britain, for example, the government published in 1974 a consultative document on neighbourhood councils. The Association for Neighbourhood Councils regarded it as a major step forward for urban communities, believing 'at last it would be possible to give formal statutory voice to the most deprived neighbourhoods who would be able to raise small sums for themselves' (cited in Hain 1980:33). Although initially mostly established to support the poor, in some countries neighbourhood organisations have involved people from all social backgrounds (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994).

Another example is the French proposal of local democracy that made it obligatory to establish neighbourhood councils in towns with more than 20,000 residents. The *politique de la ville* began to be implemented in the late 1970s and was institutionalised in the 1980s. Although the aim of these neighbourhood organisations targeted improving the living conditions of deprived groups of society, in the long run, these

institutions became purely consultative and therefore offered only a limited form of participation (Bacqué and Sintome 2001). Their limited impact draws attention to the way the agenda is implemented by local authorities.

Neighbourhood organisations are at the core of the participatory mechanisms analysed in this dissertation. In Tlalpan, Puebla, and San Pedro, neighbourhood organisations have played a key role, mainly as institutions created by authorities to provide an option for citizens to defend their interests, and to have a say in local matters; the extent to whether this has truly happened is one of the central themes of interest covered in this dissertation. As will be demonstrated in the three cases analysed, here the way local authorities implement participatory mechanisms plays a key role to determining whether the intervention of citizens truly affects the outcome of those decisions where they take part.

Citizens' Juries

A citizen jury is another recent participatory democratic structure which involves citizens' participating as observers of proposed policies or projects. Citizens' juries have mainly been established to discuss local issues. The jury of citizens, usually consisting of 16-18 individuals, serves as a microcosm of the public. Jurors are paid a stipend for their time. They hear from a variety of expert witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, the members of the Citizens Jury present their recommendations to the public. In a Citizens Jury project, a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of citizens meets for four or five days to carefully examine an issue of public significance.¹⁴ The methods for electing those who participate in juries may vary; for instance, in Germany jurors are selected at random from the electoral register, while in the US they are selected as a representative sample, controlling for such factors as gender, age, race and education (see Stewart 1996).

A small group of citizens representing the 'general public' meet together to explore a specific policy issue, Witnesses present information and jurors-cross examine their statements. Jurors deliberate on the issues amongst themselves and then make public their conclusions (Stewart, Kendall and Coote 1994:1).

The number of citizens taking part in juries varies, and the deliberation process normally lasts for about a week. Those citizens participating as jurors are not required to

reach a unanimous view so members may express different views. The jury process typically generates a deep sense of commitment amongst the jurors, who feel they are acting on behalf of the general body of citizens (Stewart 1996:33). One of the most important aspects of this type of process is that it must be protected against bias. To avoid this, great stress is placed on the selection process, the presentation of issues and the organisation of the discussion.

Citizens' juries have been implemented in different countries, for instance in Spain, in the locality of Cardedeu. The consultation involved the revision of the city's General Urban Distribution Plan (GUDP). The question on the agenda was *what do we want Cardedeu to be like?* Conducted in autumn 2000, in this Catalan municipality of some 12,000 inhabitants, a group of 68 people were randomly selected and divided in three groups to discuss the future development of the city. The conclusions reached by the citizen juries favoured better planning of the city, especially regarding the development of green areas in the municipality (Font, Jarque and Medina 2001). An important aspect of this participatory practice is that in Cardedeu, those participating as citizen juries received a daily payment of 5,000 *pesetas* (approximately £20) per session. This salary was intended to make the participants take their role more seriously and avoid bias.

An initiative operating under similar principles was identified in the locality of San Pedro. Despite the similarities in the operation process of this participatory mechanism, there are some differences – mainly dealing with the selection process of those taking part in juries – that are discussed to a greater extent in chapter 6.

Consensus Conferencing

Consensus conferencing is designed to incorporate public interests and concerns into the process of science policy-making, which has often been seen as a matter for experts alone, but which increasingly raises issues of wider ethical or environmental concern (Stewart 1996:34). A consensus conference is a forum in which people discuss scientific issues with experts. This approach was developed in Denmark – the subjects that have been discussed in the Danish context include air pollution, food irradiation, and electronic identity cards (see Stewart 1996) – and it is defined as follows:

A forum in which a group of lay people put questions about a scientific or technological subject of controversial political and social interest to experts, listen to the experts' answers, then reach a consensus about this subject and finally report their findings at a press conference (Joss and Durant 1994:3).

The selection process of those involved in consensus conferencing is similar to that employed for the citizens' juries. The members of a consensus conferencing panel are selected through advertisement on the basis of written applications and normally those selected work two preparatory weekends and a final three to four day conference with the aid of a professional facilitator (Stewart 1996:35). Preparation, especially during the weekends preceding the conference, is crucial and it normally lasts for two weeks. The preparatory weekends give the members of the consensus conference any relevant basic scientific theory and information on present and planned applications in the field to be examined. They enable the members to identify the issues they want to examine and the experts they want to question (Stewart 1996:35).

Those issues raised during the preparatory sessions are then sent to the experts, who reply by letter. Those responses and outstanding questions are discussed with the experts on the first two days of the main consensus conference. The remainder of the conference is devoted to preparing the report with the help of the secretaries. The final report is presented at a press conference held on the last day of the conference (Stewart 1996:35). One example was the UK conference on plant biotechnology organised by the Science Museum in London. For this encounter, a lay panel of between 10-20 people was selected through advertisement (in 11 regional newspapers and on BBC local and independent radio stations) (see Stewart 1996). In the locality of Tlalpan, which is analysed in chapter 4, consensus conferences are known as neighbourhood consultations under the principles of the 1998 Mexico City participatory legislation. Also, in San Pedro, these types of conferences have been organised to discuss environmental issues or reforms to local legislation, these aspects will be discussed further in chapter 6.

Standing citizens' panels

This type of panel is constituted to analyse routinely those policies to be carried out by local authorities. The selection process for panelists is not open; however, authorities try to make it as representative of the population as possible.

A standing citizens' panel in a local authority could be constituted as a representative sample of citizens weighted for gender, age, ethnic background, and occupation. It could compose one to two hundred citizens and would be used by the council as a sounding board for issues and problems before it (Stewart 1996:35).

Membership for such panel could change gradually over time with, for example 10 percent of the panel being replaced at each meeting. In this way the habit of citizenship would spread. According to Stewart, 'if citizens' panels were adopted by local authority then most citizens could have an opportunity to play a part in them at some point in their life, creating a habit of citizenship' (Stewart 1996:35).

The mechanism implemented by the Institute of Public Politics (IPP) in Holland is an example of a standing citizen panel. In Leerdam –a town of 20,000 inhabitants– a citizen panel was established in January 1999 in conjunction with local authorities to discuss the renovation of Europe square. Several meetings were held between a consultation group (the members were selected by local authorities), local authorities, a project manager, an urban planning expert, and were chaired by a member of the IPP. The resulting plan prompted few objections from the general public, and the renovation of the square was finished in summer 1999 (Monnikhof 2001). In the San Pedro case study discussed in chapter 6, a standing citizen panel operates parallel to the local administration. Whilst this initiative is not exactly the same as was implemented in Leerdam or follow the precise principles highlighted by Stewart, nevertheless, we shall see that there are elements that make it an interesting initiative.

The Referendum

Although the referendum is generally classified as an instrument of direct democracy, if accompanied by a publicly funded campaign, where educative materials and debates take place, then the referendum can be an effective trigger for citizen participation. Referenda have been regularly used in the US, and in several European countries, mostly Switzerland, for many years (Butler and Ranney 1978). According to John Stewart,¹⁵ there are there are three types of referenda:

- 1) The compulsory referendum, where legislation requires the holding of a referendum.
- 2) The authority initiative, where the local authority decides to hold a referendum.
- 3) The citizen initiative, where a referendum is called by citizens, either on a proposal before the council or on a proposal they wish the council to consider. Such referenda

are normally called after a request signed by a specified number or percentage of citizens, but there can be requirements to call them as a result of a resolution carried at a town meeting or community assembly.

Referenda, especially at the local level, can be valuable sources of information and debate:

Referendums called by local authorities can strengthen representative democracy, particularly if they serve to enhance the quality of deliberation in the polity, and lead to more widespread discussion of the interests in question. They can be used by a local authority as a consultative mechanism on issues on which they wish to know the public's views (Stewart 1996:39).

It is sometimes argued that referendums will always favour a particular point of view, for example, they will normally show a majority in favour of reducing tax levels. If that were so, then perhaps that view should prevail, but it shows a lack of confidence by advocates of increased expenditure (Stewart 1996:39). However, Cronin argues that over the past decade, voters have known when to cut and when to leave tax matters alone (Cronin 1989:206). A good example is the referendum organised in February 1999 by the Milton Keynes Council to vote on the 1999/2000 budget. Referendum papers were distributed by post to all 149,241 citizens on the electoral registrar; the papers included an explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of the three options citizens had, whether voting for a 5, 9.8, or 15 percent increase on the council tax.¹⁶ The turnout was of 44.7 percent (66,647 citizens), where 24 percent voted for a 15 percent tax increase, 46 percent for a 9.8 percent increase and 30 percent for a 5 percent increase. The results surprised the organisers and most commentators as it showed that in this particular case the participants cared for more than the money in their pockets (Snelson 1999). Yet, perhaps reflecting a lack of trust in its citizens Mexican participatory legislation forbids the utilisation of referenda to decide on tax matters.

For Stewart,¹⁷ the potential of referenda as tool of participatory democracy can be maximised by the following steps:

- a) The referendum should raise considerable interest, because if only a small minority vote in it, the whole process falls into disrepute.
- b) The issue should be capable of being resolved by a simple voting procedure, ideally a yes/no answer.
- c) The issue should be separable, (i.e. it should not be so interrelated to other decisions that is impossible to resolve on its own).

- d) There should be many opportunities for citizens to be informed about the issue.
- e) If the referendum encourages informed discussion amongst the public, it is making a major contribution to deliberation in democratic life. However, this contribution will only be realised if there is appropriate literature, media discussion and an opportunity to hear and discuss views at public meetings.

Although these mechanisms are expected to bring a series of benefits for both authorities and citizens, there are important questions about the way these mechanisms are implemented, or the true impact that citizens have on the outcome of the decisions taken within these structures, which relate to wider debates about participatory democracy (see Font 2001). Referenda have been a common practice in two out of the three cases (Tlalpan and San Pedro) analysed in this thesis. The strengths and weaknesses of the way this non-permanent participatory initiative has been carried out will be discussed to a greater depth in chapter 6. Next, having outlined a range of participatory forms, it is useful to draw on typologies that have been developed to measure the impact of the mechanisms analysed in this research project.

Measuring the impact of participatory democracy

Many claims are made about the benefits of the various participatory mechanisms discussed above. But how can we assess the strengths and weaknesses of these claims? The importance of measuring the level of empowerment that citizens receive is summed up by Arblaster: 'if a group has no power, its meetings can never be democratic. Democracy involves debate and discussion, but these are not enough if they remain inconclusive and ineffective in determining actual policies' (Arblaster 1987). This section examines two approaches that attempt to measure the impact of participatory mechanisms: Arnstein's 'ladder of citizen participation' and Burns, Hableton and Hoggett's 'ladder of citizen empowerment.'

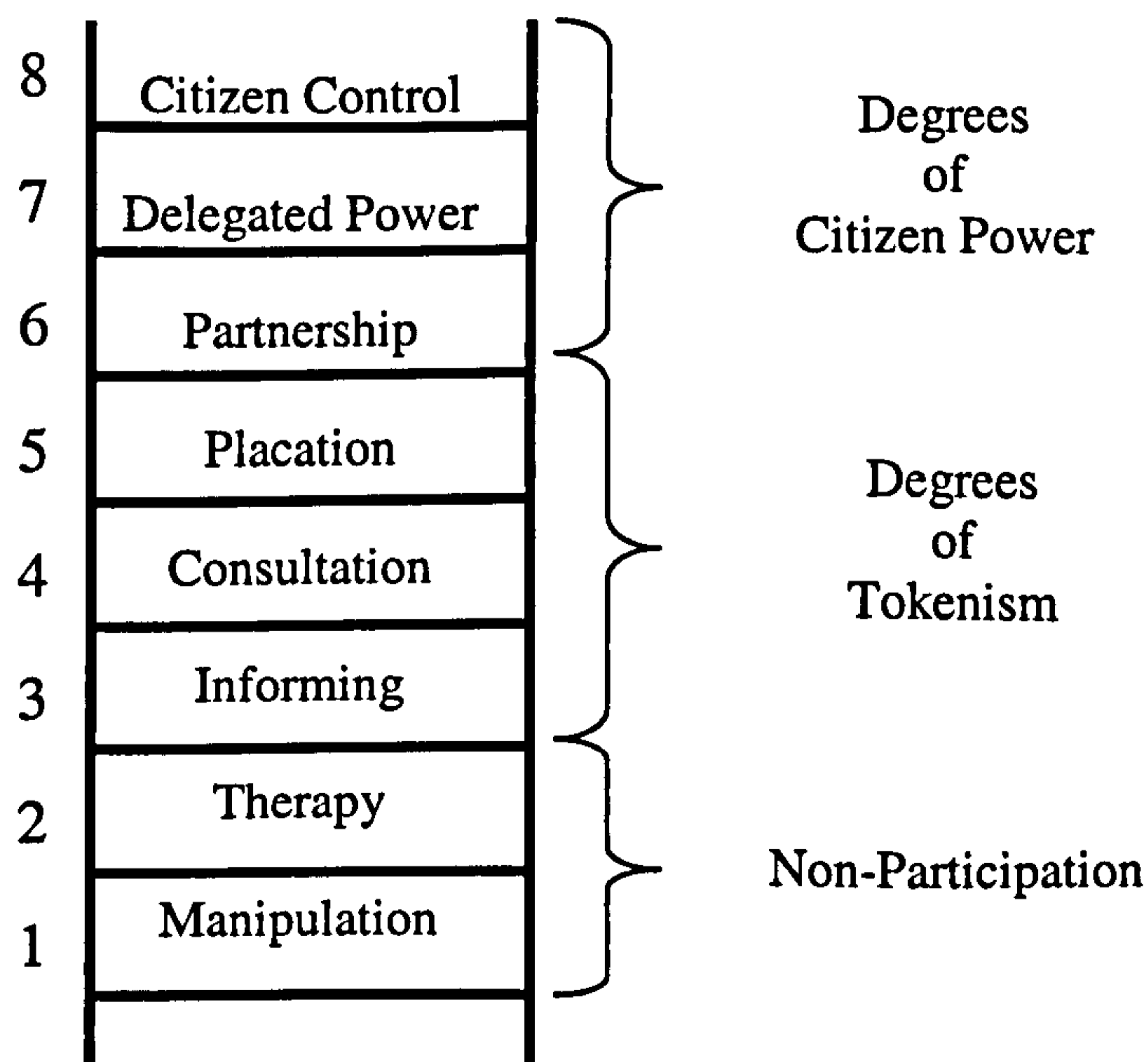
Sherry Arnstein's ladder

The core of participatory theory contains the idea of ordinary citizens taking part in political decisions to a far greater degree than at present, but there are few attempts to quantify the precise degree of involvement (Graham 1986:160). Of course, it is very difficult to measure the exact impact of participatory democracy. The first effort of this kind was Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, which was developed in the US in the late 1960s. With a 'participatory boom' taking place in the US, the main

objective behind Arnstein's model was to determine whether citizens were being truly empowered, or whether authorities were only using citizens as a means of legitimising decisions previously agreed. According to Arnstein 'there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process (Arnstein 1971:176). Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation consisted of an imaginary ladder with eight rungs, which was divided into three main areas: a) an area of non-participation, b) an area of degrees of tokenism, and c) an area of citizen power.

The non-participation zone of the ladder is composed of the first two rungs: 1) manipulation and 2) therapy, 'it is in this area where the public would be "educated" to participate in advisory committees or boards for the purpose of engineering their support' (Arnstein 1969:362). Here there is little space for ordinary citizens to influence any decisions made by authorities; it is merely using the public as 'legitimators' of previously taken decisions or of decisions which are about to be taken. This area is characterised by the absence of channels of communication between authorities and citizens (see Figure 2.1. below).

Figure 2.1 Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



The second area of the ladder, degrees of tokenism, is composed of the next three rungs: 3) informing, 4) consulting and 5) placating. This space is characterised by higher degrees of interaction between authorities and citizens. Some examples of policies carried out in this section of the ladder are neighbourhood forums, public hearings or other interactive governmental programmes.

The highest area of the ladder is composed of three rungs 6) partnership, 7) delegated power and 8) citizen control. In the view of Sherry Arnstein, it is in this area where citizens need to have the control of the policies implemented in their respective neighbourhoods.

People are simply demanding that degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a programme and be in full charge of the policy and of any managerial aspects; and also able to negotiate the conditions under which outsiders may change them (Arnstein 1969:371).

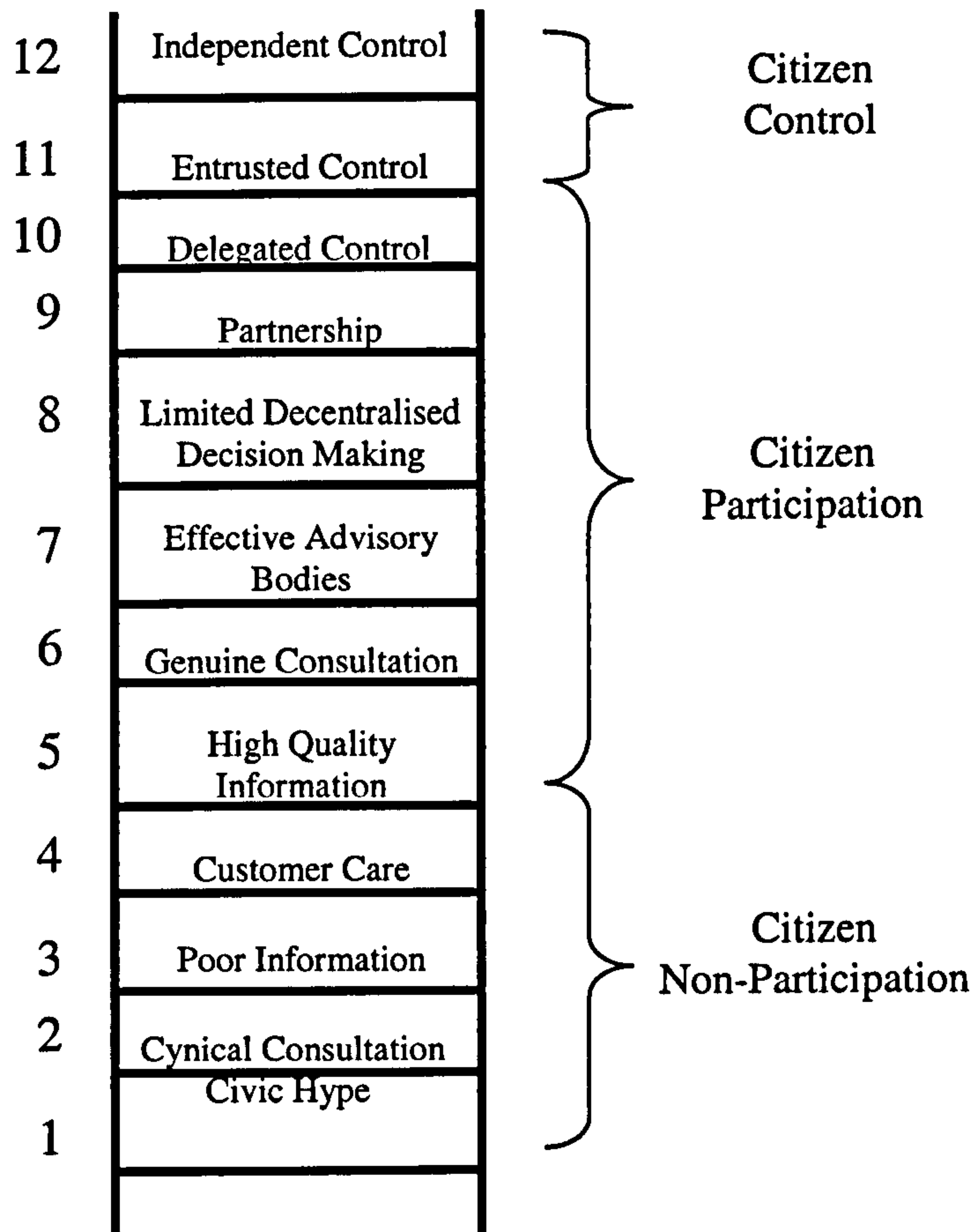
Although for the radical advocates of participatory democracy, it would be 'ideal' to have total control over the participatory initiatives implemented, realistically speaking this is very difficult to achieve. As we will see in the case studies chapters, the authorities' 'blessing' is usually essential to keep these participatory schemes working.

Following the ladder

Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett developed a new version of Arnstein's ladder in the 1990s to take account of the many new forms of citizen participation subsequently developed by local authorities (see Figure 2.2 below). The first part of the new ladder identifies four areas of interest over which all citizens interact. These areas are, 1) the individual sphere, 2) the sphere of the sub-local (i.e. neighbourhood), 3) the sphere of local government, and 4) the sphere of national governance. Their ladder of citizen participation is composed of twelve rungs and like Arnstein's ladder it categorises citizen participation into three main divisions: a) citizen non-participation, b) citizen participation and c) citizen control).

The first four rungs of the ladder 1) civic hype, 2) cynical consultation, 3) poor information and 4) customer care –are defined as a one– way communication process. It is in the first rung of the ladder where authorities implement large publicity campaigns to distract the public's attention from any participatory intentions.

Figure 2.2 Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett ladder of citizen empowerment



Cynical consultation can be defined as the establishment of pseudo-participatory mechanisms to legitimise actions that have been previously decided by local authorities. Poor information constitutes one of the biggest problems faced by citizens, for instance, Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett comment on how the City of Birmingham area committees struggled to decipher certain communications issued by local authorities (see Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1987). Customer care, the last rung in the non-participatory section of the ladder, is related to civic hype. It is at this stage where local authorities implement 'aggressive' image campaigns to avoid losing the confidence of their constituents.

The citizen participation section of the ladder is the largest one, its six rungs are: 5) high quality information, 6) genuine consultation, 7) effective advisory bodies, 8) limited decentralised decision-making, 9) partnership and 10) delegated control. When authorities provide high quality information it gives citizens the possibility of engaging

in discussions and interacting with their representatives. A deeper interaction occurs when citizens are asked to take part in genuine consultation processes.

Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett established a series of steps that need to be taken to introduce the next two rungs: effective advisory bodies and decentralised decision-making bodies.

- 1) Bringing the people together.
- 2) Agreeing how the service under scrutiny should operate.
- 3) Looking at what is happening now.
- 4) Choosing something that can and should be improved.
- 5) Deciding on and putting a plan into action.
- 6) Seeing how things have changed and deciding what to do next.

According to Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, there is an important difference between the way they perceive advisory bodies and the average neighbourhood boards established here:

These forums contrast sharply with many neighbourhood forums, which lose members very rapidly because they do not make the time to allow people to get to know each other. In many forums the people who attend meetings are rarely given time to develop a vision of what they would ideally like. Citizens are often flooded with too much information, and asked to do so much with, that they cannot see the wood for the trees (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994:170).

Partnerships (the ninth rung) are represented by joint efforts between authorities and citizens. Such schemes as management co-operatives or parish councils can be mentioned as examples. These types of bodies can perform a wide variety of activities, but the citizens taking part in such organisations would not have the total control of the programmes they run, as they would still be subordinated to authorities. An example is the Rochdale's Cloverhall Cooperative that in 1985 took over the management of 240 properties. Some of the activities performed by this organisation were collecting the rent and environmental maintenance (see Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994).

For Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, delegated control is defined as the stage where the public acts with the authority's permission.

Here the government can be seen as a kind of composer. The players may be allowed some licence to interpret the conductor's requirements, and they

may well influence the conductor considerably, but there is no doubt who is in control (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994:178).

Parish councils in the UK are also a good example of delegated control bodies, these organisations have the same attributes as a district council, however they have fewer obligations. The two main assets of these organisations are firstly, that the people involved in the board are elected by the 'locals,' and secondly, that they have the power to call referenda.¹⁸

The area of citizen control is the smallest in the ladder and is represented by rungs 11) entrusted control and 12) independent control. The types of organisations established in the last rungs of the ladder are characterised by involving citizens and having the power to govern a programme, area or institution of government more or less independently. The public could be in charge of different types of associations, neighbourhood governments, and in some cases, it would be seen as normal that these bodies control budgets assigned to develop their communities (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994:174).

Probably the majority of the forms of citizen control correspond to community organisations that are user-led. Some interesting contemporary examples would include day and resource centres run by and for the people with disabilities, (i.e. centres for independent living) black and ethnic minority housing co-operatives and community housing associations, independent membership-based community associations, cultural clubs and so on (Burns, Hambleton, and Hoggett 1994:176).

The main contribution of these two approaches is that they provide some basis for measuring the levels of empowerment that citizens receive when participating in decision-making processes at the local level. As most research on participatory democratic mechanisms in Mexico has ignored this question, the application of these two typologies may help in evaluating the degree of citizen empowerment found in our case studies. It is important to note that these typologies have been previously used to measure the impact of citizen participation in Holland. During 1997 and 1998, the Institute for Public Policy used an adaptation of Arnstein's ladder to measure the impact of a project entitled, 'Testing Grounds of Democracy Project,' which included five cases. The outcome of the study showed that people do tend to participate if they see an immediate impact on the decision taken by local authorities after consultation processes take place (see Monnikhof 2001).

Despite the fact that these typologies have been used successfully to measure participatory processes, we must still be aware of their limitations. Although they can be useful for mapping out the main advantages and disadvantages of participatory initiatives, they do not provide an exact account of the level of empowerment authorities share with their governed. Clearly these are not explanatory models, just heuristic devices to help us categorise empowerment.

Current trends in the participatory agenda

We have observed how participatory democracy emerged as a critique of the liberal representative democratic model. These ideas have helped inspire a growing number of participatory practices in government across the world. However, the discussion introduced in chapter 1 suggests that the participatory agenda implemented in Mexico bears only limited resemblance to the principles outlined in the literature. Anyone with a minimum knowledge of Mexican politics would be sceptical about the participatory agenda carried out by the PRI, PAN and PRD; especially bearing in mind the top-down implementation model that each of these parties have followed. Chapter 1 concluded by considering the real intentions behind the Mexican participatory agenda. Is it about providing genuine opportunities for citizens to get involved in decision-making processes? Or, could there be underlying – party or political – objectives behind its implementation? From where have the Mexican authorities drawn their inspiration? In a global environment where the policy agendas set by international organisations (i.e. World Bank or United Nations) are increasingly linked to the internal policies implemented in many countries, it is interesting that these organisations have begun to promote participation. Moreover, these policies acquire greater relevance in an environment where they could be used as a method for bypassing the central state and ensuring the influence of international NGOs at the local level. This section examines why these international organisations have promoted participatory democracy in order to identify a possible external influence on the Mexican participatory agenda.

In recent years the number of participatory practices involving the low-income (working class) sectors of the population has increased in many countries. Mayo and Craig observe:

Community participation and 'empowerment' have become more vital and yet more overtly problematic than ever in the current global context. In the face of deepening poverty resulting from international recession and restructuring, international agencies and national and local states have demonstrated increasing interest in strategies to promote community participation as a means of enhancing the development process. And there has been increasing emphasis upon the importance of alternative, grass roots approaches to development, starting from the empowerment of local communities (Mayo and Craig 1995:1).

The promotion of participatory initiatives has been part of a series of structural changes advocated by such international organisations as the World Bank and the IMF. The intention is to ensure that third world development projects reach the poorest groups in the most efficient and cost-effective way, sharing costs as well as benefits, through the promotion of self-help (Paul 1987). Free-market, neo-liberal, new-right strategies to 'roll back the state' both in Third World and in urban, industrialised contexts, are intended to reduce state spending on social welfare and to promote alternative solutions based upon the voluntary/NGO sectors and community based self-help (Mayo and Craig 1995:4).

Community participation is perceived as a strategy that would be directly related to overall goals of cost-sharing/cost reduction for the public sector (that is, shifting the costs from public sector budgets by persuading communities to make increased contributions through voluntary effort and/ or self-help/ voluntary unpaid labour) and through increased project/programme efficiency...In this context, programmes and projects should be delivered in ways which do not involve continuing subsidies and costs reduced through cost-sharing, including community inputs on a self-help basis. And through targeting initiatives towards the poor and the poorest, adjustment also acquires a 'human face' (Mayo and Craig 1995:4).

Thus citizen participation is perceived as a strategy to promote savings and to improve the living conditions of those who desperately need it. More importantly, the aim is to shift costs from the public sector onto communities (Craig 1993; Mayo 1994). The World Bank has installed an internal learning group to ensure that its entire staff not only becomes familiar with the pros and cons of citizen participation, but practices it (Bhatnagar and Williams 1992:1).

Box 2.1 International Organisations and citizen participation

Organisation	Perception of citizen participation
OAS	The importance of active citizen participation has become particularly apparent with regard to decision-making on matters of sustainable development and environment. Development efforts are more likely to be successful in the long run if the key players – governments, donors, and most important, local people- are genuinely interested in the outcome (OAS 1996).
OECD	Social Capital, according to the preferred OECD definition, refers to networks, shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within and among groups. Communities or societies with high social capital are thought to be characterised by higher levels of mutual trust, reciprocity, unwritten and unspoken agreement about societal rules, and social cohesion. Such societies may also be more effective at achieving collective goals – including those for environmental protection (OECD 2001:14).
World Bank	Citizen participation is defined as follows: ‘participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them’ (World Bank 1996).
United Nations	<p>The United Nations has developed what is known as the Civil Society Organisations and Participation Programme. The programme aims to work with a range of partners in civil society, government and other bilateral and multilateral organisations attempting to provide satisfying alternatives for social change on a global level by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Facilitating the empowerment of people and civil society organisations to participate in and initiate action to reduce poverty and promote equity as well as influence and manage change within their societies 2) Promoting collaborative initiatives among various development partners (government, private sector and civil society organisations) to meet the challenges posed by globalisation and increasing poverty in developing countries

The United Nations Human Development Report defines participation in terms of people having constant ‘access to decision-making and power,’ as well as in terms of economic participation (UNDP 1993:21). Empowering the poor has become an almost universal slogan (Thomas 1992). Indeed, from a slightly different perspective many NGOs have also forcefully defended the idea that participation in decision-making is necessary for all development efforts (Galjart 1995:18). Participatory agendas to promote empowerment have been directly associated with the voluntary or NGO sector, with community organisations and people’s movements (Clarke 1991). The idea is that even poor people can acquire agency, and they can take part in participatory mechanisms to improve their living conditions. The result might be that people with a higher social status have a larger say in what is to be done. Finally, participation in the sense of joint planning also implies that the NGO has to take local technical knowledge

seriously (Galjart 1995:18). Although NGOs have been very successful as advocates of participation, the concept remains vague. It does not mean that NGOs, or other change agents, do the bidding of the target group. Rather that both parties, while seeking consensus, have veto power over the other's suggestions. Whatever plan, and thus investment, is finally agreed upon, it will almost always combine local with extra-local knowledge and practices (Galjart 1995:18-19).

Thus, at a time when governments, both at the national and local levels, seem to be struggling for financial resources, participation suddenly appeared as a sort of 'magical solution' to the economic crisis affecting official institutions throughout the world. Participatory democracy is expected to bring economic benefits to some of the poorest areas of the planet, whilst also promoting the political and social values (i.e. educative, democratic) discussed earlier.

Box 2.1 (above) identifies the perspectives of some of the most influential international organisations. The four organisations agree that participation could bring positive effects to promote development, empowerment, and in general to increase peoples' awareness of decision-making processes. For instance, the Organisation of American States concluded a summit held in Bolivia in 1996 by declaring:

The Governments of Latin America, in order to support the development and implementation of national policies, programmes and actions aimed at expanding the participation of civil society in decision-making for sustainable development, instruct the OAS to give priority, through the Inter-American Council on Integral Development to the formulation and implementation of an *Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Citizen Participation in Decision-making for Sustainable Development* (OAS 1996).

On the other hand, for the OECD in recent years the notion of 'social capital' has gained importance to describe those features of societies and communities that facilitate collective action and, in particular, the kinds of difficult changes that will be needed to ensure environmental sustainability (OECD 2001:14). The OECD perceives social capital as a possible solution to poverty reduction and sustainable development. However, it would have to be accompanied by such measures as strengthening decision-making, harnessing science and technology and linkages with the global economy (OECD 2001:14).

Although the OECD has been promoting the concept of social capital in its participatory agenda, it is aware of the limits of this approach.

In practice the concept of social capital is difficult to make operational and to measure. Putnam has developed proxy measures based on statistics of: 1) the amount of involvement in community and organisational life, 2) public engagement (i.e. voting), 3) volunteer committee activities, 4) informal sociability (i.e. visiting friends), and 5) reported levels of personal trust (OECD 2001:14).

The World Bank in its 1996 document *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook* outlines the different options that governments have for carrying out participatory projects and promoting development. In identifying the key steps to be taken to promote successful participatory initiatives, the sourcebook highlights the importance of giving official support to carry out any participatory agenda:

Governments' stand on stakeholder participation is critical. Without government support, the Bank can do little to initiate, broaden, and sustain participation. This does not imply that Bank Task Managers remain passive. It does mean, however, that Bank Task Managers must obtain government consent to work in a participatory manner (World Bank 1996:122).

The UN perceives the involvement of such 'external' actors as NGOs or the civil society as essential for the success of any participatory project.¹⁹ Those civil society organisations engaged in the project promoted by the United Nations are expected to work towards achieving the following goals:

- 1) Improving the management of globalisation, including stronger trade policies and fairer rules and terms that allow more vulnerable countries to enter markets and their provisions that take into account the concerns of people.
- 2) Promoting accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness in governance structures.
- 3) Building capacities for more vibrant civil society actions in order to increase political participation and collective action.
- 4) Increase the linkages between macro/grass-roots movement and macro-level/policy structures.

These principles are expected to help develop a solidarity consciousness within the population, and also between governments and members of the private sector to establish partnerships that promote development.

The participatory agendas of these four organisations demonstrate the international enthusiasm for participatory initiatives. Participatory democracy has become a 'fashionable' way of carrying out programmes to promote sustainable development, democracy or simply to protect the environment. Highlighting the benefits of a sort of 'do it yourself' culture where globalisation is praised, most of these schemes focus on improving the living conditions of those who have not benefited from the positive effects of the market economy.

There is evidence that the *Coordinación Presidencial Para la Alianza Ciudadana* (CPAC), discussed in chapter 1, espouses similar principles to those promoted by international organisations such as the IMF and the WB. Certainly, the withdrawal of the state along with the strengthening of the NGO sector are both elements present in the core aims of this recently created secretariat. Moreover, in an era where both local and national governments are struggling due to a lack of financial resources, citizen participation has become a core issue for many Mexican local authorities. In most cases, these schemes are used to promote self-help projects where citizens cover partially the costs of social projects or collaborate with their labour to finish determined initiative. One research question in this thesis is to determine the extent to which the local authorities analysed here have been influenced by these international bodies.

Yet to what extent does this international participatory agenda overlap with that of Pateman and other participatory theorists? At first glance, it might seem that international organisations are radicalising their position by expressing concern about improving the living conditions of the have-nots. However, these organisations also state that the cost of these projects should not become an economic burden for the governments that carry them out. Implicit in this participatory agenda is that governments and international organisations are admitting that they have not been able to meet the social needs of the poor. They seem to see participation as a means of rolling back the state and sharing the burden of development with the poorest groups. It is under these conditions that the role of NGOs becomes crucial to empower underprivileged groups of society. The intervention of NGOs as policy deliverers is justified to a certain extent, as in many countries these organisations are more trusted than the government itself. Linking NGOs to the implementation of a participatory agenda becomes an aspect of paramount importance, as it is increasingly through

participatory schemes that the most vulnerable groups of society could receive either resources or policies.²⁰

Some international enthusiasm for this participatory agenda raises questions about the decision-making power that international organisations believe they are giving to unprivileged groups of society, particularly in countries where governments are doing very little to improve the situation of these groups. For instance, why is such a traditionally centralist government as the Mexican one suddenly trying to give away some power and share it with the citizenry? How far has the participatory agenda implemented in Mexico been directly influenced by these international organisations? A further consideration is whether the top-down implementation process is appropriate for policies that theoretically speaking should be carried out following a bottom-up implementation process? Finally, what role, if any, have NGOs played in the implementation process of these policies in Mexico?

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the concept of participatory democracy in depth. Derived mainly from the participatory literature that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, a wide variety of such participatory schemes as citizens' juries and referenda have recently been introduced. Two typologies were introduced that could be useful for measuring the impact of the participatory schemes implemented in each of the case studies. The last section examines the interests that international organisations might have in promoting these participatory schemes. Theoretically speaking, the aim of most proponents of participation and of the schemes presented in this chapter is to give citizens a right to take part in those decision-making processes that affect their daily lives; but the extent to which this has happened in each of the participatory schemes implemented in our three cases remains an issue to find out. For instance, is participatory democracy mainly about promoting democratic values or could it be used for particular party or political purposes? What do Mexican authorities and citizens understand by participatory democracy? What role have the authorities played when carrying out the participatory agendas under analysis? What has been the actual power that citizens have received when taking part in these participatory schemes? What factors need to be considered when carrying out participatory practices? These are all issues that will be addressed in this thesis.

More generally, it will be interesting to establish whether there are any links between the ways such writers as Pateman perceive participatory democracy and the way in which Mexican local authorities have implemented it. Perhaps the educative sense of participatory mechanisms so praised by the theorists of participatory democracy is non-existent in Mexico. Maybe in each municipality examined here participatory mechanisms are perceived primarily as political tools and authorities do not have much interest in promoting democratic values. There is also the possibility that, as with previous Mexican government initiatives, what is expressed on paper might not necessarily take place in practice.

Chapter 3 introduces Tlalpan, the first case study analysed in this research.

Notes

¹ See Held 1997.

² One of the drawbacks identified in Rousseau's model of communitarian democracy is the fact that he fails to clarify in detail how these sessions would be carried out (see Gastil 1993).

³ See Pierson (1995).

⁴ For similar perspectives see Sartori (1962).

⁵ Pateman distinguishes between industrial and community participatory types of democracy, but this study focuses on the community type.

⁶ See also Goodman (1969).

⁷ See Greaves (1976), Fromm (1963), Weil (1958) and Crick (1970).

⁸ See Gitlin (1970).

⁹ Pateman claims that such characteristics would be most effectively developed when individuals take part in participatory processes in the industrial sector, and that this would then drive a beneficial impact on participation in wider civil society.

¹⁰ See below for a discussion of some participatory approaches that measure these degrees of citizen involvement. For Graham it is not obvious that the impossibility of becoming a polymath implies the impossibility of far greater involvement, see Graham (1986).

¹¹ See Finley (1983) for similar discussions.

¹² For a discussion on inequality see Callinicos (2000).

¹³ In the view of Cook and Morgan, 'the concept of neighbourhood is not very precise. People use it in small towns and the ghetto as well as other smaller urban units' (Cook and Morgan 1971:211).

¹⁴ *The Jefferson Centre* has conducted Citizens Jury projects since 1974 at the local, state, and national levels. Juries have tackled a number of topics including national health care reform, budget priorities, environmental issues, and local school district facility needs. Visit: http://www.jefferson-center.org/citizens_jury.htm. Similar projects can be found at: Lewisham Council in London Visit: <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/NewsAndViews/jury.asp>; *South Lanarkshire Council in Scotland* Visit: http://www.step.gb.com/consultation/citizens_jury.htm.

¹⁵ For a discussion on different types of referenda see Butler and Ranney (1994).

¹⁶ More recently, the British On-line democracy project has been created to facilitate the access of citizens to this type of consultations. UK Citizens On-line Democracy provides information, resources, help and guidance on electronic democracy. Not only does it provide access to a range of web services relating to electronic democracy, it also provides several of its own forums to discuss political issues affecting the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Through its resource centre it also provides access to research, best practice and training in electronic democracy. See, in particular, the

paper produced by the Dutch Ministry of Interior entitled 'Electronic Civic Consultation: A Guide to the Use of the Internet in Interactive Policy-making'. Visit: <http://www.democracy.org.uk/>.

¹⁷ For more discussions on the utilisation of referenda see Duval, Leblanc-Dechoisay and Mindu (1970).

¹⁸ For examples see Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett 1994.

¹⁹ Recently, the United Nations' perception of citizen participation has been linked to the conceptualisation of social capital developed by Robert Putnam (1993) or associationalism developed by Hirst (1993).

²⁰ At the world development conference organised by the UN and held in Monterrey, Mexico (March 2002), for the first time NGOs were allowed to participate in the discussions; mainly to discuss issues regarding the future financing of development projects (see *Reforma* 22/3/2002).

Chapter 3

Tlalpan

Introduction

1997 was a historical year for Mexico's political system, for the first time in Mexico's contemporary history, the party of the president (the PRI) lost the majority at the federal congress. In Mexico City, the PRD won the governor election and the majority at Mexico City's congress. Just a few days after the new administration took office a political reform for the capital was announced (*La Jornada* 11/10/1998).

The 1997 Mexico City governor election was the turning point of a debate on the democratisation of the capital that had started more than 20 years earlier (see Ramírez 2000). Governing the capital represented a golden opportunity for the PRD to show not only the inhabitants of Mexico City, but also the inhabitants of Mexico that this political party could represent a credible alternative after years of unilateral decision-making and corrupt practices by PRI governments. After decades of one party-rule, perhaps this was the moment to introduce participatory schemes to the governmental agenda. Mexico City was, therefore, a flagship government for the PRD to demonstrate it could govern and govern differently from the PRI style. Citizen participation was a critical part of the PRD democratisation agenda: the PRD message was that change required the involvement of many sectors of the Mexican society. The first elected governor of Mexico City, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, invited the inhabitants of the City and groups of NGOs to participate in the development of new citizen participation legislation, calling on them to 'take into their hands the decision-making power.' Cárdenas led a ceremony held to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the citizen plebiscite –held on 21 March 1993– when the citizenry of Mexico City voted 'yes' to openly electing the governor of the City¹ after more than 60 years of PRI hegemony in the government of the capital. In his speech, Cárdenas highlighted the importance that citizen participation had for his administration, 'we must open democratic channels of communication between authorities and citizens, citizen participation must be direct and we as authorities must respect public opinion and be tolerant of views different from ours. Citizen participation must be the sign of the democratic process that we have already started in the capital'

(*La Jornada* 21/3/1998). Cárdenas' motion was seconded by the leader of the PRD majority at the Congress of Mexico City, Martí Batres, who observed that 'citizen participation is a topic that can be discussed in circles of academics, entrepreneurs, community leaders and political parties' (*La Jornada* 25/01/1998).

The result of the debates proposed by Cárdenas was the approval of the 1998 Citizen Participation Legislation by the congress of Mexico City. The legislation covers a series of participatory practices that range from neighbourhood forums to the implementation of referenda. An important aspect to highlight is the fact that after winning also the 2000 governor election the PRD has a true opportunity to consolidate a participatory agenda. To have a clearer understanding of how this legislation operates, in this chapter we analyse how it was implemented in the locality of Tlalpan, one of the 16 *delegaciones* or localities in which Mexico City is divided. Located in the southern part of Mexico City, it has 650,000 inhabitants and a mix of rural areas, ecological reserves, and large shopping centres which proved to be an interesting place for the analysis of citizen participation mechanisms, for two main reasons. Firstly, the social differences present in Tlalpan, where inhabitants with very different needs are expected to group together and solve their problems. Secondly, the active role which informal community leaders still play in Tlalpan, and how the principles of the 1998 participatory legislation are sometimes ignored even by local functionaries. These two points and other relevant issues will be discussed to a greater depth in this chapter.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. After identifying the main conditions under which the 1998 reform took place, the details of the 1998 citizen participation legislation are introduced. The third section analyses the main strengths and weaknesses identified in this document. The fourth part covers Tlalpan's main characteristics, and the fifth section examines the bureaucratic structure responsible for implementing the participatory agenda. The sixth section analyses how the participatory agenda works. Finally, an overview of all the participatory mechanisms implemented in Tlalpan is presented, followed by a conclusion.

The context of the 1998 participatory reforms

Background

Mexico City's 1998 political reform had three core features: a) electoral legislation, b) citizen participation legislation and c) re-organisation of the government of Mexico City. Despite the importance of all three topics, the citizen participation legislation occupied a primary position in the agenda. As soon as the discussions started, diverse points of view began to emerge about what the participatory legislation should provide. SOLIDARIDAD became the most immediate point of reference for what the legislation should not include. For Sergio Zermeño, 'the strategy of SOLIDARIDAD was not bad, however it was not implemented properly, solidarity committees proved to be isolated, weak and legally impeded to challenge the authority exercised by the president. SOLIDARIDAD was used as the personal party of the president and all the political acts related to this programme became mere political populism' (*La Jornada* 23/5/1998). PRD MP Marco Rascón also stated:

To avoid what happened with SOLIDARIDAD, the new citizen participation legislation must organise the citizenry into structures where their direct participation is not diminished or manipulated by a totalitarian body. There must be a participatory structure per rural area and neighbourhood, where the interests of the community are interwoven to dissolve the *clientelist* relationships created by previous *priísta* administrations. We need a participatory legislation for the citizenry, not for the political class (*La Jornada* 14/7/1998).

A second concern expressed by the intellectuals and groups of NGOs discussing the legislation was the possibility of repeating what happened with Mexico City's 1995 participatory legislation, when people did not participate as expected. The 1995 participatory legislation aimed to establish an intermediate instrument of consultation between authorities and citizens at the local level. This is how the structure known as *consejeros ciudadanos delegacionales* (municipal citizen councillors) emerged. In each of the sixteen localities of Mexico City elections were held to choose twenty-two citizens who would represent and defend the interests of their respective communities. In the view of Sergio Zermeño:

When the preceding legislation was implemented only 8 percent of the voting list took part in the election organised to choose neighbourhood leaders. If we analyse the 1995 document, we will find out that citizen counsellors, before being elected were not obliged to give their personal viewpoints publicly.

Nothing forced them to exchange points of view with the community they were about to represent. The legislation only demanded that someone interested in occupying one of the seats could do it when collecting the support of 4 percent of the citizens enlisted in his/her neighbourhood's voting list (*La Jornada* 28/03/1998).

In addition to the low turn out in the 1995 neighbourhood election, the relaxed framework governing the 1995 participatory initiative allowed the illegal indirect involvement of political parties in the election of citizen representatives. For instance, during the 1995 election the PRI presented 750 candidates, (through parallel urban organisations), the PAN posted 200 candidates representing the NGO *Acción Vecinal* (Neighbourhood Action) and the PRD appointed 382 candidates using the structure known as *Movimiento Ciudadano* (Citizen Movement) (see Safa 1997). The PRD was keen not to repeat the mistakes committed by previous *priista* administrations. PRD member Alejandro Ordorica commented, 'the new citizen participation legislation will have to define the type of actors, representative bodies, powers of those bodies, and re-define the relationship between state and society. The legislation must also include issues related to accountability, neighbourhood elections, and forms of decentralisation; moreover, the document should offer such participatory forms as the plebiscite and the referendum' (*La Jornada* 14/3/1998).

One of the main difficulties highlighted by those involved in the discussion of the new legislation, is the fact that the people of Mexico City are not used to participating. Ortiz Pinchetti (Technical Secretariat for the Citizen Participation Reform) commented that, 'the great difficulty of the participatory reform is not in the elaboration of laws, but in the minds of citizens' (*La Jornada* 3/5/1998). Pinchetti highlighted four problems that the new legislation would face:

- 1) The legitimate will of many citizens and organisations to 'have a say' in those decisions affecting their respective places of residence,
- 2) The immaturity and fragmentation of civil society,
- 3) The inevitable problem of having political organisations using the legislation for particular party interests,
- 4) The need to maintain the governability of the city.

Pinchetti pointed to three elements that might diminish the impact of these four problems. Firstly, people need to know how to demand, as in Mexico the concept of accountability is still difficult to understand, 'we still do not understand that authorities are our servers, they work for us.' He proposed the creation of a similar body to the

federal electorate institute, which has proven to be a successful independent organisation, with sufficient powers to scrutinise Mexico City's politicians effectively (*La Jornada* 3/5/1998).

Secondly, Pinchetti propose using semi-direct forms of participation, such as plebiscites, referenda, popular initiatives, (where citizens would be able to propose their own laws) and consultations, which invite large numbers of people to get involved. However, these are 'exceptional instruments' for specific occasions and each is expensive, economically speaking, and quite demanding, politically speaking (*La Jornada* 3/5/1998). Finally, Pinchetti identifies participation and parallel power. Parties are willing to create new forms of neighbourhood representation, but these will only be positive as long as a parallel political pyramid is not constructed in the process: 'We must not forget that citizens are already represented in the executive and the legislative, and it has already been demonstrated that the establishment of citizen councils fall in the hands of political parties most of the time' (*La Jornada* 3/5/1998).

Other preoccupations of those involved in the deliberation of the 1998 participatory legislation were linked to the size and functions of the new participatory bodies. In the view of Sergio Zermeño:

One of the positive sides of the discussions dealing with the reform of the 1998 legal participatory framework is the strengthening of the neighbourhood as the main nucleus of participation. Although these units are not quite homogeneous, they are still the basic unit of participation...it is in these organisations that several committees should be established and where such issues as security, or the introduction of public services must be discussed, it is here where citizens must be elected (*La Jornada* 28/3/1998).

Zermeño proposes that, on an average, one community representative should be elected for every 5 to 10 thousand residents. The role of the five *subdelegaciones* would be crucial as it is through these offices that citizen participation would be channelled and co-ordinated. In Tlalpan he proposed that these organisations should co-ordinate the efforts of between 20 to 40 neighbourhood representatives (*La Jornada* 28/3/1998).

Political parties and the participatory reform

Although numerous participatory proposals were emerging, not surprisingly, opposition political parties played their role in trying to stop the reform. Ortiz Pinchetti complained that:

The role of the PRI and the PAN has been crucial in slowing down the speed of the participatory reform. The PRI denied approval of any motions that went beyond local reforms and the PAN, although it showed genuine political will at the beginning of the process, modified its position and abandoned the negotiation process (*La Jornada* 11/10/1998).

The attitudes of the PAN and the PRI jeopardised a process that lasted for nine months and such groups of NGOs, academics and political organisations developed more than 219 proposals (*La Jornada* 11/10/1998). There were different views about how to deal with the problems caused by opposition political parties. On the one hand, people like PRD member Alejandro Ordorica, believed that time should not be an issue. In his own words, 'we must take maybe all of 1998 and part of 1999 to discuss the legislation...the important thing is to have a positive law that would benefit the participatory practices of the city by the year 2000' (*La Jornada* 11/2/1998). However, there were other groups within the PRD that were pushing to approve the reform before 1998 concluded. Thus, PRD MP Marco Rascón believed, 'the PRD should approve the new participatory legislation without the consensus of the PRI and the PAN, as otherwise the document could be under the threat of being rejected'. Rascón added, 'you know when you are going to convince the PRI to approve a legislation that would empower the citizenry? Never! To try to reach consensus with the PRI or the PAN would not be useful for the PRD, as the party has a responsibility with the citizenry, not with these political organisations' (*La Jornada* 14/7/1998).

Zermeño also wanted the participatory reform approved by the end of 1998, pointing to the postponement of the neighbourhood representative election from November 1998 to March 1999. He identified three factors that delayed the approval of the legislation and which indirectly affected the neighbourhood election process. Firstly, the legislation regarding citizen participation was presented as part of a 'global package,' which included other agreements, transferring the participatory agenda to a secondary level of importance.² Secondly, in several localities, especially in the poorer and more populated ones, the PRI still dominated the local agenda, and could have possibly defeated the

PRD in this electoral process. Lastly, the PRI wanted to create a citizen committee of neighbours elected in each neighbourhood which would be able to challenge the mandate exercised by each mayor (*La Jornada* 10/7/1998).

In the event, the new citizen participation legislation for Mexico City was approved on 26 November 1998, timing that cleverly suited Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's plan to launch his candidature for the 2000 presidential election using the topic of citizen participation as a big campaign issue.

One of the most important aspects of the legislation was the participation of citizens in those decisions related to strategic planning and development, as *La Jornada* columnist Emilio Pradilla Cobos stated:

The law establishes the participatory rights of the citizens of Mexico City. The law visualises the possibility of carrying out plebiscites to make it possible for citizens to approve or reject any policies to be implemented by Mexico City authorities. The legislation also considers the referendum as an option for citizens to reject, modify, or create any laws discussed at Mexico City's congress. It regulates neighbourhood consultations, where neighbours would be able to emit an opinion or to propose projects to solve their respective community problems (*La Jornada* 23/12/1998).

Pradilla Cobos also stated that the legislation gives citizens the right to present complaints and to receive information about any future actions of government. In his words, 'the participatory legislation regulates the way neighbourhood committees operate; it sets the legal boundaries that citizens have to solve their community issues and elect their community representatives' (*La Jornada* 23/12/1998). Thus the 1998 participatory legislation offered an opportunity to get involved in the issues affecting their respective communities.

With this law the people from Mexico City have a new participatory instrument, although by no means can we state it is a 'perfect legislation.' With the creation of such legislation we are advancing in the establishment of a co-ordinated type of government, where citizens and authorities start sharing the responsibility of governing (*La Jornada* 23/12/1998).

Before discussing these reforms in more detail, it is worth noting that the 2000-2006 administration of Mexico City remains keen to increase the decision-making power of the citizens of the capital, as illustrated by the new budget recently granted – since

January 2001 – to neighbourhood organisations. However, the future of this participatory agenda might be under threat from opposition political parties. For instance, María de los Angeles Moreno, PRI co-ordinator at the Congress of Mexico City, recently declared: ‘we are not going to allow the consolidation of a fourth power constituted by the neighbourhood committees. Now he – the governor of Mexico City, López Obrador – is using these structures to make the administration more accountable, but we are not going to let him advance any more’ (*La Jornada* 8/3/2001). Similarly PRI MP Cuauhtemoc De la Torre observed that, ‘López Obrador is trying to give more powers to neighbourhood organisations to hide PRD’s political intentions. We should go back to the idea of having block representatives, we are definitely against the strengthening of neighbourhood committees’ (*La Jornada* 8/3/2001). Thus, jumping ahead a little, one of the greatest challenges for the 2000-2006 administration is to consolidate Mexico City’s political reform. The consolidation of various participatory practices presented in the CPL depends on promoting, but at the same time, respecting, the legal frameworks created for these purposes. It all seems to indicate that the greatest dispute will be, not surprisingly, with members of the PRI, over the ‘best’ participatory mechanisms that should take place in Mexico City. Box 3.1 presents some of the proposals of the PRD and the PRI.

Box 3.1 An overview of the future of the participatory agenda

Proposals of the PRD	Proposals of the PRI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen citizen participation co-ordination • Substitute neighbourhood committees with citizen committees • Establish local constitutions in each of the 16 municipalities to implement local referenda or plebiscites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to the figure of the block representative • Reduce the power of the City governor regarding the implementation of referendums and plebiscites • To open citizens’ elections to political parties

While the PRD seems to be willing to give more power to citizen organisations, the PRI seems more concerned about openly accepting party political involvement in the election of neighbourhood bodies. The reforms proposed by the PRI also stress the importance of controlling the use of such participatory instruments as the referendum or the plebiscite. By establishing local constitutions, the PRD expects to provide local authorities with the opportunity to have their own ‘mini-referenda’ on local matters. Notwithstanding the course that the participatory agenda takes, what is certain is that the

utilisation of citizen participation mechanisms sits at the core of Mexico City's political agenda.

To return to the focus of our analysis, the 1998 legislation, it seems that the main concern of those PRD members and congressmen involved in the discussions to have a new participatory legislation was to finish with the *clientelistic* practices of the PRI. By creating alternative participatory schemes where authorities shared their decision-making power with citizens the PRD expected to make an impact on the way policy making occurred in each of the 16 localities that compose Mexico City. Theoretically speaking, these schemes would avoid dealing with *caciques* (local bosses) commonly found in local governments and would give citizens real decision-making power, but was this truly the case? Did citizens think that when taking part in the schemes proposed in the 1998 legislation they affected those decisions reached by local authorities? Or, did they continue using pre-established channels such as those offered by informal community leaders? Did citizens think that these schemes were a truly democratic option? More importantly, what was the role of local authorities when implementing the new participatory legislation? In the conclusion of this chapter we will return to these questions.

The next section of this chapter outlines the controversial legislation that caused so many debates between political parties, NGOs and groups of academics. The legislation that is expected to give the inhabitants of Mexico City, and the people of Tlalpan, a real chance to participate in decision-making processes at the local level.

The 1998 Citizen Participation Law

Permanent forms of participatory democracy

The legislation can be divided into two sections: permanent participatory bodies, and non-permanent participatory initiatives.³ The primary participatory mechanism in the CPL is arguably at the neighbourhood level, where residents are expected to have a voice in the issues affecting their respective communities.

Neighbourhood committees are organisations of citizen representation whose main function is to group the citizens within a specific territory to act as supervisors, evaluators and negotiators of public demands related to public

services, utilisation of public spaces, public security programmes and other local issues (Citizen Participation Law 1998:43).

One feature of the legislation foresaw a re-division of all of Mexico City's neighbourhoods,⁴ depending on whether they were constituted as a *colonia*, *barrio*, *pueblo*, or *unidad habitacional*.⁵ One major concern of the academics involved in designing the CPL was how to balance the roles of the government and the citizenry, and where to set the boundaries for each others interaction. Initially, the discussions headed in the direction of a type of citizen participation focussed on *delegational* (local) committees that would be above neighbourhood organisations. The scheme would have been based on the election of *delegational* representatives. For instance, in Tlalpan the public would have elected neighbourhood representatives for its five sub-divisions. However, some academics, such as Zermeño, believe these organisations would be perceived as potentially harmful for local authorities, as they might become a sort of parallel administration outside the control of the public, and therefore actually diminish the level of citizen involvement in any participatory activities. According to Zermeño, 'to have truly representative and responsive participatory units, these bodies should not be composed of more than 100,000 inhabitants (*La Jornada* 23/05/1998). Tlalpan authorities decided that the locality should have be divided into 140 territorial units.

The second step towards a better participatory reform was to elect a new generation of community leaders. The CPL establishes that neighbourhood committee elections will be held every three years. The neighbourhood representative position is an honorary position with no salary. The new legislation states that the election of neighbourhood boards will be organised by the Mexico City electoral authority. Candidates cannot represent a political party or any other social organisation,⁶ and must not have occupied a government position in the previous six months.

The CPL states that each neighbourhood board will consist of between 7 to 15 members, depending on the size of the unit, and that men and women must be equally represented in every board. Those citizens interested in being part of the neighbourhood board would be grouped into slates, which would then compete against other slates of residents in an election. The members of the slate that wins the election will become 'the majority' in the neighbourhood committee, but proportional representation ensures members of the losing slates will also be represented. The slate leader of the winning

team will become the neighbourhood committee leader.⁷ According to article 98 of the CPL the following are the main activities to be performed by neighbourhood committees.

- 1) Represent neighbours' interests in the neighbourhood that chose them as representatives.
- 2) Collect, analyse and lead any initiatives presented by citizens of their *colonia, barrio, pueblo* or *unidad habitacional*.
- 3) Inform their representatives about any action performed by local authorities which affects their neighbourhood or which could be of special interest.
- 4) Follow the course of citizens' demands at the local government office in charge of resolving that particular matter.
- 5) Motivate the community to participate in developing projects for their benefit.
- 6) Elaborate a diagnosis of their main problems, (i.e. lack of services or other basic infrastructure projects) to include them in the budget to be spent by local authorities.
- 7) Develop programmes channelled to educate and inform the community about the importance of participating at the local level to strengthen neighbourhood unity.
- 8) Act as a link between local authorities and citizens.
- 9) Promote citizen participation.
- 10) Organise social investigations or forums about the main problems affecting their communities.
- 11) Work as a link with other committees involved in similar community projects.
- 12) Keep up with the different programmes and services provided by local authorities.

The functions should be carried out by all the members of the neighbourhood committee. However, articles 99 and 100 of the CPL state that neighbourhood committee leaders would have the following additional duties:

- Co-ordinate the works of their respective neighbourhood committees
- Call community meetings (at least twice a year; these can be between the members of the committee he/she leads or with members of other committees)
- Advertise any agreements reached at community meetings or assemblies
- Promote joint activities with other neighbourhood committees

The CPL also foresees the removal of neighbourhood representatives from their position when:

- 1) When absent without justification more than three neighbourhood meetings
- 2) When obtaining personal benefits while carrying out their representative activity
- 3) When disobeying the statutes of this legislation

A member of the neighbourhood board could be removed from his/her position when two thirds of the board support the motion, although an investigation must be held prior to the removal of a committee member.

The functions set out in the CPL are expected to give community representatives enough power to command their respective neighbourhoods in co-ordination with authorities. The next section examines the non-permanent form of citizen participation included in the 1998 citizen participation legislation.

Non-permanent forms of participatory democracy

The 1998 legislation offers 9 non-permanent forms of citizen involvement:

- 1) Plebiscite
- 2) Referendum
- 3) Popular Initiative
- 4) Neighbourhood Consultation
- 5) Neighbourhood Collaboration
- 6) Complaints Unit
- 7) Public Diffusion
- 8) Public Assembly
- 9) Official Visits.

According to article 13, section 3, of the 1998 CPL, a *plebiscite* can be proposed by the Governor of Mexico City when he/she judges that the involvement of Mexico City electors is essential for the decision to be taken. A plebiscite might help decide controversial initiatives, and legitimate the final outcome. The legislation also gives the public the right to ask for the implementation of a plebiscite where one percent of Mexico City's electorate demands one and delivers a letter containing the reasons and the signature of all the members supporting the motion. However, only one plebiscite can take place per year, fiscal matters (especially those dealing with taxation) would not be considered for consultation and plebiscites cannot be held in the same year as a local or federal election. The result of the plebiscite has to be respected by the authorities, who must act according to what the public decides.⁸

The *referendum* deals with the laws decided by Mexico City's Congress. A referendum can be promoted both by authorities and citizens. Where two thirds of the members of congress decide that public involvement is necessary to approve, reject, or reform a law, then a referendum is carried out. The public can ask for a referendum when one percent of Mexico City's electorate delivers a letter stating the reason for holding it. The package delivered to congress must include the piece of legislation (i.e. a whole legislation or only some articles of a law) over which the consultation would take place,

along with the signatures of all the citizens supporting the motion. Again, only one referendum can take place per year and fiscal issues aspects would never be considered.⁹ The result of the referendum would not be linked to the actions authorities take.

A *popular initiative* is an instrument that can be used by the citizens to create, modify, or derogate laws promoted by legislators at the congress of Mexico City. Once a popular initiative is presented to the assembly, a verifying commission would discuss the changes proposed and give a response no later than thirty working days after its presentation. The requirements for accepting a popular initiative are similar to those of the plebiscite and the referendum, where at least one percent of Mexico City's electorate must sign the petition and also provide a letter stating the main points of disagreement and the amendments proposed.

A *neighbourhood consultation* is a mechanism for residents to express their opinions, proposals or simply to discuss the problems they face. Three sectors of the community could get involved in a consultation: a) residents, b) the private sector, (i.e. commercial or social organisations) and c) neighbourhood committees in particular areas. Significantly, the consultation can only be promoted by official authorities and not by residents themselves. According to section 4 article 48 of the citizen participation law, the consultation must use one of the following two mechanisms: a) direct consultation or b) survey. The conclusions reached by the consultation would be notified to the participants but, unlike a plebiscite, the decision reached would not be binding on the authorities.

Neighbourhood collaboration involves a joint co-ordination between authorities and citizens and it is intended to conclude a project or complement a budget. The most popular form of neighbourhood collaboration is the *fideicomiso*. Under this scheme, authorities would cover the majority of the costs of a determined project, and residents would provide the rest, which would be deposited in bank accounts opened by local authorities for this purpose. To request a *fideicomiso*, a letter specifying the reasons and the project to be considered should be sent to local authorities which must respond within thirty working days.

The aim of having *complaint units* at local authorities' offices is to give citizens the opportunity to scrutinise public services, projects, or the performance of civil servants. Each *delegación* is obliged to have a unit and to assign personnel to follow up each complaint received.

Public diffusion is simply a process whereby the authorities inform citizens about legislation approved by the Mexico City assembly or congress and those decisions made by the governor of Mexico City.

Public assembly is a mechanism of citizen participation by which the residents of Mexico City can propose that the authorities adopt certain policies, or they receive information about laws or decisions affecting their areas of residence. Elected representatives (i.e. members of congress), residents affected by a particular decision, or members of the private sector can solicit a public assembly. A letter specifying the issue to be dealt with and information about the sectors of the population demanding the assembly must be presented to local authorities. Once consultation is completed, local authorities are obliged to inform about the terms and the conditions of the resolution(s) to be taken. Because the solution of the problems discussed at the assembly might not be at the reach of those present in the meeting, when this happens, local authorities have the duty to inform the branch of government in charge of solving the problem. Those local officials present at the assembly must give feedback to the citizenry within seven days of the meeting.

The aim of *official visits* is to make the governor of Mexico City or any of the 16 mayors aware of the primary concerns of certain communities. This practice is based on the principle that authorities must constantly interact with those they govern. Neighbourhood committee leaders or other community representatives can request such encounters. During these visits, authorities collect information that is later channelled to the department in charge of dealing with the issue(s) raised by the visit. Generally, the issues dealt with in these visits are relate to the introduction of basic infrastructure public services such as piped drinking water or electricity.

The nine non-permanent participatory forms presented here will be analysed below, along drawing on practical examples. The next section of this chapter analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the legislation.

Strengths and weaknesses of the legislation

Permanent participatory bodies

The only permanent form of citizen participation proposed in the CPL is the neighbourhood committee or board. These committees are intended to 'erase the past' and make the public forget the political use to which initiatives such as the *jefes de manzana* (block representatives) were put.¹⁰ Box 3.2 presents the main strengths and weaknesses of the permanent participatory bodies contained in the CPL.

Box 3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Permanent Participatory Bodies

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits the functions of neighbourhood representatives • Having newly elected neighbourhood leaders, in theory without a 'political past' • The re-division of the city may have brought benefits for some neighbourhoods (i.e. more residents united towards the same goals) • Attempts to remove <i>clientelist</i> practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too large territorial units, which could be detrimental for the development of the committee • The re-division of the city might have brought disadvantages for some neighbourhoods (i.e. residents grouped in the same territorial unit but with different needs) • There is no clear explanation of how the neighbourhood committees could influence the policies implemented in their communities • The risk of becoming a mere informational body • No distinction between urban and semi-urban areas

The strengths of the legislation concern setting the boundaries over which the new participatory practices would take place, something that had never been done before. Bringing the 'freshness' of the views of ordinary people without a political background represents a bold step taken by the PRD administration towards achieving a more permanent structure of citizen participation. By re-dividing the city, some people might have benefited from being joined into territorial units where other citizens share the same needs. Grouping people with similar needs, can be a useful move to achieve common goals. On the other hand, re-dividing the city could be a weakness if existing groups of citizens are broken up. Another weakness is that although the functions of these bodies are clearly set out, the legislation does not establish how the neighbourhood committees could actually influence the outcomes of those policies implemented in their communities. This omission implies the possibility of these groups becoming merely informational units without any real power to affect the decision-

making process. As stated by one neighbourhood committee leader, Irma Zuchitl Dávila, 'sometimes I feel a bit ashamed because we cannot solve everyone's demands, we always tell neighbours that we are only an intermediate structure between authorities and neighbours and we have no "magic wand" to solve everything' (Dávila interview 2/5/2000).

The legislation also fails to take account of differences between urban and semi-urban areas. This issue is highlighted by the 1997-2000 Neighbourhood Participation Co-ordinator of Tlalpan's rural areas, Martín Flores,

The citizen participation law cannot be exclusive. There is no proper division of the different regions that are not urban. We are not talking about a democratic law when every social group is considered the same. You cannot implement urban programmes in rural areas. Customs in rural areas are very different when compared to those prevailing in the city (Flores interview 14/4/2000).

The weaknesses here identified should be clarified once we analyse the empirical evidence later in this chapter. The next section analyses the main strengths and weaknesses found in non-permanent participatory bodies.

Non-permanent participatory bodies

The CPL offers, for the first time, the possibility to get involved in a series of participatory practices that a few years ago would have been unimaginable. PRD authorities seemed to be genuinely concerned to have a constant interaction with citizens.

From a 'participatory perspective,' a major strength is the emphasis of these participatory bodies on developing constant contact between authorities and citizens, and to enable citizens to start certain participation processes. It seems that the PRD was seeking to be perceived as an open political organisation that 'genuinely' cares about what the average citizen thinks. Perhaps the fact that groups of NGOs and citizens got involved in the discussions contributed to the development and approval of a 'large menu' of participatory opportunities. However, there are several limitations to the legislation. For instance, in eight out of nine non-permanent participatory options, what citizens decide is not binding on the relevant authority. Furthermore, in all the non-permanent bodies the decision whether the participatory activity would take place rests

with the authorities. Moreover, the plebiscite or the referendum would only take place at the state rather than the local level. Box 3.3 highlights the main strengths and weaknesses of each of the nine non-permanent participatory possibilities offered in the 1998 CPL.

Box 3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Non-permanent Participatory Bodies

Initiative	Strengths	Weaknesses
Plebiscite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be invoked by the citizenry • Authorities must respect what the public decides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum one per year • Cannot take place in an electoral year • Can only be implemented at the state level not at the local
Referendum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be invoked by the citizenry • Could be a useful 'defence mechanism' against certain laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One per year maximum • Authorities decide whether it takes place • Not binding on the authorities • Cannot take place in an electoral year • Can only be implemented at the state level not at the local
Popular Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be initiated by the citizenry • Could be useful against certain laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities decide whether it takes place
Neighbourhood Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to solve certain controversies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can only be invoked by authorities • Not binding on the authorities
Neighbourhood Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be initiated by the citizenry • Useful mechanism to finish projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not very useful in poor areas
Complaints Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens can speak to someone about their problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not have 'real power' to solve the issues raised
Public Diffusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings greater accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be used for particular 'propaganda' purposes
Public Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be initiated by the citizenry • Could speed-up the solution of specific problems • Citizens could meet the functionary responsible for resolving their problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to be useful if the right authorities are not present at the Assembly
Official Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People interact with their local representatives • Local authorities learn about the problems affecting a particular community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities could promise solutions they would not be able to provide (e.g. due to budget restrictions)

Other weaknesses of the legislation concern with the frequency of the practices, as in the case of the plebiscite and the referendum, only one per year can take place. It is understandable that it would be difficult to be constantly organising consultation processes, nevertheless, what would happen if in the same year two very important decisions had to be taken utilising such initiatives? Or if authorities wanted to organise a plebiscite in an electoral year? A final weakness is that most involve long bureaucratic processes, which might result in citizen disenchantment with participation. Later in this chapter some examples of these practices will be examined. But how have these participatory mechanisms been implemented in Tlalpan? In the next section, an analysis of the way in which the participatory mechanisms above discussed have been implemented is presented.

Tlalpan's main characteristics

The municipality of Tlalpan, situated in the southern part of Mexico City is considered a rich municipality in terms of natural resources, its total surface covers 30,449 acres, representing 20 percent of Mexico City's total territory, and is mainly composed of areas of ecological conservation and rural communities. The population of Tlalpan increased eleven fold between 1950 and 1980, and as will be discussed later in this chapter, it is characterised by zones where affluent and poor people interact. The urban area of the municipality covers more than 5,000 hectares, and 8,489 hectares are used for agricultural purposes. The disordered way in which Mexico City has grown has negatively affected Tlalpan. Thirty years ago only 120,000 people lived there, today, more than 650,000 do. As a consequence of this exponential growth, the service infrastructure has never been able to cope with the demands of the population. In 1998 only 57.8 per cent of Tlalpan's inhabitants had sewage and 83.27 percent piped drinking water (*La Jornada* 23/3/1998). Tlalpan is divided into five territorial zones: Centre, Coapa, Miguel Hidalgo, Ajusco Medio and Pueblos. There are 181 neighbourhoods, 11 *barrios*, 31 *unidades habitacionales* and 30 *fraccionamientos*. In 1998, Tlalpan also had 133 irregular settlements occupying 487.7 hectares, in which 7,566 families lived (representing about 31,862 people) (*La Jornada* 3/3/1998).

One of the main problems that Tlalpan faces is the illegal invasion of large extensions of its territory, which in the past were considered as 'normal' under the auspices of *priísta* administrations. These illegal invasions benefited the PRI, as it continued to win the

support of vulnerable groups of the population. These invasions of land were normally orchestrated by 'popular leaders' who, with the approval of local authorities, would provide 'housing' for the poor. However, once the PRD took office in December of 1997 things began to change. For instance, two months after the recently elected administration started its mandate, the Mayor of Tlalpan, Dr. Martínez Della Roca, decided to 'return to the public' an office which belonged to the locality and which was used for more than 15 years by the PRI without paying any rent. In the view of Della Roca, 'we only did what was expected from us' (*La Jornada* 31/01/1998).

Another action to highlight was when a group of 250 houses where more than 700 people lived in the area known as *El Llano* was removed. Mayor Della Roca opposed the invasion and, escorted by a group of bulldozers, directed the operation to remove the invaders from the area and demolish their houses. Such actions increased the tensions between the recently elected authorities and groups of *priístas* (see *La Jornada* 21/08/1998). In fact, it can be argued that the main problems faced during the first months of the 1997-2000 administration were linked to irregular land invasions led by *priístas*:

In the municipality of Tlalpan former *delegados* (mayors) and local functionaries have been involved in several invasions of Tlalpan's ecological reserves. Other measures implemented by the *priístas* include the establishment of anti-corruption committees in each of the 16 municipalities of Mexico City. According to Cuauhtémoc Gutiérrez, member of the PRI, the aim is to observe the way in which Tlalpan authorities perform and also to denounce any acts of corruption (*La Jornada* 16/1/1998).

Despite the fact that territorial invasions continued throughout 1999¹¹ the 1997-2000 PRD administration was increasingly careful about how it planned the growth of Tlalpan. For instance, in 1999 the Congress of Mexico City approved the construction of a large project in a rural area of Tlalpan, which include 1,825 houses, a large shopping centre, and offices. To 'compensate' the loss of some species of flora and fauna, the firm FRISA, in charge of the project, will donate to the government of Mexico City an area covering over a million square metres for ecological use. The firm will also provide 63 million pesos (around £4.5 million) to improve the sewage infrastructure and the drinking water pipelines in some of Tlalpan's less developed regions (*La Jornada* 27/12/1999).

Tlalpan's population seems quite concerned about the loss of green areas via invasions or private development complexes. Thus, in April 2000, after two months of intense promotion in several municipalities, including Tlalpan, which possess the largest ecological reserves in Mexico City, a consultation process to discuss the future of the green areas was organised. The aims of this democratic initiative were to discover the views of ecological experts, authorities and local inhabitants regarding the future development of these vast but vulnerable ecological reserves. The consultation process was divided into eight discussion tables as follows: 1) Ecological Instruments, 2) Productive Programmes, 3) Hydraulic Projects, 4) Interinstitutional Co-ordination, 5) Education, 6) Vigilance, 7) Natural Areas Management, 8) Towns and Rural Communities (see *La Jornada* 08/04/2000).¹² As a result of this participatory exercise the PRD governor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador stated, 'I would apply rigorously the law to any organisation or group of people intending to invade illegally any ecological reserves.' Yet he also announced an aggressive housing policy that would be implemented to provide housing to those who need it the most (*La Jornada* 08/12/2000).

Land-use has become one of the most difficult problems in Tlalpan. Recently many farmers have sold their properties to private developers. One PRD advisor, Dr. Zermeño,¹³ observed, 'farmers are attracted by the prospect of making a "good sale" of their land, they are attracted by the possibility of not working for the rest of their lives. On the other hand, private developers benefit from large extensions of territory where luxurious flats and shopping centres are built' (Zermeño interview 29/5/1999). This contrast between very developed and underdeveloped areas is one of Tlalpan's main characteristics. The magnitude of the differences between the rich and the poor in Tlalpan, is illustrated by the programme inaugurated by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in April 1998, which aimed to provide medical services to around 46 percent of the 650,000 inhabitants who do not qualify for any type of medical services.¹⁴

To conclude this brief account of Tlalpan's general background, the main problems, can be summarised as:

- Lack of appropriate sewage and piped potable water services
- A demand for greater public security
- The need to preserve ecological areas

- Using the land as designated (i.e. if the land has been declared an ecological reserve, then do not use it for commercial purposes)
- Finding the right balance between economic activities and the environment

The Bureaucratic Structure

The bureaucratic structures in charge of carrying out the new participatory scheme can be divided into two groups, responsible for the non-permanent and permanent participatory mechanisms (Box 3.4 below sets out the responsible authorities). For obvious reasons the analysis here focuses on the operations of local authorities. In Tlalpan, the structure operating the local participatory agenda is the *Subdelegación de Enlace Territorial* (Territorial Link Directorate). The 1997-2000 *subdelegado de enlace territorial*, Mr. Eliseo Moyao, was the citizen participation director responsible for the co-ordination of the five territorial zones within Tlalpan. Mr. Moyao observed that implementing the participatory agenda had not been easy partly as a consequence of preceding *priísta* administrations:

After having a one party structure for 70 years, where citizens did not have 'a say' in any decisions that affected the locality, it is difficult to decide where to start. Undemocratic practices were a constant and there is no trust or solidarity within the members of this and other localities. Residents think about very specific issues, they are selfish, it is only his/her street that matters. The population is totally fragmented, violence is present everywhere, along with corruption and all the bad influences of the PRI. We need to build and consolidate a democratic structure, we need to put in a lot of effort. There is no democratic culture between neighbours and authorities; we are practically forced to develop a democratic culture for this city (Moyao interview 10/4/2000).

Box 3.4 Authorities responsible for each Participatory Practice

	Practice	Authority in Charge
Permanent Participatory Practice	Neighbourhood Committees	Local Authority
Non-Permanent Participatory Practice	Plebiscite	Government of Mexico City
	Referendum	Congress of Mexico City
	Popular Initiative	Congress of Mexico City
	Neighbourhood Consultation	Local Authority
	Neighbourhood Collaboration	Local Authority
	Complaints Unit	Local Authority
	Public Diffusion	Congress of Mexico City and Government of Mexico City
	Public Assembly	Local Authority
	Official Visits	Local Authority in conjunction with Government of Mexico City

The *Subdelegación de Enlace Territorial* channels all public demands to the governmental area in charge of the problem under consideration. This department plays a key role, as it is here where all citizen demands from inferior departments are received and filtered. Moyao declared, 'there are no distinctions made between the different groups asking for our assistance, we do our best to solve most of the problems we deal with— of course, if the solution is within our reach' (Moyao interview 10/4/2000). However, he differentiates between the social sectors of Tlalpan and how their needs would vary based on class.

Groups belonging to the lower classes are not going to have the same needs as those from middle and upper classes. Middle and upper sectors are more concerned about such issues as pollution, ecology or the architecture of the neighbourhood. Quite different worries from those of those from groups of lower class groups, where basic infrastructure problems will be on the agenda (Moyao interview 10/4/2000).

Under Moyao are five *Subdelegados Territoriales*, or Citizen Participation Co-ordinators; each heads one of the five sectoral offices. The core aim of these offices is to function as popular demand reception centres. Jaime Alvarado, Citizen Participation Co-ordinator in the Centre of Tlalpan, describes how this office operates, 'this department assists neighbourhood committees, independent groups of citizens, political parties and NGOs, we try to offer solutions to those demands presented by any of these groups' (Alvarado interview 25/4/2000). This branch of the local administration is constantly interacting with neighbours and, when possible, Citizen Participation Co-ordinators would solve certain problems before sending them to the Territorial Link Directorate.

Co-ordinators play a crucial role in implementing some of the participatory mechanisms included in the CPL. It is here where such schemes as neighbourhood consultations, neighbourhood collaborations, complaints units, public assemblies and official visits are co-ordinated. But above all, it is in this department where intense interaction between authorities and neighbourhood committees takes place. At each Citizen Participation Co-ordinator office there is a project leader who assists neighbourhood committees in the prioritisation of their needs. Project leaders are responsible for following up every case they deal with, and are obliged to give feedback to citizens within a determined period of time. According to Judith Reyes, project leader for the Centre of Tlalpan, 'we aim to provide as much advice as we can. We have to make people aware that there is a

limited budget and that their problems are not going to be solved in one go' (Reyes interview 27/4/2000).

The implementation of the participatory agenda has not been as smooth as hoped, especially at the neighbourhood committee level. Moyao identifies various problems:

The principle of the neighbourhood committees is to offer many opportunities for discussion, but instead, some political parties have been using them as 'political platforms'. Fifty percent of the neighbourhood committees installed in Tlalpan have organisational problems. The PRI and the PRD are the two main political forces disputing the leadership of these participatory bodies. Unfortunately in Tlalpan there are still plenty of *caciques* operating (Moyao interview 10/4/2000).

Despite these problems, the participatory agenda continues to be implemented; indeed, as it will be discussed below, more powers have been given to the permanent participatory structure. To have a clearer perspective on how the participatory agenda has been implemented, the next section presents some practical examples.

The participatory agenda in practice

Permanent participatory practices

The permanent participatory body visualised in the CPL is the neighbourhood committee. This body should enable citizens constantly to interact with their fellow-citizens and local authorities. Furthermore, residents are expected to discuss and provide authorities with some alternative solutions to their problems. Neighbourhood committee members can organise their groups as they wish, meeting as often as they consider it convenient, as long as they meet the legal quota of two meetings per year.

A key factor in the analysis of the neighbourhood committee participatory structure is class. The diversity of the neighbourhoods that compose Tlalpan provide contrasting perspectives of the problems faced by each of them. Generally speaking, middle and upper class neighbourhoods are more concerned about issues such as ecology or maintaining living standards. Because upper and middle classes have already covered their primary needs (infrastructure wise and materially speaking) they seek little more than to 'live in peace.' As stated by Jaime Alvarado, 1997-2000 Citizen Participation Co-ordinator for the centre of Tlalpan, 'most middle and upper class neighbourhoods have their own isolated participatory structures' (Alvarado interview 25/4/2000). It is

middle and upper class residents who live in the luxurious developments described at the beginning of this chapter. In a way, we can say that these classes live in a 'purposely built isolated environment' where local authority intervention, apart from being service providers, (i.e. rubbish collection, water services) seems unnecessary.

On the other hand, most working class neighbourhoods need to cover their primary needs, so a neighbourhood representative structure becomes an important issue. Two choices are available for the poorer sectors, either sticking to traditional leaders ignoring the CPL permanent structure, or participating in the reformed neighbourhood committee framework. Of course, the aim of the CPL was to dissolve those forms of local authoritarianism practised by local *caciques* by establishing neighbourhood committees that would reform local leaderships, promote democratic values, and involve the public in decision-making processes. But has this necessarily happened?

It is true that, theoretically speaking, the CPL provides the legal framework to give neighbourhood committees an official status to promote local initiatives and address social issues. But certain independent organisations also have more 'informal power' than those associations grouped under the formal scheme. For instance, we have Julieta's informal association. She represents around 1,500 families, and is recognised, by local authorities, as one of Tlalpan's most charismatic informal leaders, she has fought for three generations – along with her family – for the construction of basic infrastructure projects in her neighbourhood. Julieta and her associates decided not to form a neighbourhood committee because from her point of view, the only way to achieve progress is by 'pushing' local authorities directly and not through neighbourhood committees. In her own words:

We did not group as a neighbourhood committee because we felt our independence threatened. I know those in the *delegacion* in charge of solving our problems and it is easier for me to try to find them than to try to set up one of the types of meetings established in the new legislation. Functioning as a neighbourhood committee could jeopardise the little power we possess (Julieta interview 3/5/2000).

Another problem affecting the operation of neighbourhood committee meetings is that party political preferences have emerged as an element of internal division. The Neighbourhood Committee Co-ordinator for Tlalpan's *Pueblos* region, Martín Flores, observed that 'there are cases where PRD committee members would not accept

working with PRI or PAN committee members' (Flores interview 14/4/2000). Tlalpan authorities have openly admitted that political interests or parties have corrupted the neutral character of neighbourhood committees. To see some examples of how local authorities have labelled each committee with a political organisation see Box 3.5 below.

Box 3.5 Neighbourhood Organisations and Political Parties

Name of representative	Neighbourhood location	Political preference
Jerónimo Váldez García	San Miguel Topilejo	PRI
Miguel Pichardo Galindo	Santa Cruz	PAN
Benjamín Torres Becerra	San Pedro Martir	PRD
María Guadalupe Morones	Cruz Xochintepec	PRD
José Alfredo Moreno	Los Angeles	No political affinity

Source: Tlalpan local authorities

So how did this happen? Political parties supported community leaders to become neighbourhood representatives, or vice-versa, neighbourhood leaders offered their services to political parties with the promise of working for those organisations in the future. These internal disputes have caused the withdrawal of independent citizens who were interested in participating and who now are disappointed about the whole *raison d'être* of the neighbourhood committees.

This political intervention has negatively affected the consolidation of the neighbourhood committee framework as an effective citizen-led participatory mechanism. According to Tlalpan Citizen Participation Director, Eliseo Moyao,

In summer 2000 only fifty percent of Tlalpan's neighbourhood forums continue operating based on what is established in the 1998 legislation. Those organisations that do not operate under the legal framework of the new legislation keep on channelling their demands through the types of local leadership the legislation aimed getting rid of (Moyao interview 10/4/2000).

The next section outlines some examples of how 'official' and 'unofficial' channels of communication operate, to provide a general perspective on how each branch has developed. The presentation also aims to understand more about the role of political parties in both types of bodies.

a) 'Official' neighbourhood committees

When 'official' neighbourhood meetings are held, these would commonly deal with collective problems, although particular issues can also make the agenda. For instance, during the meeting held on 2/4/2000 the Belisario Domínguez neighbourhood committee discussed stopping celebrating parties in a civic centre built for cultural and sport purposes. Neighbours thought it was not fair to rent this communal area for weddings and other social events in a residential area that does not have enough parking spaces and where the noise is unbearable during each celebration. After discussing the main problems surrounding this case, the following agreements were reached:

- 1) Residents agreed that the civic centre was built as a space for promoting culture and sport activities and not as a 'party-centre'. They also highlighted the fact that the centre did not need the safety regulations (fire extinguishers or emergency exits) necessary to hold social events. Furthermore, by holding massive events in a residential area, the organisers of such events were violating the Urban Development Plan of the Federal District.
- 2) Neighbours agreed that the community centre should be used as a place for promoting education (by having a small library for the neighbourhood), health centre (where indoors sports or health consultations could also take place), or as an internet-cafe.
- 3) It was also agreed that the entrance of vehicles not belonging to any of the neighbours living in the neighbourhood would be forbidden.
- 4) A final point was that the members of this neighbourhood committee would invite the general secretariat of the senate, who is in charge of the operation of the civic centre, to inform neighbourhood committee members about the future uses of the civic centre.

The CPL established that neighbourhood committees are obliged to have at least two meetings per year. Normally there is no fixed date or time, and the programming of these sessions is mostly determined by the issues affecting each neighbourhood. For instance, according to neighbourhood committee leader Irma Zuchitl Dávila, 'we meet once every two or three weeks. If something urgent occurs between meetings, then an emergency meeting is organised' (Dávila interview 2/5/2000). Some neighbourhood committees take notes or a minute of the issues dealt with in each gathering, while others only do so when local authorities get involved.

The number of participants in neighbourhood committee meetings varies according to the issues on the agenda. If the issue affects certain group of neighbours, then they would take part, otherwise they would mostly not be interested. Dávila recalls:

The people who take part in the meetings are always different, if the issue is important for them then they would participate, if it is not then they would not do so. Generally speaking people are apathetic, and if we add to this factor the difficult economic situation we are facing, then the indices of participation are quite low. For example, a young married couple, they both have to work, and once they return back home, they are too tired to get involved in their community issues (Dávila interview 2/5/2000).

Indeed, an important aspect is the lack of interest shown by young people in taking part in these meetings. As neighbourhood committee leader Juan Mújica complained: 'we still do not know how to involve young people, participation is dominated by people over 30' (Mújica interview 27/4/2000).

Security issues, at the core of the neighbourhood agenda

The problem dominating the agenda in most meetings deals with public security. Prior to the implementation of the new legislation, Tlalpan's authorities were already very concerned about the high indices of criminality in the locality and attempted to support residents' efforts to reduce these figures. The following lengthy extract from Tlalpan advisor Sergio Zermeño captures these points effectively:

If there has been an agreement between the groups discussing the 1998 participatory reform, this is that the main participatory unit should be the neighbourhood, or its equivalent in rural areas. In the municipality of Tlalpan we have decided to divide the municipality into 250 units to start a security scheme. However, the main problem that we are facing is that when we analyse most of the 250 units, there happens to be a spontaneous creation of groups that come together to face the city's high levels of insecurity. These groups are much smaller than the units we visualised, citizens group by street or even by a determined number of houses. And the number of 250 units proposed by Tlalpan's authorities could exponentially grow to over a thousand small security bodies. When we talk to neighbours, it is difficult to convince them to not fence themselves off, or at least not to do so in such small and irrational divisions, because in the long run they are going to run out of money to pay the surveillance of their 'urban cages'...our aim is to find the balance between participatory spaces and security spaces, always bearing in mind that the aim is to strengthen our associative life and to increase our levels of trust. We cannot keep hiding in our 'cage' in front of the television, with that attitude we are not going to solve our community problems (*La Jornada* 13/06/1998).

In direct relationship to this quote, one of the changes that has been recently introduced by the Government of Mexico City is to provide neighbourhood committees with a budget. Governor López Obrador, introduced the 'participatory budgets' as a means for neighbourhood committee members to discuss and decide how best to use these

resources. In a survey carried out by the newspaper *La Jornada* 11/6/2001 the great majority of the neighbours living in 14 out of 16 localities that compose Mexico City agreed to spend their 2001 'neighbourhood budget' to improve their security (i.e. buying police patrols, security lights, hiring more security personnel). The government of Mexico City decided to assign 700 million pesos¹⁵ to the neighbourhood committee participatory structure that operates in each of the 16 localities of the city. The average amount that each committee would receive is around 500,000 pesos,¹⁶ this amount could vary depending on the number of citizens in each body, however, none of these bodies would receive more than 2 million pesos.¹⁷

Neighbourhood committee members were given a list of options on how to spend their respective budgets, including the cost of such goods as alarms, police patrols, motorcycles and other items related to security. Each neighbourhood committee had to hold an extraordinary meeting to determine how to use these resources. This process is certainly the first attempt to give 'real decision-making power' to these participatory structures, as no one before had tried to carry out such an ambitious project with the co-operation of neighbourhood committees.

b) 'Unofficial' forms of participation

Although one of the core principles of the CPL is to eliminate informal community leaders, there are still plenty of them operating. In some cases, these community intermediaries continue to exercise more 'real' power than the recently created neighbourhood structures. Most of these leaders are known by authorities and are seen as a threat to the stability of the locality. This is one of the reasons why authorities, generally speaking, always listen to their demands. Normally, this type of leader 'jumps' the normal channels of communication and would practically invade local authorities' offices demanding the solution of a particular problem. They would typically turn up with a large amount of people supporting the solution of a problem, as they think that the larger the number of supporters accompanying them, the faster authorities would solve their problems.

To see how these informal community representatives operate, we attended a meeting held on July 2000 where Mr. Rosas, who is a PRI sympathiser and has been an informal leader for more than twenty years, led a group of more than sixty people to put pressure

on local authorities regarding the provision of sewage and piped drinking water. Rosas turned up at Tlalpan local government's offices to meet those responsible for the provision of the services needed by the members of his organisation. During the first part of the meeting, Rosas proposed the creation of a commission to follow closely the implementation of these projects. He also questioned the competence of the staff surrounding the mayor, by saying 'in this administration no one ever sticks to what you promised during your political campaign' (Rosas 2000).

When Tlalpan local officials offered an explanation to the water problem, Rosas interrupted them and stated: 'we do not want an explanation, we already know what you are going to say, we want to know who is going to solve our problems'. Nevertheless the Water Commission official Mr Machado, stated that Tlalpan's water authorities had already been working to provide water to this particular neighbourhood, but that the services have not been fully covered yet. Rosas responded that this was untrue and that most of his neighbourhood still did not receive a drop of water (Rosas 2000).

Rosas also wanted to know what was happening with the construction of the sewage system previously promised for the neighbourhood of Achalco. He noted that they had covered the necessary legal requirements to start the construction of the network. Machado told Rosas that an agreement with a construction company had been reached, and that they would start working soon on the construction of the sewage network. Rosas made Machado promise a date to start the works in front of the 60 people attending the meeting.

The way Mr. Rosas' organisation operates cannot be compared to the modus operandi of neighbourhood committees. During this meeting it was Rosas who set the rhythm of the meeting and made authorities promise fixed times and dates for the solution of his representatives' problems. Moreover, the mayor participated in the session, giving a 'higher status' to the meeting.

What can be learnt from this type of meeting is that authorities do feel threatened when dealing with informal leaders. In one sense, informal leaders represent one of the greatest obstacles to the CPL agenda according to the 1998 legislation. A deeper

analysis of the way in which unofficial leaders operate will be presented in the last part of this chapter.

Non-permanent participatory practices

a) Referendum and Plebiscite

The non-permanent participatory mechanism used more frequently is the plebiscite. In May 1999 a plebiscite was organised by the government of Mexico City, which aimed indirectly to persuade opposition political parties (the PRI and the PAN) to conclude the political reform started in 1998. By 1999 a considerable number of issues were still unresolved so PRD authorities wanted to involve the public as a sort of 'pressure mechanism' to influence the decisions that still needed to be approved at the Federal Congress. The plebiscite was based on the following questions:

- 1) Do you agree that Mexico City requires its own constitution?
- 2) Do you agree that the government of Mexico City must have the legal capacity to decide its own budget?
- 3) Do you agree that Mexico City should receive federal funds for poverty programmes?
- 4) Do you agree that the congress of Mexico City should have the legal power to remove the governor of the city and not the senate?
- 5) Do you agree that the congress of Mexico City should decide over the City's gender issues, and not the federal congress?
- 6) Do you think it is necessary to re-define the functions of each of the 16 mayors of the City?
- 7) Do you think it is necessary to establish a plural body of political parties as a counterweight to the authority exercised by each of the 16 mayors of the City?
- 8) Do you agree that is necessary to establish an external body of independent citizens to scrutinise the finances of each of the 16 localities of Mexico City?
- 9) Do you agree that the Judicial Secretariat and the Security Secretariat of the City should be appointed by the governor of Mexico City?

2,820 ballot boxes were installed throughout the 16 localities of Mexico City, and 163,000 citizens took part (*La Jornada* 17/5/1999). The plebiscite was criticised by opposition political parties (PRI and PAN) as being 'biased and expensive' (*La Jornada* 14/05/1999).¹⁸ Most citizens who took part in the process voted in favour of the 9 initiatives proposed, and their responses were sent to the federal congress for discussion (*La Jornada* 17/5/1999).

The second example of a consultation took place in January 2001. The aim of this process was to discover what the public thought about creating new legislation

governing protest marches in Mexico City. When the consultation was initiated there were disputes between the Government of Mexico City and the Congress of Mexico City, to decide which body should lead the process. In the end it was decided that the congress directed the consultation, which lasted for 5 days (between 26 and 30 January 2001). Some 56,000 people participated and 90 percent supported legislation to regulate protest marches in the capital (*La Jornada* 01/02/2001).

b) Neighbourhood Collaboration, Neighbourhood Consultation and Complaints Unit

According to the 1998 legislation neighbourhood collaborations and neighbourhood consultations are mainly organised by local authorities, however, members of neighbourhood committees, NGOs and other external actors have played a key role to setting up these gatherings. The case below is an example of how citizens from diverse backgrounds contributed to try to rescue a green area in Tlalpan. It is an example of how neighbourhood collaboration, neighbourhood consultation, and a kind of complaint unit were assembled in one big participatory experience.

In 1939 President Cárdenas declared the Fuentes Brotantes Park a natural protected area. One of the most important aspects of this declaration was that it did not allow anyone to build houses or live in the park. The original extension of the park covered 129 acres, and its main attraction was the water source and lake running from the upper section of the park downhill. Unfortunately, by the year 2000 there were only 20 acres remaining of the original 129 protected by Cárdenas, most of them lost due to the disordered growth of the city and currently used for farming or as shopping centres. Mexico City's disordered growth is the main argument for the virtual extinction of this green area. During the summer of 2000 a group of people interested in saving what is left of the park gathered to discuss alternative regeneration projects. For such a titanic task, groups of ecologists, neighbourhood committees, schools, and a commission of Tlalpan officials got involved. Neighbourhood collaboration was perceived as essential to save the park, because residents living near it were to become permanent vigilantes. Neighbourhood consultation played an important role in the agenda, as through residents' visions, those interested in saving the park were able to get a clearer idea of the social conditions surrounding Fuentes Brotantes. Meetings were held on a weekly basis, and to give the reader a brief idea of the sorts of issues dealt with at meetings, here is the agenda discussed in the meeting held on 19/05/2000:

- Open-school (a proposal that the park is used for educational purposes by the schools involved in the project). The proposal includes building a greenhouse and growing vegetables and fruits in a pre-determined area of the park.
- Consolidating an investment fund, by inviting local entrepreneurs and other large companies to cover part of the restoration costs.
- Establish as soon as possible the territorial limits of the park (as there is confusion about its current boundaries).
- Create a scientific committee, to deal with all the environmental aspects surrounding the restoration of the park.
- It was agreed that only the neighbourhood committees adjacent to the park would be those with voice and vote in the park's trust. However, if other committees would like to get involved, they could do so but would not have voice or vote in the trust.
- Start promoting 'small' actions (i.e. rubbish collection) while awaiting the final report about the total territorial extension of the park.
- It was agreed to create a park's partnership trust for co-ordinating the restoration effort.

A 'save the park' commission was established and its members soon realised that co-ordinating the efforts of so many organisations was not going to be easy.¹⁹ In addition to the co-ordination efforts other problems emerged as the discussions intensified. For instance, the fact that some of the neighbours collaborating and being consulted lived in areas considered to be part of the ecological reserve delayed the process. The first sessions were characterised by a participative audience, all groups involved seemed to realise that to achieve such an ambitious project self interest and other differences must be left aside. However, once Tlalpan's legal team found that some families were living in, or rather invading, a section of the park, then the spirit of the sessions changed. According to the law, these families had to be relocated outside the park, but public pressure stopped this from happening. Residents put pressure on the 'save the park' commission to stop the discussions and, after asking for official advice from Tlalpan's legal team, members of the park commission had to inform pressure groups that those families living in the park would continue doing so.²⁰ Although the meetings continued taking place, more problems arose, as some members of the trust began defending their personal interests, and forgot about the original aims of the gatherings. The case of Samuel Moreno who was representing one of the neighbourhood committees is illustrative. He owned a small restaurant in the park and during the sessions he hinted about the necessity of building easier access facilities for the restaurant area, so he could sell more.

These problems fragmented the park commission and the original aims of the project were postponed. Time constraints also had a negative effect on the whole initiative, as Tlalpan's 1997-2000 PRD local authorities were about to finish their mandate when the rescue process began, and once the 2000-2006 administration took office the project was forgotten.

c) Public Assemblies and Official Visits

The aim of public assemblies is to give citizens the opportunity to demand greater information about a particular matter, as well as making proposals for determined policies. During these assemblies, residents would provide authorities with a general background of the problem they face, along with records of previous responses they might have received. Normally, after the residents' exposition, authorities then offer alternative possible solution(s) to the problem(s) presented. Residents would then proceed to ask the details (office phone number, beeper, or mobile phone number) of the local official to be reached in case the agreement is not respected.

One meeting took place on 27 May 2000 in Tlalpan's central meeting room between Chichicaspa residents and authorities, with more than 100 residents from the neighbourhoods of Chichicaspa, Bosques del Pedregal, and Contreras present. The problem in this part of Tlalpan is that residents are being charged for water services that they do not receive. The water network that is supposed to supply this region is empty; nonetheless neighbours punctually receive their water-bills. The core point of the meeting was a very simple one, why is the Tlalpan water commission charging for a service that is not being provided? Since 1989 the residents of Chichicaspa and Bosques del Pedregal had to carry water in buckets or when possible hire a lorry with a water tank and collect the water from a water source located in the neighbourhood of Contreras, not far from where they live. The whole operation is time consuming and exhaustive. So it is vital for them to know when the water network would work properly.

As a proof that authorities did not stick to what they promised, a group of residents showed Mr. Machado, of Tlalpan's Water Commission a letter signed by him in 1997 promising that the water network would work normally that year. Unfortunately for the residents, three years later the water network was still not working. A week before this

meeting, residents delivered a letter explaining the situation, and authorities' response to the missive was that all residents, in this particular area, were already receiving water. This claim was denied during the meeting; indeed, according to some neighbours, personnel from Tlalpan's water commission did not even bother to turn up and check what the current situation at Chichicarpa was; the authorities took for granted that water services were already provided.

During the first part of the meeting neighbours heavily criticised the local authorities, especially the water commission, for doing such an inefficient job. The first to speak was Chichicarpa neighbourhood committee leader Mr. Juan López, followed by a group of neighbours who expressed their concerns about being fooled again by their local authorities. The response provided by the local authorities centred on explaining that the main problem is that there is not enough water in the region. Although the construction of five water tanks was planned to solve all the water needs of this area, only two of them had been built by 2000. According to Machado, 'the network is properly designed, but a water network without water cannot work, we must also consider that there are water leaks throughout the network, preventing the water from reaching all the neighbourhoods in the zone. We must think of building new networks that could help this region' (Machado 2000). Mr. Machado stressed the importance of solving this problem together with residents, pointing out that Tlalpan's authorities do not have the resources to solve such problems immediately. Finally, Mr. Machado promised that the water infrastructure was going to be modified to facilitate residents' immediate access to water. After Mr. Machado's explanation, residents accepted the proposal and the meeting concluded, however, they stated that they were going to keep a close eye on Tlalpan's authorities to check whether they stuck to their word or not. Despite the fact that the changes promised by Machado were fulfilled, the water problem persisted and was 'inherited' by the 2000-2006 administration.

Analysis of Citizen Participation Mechanisms

Neighbourhood Committees

Neighbourhood committees operate permanently, so their complexity is greater than any of the non-permanent mechanisms. The problems start from the way in which the 1998 legislation divides the city. According to one of Tlalpan's informal leaders, Socorro Jiménez, 'travelling long distances and differences between each neighbourhoods'

needs have contributed to the lack of interest showed by the public to get involved in the initiative' (Jímenez interview 18/5/2000). Furthermore, Tlalpan informal leader Julieta also adds, 'the government of the city made a very uneven division of some neighbourhoods and in some cases divided neighbourhoods having very similar problems and joined them with others which did not have the same demands at all' (Julieta interview 3/5/2000). The 'division problem' is in a way related to class. For instance, it would be illogical to put in the same participatory unit an upper class neighbourhood that has got all their basic infrastructure problems solved with neighbourhoods facing such problems as lack of piped drinking water or electricity.

A second problem concerns the promotion of the legislation. According to Julieta, 'the government did not effectively promote the citizen participation law, the general public do not participate because they do not know what the benefits of doing so in a neighbourhood committee are' (Julieta interview 3/5/2000). For instance, Tlalpan resident, Alfonso García Sánchez stated, 'whenever I have a problem I go directly to the local authorities because I do not know the functions that my neighbourhood representatives have' (García Sánchez interview 5/11/2001). This view was also supported by Gustavo Carrizales and Fabiola Jímenez, who also live in Tlalpan, but who do not believe that through their neighbourhood representatives they could expect to solve the problems of their respective neighbourhoods.²¹ It seems that Tlalpan – and Mexico City's local authorities in general – need to promote more clearly the capacities of these participatory bodies, else the average citizen will keep addressing his/her community problems directly to local officials, ignoring the potential of the neighbourhood representative scheme.

A third issue is that very high expectations were created by the operation of these neighbourhood bodies. *Pueblos* Neighbourhood Committee Co-ordinator Martín Flores recalls:

During the first three months that the legislation operated, neighbourhood committees worked according to the programme and to the law. After people began to realise the true limitations of the legislation, people lost their faith in this structure and stopped participating. A reform that can guarantee greater empowerment of the citizenry is required (Flores interview 14/4/2000).

A fourth factor is that in some circumstances the local functionaries dealing with the neighbourhood committee structure give priority to the needs of those groups

represented by informal leaders. Committee leader Samuel Moreno comments, 'I would say that our performance is highly based on how good or bad relationship we (as a neighbourhood representatives) have with official authorities. In some cases neighbourhood organisations are given less importance than informal leaders' (Moreno interview 16/5/2000).

A fifth element deals with the reform promoted by the 2000-2006 governor of Mexico City López Obrador. Although the initiative to provide citizens with a budget seems a positive one, not all citizens agree. For Samuel Moreno,

I personally think that should not happen, (providing neighbourhood committees with a budget) it could be a good campaign plan, but that would definitely bring corruption. If currently we are having problems to start the initiative imagine once you speak about money, neighbours would start almost killing each other to gain these positions. We should not manage resources, but neighbourhood committees should have enough faculties to operate as truly democratic structures (Moreno interview 16/5/2000).

The idea of providing neighbourhood committees with a budget could affect negatively the unconsolidated structure of the neighbourhood committees. In the view of Juan Mújica, having a budget can be considered as being under cross fire, as there are plenty of people who misuse public budgets. If they do so, (provide neighbours with a budget) corruption is going to definitely take place (see Mújica interview 2000). For other neighbourhood leaders the initiative should be about giving more legal attributes rather than providing a budget. Thus Germán Gúzman believes 'we would like to have more faculties in decision making processes, because the law limits our deliberation and participation power' (Gúzman interview 27/4/2000). After listening to these views one might think that perhaps the initiative should be about giving more powers to this local structure of community participation rather than attaching it to the monetary element of a budget.

The last point deals with the involvement of political parties through neighbourhood organisations. Although the CPL forbids the involvement of political parties, they did participate, especially during the neighbourhood election process. It is true that the PRI's influence in neighbourly based organisations has diminished, however it is also true that other political institutions have replaced those spaces left by the official party. As commented Coapa Neighbourhood Committee Co-ordinator Alejandro Pérez:

The PRD and the PAN saw an opportunity to 'fill-in' those spaces left by the PRI. Neighbourly based organisations will always be a good forum for representing community interests and a good platform for future political careers. In some neighbourhoods the influence of political parties has been evident as some leaders counted on the support of these organisations to reach the neighbourhood leader position (Pérez interview 24/4/2000).

Other views collected admit that they had to get involved in a political institution to gain experience as a citizen representative, neighbourhood committee leader Maurilio Vázquez affirmed:

I began working in the community 15 years ago, and when you work at the community level you realise that everything is ruled by structures and one of those structures is the one constituted by political parties. If you want to perform any social activity at the local level you need to be involved in a political force, I tried to avoid it as much as I could but for the last three years I became a member of the PAN. But I do not expect to receive any personal benefits. In San Pedro the PAN had no presence and this is what motivated me to become a PAN member, we need to accept different postures and ideologies and that is why I joined an opposition party. Having options is part of a democracy (Maurilio Vázquez interview 12/5/2000).

During the 2000 presidential election some organisations were defending very specific political interests, mainly supporting one of Mexico's three major political parties: PRI, PAN, or PRD. According to 1997-2000 *Coapa* Neighbourhood Committee Co-ordinator Alejandro Perez, 'during the 2000 general election there were committee leaders who openly supported political parties and who were even receiving a salary for doing this promotion' (Pérez interview 24/4/2000). In such a politicised environment perhaps the idea of the PRI to give neighbourhood organisations party support is simply realistic. If political parties are going to take part in the election of neighbourhood organisations anyway, then it might be better to have them officially represented.

Informal Neighbourhood Committees

Local authorities play an important part in strengthening neighbourhood committees, because if they continue giving preference to informal organisations, then 'official neighbourhood organisations' would not be perceived as having the necessary strength to solve community issues. Local authorities have to get used to applying the CPL and not do what informal leaders do, which is to 'jump' any type of official regulations and tackle issues directly at local authorities' offices. One of the aspects that has caused confusion within Tlapan's population is that there is not enough information about the

advantages and disadvantages of organising through the CPL participatory mechanisms. This lack of information contributes to public scepticism about the way in which participatory mechanisms operate. As informal neighbourhood leader Julieta observes:

I would like to ask any of the 16 *delegados* if they promoted the initiative? I would like to ask them if they gave enough information about it? I did not know what the initiative was about, and this was only a few days before the neighbourhood committee leader election took place (Julieta interview 3/5/2000).

Not surprisingly, many citizen organisations remain independent, According to informal community leader, Socorro Jiménez, the reasons for not joining the neighbourhood committee are the following:

I do not know the programme (neighbourhood committees) and most people in the municipality do not have a clue about it, this is why we preferred to stay as an independent organisation. If local authorities were to guarantee us that under the new scheme we would have the same benefits, then we will form a neighbourhood committee otherwise I do not see any reason to do so (Jiménez interview 18/5/2000).

These informal organisations have created their own networks within the governmental apparatus, these contacts have been developed through a long-term sort of labour relationship. The mediator role puts this type of leaders in a privileged position. In some cases, it allows to ask for political favours as a condition for maintaining the stability of the neighbourhood.

I know the channels of communication between authorities and citizens I write the letters some other neighbourhood committees write for local authorities. They (committee leaders) sign all the documents, but I'm the one pushing them to keep track of what is happening with all the initiatives presented. Me and my mum do everything, I do not want to take the credit for doing all these, I just want to work for the community, but these people use my experience to achieve their goals (Julieta interview 3/5/2000).

If working class citizens prefer to conduct their demands in a neighbourhood committee, they have three possible scenarios. Firstly, they could find a neighbourhood committee led by someone with very specific political interests,²² which would not be very useful. Secondly, they could find a committee divided by personal or party interests. Finally, they could find a committee working properly, but without strong legal bases to giving a rapid response. As stated by neighbourhood committee leader Maurilio Vázquez:

All social policies are co-opted by the previous political system, and when you want to take an active role within the neighbourhood committee, according to the law, you are only authorised to be a channel, but no more than that. We should have more legal faculties, it should be a public thing to decide and to take a more active role regarding different policies implemented by local authorities (Vázquez interview 12/5/2000).

Referendum and Plebiscite

The first case presented in this chapter suggested several criticisms of the way in which the consultation was implemented. Although the ten questions presented in the process were relevant to the development and further consolidation of the participatory agenda, the whole purpose of the consultation does not seem very clear. The CPL establishes that when a plebiscite (this consultation was promoted as a plebiscite) takes place, then authorities must act in accordance with what the people decide. However, in this particular case, the result of the consultation could not have influenced in any way the authorities' decision over the ten issues covering the agenda., because it would still have to be voted at congress. The result of this consultation was given to congressmen in an attempt to influence their decisions over the political reform of the city; it was like saying, 'if the public says it, then you as their representatives must approve it'. To date the reforms proposed in the 1999 consultation are still under discussion, and although the majority of the public supported the proposed reforms, their participation did not have a direct impact in the outcome.

The second participatory process was simpler. It is true that protest marches constantly disrupt the traffic of the city, but we believe that the motion to create a protest march law was necessary and did not need to be put to the public. Although this consultation process lasted longer than the previous one, the number of people who participated was less. Not surprisingly, the majority of the people who took part in this process thought that a protest march law was essential for the city.

If the PRD keeps on implementing participatory processes where citizens do not see an immediate impact on the outcomes of the issues they are asked to participate in, then it may be putting at risk its political capital. When citizens do not perceive the result of their participation immediately, then they could be demotivated and stop taking part in these processes. Although the PRD has been openly promoting the utilisation of participatory mechanisms, they could be misunderstanding the role of these processes.

They should perhaps take more care when implementing these processes to stop what has been identified in Mexico City as 'consultitis'. The term has been developed by some members of the PRI, and it refers to PRD's apparent will to consult the population about almost every issue related to the City. Consultation processes carry a high political and economic cost that can influence the 'normal' election process.

Neighbourhood Collaboration, Neighbourhood Consultation and Complaints Unit

In the example presented in this chapter, neighbourhood collaboration and consultation transformed from practices of preservation to practices of self-protection. The weekly meetings held at the Fuentes Brotantes Park began as a good example of how neighbourhood organisations can play a key role in larger networks involving a wide variety of actors. The information provided by the neighbours taking part in the meetings served as an important database, especially regarding the main problems surrounding the area of the park. Both neighbourhood collaboration and consultation were at the core of the weekly agenda, which also covered ecological and public security issues. However, once the legal team determined that some neighbours taking part in the meetings were living in parts of the park that they should not, then the tone of the meetings changed. The willingness with which neighbours were co-operating with the members of the 'external' groups interested in saving the park changed to display a greater interest and unity in keeping their own houses.

It appears that the positive side of neighbourhood collaboration and consultation is that through any of these processes citizens do receive information before a decision is taken. Although in the case of the Fuentes Brotantes Park, it was through these mechanisms that the initiative to save the park was halted, we can say that both practices worked as a sort of 'defence-mechanism' for those groups not wanting to be relocated. This example of neighbourhood collaboration and consultation therefore highlights the relevance of informing before acting, which seems to be one of the greatest concerns of the PRD in Mexico City.

Public Assemblies and Official Visits

In the case presented above, authorities managed to divert the attention of the neighbourhood committee by providing alternative solutions to their water problem. The authority was in the last months of the 1997-2000 local mandate, so it was easy to

promise 'express solutions' to problems that need months, if not years, to be solved. This is a point that needs to be addressed by authorities, because if neighbourhood committee leaders are not taken seriously or are fooled, then people's interest in participating in these bodies could be diminished. If neighbourhood committees are not given the importance accorded by the CPL, then informal leaders (i.e. local *caciques*) will continue dominating neighbourhood organisations. Neighbourhood committee leaders need the support of local authorities to consolidate as a genuinely influential force in the municipality. As stated by neighbourhood committee leader Maurilio Vázquez:

The government has the faculty or the capacity to make us strong or not making us strong. Why? Because the citizen who takes an active role in the neighbourhood committee knows the problems he/she is facing and could do something to put pressure on authorities. But those controlling the political power have the last word. Whether they will use neighbourhood committees as part of a 'political machinery' or whether they will give citizens the possibility to influence the outcome of essential political decisions is the authorities' choice and we have little to say (Vázquez interview 12/5/2000).

Conclusion

Seeking an alternative style of government to previous *priísta* administrations, the PRD established the CPL to offer the public real participatory opportunities where their say would be part of those decisions reached at the local level. Tlalpan represents an interesting 'participatory laboratory,' not only due to the creation of the 1998 CPL – which as discussed above encompasses a wide range of permanent and non-permanent mechanisms – but also based on the way this participatory agenda has been implemented. One of the most important aspects identified deals with the fact that the cession of power promised in the CPL has not necessarily taken place; the data collected in Tlalpan shows that citizens have not experienced a genuine transfer of power. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that one of the main concerns of the PRD in Mexico City and in Tlalpan was to get rid of pre-existing PRI *clientelistic* structures that operated at the local level. However, it seems that local authorities underestimated the possibility that if the public does not feel empowered then, the poor in particular are practically forced to use whichever channels are available to improve their living conditions. Citizens (especially lower class ones) still feel that the channels of communication represented

by informal community leaders can be more effective in some circumstances, thereby reducing the potential of the participatory schemes proposed in the CPL.

Creating a 'citizen participation system' proved to involve more than simply providing a legal structure or the adequate channels of communication between authorities and citizens. As even if the most empowering participatory schemes are outlined on paper, the way these mechanisms are implemented is crucial in determining their success or failure. Despite the PRD's democratic aims, the way Tlalpan authorities have implemented their initiatives has considerably limited their potential.

The case also shows that class is an aspect that has to be considered when participatory mechanisms are implemented, – especially in an environment where upper middle neighbourhoods are built next to working class ones – as the needs faced by both social groups vary widely. The upper classes are more concerned about such issues as pollution or traffic, whilst the lower classes still confront basic infrastructure problems dealing with sewage or piped drinking water. The high involvement of political parties, especially in permanent participatory structures, is an issue that will have to be addressed, and perhaps the idea of the PRI to allow political parties to participate in these elections is a possible solution.

Despite the criticisms presented above, the implementation of the participatory schemes in Tlalpan did bring greater transparency to the local administration. And, in some cases, these mechanisms (e.g. neighbourhood committees, neighbourhood consultations) proved effective 'self-defence' mechanisms against the unilateral decision-making that characterised most local administrations in Mexico. But are these trends the same elsewhere? The next chapter introduces the case of Puebla, where political changes at the local level have affected the way the participatory agenda has been carried out by the last three administrations.

Notes

¹ Previously the governor of Mexico City was appointed by the President. In the 1993 plebiscite 331,376 citizens participated and the great majority voted to the democratic election of the governor of the City (*La Jornada* 21/3/1998).

² Some of the reforms include the establishment of Mexico City as the 32nd state of the country, and also the 'official' municipalisation of the 16 *delegaciones* that form the capital (see *La Jornada* 16/2/1998).

³ For more details about non-permanent and permanent forms of citizen participation see chapter 2.

⁴ Replacing the division used by the 'block representatives' initiative implemented during the 1980s and throughout most of the 1990s.

⁵ These are the four territorial divisions found in Mexico City: a *colonia* and a *barrio* are commonly known as a neighbourhood, a *pueblo* is used to define a town or a rural area and a *unidad habitacional* is an area composed of purpose built groups of flats.

⁶ Candidates would not be permitted to use any particular colour during their campaigns, instead the law establishes that numbers should be used (see article 94 of the 1998 Citizen Participation Law).

⁷ See articles 91, 92 and 93 of the 1998 CPL.

⁸ There has only been one plebiscite implemented, the case will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁹ For further details see 1998 CPL.

¹⁰ For more information regarding *jefes de manzana* see Safa 1997.

¹¹ For example, 250 people led by the *priísta* local MP Mr. Humberto Serrano tried to invade an ecological reserve of the municipality. Luis Gómez, the judicial secretariat in Tlalpan threatened that the municipality will sue the Agrarian Confederation of Mexico, political arm of the PRI, for the illegal action and also for damaging some official vehicles (*La Jornada* 12/8/1999).

¹² The NGOs involved in the consultation were: Frente Unitario Progresista de Tlaltengo, Comuneros Productores de San Francisco, Tlalnepantla, Xochimilco; Campesinos Ejidatarios Independientes de San Gregorio Atlapulco, Circulo de Madres Trabajadoras Campesinas, Asociación Interdisciplinaria de Ciudadanos de Sta Cruz.

¹³ Advisor of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas during the 1997-2000 governor mandate.

¹⁴ This means that more than 90 percent of the population is not covered by any type of medical services.

¹⁵ Around £ 50 million.

¹⁶ Around £ 35,500.

¹⁷ Around £ 143,000.

¹⁸ In fact the consultation costed 4.5 million pesos (approximately £ 320,000).

¹⁹ The commission was constituted by the following members: Representing the neighbours: Fuentes Brotantes, Cantera, and Camisetas neighbourhood committee co-ordinators. Representing the ecologists: Dr. Luis Sánchez (Altavista NGO). Representing Tlalpan's legal department: Mr. Rene Cervantes. Representing Tlalpan's hydraulic commission: Mr. Hector Machado. Trust leader: Mr. Emilio de Antuñano. The schools: Lancaster School representative, Peterson School, representative, British American School representative, José Azueta School representative, 163 Technical School representative. Secretary: Ms. Olivia Araujo.

²⁰ Political reasons could have also influenced this decision, as elections were about to be held during the summer 2000.

²¹ See Carrizales interview 5/11/2001 and Jiménez interview 8/11/2001.

²² San Pedro Martír provides an example. Where there is a so called community leader that has been working for twenty years and he wanted to use the neighbourhood structure as a step to get an independent candidature to represent his local constituency (cited from interview with Jaime Alvarado 2000).

Chapter 4

Puebla

Introduction

Although participatory schemes are generally intended to generate confidence and openness, in an environment characterised by political scandals and untrustworthy politicians, this is not necessarily always the case. The municipality of Puebla, currently governed by the PRI, offers one of the most interesting scenarios for the analysis of participatory initiatives in Mexico, especially bearing in mind the circumstances under which such participatory programmes as the *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* were developed. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the participatory initiatives that have been recently implemented in Puebla, focussing on three projects: *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN*, the PAN-UN initiative, and the participatory schemes implemented by the 1999-2002 local administration. This case is of great interest for our research purposes, as it represents a good example of how the 'volatility' of local politics may see the rapid replacement of initiatives whenever administrations change. Yet the 'replaced' schemes have not simply disappeared. Puebla is fascinating because there are participatory initiatives from different levels of government and different parties existing at the same time. COPLADEMUN was a state government initiative whilst the PAN-UN scheme emanated from municipal government. Indeed, Puebla was practically transformed into a participatory 'battleground' by the PRI and the PAN, which itself indicates the contested nature of the participatory agenda. These characteristics underline the importance of increasing the various political uses to which participatory agendas might be put.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. It starts with an overview of Puebla's main characteristics, followed by a section that reviews the controversial *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* initiative. The third section introduces the PAN-UN participatory scheme, and the next analyses the implications of the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the implementation of the *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* initiative. The fifth section evaluates both the *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN* and the PAN-UN schemes.

Finally, the sixth part covers the participatory agenda that has been carried out since the PRI re-gained control of the municipality of Puebla in the 1999 local election, and the last section analyses the three schemes discussed in this chapter.

Overview of Puebla

Puebla is the capital city of the state of Puebla. The municipality is divided into 514 territorial units (i.e. neighbourhoods, villages, or rural areas) and the population, as stated by Puebla's (1999-2002) citizen participation director Alejandro Armenta-Mier: 'is quite heterogeneous, there are sectors of the population with high income and levels of education, and on the other hand we also find rural areas mainly inhabited by illiterates' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000). According to the 2000 census, Puebla has a population of 1,250,000 inhabitants, a figure that represents about thirty percent of the total population of the state. The average growth rate of the population of municipality is 2.79 percent per year; almost double the 1.44 percent national average growth rate.¹ There are 17 *juntas auxiliares* in the municipality, and similar to Tlalpan, in 11 of them there are still people engaged in agricultural activities. As a consequence of the disordered way in which most urban centres have been developed, many rural areas are now within big cities.

Puebla is strategically positioned between the port of Veracruz and Mexico City, a factor that has motivated an increasing number of companies to establish their industries there. Formerly dominated by the Volkswagen plant situated in the state, which still has a strong impact on its economy, in recent years the steel industry – represented by the conglomerate HYLSA – and other productive activities have been developed (e.g. INDEPENDENCIA Chemical company). Industrial parks where all the facilities are given to national and international manufacturers have been built, and a considerable number of assembly plants have been established within these spaces. To improve the growth of the city, a 20 year urban development programme has been established to plan the adaptations that would have to be made for the coming years (see *La Jornada de Oriente* 28/9/2000). After this brief overview of the main characteristics of Puebla, the next section introduces the controversial *Ley Bartlett* participatory scheme.

The *Ley Bartlett* Scheme

Background

The so-called *Ley Bartlett* scheme was an initiative of the *priísta* governor of Puebla Manuel Bartlett in response to changes in the distribution of federal resources to states and municipalities. Previously, federal funds to municipalities came through the state governor who then decided on their distribution to municipalities in the state. However, following criteria established in the 1995-2000 National Development Plan, in December 1997 a new fiscal co-ordination law was approved by the federal congress. Using mathematical distributions,² the new legislation was intended to provide greater financial resources to the country's poorest municipalities, and included mechanisms to make those resources more accountable. In this way the legislation sought to avoid the problem associated with Salinas' main social programme, PRONASOL, where resources intended to alleviate poverty were redirected to political purposes (i.e. financing political campaigns). The document allowed for fairer economic resource distributions, based on the number of inhabitants and such indicators as income and primary needs,³ rather than using the governor's personal criteria as it happened in the past.

However, these changes provoked a political row. It involved an 'obscure' arrangement, commonly known in Mexico as *concertación*,⁴ between the national committees of the PAN and the PRI, where finance secretary Guillermo Ortiz played a key role, promising PAN legislators greater resources for those municipalities governed by their party, provided they voted in favour of the initiative (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998). Ironically, this initiative promoted by the finance minister benefited the PRI's main political enemies. It favoured the PRD's social demands as it increased welfare expenditure by 10 percent whilst it also benefited the PAN by boosting the resources sent to states and municipalities throughout the country, a sort of 'effective federalism' (*La Jornada* 14/11/1997). Indeed, President Zedillo (1994-2000) was widely criticised by some PRI members, as the arrangement was perceived as handing power to the PAN (*La Jornada* 28/01/1998). Zedillo tried to rebuff those criticisms stating, 'it is absolutely false that by strengthening our federalism this administration is favouring certain political parties' (*La Jornada* 21/2/1998).

Few *priísta* governors welcomed the initiative, as all resources were to be allocated under federal formulas and not by state governors, as had normally happened before. Some PRI governors were also concerned that by allocating greater resources to some of the country's poorest municipalities, the new scheme was benefiting areas under opposition party rule. A third concern was that in 1998 ten governors (including Puebla's governor and all of its 217 mayors) were to be elected, so if the distributors of all federal resources were to be pre-determined before being received by state authorities, there would be no possibility of reallocating federal resources to the PRI's state finance departments, a common practice in Mexico under *priísta* administrations, particularly in the run-up to elections.

One of the most ferocious opponents of the initiative was Puebla's governor, Manuel Bartlett. In an attempt to gain national exposure, (he then hoped to become the PRI's presidential candidate for the 2000 presidential election), Bartlett launched his own 'true federalism' initiative. As *La Jornada* observes: 'Bartlett has recently shown a 'true federalist' spirit and this has inevitably helped him to be in the national media. He has used his position (as governor) to fight for direct access to those federal resources in order to 'inject' them into this year's governor campaign' (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998).

Bartlett's 'true federalism' emerged in another piece of legislation, the Law for New Federalism of the State of Puebla (LNFSP), or what was later known as *Ley Bartlett*. The initiative led to the formation of Municipal Planning Committees (COPLADEMUNS) that would be in charge of prioritising and deciding where these resources are spent (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998). Highlighting the need for a truly distributive and more balanced allocation of federal funds, Governor Bartlett introduced legislation enabling economic resources to be received and redistributed by state authorities, rather than, as proposed in the 1997 fiscal co-ordination law, directly from federal authorities to municipalities. A 'democratic touch' was also included, as the COPLADEMUNS were expected to work as decision-making forums, involving the participation of authorities and citizens. These initiatives were discussed at Puebla's State Congress amidst a chaotic atmosphere,⁵ but in the end Bartlett's project prevailed.

Ley Bartlett

Ley Bartlett targets the improvement of social infrastructure at the municipal level, based on what the Zedillo presidential administration defined as 'new federalism.' The aim of new federalism was to strengthen state and local government finance departments:

Mexican New Federalism contributes importantly to strengthen national unity, by highlighting the federal pact. It is by activating the relationships between state and local actors that federal authorities expect to transfer more responsibilities for achieving a greater political, economic, regional and administrative development where citizen participation will become an important civic activity (*Diario Oficial* 28/1/1998:4).

According to the commission that developed the *Ley Bartlett*, the main objectives of the legislation were:

- 1) Protecting those programmes installed for building piped water networks or sewage, rural electrification, education, health, housing improvement, rural roads and rural productive infrastructure.
- 2) To make sure that the resources available for these initiatives are applied through programmes where the community takes an active decision-making role.
- 3) To guarantee that all municipalities receive more economic resources than the previous year.
- 4) To ensure the execution of all those social projects and programmes included in each local development plan.
- 5) To increase the amount of economic resources allocated for public security programmes.
- 6) To apply all economic resources available to combat poverty.
- 7) To establish a transparent management of economic resources.

A core element of the legislation is the involvement of the community in decision-making processes. In accordance with federal and local planning legislation, this law encourages the state, in co-ordination with municipalities and *juntas auxiliares*, (community boards) to promote the involvement of local actors in discussing and executing social programmes (*Diario Oficial* 28/1/1998:6).

The body created by the *Ley Bartlett* for deliberating local matters is the COPLADEMUN (municipal planning board). COPLADEMUNs are the forums where authorities and citizens would gather to discuss the best ways for improving the living conditions of their respective communities.

The legislation guarantees that the participation in these forums (COPLADEMUNs) is open and consequently democratic. Not only local official authorities take part, but also those representatives elected in each neighbourhood, rural area, or sector of the city with compelling social needs (*Diario Oficial* 28/1/1998:6).

The initiative stresses that the strengthening of *juntas auxiliares* (community boards) is essential for the success of the programme. Precisely the *juntas auxiliares* had little influence over resources and were therefore unable to respond effectively to any demands. Now in accordance with article 72 of *Ley Bartlett*, *juntas auxiliares* would have the right to demand that municipalities allocate resources to those projects previously prioritised and debated by citizens. It will be the *juntas*' responsibility to use their newly allocated federal resources to execute all those projects approved by COPLADEMUNs. It is also their responsibility to be accountable to their respective local authorities. Article 45 requires that: *Juntas auxiliares* must present their local authorities and later the state congress, under the terms and conditions stated in the municipal law, with an account of how all their resources were used (*Diario Oficial* 28/1/1998:8). *Ley Bartlett* stated that *juntas auxiliares* will work closely with local authorities in administering the resources available within each locality. It also emphasised the important role of *juntas* in revising and executing municipal projects. From the budget allocated to municipalities, *juntas* will receive a share according to the number of inhabitants and *juntas auxiliares* in each municipality, distributed thus:

- a) Five percent when the municipality has from one to five *juntas*.
- b) Ten percent when the municipality had from six to ten *juntas*.
- c) Fifteen percent when the municipality has 11 or more *juntas*.

Juntas are obliged to apply their resources to those projects approved by COPLADEMUNs and to provide a report on how those resources were used. The report will be directed to the state congress, under the terms and conditions mentioned in Puebla's municipal constitution.⁶

Federal funds can be used for five purposes:

- 1) Education.
- 2) Health.
- 3) Social infrastructure.
- 4) Strengthening municipalities and the federal district (Mexico City).
- 5) Multiple use fund.

According to Article 8 of *Ley Bartlett* these funds will be administered by state authorities, although the decision on how to spend those resources will be taken at COPLADEMUNs.⁷ State authorities will take into account all those decisions taken within each COPLADEMUN and also will consider the viewpoints of such organisations as academic institutions, groups of entrepreneurs, workers unions, and farmers who could also take part in these gatherings.⁸

Ley Bartlett emphasises several ways to strengthen and expand the capacity of municipalities: 'a boost will be given to those programmes aimed at strengthening each municipality, to make them more responsive to solving each community's needs' (LNFSP 1998). Article 19 of the document establishes that state economic resources and responsibilities will be transferred to municipalities, as a measure to improve their capacity to respond to those social sectors of the population where development has not yet arrived.⁹ Municipalities will also be obliged to present a report including the amount of resources received and invested in communitarian projects.¹⁰

In theory, *Ley Bartlett* offers the opportunity to participate in local politics through COPLADEMUNs as a means of improving the living conditions of the most deprived groups of society. The next analyses the legal basis of the COPLADEMUN.

COPLADEMUNs: An open space for participation?

Ley Bartlett's main democratic feature is the involvement of the community in the COPLADEMUNs. Within these organisations, groups of citizens, local officials and other participants interacting at the municipal level were expected to participate in debates prioritising the projects to be implemented in their respective localities. Articles 25 and 26 of the Mexican Constitution¹¹ were used to justify the creation of COPLADEMUNs. According to article 3 of the COPLADEMUN statutes, state resources will be allocated to COPLADEMUNs through the *Sistema Estatal de Coordinación Hacendaria* (State system for Fiscal Co-ordination) and not through the 1997 Federal Fiscal Co-ordination agreement. The funds available through this scheme were mainly to be used for investing in health services and education.

COPLADEMUNs operate on a project base, where community interventions would not be regular, as meetings would only take place whenever there is a budget to discuss. The

projects had to be approved by the local authority in agreement with officials from the state finance department, and resources would then be provided on a monthly basis. Each COPLADEMUN had to be composed of the following members. Firstly, the mayor, who would be the president, with the power to decide over any controversies taking place during the deliberating process. Secondly, a member of the state administration (finance department) was present to follow how each of these projects develops, with the right to speak but not to vote. Thirdly, neighbourhood representatives had to take part in each meeting, with the right to express their opinions and to vote on any of the issues on the agenda. Finally, for each project the community elected a committee project leader, whose main duty was to act as a watchdog until the project is concluded, with the right to speak and vote in each meeting.

These bodies were required to meet at least every three months or, if an issue emerges between meetings, whenever the president of the COPLADEMUN considers it convenient. The meeting calendar was divided as follows: during the first three months of the year each proposal or project were to be analysed. During the second and the third trimester an analysis of the current situation took place, concluding with the final evaluation and a financial report of the expenditure throughout the year. Each year, the secretary of social development was in charge of presenting a report of all the projects executed, a document that for accounting purposes was attached to the government's expenses report presented to the local congress.

A key aspect of the COPLADEMUN initiative is citizen's participation, not only in decision-making processes, but also by providing different types of support for the accomplishment of projects. According to article 33 of the COPLADEMUN constitution:

- a) Each COPLADEMUN will define the form in which the beneficiaries will support each initiative. They could do this by providing economic resources, labour or construction materials.
- b) For each project, the budget will be constituted entirely by fiscal resources, although citizen's support will also be required for accomplishing projects.
- c) All resources coming from the community should be kept separately from those resources coming from fiscal sources and mayors are responsible for presenting a report on the way in which these resources are spent.

According to article 34 of the initiative, whenever the community provides economic resources, a project committee will have to be created, to analyse how those resources or other type of aid provided by the community are used.

Another important aspect is the way in which the budget is controlled within this participation body. For every project, a budget was assigned by the state finance department and all the members of the COPLADEMUN had access to the account details. Mayors played a crucial role, as they are responsible for opening the accounts and have a close relationship with state finance departments.¹² The mayor was also responsible for registering and controlling the flow of economic resources available.¹³ If a project needed to be modified, then the municipality had to inform state authorities, specifically the secretary of social development, about these changes required.

Ley Bartlett's strengths and weaknesses

On paper it seems that, *Ley Bartlett* and COPLADEMUNs seek to increase people's decision-making power, to make authorities accountable and to promote a more democratic environment. Some of the advantages of the scheme include the provision of greater financial resources to Puebla's less developed municipalities, along with the involvement of all those official and unofficial bodies interacting at the local level in the institutions known as COPLADEMUNs. However, the motives of Governor Bartlett in promoting the *Ley Bartlett* and COPLADEMUNs have been questioned.

Two key features of the scheme highlight both its advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, the power that is given to *juntas auxiliares* to administer and deliver resources for their respective communities. It is true that *juntas auxiliares* are composed of citizens elected to represent the interests of their localities, that is the positive side, as theoretically speaking, *juntas auxiliares* would have an active role in COPLADEMUNs and could push local authorities to deliver economic resources faster. On the other hand, the *jueces auxiliares* have previously played an important political role supporting the PRI during election processes. Consequently, there is no guarantee that these local bosses would not continue to favour the interests of the PRI which through the state finance department is in charge of all the economic resources allocated via COPLADEMUNs.

The second point deals with the flow of resources from federal authorities, via the state, to each municipality. One advantage is that state authorities would probably have a

clearer understanding than federal authorities of the problems affecting each locality. However, allocating using governor's personal criteria could result in a similar scenario to PRONASOL, where state authorities and local elites struggled over the control of budgets that should have been used for development projects, and which often ended up supporting political campaigns (see Kaufman and Trejo 1997). How could it be guaranteed that under *Ley Bartlett's* statutes this would not happen again?

Thus it would seem that 'all that glitters is not gold,' moreover, there were also legal aspects of *Ley Bartlett* which are not very clear, or which apparently contradicted the participatory principles included in the Mexican Constitution – these two points will be discussed later in this chapter.

Reactions to Ley Bartlett

Once *Ley Bartlett* was approved by Puebla's local congress, it provoked a series of reactions, especially from opposition political parties who criticised the legal basis of the new legislation. The main argument used against *Ley Bartlett* was that it was unconstitutional. Immediately after its approval by Puebla's *priista* majority, a protest march to Mexico City was led by *panista* local and federal congressmen and also by Puebla's 21 opposition mayors (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998). The case acquired national recognition as the press publicised it, and *panista* mayors from different parts of the country showed their sympathy to the cause.¹⁴ The reaction from legislators at the federal congress was firm, according to Carlos Medina, PAN's congress leader in 1998: '*Ley Bartlett* goes against municipal autonomy, it creates parallel institutions to local authorities and a fourth level of government. By establishing municipal planning committees, the legislation gives them powers to decide on how resources are spent, violating the constitution' (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998).

The PRD also strongly criticised Puebla's legislation. According to Eduardo Espinoza, PRD's municipal issues representative at the Federal Congress, 'Bartlett is rebelling against allocating federal resources to those municipalities which in accordance with the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law require it. We are seriously analysing taking the case to the Supreme Court, as Mr. Bartlett is definitely violating the constitution' (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998).

Not surprisingly, the PRI showed its support for Bartlett's motion, arguing that the governor only exercised his 'freedom and sovereignty' when promoting *Ley Bartlett* which was expected to bring benefits to the poorest people of Puebla and also important advantages to those municipalities inhabited by indigenous people. *Priista* federal congressman José Luis Flores observes, '*Ley Bartlett* is going to mainly benefit indigenous municipalities, furthermore, the legislation is not only going to increase resource allocation to *priista* municipalities, but also to those governed by the PAN (*La Jornada* 29/1/1998).

The struggle to find alternatives to Bartlett's initiative lasted a couple of weeks. The constitutional struggle over the legal basis under which COPLADEMUNs were established was, effectively, a political battle between *priistas* and *panistas*. According to PAN's national leader, Felipe Calderón, 'the best formula to assigning resources for all states and municipalities is by creating a Federal Council, formed by the three levels of government (local, state and federal) and the legislative' (*La Jornada* 08/2/1998). *Panistas* agreed that with the formation of such a body, resource distribution would not fall under any political party's label, so it would be better distributed. Even without a Federal Council, Calderón called for the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law to be respected, 'in the 1997 Law the criteria to assist all vulnerable groups in society is clearly delimited, with indicators considering health, education, poverty and unemployment; these indexes should be respected by all, especially by state governors' (*La Jornada* 08/2/1998).

On 20 February 1998 a group of 12 *panista* mayors headed by Diego Fernández de Cevallos, who was also trying to become presidential candidate for the PAN, presented the case at the Supreme Court. Mr. Fernández justified their action by stating, 'Puebla's governor is violating the constitution by establishing intermediate institutions that interfere with municipal autonomy. Governor Bartlett is assuming responsibilities that are municipal (i.e. planning, prioritising and allocating resources)' (*La Jornada* 21/02/1998). PAN's national leader, Felipe Calderón also declared, 'article 115 of the constitution clearly states that intermediate authorities between states and municipalities cannot be created. *Ley Bartlett* creates COPLADEMUNs, which obstruct municipal actions of government and the functions performed by the finance department of Puebla' (*La Jornada* 21/2/1998).

In spring 1998 the Supreme Court announced a temporary suspension of *Ley Bartlett* in the 13 *panista* municipalities¹⁵ that protested against its implementation. It is important to state that the suspension only covered those articles related to receiving, administering and delivering federal resources presented in the legislation. Despite the suspension emitted by the Supreme Court, *Ley Bartlett* was fully implemented in the rest of Puebla's 204 municipalities. A final decision was not reached at this time, as the forty articles at the centre of the controversy had to be scrutinised by Mexico's most important legal institution, which, eventually, decided to ban *Ley Bartlett* in April 2000 (see below).

The PAN and the UN

While the controversial *Ley Bartlett* was discussed on a national level, and the Supreme Court considered its final verdict, the 1996-1999 *panista* municipality of Puebla developed its own participatory strategy. The inspiration for the PAN citizen participation project was a 1997 document published by the United Nations entitled *Gobernabilidad y Desarrollo Sostenible* (Governance and Sustainable Development). In an attempt to publicise a 'new participatory culture,' based on the various community projects promoted by the United Nations, the *panista* municipality organised a conference entitled: *Foro de Gobernabilidad y Desarrollo Humano Sostenible* (Forum of Governance and Sustainable Human Development) in September 1998. The explicit aim of the conference was to highlight the importance of citizen involvement at the community level, but it also served to justify implementing the *panista* participatory agenda. The conference was led by participatory experts¹⁶ and some of Mexico's most influential political figures.¹⁷ In effect, the intended message was, 'if the experts say it, then we (as authorities of Puebla) have the responsibility to carry out similar initiatives.' The conference had a positive outcome as the UN decided to choose Puebla to implement the participatory project, and by January 1999 economic resources started to flow for this purpose. According to Puebla's citizen participation director 1996-1999 Carlos Albicker, 'during the first stage of the project the UN assigned the municipality of Puebla one million dollars for participatory purposes' (Albicker interview 27/4/2001). Puebla's participatory scheme was put in practice based on the following agenda:

- 1) Creating groups of citizens with a social commitment to improve their respective communities.
- 2) Finding housing solutions through self-constructing citizen's properties under qualified supervision.
- 3) Providing advice for nutritional purposes.
- 4) Establishing methods for developing children's character.
- 5) Highlighting the importance of the environment through environmentally friendly policies.
- 6) Involving citizens in decision-making processes.
- 7) Creating groups for the elderly, to dignify the last stage of their lives.
- 8) Implementing projects that aim to improve women's and children's self esteem.

These aims provided the guidelines needed by Puebla's authorities to develop their own strategy for enhancing participatory projects. In a document entitled *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario* (Community Development Guide), Puebla's municipal authorities established the steps necessary for neighbourhoods, rural areas or villages to form groups and take part in decision-making processes. The core idea behind the *panista* neighbourhood forum scheme was to involve the public in decision-making processes, where authorities and citizens would decide on the matters that affect their respective communities, it can be argued that the PAN had political motives as well as democratic ones to develop this scheme:

The PAN's proposal for citizen participation was to establish a social network based on *Mesas Directivas* (neighbourhood boards) and other interest groups. None of these organisations would have absolute decision-making power, but the government should provide opportunities to allow them to participate in those decisions taken by the current administration. Authorities should not tell neighbourhood organisations, 'gather together deliberate and decide;' they should tell them 'let's decide together' (neighbours and citizens). The government should not quit its decision-making power, but should take decisions collectively with citizens (Rodríguez-Regordosa Puebla's 1996-1999 Community Promotion Sub-director interview 1/5/2001).

However, in addition to these democratic aims, the PAN scheme also had wider political motives. Specifically, the strategy was intended to remove the archaic local *priísta* clientelistic 'participatory structure' that operates in most municipalities of Mexico.

The Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario (Community Development Guide)

The *carpeta de desarrollo comunitario* (CDC) includes several definitions (i.e. what a community is, what a community plan is etc.) and instructions on how neighbours should elect their neighbourhood representatives. The document sets a series of

measures that should be taken by communities to achieve development in an ordered and democratic way.

The *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario* (CDC) is a compendium of the basic tools needed by those citizens who think there is a possibility of having a better world. The aim of the document is to help these enthusiastic citizens to improve their environments grouped in small units, avoiding dependence on governments to achieve social progress (CDC 1998:1).

According to the CDC, these 'enthusiastic citizens' would be grouped in *Mesas Directivas* (Neighbourhood Boards) that would represent the interests of their fellow-citizens with private or public institutions. A neighbourhood board is composed of a president, a secretary and a treasurer who have the capacity to appoint street or block representatives.

The CDC does not establish a fixed term for neighbourhood board elections, however, neighbourhood boards are recommended to consult the local community, regarding their performance, on a two yearly basis (under the supervision of the local authority). The CDC does not provide a uniform neighbourhood board election process, as it accepts that practices will vary in each neighbourhood, rural area or village. For example, some neighbourhoods are used to having open elections or assemblies, while in others, especially in places with low indices of citizen involvement, the same person remains as a neighbourhood board president for prolonged periods of time. What is clearly stated, is the fact that local authorities have the power to appoint those members taking part in neighbourhood boards, though any such designation made by local officials would have to be confirmed through a neighbour consultation (see CDC 1998:14). The CDC also states that neighbours can ask local authorities to replace neighbourhood boards where their members do not perform as expected.¹⁸

The stated aim of creating these neighbourhood boards is to establish a long-term local development vision, that avoid dependence on governmental projects or on the federal, state or municipal authorities. The document argues that it is better to plan the development of each community from within itself, rather than from a governmental office –after all, citizens will continue living in their neighbourhood, village or rural area long after federal (6 years) or local (3 years) governmental terms are finished (see *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario* 1998:14).

An element to highlight is the relevance that the community acquires as a planning unit, implying that the governmental level becomes less important. According to the author of the CDC, its rationale was straightforward:

The SEDESOL (Social Development Secretary) was created in Mexico as a political tool, neither Salinas nor Zedillo were concerned about development. Their idea was to create mechanisms that would help the PRI to stay in power, starting from the block representative and finishing with the President. We discovered this network and in 1996 we tried to establish a true participatory scheme, one where all the interests of the community would be truly represented and where they had a voice (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

From the PAN's viewpoint there was a need to implement forms of citizen involvement that provide an alternative to the prevailing *clientelist* structure. The CDC wanted the neighbourhood boards to have the following attributes:

- 1) Appointing neighbours as representatives for specified functions (i.e. informational purposes, collecting residents' fees) within their locality.
- 2) Appointing street or block representatives to improve communication with their representatives.
- 3) Writing letters to authorities demanding their support for community projects.
- 4) Organising assemblies or meetings for consulting, informing or reaching agreements with neighbourhoods regarding local matters.
- 5) Implementing any agreement reached at assemblies or meetings.
- 6) Making sure that the law is respected by their neighbours.
- 7) Having continuous communication with authorities to implement joint actions.
- 8) Developing work programmes that allow citizens to improve their communities without involving governmental authorities.
- 9) Keeping close communication with neighbours regarding any actions currently implemented in the locality.
- 10) Charging fees (whenever necessary) for specific projects, and to be accountable to all those who participate under these schemes.
- 11) Acting as an accountant for the locality.
- 12) Keeping the CDC and upgrading it whenever necessary.

The CDC states that neighbourhood boards are residents' representative bodies. To avoid what happened with such schemes as SOLIDARIDAD, the CDC establishes that neighbourhood boards would not have the capacity to impose any type of sanctions or to force neighbour participation in schemes (CDC 1998:15).

The CDC laid great emphasis on the accountability of the neighbourhood organisation. Chapter VII of the document provides a 'transparent guide' setting out different options enabling citizens to make their respective boards accountable to their fellow-citizens.

Table 4.1 (below) demonstrates how the CDC recommends that residents keep records of the resources received and spent by each neighbourhood board. Such categories as residents' fees, income from raffles or parties and paying the maintenance of a green area, are some of the most common transactions taking place within these local participatory bodies. According to the CDC, citizens should be informed as often as possible about the state of the neighbourhood finances, thereby giving them the confidence to keep on co-operating with their local representatives: 'the more often the community is informed about their finances, the more they will trust their representatives and the more they would keep on co-operating with local initiatives' (CDC 1998:40). It is a line of reasoning that is reminiscent of Pateman's notion of 'learning to participate by participating.'

Table 4.1 CDC Example of Accountability

Date	Item	Money IN	Money OUT	Balance
1/4/1997				-500.00
30/4/1997	Residents' Fees	1,215.00		715.00
30/4/1997	Parties, Raffles	522.14		1,237.14
30/4/1997	Other earnings	18.32		1,255.45
30/4/1997	Paying Vigilantes		568.00	687.46
30/4/1997	Park's maintenance		325.46	362.00
30/4/1997	Stationary and Transport		18.60	343.40
30/4/1997	Diverse payments		5.30	338.10

Amounts in *Pesos*, approximately 14 pesos = £ 1

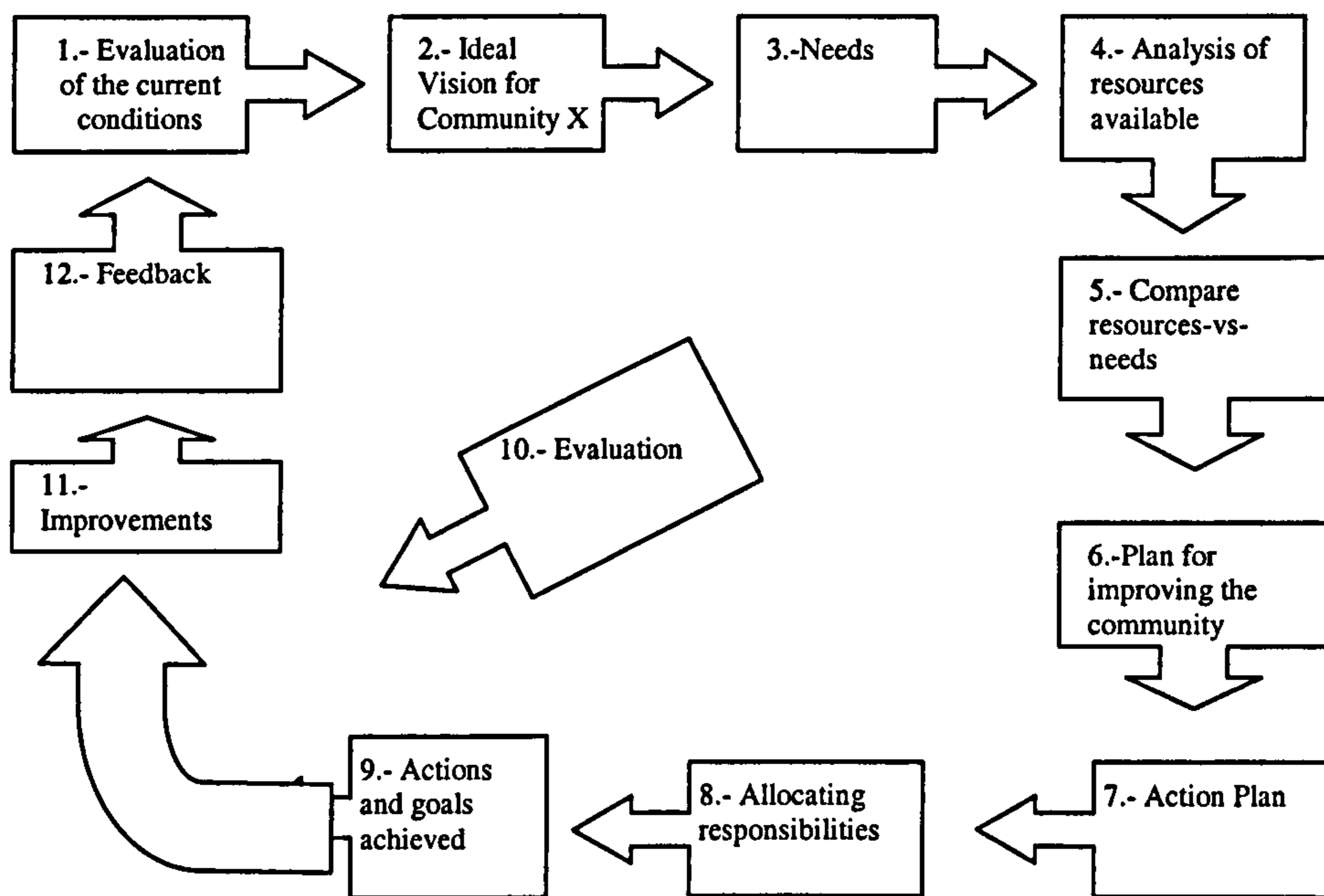
One of the most interesting features of the CDC is the establishment of a community plan for developing each neighbourhood, rural area, or village. According to the 'plan-guide' presented in the CDC, all community plans should involve four steps:

- 1) Diagnosis, to identify the needs to be covered;
- 2) Formulation, when the objectives are set, along with the necessary actions to achieve them;
- 3) Execution, when the plan is put into practice;
- 4) Evaluation, when the actions performed are compared to those objectives previously set.

The 'community plan' is defined as a plan made by the community for improving their living conditions. It is called a community plan because the aim is that all those inhabitants of a particular rural area, village, or neighbourhood get involved in its elaboration. The community plan is a tool that neighbourhood boards can use to determine the current state of their respective localities, infrastructure-wise, and also to set medium and long term goals for improving their living conditions (CDC 1998:51).

The community plan would operate following the steps presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Steps to carry out a Community Plan



Adapted from CDC 1998:52

The CDC states that in developing the community plan, the involvement of the majority of citizens is essential, to contribute all their valuable opinions and to provide a 'total perspective' of all the key issues within a specific locality (CDC 1998:59). Following the steps presented in figure one, the community is expected to gather, discuss, plan, implement and evaluate the outcomes of all the projects carried out in their respective neighbourhood. There are two points that are important to highlight. Firstly, the fact that all the community should be involved in the process of prioritising its needs. Secondly, that citizens are expected to create their own budgets to implement projects, in order to reduce dependence on authorities for implementing community initiatives. However, financial support from the authority would be required if residents cannot cover the totality of a project. According to the CDC there would be three types of resources

available to citizens for carrying out social projects: human resources, economic resources, and material resources.

Advantages and disadvantages of the PAN-UN participatory initiative

The primary aim of the PAN-UN participatory initiative was to dismantle the *priista caciquil* structure prevailing at the local level by increasing transparency. The scheme visualises an active citizenry, grouped in neighbourhood committees, who would elect their representatives in open processes. The project is an initiative that focuses on looking beyond the three years which each local administration lasts to encourage individuals to achieve development by themselves, without depending on federal, state or local functionaries to implement social projects. In agreement with the *panista* managerial tradition, the guidelines to implement this policy are set in the *carpeta de desarrollo comunitario*, which is a goal oriented 'business-like' booklet with the necessary information to make one's community organisation successful. Thus the PAN hoped that the establishment of successful community organisations would remove the incentive to use traditional PRI *caciquil* networks.

The main advantage of the PAN-UN participatory project is that the rules under which the strategy would be implemented are clearly defined, including the functions of the participatory units and the conditions under which their representatives would be elected. The CDC emphasises accountability and the importance of 'accountable actions,' in increasing the confidence of the community in their neighbourhood representatives (such as the presentation of a monthly account of neighbourhood finances). Perhaps the most important idea in the document is the step-by-step elaboration of a community plan.

The disadvantages of the PAN-UN project are primarily related to its legal aspects. Firstly, the CDC does not have a legal framework supporting its operations, as it is only based on a booklet that was never sent to the local congress for approval. The absence of a strong legal structure made it a tool highly 'volatile' to any political changes, as will be discussed below. Secondly, establishing that citizens would fund their own projects meant that the CDC was unlikely to perform 'big actions of government,' especially as the CDC targeted the poorer sectors of the population who would not have

the capacity to contribute large sums of money. On the other hand, because the middle classes were not facing any major infrastructure problems, they did not take part in this scheme and continued using their neighbourhood organisations. Moreover, the introduction of accountable mechanisms to regulate those resources used in the CDC was not a novelty for the middle classes, as they were already used to report the income and expenses of their neighbourhood organisations on a regular basis.

Although the UN supported the initiative, the resources that the UN provided were to be used to promote democracy, and not to finance social projects. This is why *panistas* were forced to search for economic resources in other state programmes, which ironically they found in the COPLADEMUNs. For the *panistas*, the only means of delivering social projects through their participatory agenda was to implement a hybrid of the PAN-UN initiative and COPLADEMUNs a procedure which will be discussed more extensively later in this chapter.

The Constitutional controversy: the Supreme Court decision

According to Governor Bartlett, COPLADEMUNs was an attempt to create more democratic and accountable government institutions. Yet the opposition parties claimed it threatened the authority of both state and local government, as COPLADEMUNs acted as an intermediate body of political decision-making. Headed by the PAN, a petition questioning the legal status of COPLADEMUNs was presented to the Supreme Court. The controversy was based on the establishment of intermediate decision-making bodies that might have more influence than local authorities. The fact that during COPLADEMUN meetings the destination of federal resources was decided was a key issue motivating PAN's energetic opposition.

The PAN argued that COPLADEMUNs violated article 115 of the constitution, as they impede the municipalities' right to decide freely how to spend their budgets. Article 115 states: 'it is the "free municipality" that constitutes the base for the territorial division and political administration of each state and each municipality will be governed by a freely elected group of citizens' (Mexican Constitution 2000).

State authorities are creating intermediate decision-making institutions that operate between local and state authorities. COPLADEMUNs and *juntas*

auxiliares have been given powers that go against what is stated in article 115 of the constitution. It compromises the position of municipalities, as these bodies diminish their authority, especially regarding decisions on how federal resources would be spent. The powers given to the bodies known as COPLADEMUNs go beyond analysing and deciding on how budgets are spent, and focus on taking unilateral decisions that affect the stability of local authorities (*Diario Oficial* 12/4/2000:40).

According to the PRI, COPLADEMUNs did not violate article 115, quoting articles twenty-five and twenty-six of the federal constitution to argue that COPLADEMUNs do not constitute a threat to local authorities' leadership and decision-making power, as they operate under their domain. *Priistas* stated that COPLADEMUNs only operate at the municipal level and therefore do not interfere in state matters. They claimed that the decision-making process taking place within these organisations cannot be considered as unilateral, as a large number of actors with different political ideologies are involved in each session. Moreover, COPLADEMUNs do not have the budget totally under their command, as the municipality is in charge of deciding how to spend it.¹⁹

Finally, *priistas* argued that the COPLADEMUN's function is limited to planning, discussing, analysing and selecting the projects or government actions to be implemented, all in accordance with national and state development plans.

After listening to both sides involved in the conflict, the verdict was deliberated at the Supreme Court for more than two years, and in April 2000 it finally decided the following:

COPLADEMUNs do not only act as planning and co-ordination institutions, as their functions include the prioritisation of programmes to be implemented by municipal authorities. Therefore...COPLADEMUNs do constitute an intermediate body between state and local authorities, as municipal authorities depend on these institutions to perform certain actions of government (*Diario Oficial* 12/4/2000:99).

The decision reached at the Supreme Court did not completely annul *Ley Bartlett*, it only banned those articles related to citizen participation and resource distribution, as presented in Box 4.1 (below).

The motion was received with joy by *panistas* in different parts of Mexico and was a prelude to a series of serious electoral defeats including the 2000 presidential election suffered by the PRI throughout 2000. But the defeat went beyond punishing Manuel

Bartlett or the PRI, for the Supreme Court's decision also threatens the future of all citizen participation programmes intended to give citizens more decision-making power.

Citizen participation can be promoted at the state and municipal levels for planning and prioritising programmes or projects as long as the final decision is taken by local authorities (*Diario Oficial* 12/4/2000:103).

Thus, the decision of the Supreme Court diminishes the influence of participatory mechanisms established by local authorities. The whole democratic sense of community initiatives is questioned by stating that these mechanisms can operate 'as long as the final decision is taken by local authorities'. If citizens know that authorities can impose their own decision on whatever is discussed in these forums, then it is worth asking, what is the purpose of participating in these 'democratic' forums?

Box 4.1 **Articles banned by the Supreme Court**

<i>Article</i>	<i>What it states</i>
13	Each municipality will have a COPLADEMUN as the mechanism to discuss, plan, analyse, select and execute those demands of the population previously stated in the state and national development plans.
14	COPLADEMUNS will be composed of the following members: 1) The Mayor of each municipality 2) The totality of <i>juntas auxiliares</i> in each municipality 3) Community representatives elected in each neighbourhood, rural areas or villages and those project committees previously elected 4) State Finance Department representatives
44	<i>Juntas auxiliares</i> will apply those resources mentioned in article 43 of LNFSP, only after these have been approved at each COPLADEMUN.
57	When those resources referred in this section of the LNFSP are destined for public projects, state and local authorities will present these projects to those authorities who will be in charge of executing them, to analyse its feasibility. All projects will be subject to meeting those conditions set by state and local authorities.
73	State authorities will administer and provide economic resources to municipalities on a monthly basis, as long as these resources are invested in projects that benefit the poor. To do so, municipalities' projects will have to be previously approved at the COPLADEMUNS.
74	Municipalities will present to state authorities, for their analysis and approval, all those projects previously agreed at COPLADEMUNS.
75	Once state authorities authorise each project, they will proceed to provide municipalities with those resources based on what is stated on article 73 of this legislation.
82 fraction II	Municipalities will promote citizen participation under the COPLADEMUN scheme within those municipalities benefited by social initiatives. The members of each COPLADEMUN will be involved in the execution, vigilance and evaluation of those projects taking part within their communities.
97	If municipalities are not able to provide <i>juntas auxiliares</i> with economic resources, state authorities will do so directly.

If the constitution considers any citizen participation body as an intermediate institution between state and local authorities, then similar initiatives involving the public in decision-making processes also violate article 115. The requirement to leave the ultimate decision to authorities seems to go against the spirit of the 'new federalism' proclaimed by the Zedillo administration. Whilst citizen participation has become a central part of local government's political agenda, these mechanisms, in most cases, are limited or dominated by state and federal authorities, leaving municipalities and their citizens in a dilemma, in a sort of 'legal limbo.'

COPLADEMUNs and the PAN-UN initiative: an evaluation

In the previous section we have presented the principles of two different participatory initiatives; the first promoted by the party in power at the state level, the PRI, and the second presented by the local PAN administration. *Ley Bartlett* was promoted as a response to the 1997 fiscal co-ordination law, and the PAN-UN project was a response to *Ley Bartlett*. Each initiative has both positive and negative aspects and while carrying out the fieldwork it became clear that, as expected, the political preference of those functionaries or citizens interviewed was an important factor to consider in such a politicised environment. As far as possible, a range of perspectives was obtained in order to provide a balanced analysis.

Puebla's *panista* 1996-1999 administration benefited considerably from the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law, as the amount of resources for the poor increased significantly. The 1996-1999 community promotion sub-director Pablo Rodríguez Regordosa recalls that:

The first year the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law was put into practice, almost 150 million pesos were assigned to the municipality of Puebla. To give us an idea of what those extra funds represented we can compare them to the total budget for the municipality in 1996, which was around 300 million. It meant that the municipality was going to receive an additional amount that represented half of the budget spent a year before (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

Ley Bartlett and COPLADEMUNs were perceived by opposition party members as a way of injecting resources to preserve the PRI's power. Rodríguez Regordosa put it bluntly: 'the truth about COPLADEMUNs is that they were created for political

purposes, a structure that had been created for delivering economic resources to the *priista* machine present in each locality of the state of Puebla' (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001). He linked economic resources and political purposes:

Bartlett created *Ley Bartlett* when he saw that the federal congress really wanted to decentralise economic resources, and not only resources, but also decision-making processes over the application of federal resources to states and municipalities. Bartlett said, no! This is why in *Ley Bartlett* we identify an intermediate body, the COPLADEMUN, furthermore, the state finance department had the last word in either approving or rejecting each project analysed at the COPLADEMUNs (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

Despite the efforts of the Puebla 1996-1999 *panista* administration to carry out their participatory agenda and not to implement *Ley Bartlett's* principles, realistically speaking, COPLADEMUNs was the only way to get hold of economic resources to deliver social policies. Although the UN assigned the municipality one million dollars for implementing the *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario*(CDC), this project was put in practice only to promote participatory principles and not to finance social initiatives. The *panista* administration was forced to negotiate with the *priista* finance department to gain access to the economic resources needed to deliver a specific infrastructure projects. Rodríguez Regordosa recalls:

We had to reach some agreements with the *priistas* to keep having access to economic resources. We told them: you accept our community organisations in some COPLADEMUN projects and you insert some of your groups in a specific amount of our initiatives and we all benefit from this' (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

It seems that the *panista* scheme, the *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario*, was used as a 'practice session' before discussing community projects at a COPLADEMUN meeting: 'we would gather at the neighbourhood municipal council on a monthly basis, in this meeting the mayor was present and we would discuss the projects that were later going to be discussed at the COPLADEMUN' (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 2001). Thus it appears that Puebla's 1996-1999 local authorities were forced to implement a hybrid of COPLADEMUNs and the *carpeta de desarrollo comunitario*. The lack of a strong legal framework, mainly for financial reasons, negatively affected the full accomplishment of the PAN-UN participatory agenda, and *panistas* were obliged to negotiate their infrastructure projects at COPLADEMUN meetings.

COPLADEMUN meetings would take place in a controlled atmosphere, where everyone taking part knew what he/she was supposed to say, and where the statutes of this participatory initiative were left aside. In theory, during each COPLADEMUN meeting functionaries and citizens are asked to prioritise and then approve a specific number of projects that would be carried out during the year. However, this depiction does not reflect what happened in practice:

What really happened is that we decided which were the most important projects, and elaborated a scheme where all participants had at least one project, giving priority to the most urgent demands, for example sewage or electricity. Once we had the list, we compared our list to the list presented by state authorities and I would personally check both lists and square the numbers with state representatives from the finance department and we would then sign an agreement before the COPLADEMUN meeting took place. During the meeting I would control the *panistas* and people from the state finance department would control *priistas* and all had to vote in favour of the projects we had previously approved. In the end it was not a true participatory experience, it was a masquerade presented as a participatory experience (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

There was total control over the way in which resources were spent by each COPLADEMUN, and citizens had only limited impact on those decisions reached. Political parties led the negotiations, adding to the controversy over the operation of this pseudo-citizen participation scheme. For members of opposition political parties – especially those belonging to the PAN– it seemed that the democratic sense of this ‘participatory initiative’ was nothing more than a political charade. In principle, *Ley Bartlett* appears as a document that sets the basis for a new relationship between authorities and citizens. In reality, according to Puebla’s 1996-1999 *panista* citizen participation director Carlos Albicker, an enormous discrepancy between theory and practice existed:

In practice the COPLADEMUN initiative was pure clientelism, it was swapping projects for votes. When COPLADEMUNS were operating, we realised that most neighbourhood representatives did not exercise a true leadership, most of them were pseudo-neighbourhood representatives with strong links to the official party (Albicker interview 27/4/2001).

Unfortunately when the fieldwork for this project was carried out, it was not possible to examine how the PAN-UN *carpeta de desarrollo comunitario* was implemented, as the

framework for this scheme had already been dismantled by the 1999-2002 *priista* administration. Despite lacking legal recognition, 280 neighbourhood forums were established following the bases of the *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario*, but although there was a large number of neighbourhoods interested in applying the PAN-UN participatory agenda, the scheme was not consolidated. There were several reasons for this failure. Firstly, the PAN lost Puebla's 1998 local election and the flow of economic resources provided by the UN for participatory purposes stopped. Secondly, and directly related to the previous point, political interests eclipsed the *panistas* democratic intentions. According to Albicker, '*priistas* did not want any programmes that smelt of a *panista* administration and renounced the UN's financial support, and also a long term participatory strategy that would have benefited many citizens. In return they kept on implementing the same old *clientelist* approach' (Albicker interview 27/4/2001). Carlos Albicker recalled that UN officers tried to defend the project: 'UN functionaries realised that our project was successful and tried to persuade the recently elected mayor, Mario Marin, to continue implementing the project, but he rejected anything that looked or sounded like the PAN' (Albicker interview 27/4/2001).

Once the *panista* 1996-1999 administration left office, the PRI was able freely to implement a 'pure' COPLADEMUN agenda, without using the CDC at all. Although COPLADEMUNs operated in Puebla only for approximately a year, they had an immediate impact on the delivery of social services and infrastructure projects. According to Puebla's north-east *delegado* Mr. Medina, during the first year of the (1999-2002) *priista* administration, between February 1999 and April 2000, one thousand projects were discussed and implemented through this participatory scheme.²⁰ Mr. Medina also commented that when the Supreme Court announced its decision regarding the future of this citizen participation programme, official authorities were forced to look for alternative programmes to keep up with the high demand to cover social needs (Medina interview 23/6/2000). According to the 1999-2002 Mayor of Puebla, Mario Marín, 'during the first 100 days of the 1999-2002 administration, the Council for Municipal Development of Puebla COPLADEMUN was established and operated with 144 community representatives and 800 committee projects, within this period 461 projects were implemented mainly with federal resources' (Marín 2000).²¹

According to Puebla 1999-2002 south-west *delegado* Mr. Váldez, the exercise of participating in COPLADEMUNs helped develop a 'community-feeling' between those involved. Because people prioritised projects, they then became less selfish, as in some cases, those taking part realised that there were some projects that were more important than their own (Váldez interview 17/7/2000). These meetings took place four times during the year, in the first meeting we would prioritise, then in the second we checked the advances, and in the third and fourth next year's proposals were made (Váldez interview 17/7/2000). This positive 'community-feeling' mentioned by Mr. Váldez contrasts with the views of Rodríguez Regordosa:

What happens in practice when you involve people to prioritise their needs is that they do not behave as 'innocent' human beings. Each of the actors participating at COPLADEMUNs meetings takes a party, and there is a lot of ignorance, it is impossible to have 200 people discussing the destiny of 150 million pesos, and why is this impossible? Because each of the 200 has a very particular demand to fight for, and he/she knows that ceding his/her project would mean that it would not take place, in the end they all have their interests, it was impossible to manage (Rodríguez Regordosa interview 1/5/2001).

After the COPLADEMUN initiative was invalidated by the Supreme Court, these bodies were transformed into social development committees. These committees are formed by groups of people elected by their respective communities (neighbourhoods or rural areas). The aim of these bodies is to present projects to local authorities, mainly to cover citizens' basic infrastructure needs, and also as a way to avoid unilateral decision-making. The performance of this scheme is still under scrutiny, as it has proven not to be that efficient. According to social development committee leader Mr. Ramírez:

It is really difficult to introduce services through the development committee, you have to fill in some forms and then once your project is analysed it could take even years to introduce it. In the neighbourhood next to this one, they have been demanding services for more than 10 years without any success. For me it was easier because we were only asking for two streets to be paved. If you want to introduce electricity it is the same, as you need to see many people and to insist in order to be taken into account. They should create a less bureaucratic structure (Ramírez interview 21/7/2000).

All decisions that used to be taken within COPLADEMUNs are now taken unilaterally by local authorities, according to Mr. Váldez 1999-2002 south-west *delegado* 'some authorities expressed their concern regarding the creation of "true" citizen participation structures where citizens have a say'. Mr. Váldez recalls, 'COPLADEMUNs are not

working any more, now the municipal authority decides. There is not an alternative structure, we need one to legitimise and make accountable all social projects carried out' (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).

The following section shows that the post-COPLADEMUN era has been characterised by efforts to involve the citizenry into different schemes where they would be allocated some decision-making power, but where the final decision will always rest with the local authorities.

The Participatory Agenda of the PRI since 1999

The Bureaucratic Structure

Once the Supreme Court decided to void *Ley Bartlett's* core principles, in April 2000, different participatory options had to be developed to replace the COPLADEMUNs. Since his mayoral political campaign, the *priista* Mario Marín, has developed new strategies for involving citizens. According to 1999-2002 *priista* citizen participation director, Alejandro Armenta Mier, Marín's perspective varies widely from the managerial tradition under which community projects were managed by the previous administration.

The mayor, during his campaign, presented a project that is the basis of this administration. The municipal development plan foresees four core principles: 1) government with a social duty, 2) services and quality of life, 3) progress with social justice and 4) promotion of economic development (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000).

The bureaucratic structure in charge of promoting citizen participation in Puebla is the Citizen Participation Directorate. The aim of the directorate is to channel all social demands to the responsible departments. The Directorate is composed of four geographically-based *delegaciones*, or citizen participation departments.

Each office has the responsibility for acting as a channel between authorities and citizens, as stated by south-west *delegado* Mr. Váldez: 'We are in charge of promoting citizen participation and establishing links between the different departments of government and citizens, so government actions do not simply remain on paper' (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).

The citizen participation directorate, co-ordinates the participation efforts of around 800 neighbourhoods, and 17 *juntas auxiliares*, (citizen boards),²² altogether this office assists approximately 2,000,000 *poblanos* [Puebla's citizens]. According to 1999-2002 citizen participation director, Alejandro Armenta-Mier, 'the aim of this directorate is to give attention to the lower sectors of the population, and to take progress and development to deprived areas. By promoting social participation, we open channels to help citizens reach the wishes and aspirations all members of the community have' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000). Through each of the four *delegaciones* the citizen participation directorate receives information about those needs faced by the community. Each *delegado* works with a group of promoters who have constant contact with the community, they organise people to participate, they co-ordinate efforts with neighbourhood leaders, and in rural areas with other bodies. According to Mr. Armenta-Mier, through these various channels the citizen participation directorate received 4,000 demands during the first five months of 2000.

Mr. Armenta-Mier claimed that the current PRI administration, when compared to the preceding one (the *panista*) is innovative and much more active. The comment was complemented by south-west *delegado* Mr. Váldez: 'in three years the *panistas* completed 800 projects, this administration in one year has finished 1,500. The public has responded positively, as all sectors (urban and rural) have been involved in some kind of social activities (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).²³

The mayor, Mr. Mario Marín, is transforming the way politics is done, everyday he visits different neighbourhoods, (three to four per day). He has made more than 650 visits since he is mayor. This means that there is a constant presence of local authorities in the municipality and of course that throughout these visits the mayor constantly receives demands for services or other community projects (Armenta-Mier 23/6/2000).

Delegados are responsible for promoting citizen participation within their respective designated areas, in some cases they have to provide technical assistance, as some projects involve managing economic resources. As stated by *delegado*, Mr. Váldez:

We set up project committees, so the public can get involved. These committees operate under a scheme where resources are provided by federal authorities to be used by citizens. People receive some training, so they can follow all projects. We also developed social participation committees, which

are committees that operate even without resources, but they still perform communitarian activities without a budget. We have a close relationship with all neighbourhood boards and with all those persons wanting to participate at the local level (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).

The structure of the municipal *delegación* is based on community promoters whose duty is to find those needs prevailing in each neighbourhood. Each promoter is in charge of between twenty to thirty neighbourhoods. According to *delegado*, Mr. Medina, a promoter's main activity is to visit neighbourhoods, rural areas or villages to find out which are the projects required for improving citizens' living conditions. The north-east promoter, Felipe López, outlined the steps citizens or neighbourhood representatives need to follow to receive the benefits of a social project as follows:

- 1) Direct a letter to the mayor, Mario Marín Torres;
- 2) Send a copy to the *Delegado* Antonio Medina;
- 3) Then *delegados* give a copy to the promoters;
- 4) Promoters channel it to the public services department;
- 5) Finally, once promoters have an answer from authorities, they will tell neighbours the estimated time it would take to accomplish the petition. Normally minor projects take between a week and ten days and major projects (paving, electricity, sewage etc.) could take an indefinite period of time.

According to *delegado*, Mr Medina, 'neighbours also approach the *delegación* and what we do then is that we personally channel citizen's problems to the area that can best solve them' (Medina interview 23/6/2000). Citizen participation director, Alejandro Armenta-Mier agrees that 'promoters play a key role, as they would be the link between *delegaciones* and neighbourhoods' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000).

Juntas Auxiliares are another channel within the citizen participation direction. This role is defined by Alejandro Armenta Mier as follows, 'a *junta auxiliar* works as an alternative organisation to the municipal one, in its own way it is an organisation of social participation' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000). According to the prevailing municipal regulation, *juntas auxiliares* are elected for a period of three years. Political parties cannot take part in this election process, however, they do get involved, people speak about 'red circle,' 'green circle,' and 'yellow triangle' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000), a reference to the 'underground' participation that political parties have in these processes. For instance, certainly both the PRONASOL and COPLADEMUNs 'participatory schemes' are characterised by strong links between the official party and citizen's representatives, thereby undermining the non-partisan nature of each policy.

Alongside *juntas auxiliares*, citizen participation committees also operate in Puebla. Citizen participation committees assist the work performed by the citizen participation directorate, but are entirely managed by citizens. They are elected on an annual basis and their main activity is to prioritise their most vital needs. In the view of Armenta Mier, prioritisation is a key element for their department, 'in order to determine when we will have resources available for solving those needs. This is why citizen participation is so important, because we need to organise with neighbours in order to know which needs are most important' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000). Citizen committees are also involved in implementing certain programmes, as stated by *delegado*, Mr. Medina, 'we are implementing some public security initiatives and we are supervised by the municipal police director. The aim is that people in each neighbourhood can implement those programmes in their communities (Medina 23/6/2000). Currently, the main activity performed by committee leaders is when they represent their neighbourhood at the social development committee meetings. Most of these committees do not have a defined structure and meets regularly, when local authorities involve them or when something urgent arises.

Puebla's Current Citizen Participation Schemes

Despite the enthusiasm with which bureaucrats working for the 1999-2002 participatory department defined the functions performed by them, there seems to be a general feeling, amongst the average citizen, that they have not received the participatory options they deserve. For instance, one resident Nallely Estrada, believes that her participation in any of these mechanisms would have no effect in the decisions taken by local authorities, in her view: 'there is no point in taking part in such processes, authorities already know in advance the ultimate decision' (Estrada interview 7/11/2001). This view was also seconded by resident Edith Cruz, who stated: 'in my neighbourhood we do not take part in any of the participatory schemes promoted by local authorities, there is no point, whenever we have a problem, we prefer to go directly to the office of the mayor' (Cruz interview 8/11/2001). Furthermore, after speaking to some neighbourhood representatives, they admitted that neither the previous PAN (1996-1999), nor the current *priista* (1999-2002) administration has created the participatory opportunities required to have an impact on those decisions reached at the

local level. According to community leader, Mr. Caso, 'when Puebla was ruled by a *panista* administration, we were totally ignored, mainly because the PAN is a party mostly composed of the upper classes. *Panistas* did not care about the main problems affecting our neighbourhoods. Mr. Hinojosa [the former mayor] told me, that his administration did not want to deal with us because we were poor' (Caso interview 19/7/2000). On the other hand, from the perspective of neighbourhood leader Mr. Ramirez, things have not evolved that much, politically speaking, since the *priista* administration recovered the municipality of Puebla.

Here we live in a *cacicazgo*²⁴ and I keep telling the *delagado* that more educated people should occupy political positions, and that the system should not be based on 'hereditary politics.' I do not understand why politicians want to keep power in a few hands, they want to dominate the economic, political and social scenarios. They do not want to listen their own people, they want to keep their power at any price. Nepotism should not take place at all (Ramírez 21/7/2000).

The municipality of Puebla continues operating under the scheme known as *Jefes de Manzana*, (block representatives) which was implemented throughout the 1980s in different municipalities of Mexico. Repressive community leaders still dominate the local scene and strong bonds between local authorities, the PRI and popular leaders are common. Dishonest practices are also frequent amongst community leaders, as accountability is something unknown for most of them.

For example with the leader working near here, he keeps money and works without any community interests. He asked neighbours to give him money for paving the street, when in reality, those resources were provided free by local authorities. We are talking about 700 neighbours who paid 300 pesos²⁵ each— imagine the amount of money he is going to receive. The problem goes further because the government is supporting him. He is not an educated person, there are many preferences within the municipality. When I met him I was supporting him but he disappointed me. He was a speaker when Labastida²⁶ came. In the near future he could occupy a position within the administration, but imagine how someone like him would act in the government (Ramírez interview 21/7/2000)?

Populist practices are normal, especially in those areas inhabited by people with economic needs or low degrees of education. In deprived areas, people do not seem to realise that they are used as 'political cattle,' as observed by community leader Mr. Caso:

When the party (PRI) needs our support for an event in Mexico City, they send us two coaches and we start at 5am waking up people for these occasions. Once we gather for the event, around thirty families, we collect money from everyone, if we manage to collect 200 pesos we eat, otherwise we only enjoy the trip without eating. On some occasions the *delegaciones* support us, Mr. Antonio Medina, he will send someone to give us some cash for buying refreshments or fruits for everyone, that is why people are so happy with us, because they say, we support, we eat and we have fun (Caso interview 19/7/2000).

Puebla did not experience the social awakening that took place, for example, in Mexico City during the 1980s and is still permeated by traditional forms of leadership, especially at the local level. According to 1999-2002 citizen participation director, Alejandro Armenta-Mier, all actions regarding communitarian involvement are based on a pamphlet developed by the directorate under his command, which provides broad guidelines to carry out citizen participation schemes. *Delegado*, Mr. Váldez, admitted the need to develop adequate citizen participation legislation and his respect for Mexico City's citizen participation legislation, 'in Mexico City there is a good citizen participation law, but here unfortunately there is no such document' (Váldez interview 17/7/2000). Under the current local 'participatory scheme', the city is divided into neighbourhoods and within each of these bodies, citizens are expected to organise by themselves and elect a neighbourhood leader. The elected citizen would act as a channel between authorities and citizens, and would also represent his/her community at project committee meetings, whenever these take place. All neighbourhood boards are elected on an annual basis, and are expected to receive support from their *delegado* (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).

The way in which a project committee meeting functions is that whenever local authorities carry out a project within certain neighbourhoods, *delegados* have to make sure of involving those elected community leaders to act as watchdogs until the project is concluded. Neighbourhood leaders do not have any decision-making power within project committees and it can be established that their function is merely to be accountable. One of the most common forms of setting up a project committee is via a *fideicomiso*.²⁷ In a *fideicomiso* citizens would estimate the cost of a project and then would take the quote to local authorities. Local authorities would then study the proposal and decide how much of the total cost would be covered by them. In the view of some community leaders, whenever they use this mechanism there is very little co-

operation from authorities and citizens are practically left on their own. According to community leader Mr. Ramírez, 'in this neighbourhood one has to ask, otherwise authorities will completely ignore us. We created a project committee for paving a street, 70 percent is paid by the municipality, and 30 percent is paid by neighbours, but because we do not have an estimate of the costs, we estimated costs using other projects' (Ramírez interview 21/7/2000). The implication of having unqualified citizens estimating values might seriously underestimate costs, with a possible detrimental effect when an accurate quote is subsequently presented, as it could increase the financial burden on the residents. Especially in the poorest sectors of the population, this could negatively affect the promotion of any local initiatives.

The main reason why many citizens get involved as community representatives is to solve their basic infrastructure needs, as stated by committee leader Josefina Andrade:

I got involved as a community representative because we did not have any services. For three years I worked without official recognition, but after that we began an election process and I got elected. Since then the sewage network was finished, now we also have piped potable water, a sports area, a health centre and we also received our property titles (Andrade interview 18/7/2000).

Another example is Mr. Ramírez, who was not even formally elected, but who still maintains his position as a community representative, based on the achievement of several 'community goals,'

Well I cannot say that I was democratically elected, I installed myself in this position and the community supported me. Since then we have achieved the introduction of sewage and paving in several streets and electricity. We have participated with the *delegacion* to work in communitarian initiatives, mainly related with the introduction of services (Ramírez interview 21/7/2000).

There is not a settled schedule for community meetings, and whenever they take place, attendance varies widely depending the issue to be dealt with. Neighbourhood leader Josefina Andrade said, 'we normally meet on a monthly basis, but there is not an established date for these reunions. The number of people also varies, but I would say that on average between 45 to 50 persons attend the meetings. Attendance is directly related to the issue to be dealt in the meeting' (Andrade interview 18/7/2000).

Although authorities did not admit it, a very close relationship exists between the *delegados* and some local community representatives. According to neighbourhood

leader Mr. Ramírez, there have been cases where leaders keep their position as a community representative based on their friendship with the *delegado* or the current mayor. These types of relationships have resulted in the promotion of some former community leaders as local MPs or to other positions within local administrations. Neighbourhood leaders can also get involved in games of interests:

A street has not been paved because the leader had interests in installing a type of concrete which was provided by a company owned by the former mayor, which was bad quality and more expensive. This proves the type of relationships that motivate persons not to trust their neighbourhood representatives. The average people have little to say about all these, as they would benefit from any position (s) these representatives occupy in the future, they see it as a possible future contact (Ramírez 21/7/2000).

Juntas auxiliares play a key role in Puebla's citizen participation scheme. In rural areas, *juntas auxiliares* can function in some cases as alternative 'mini-municipalities,' especially when the mayor's head office is far from certain communities. Each *junta auxiliar* is formed by 5 or 6 *inspectorias* that will be in constant interaction with citizens. *Inspectorias* perform the same functions carried out in urban areas by neighbourhood committees. According to citizen participation director Mr. Armenta-Mier there is a big difference between the way *juntas auxiliares*' and neighbourhood committees' members interact, 'that is the main difference between a rural community and an urban society. Within rural communities there are still many traditional customs taking place, there is a lot of interaction between all its members as families also get involved' (Armenta-Mier interview 23/6/2000). Similarly to the case of Tlalpan, the disordered way in which Puebla has left former villages within the periphery of a city. This is one of the main reasons why authorities have to be aware of creating alternative scheme for these particular regions, where the 'normal' neighbourhood participatory schemes would not function.

What Puebla's authorities did not mention is that *juntas auxiliares* are also considered the easiest places to implement populist practices and where dominant leaders are more common. Most presidents of *juntas auxiliares* are appointed by municipal or state officials, and are rarely elected in an open process. These semi-functionaries and semi-community representatives are still active in many municipalities of Mexico and are part of the citizen participation structure. These pseudo-representatives play a key political role, especially during elections or at times when unpopular measures are to be

announced by local or state authorities (see Alvarez and Castro 1999). These community leaders are used, mainly by the PRI, as an instrument of local political control and, as will be discussed later, maybe this is why *Ley Bartlett* gave these structures so much power.

The authorities admitted the involvement of political parties in some of the local participatory structures. This party involvement was confirmed with most community leaders interviewed, who even felt proud of belonging to such institutions as stated by Mrs. Andrade, 'my party is the PRI and I'm in charge of the provision of services, health centre and a little school we have nearby.' Although most community leaders interviewed accepted their party involvement, they denied receiving any economic support from their respective political institutions for performing their communitarian activities.

Thus, Puebla's local authorities have implemented various alternative solutions to deliver social projects. By strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood committees or *juntas auxiliares*, authorities hope to involve the citizenry and at the same time cope with most of their demands. However, there is no citizen participation legislation supporting any of these community activities, and they take place in a disordered manner. What has proven to be true, according to *delegado* Mr. Medina, is that 'neighbours only care about receiving the benefits of social programmes and do not mind the title(s) given to these initiatives' (Medina interview 23/6/2000).

In order to have a better understanding of the way the current participatory agenda operates, in the next section we will present the three types of meetings taking place in Puebla.

*Types of Meetings*²⁸

There are three types of neighbourhood meetings currently taking place in Puebla. Each has its own characteristics, and they will vary widely depending on the social group where they take place. A constant that can be identified though is that they take place under loose citizen participation structures, as there is no legal framework supporting its operations. The first type of meeting takes place within the poorest sectors of the

population. These meetings are under the command of neighbourhood leaders (in urban areas), or presidents of *juntas auxiliares* (in rural areas). The aim of these encounters would be mainly to discuss the introduction of services, but also particular needs can be analysed by community leaders. As Mr. Caso commented, 'if someone with a physical problem or a disease comes to me, then I will put his or her relatives in touch with someone working at the Health Social System to provide help, otherwise we take them to the health centre' (Caso interview 19/7/2000).

Community leaders²⁹ are expected to get involved in time-consuming processes to achieve their respective community goals as a result of not having a clear 'manual of procedures' for lobbying community projects. For example, if a neighbourhood lacks a basic public service like piped drinking water or sewage, community leaders would be in charge of developing a proposal and taking it to the corresponding authority. This process is very bureaucratic and often affected by the social class of the citizen, as neighbourhood leader Mr. Ramírez recalls, 'yesterday I waited for four hours to be received by a bureaucrat at the municipal office, this should not happen. Local authorities discriminate against people coming from the lower sectors of the population, young public servants should take courses on how to treat people' (Ramírez interview 21/7/2000).

Strong bonds are created between community leaders and citizens once a service is introduced. As a result of this interaction, the community feels as if they owe something to the leader and promise their support for any further political or party activities. Neighbourhood representative Mr. Caso commented, 'once we achieve the introduction of a service or when we do someone a favour, they (neighbours) tell us that they now feel as if they just signed a contract and that they would help us in case we need their help for any further political purposes' (Caso interview 19/7/2000). One resident Ms. Rosalia Lira affirmed, 'once we receive a service, we thank our community representative and we try to help him or her whenever he or she needs our support; although we are not forced to do so, we feel a strong link with our community representative' (Lira interview 26/11/2001).

The above structure is not well organised, as meetings are inconsistent and whenever they take place,³⁰ are mostly dominated by community leaders. No minutes are taken, and although elections should be held every year, this does not necessarily happen, as

neighbourhood leader Mr. Mendoza observed, 'we haven't had neighbourhood representatives elections for a couple of years' (Mendoza interview 20/7/2000).

The second type of meeting is the project committee meeting. It also takes place in the lower sectors of the population and although it has certain similarities with COPLADEMUNs, nevertheless, it is important to note that it was not conceived to substitute it. Project committee sessions take place to discuss progress in projects previously lobbied for by community leaders. Once local authorities receive federal or state resources to carry out a range of projects, then they analyse which are feasible. Authorities give priority to those projects expecting to have a greater impact on a large sector of the community, and citizens have little say about those decisions taken. Neighbourhood representatives are invited as watchdogs to check project progress and its expenses. Project committee members are expected to give their representatives this information. However, despite the fact that committee members are constantly monitoring the way projects are carried out, they do not have any powers to complain if a project falls behind schedule or is wrongly completed.

Due to the scarcity of resources facing most Mexican local authorities, the implementation of projects where the community covers part of the project's costs is increasingly common. Puebla is no exception, as commented by *delegado* Mr. Váldez, 'the mayor started a few weeks ago the project of *obras por cooperación*' (Váldez interview 17/7/2000).³¹ Similarly to a *fideicomiso*, *obras por cooperación* are projects that are concluded with the active support of citizens. Their co-operation could be provided either through financial resources or via their labour. This particular scheme is similar to the types of initiatives promoted by such international organisations as the WB or the IMF, and which are discussed in chapter 2.

The third type of meetings takes place within the upper class areas, where there is unlikely to be a dominant leader or any explicit ideological content. They would mainly address the provision of services such as street lighting, rubbish collection or constructions that could affect the living standards of these neighbourhoods. Within the upper sectors of the population, citizens organise by themselves and do not need any guidance from authorities to establish their committees:

Socially speaking, the population organises according to the level and needs they have. In residential, upper class areas they focus their energy towards demanding better public services as they have their basic infrastructure needs already covered. In the upper sectors of the population there is not such a co-operative community, people are more individualistic (Armenta Mier interview 23/6/2000).

To sum up, we can say that two out of the three types of meetings currently taking place in Puebla are tightly controlled by local authorities. Neighbourhood and project committee meetings would be strongly dependent on the amount of resources available. In neither we perceive a 'real' will from local authorities to share their decision-making power with citizens. According to the people interviewed (neighbourhood leaders and some members of the public), they are highly dependent on what authorities decide. On the other hand, and similarly to the trend found in chapter 5, the upper sectors of the population do not need the support of local authorities to decide whether or not a neighbourhood meeting should take place. As the middle and upper classes have already covered their basic infrastructure needs (i.e. piped drinking water, electricity), we can say that the only relationship of these sectors with local authorities is based on making sure that such core services as rubbish collection are delivered properly. The next section analyses the three participatory schemes that have been presented in this chapter.

Analysis of the Three Participatory Schemes

Ley Bartlett

Ley Bartlett is a good example of how democratic measures can be interpreted differently depending on who promotes the initiative, and the political, economic and social circumstances under which they are implemented. In this case, the debate over the legitimacy of *Ley Bartlett* became a crude political dispute between the PRI and the PAN. We must not forget the context under which the controversy took place, as it happened in a period when Manuel Bartlett of the PRI and Diego Fernández de Cevallos of the PAN were trying to become party candidates for the 2000 presidential election. A local issue that under a different context would perhaps not have been publicised on a national scale became a big issue throughout Mexico.

Ley Bartlett was created as a response to the 1997 fiscal co-ordination law, which would have diminished the amount of economic resources received by the state government of Puebla and increased those resources destined for local authorities. This is why Bartlett

elaborated a project firstly to recover Puebla's state government financial strength and consequently to dominate the pseudo-participatory structures (COPLADEMUNs) created through local networks that had previously worked for the official party. In many respects *Ley Bartlett* became mere clientelism, as claimed by some members of the PAN, who stated that negotiations took place before meetings, and that the destiny of financial resources was allocated depending on authorities' preferences. The implementation of this initiative demonstrated once more, that in a Mexican context, there is a big difference between ideals on paper and what is put in practice.

Bartlett's conflictual reputation³² was another factor that contributed to the widespread mistrust of the decentralising and democratic aspects covered by *Ley Bartlett*. Maybe if another politician had promoted the reform, it would have gone through with fewer problems, but Bartlett's machiavellian procedures were viewed with suspicion and scrupulously analysed. The fact that Bartlett promoted his initiative in an electoral year was another element that was also added to the controversy. If resources had been distributed in the state of Puebla according to the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law, the state authorities' capacity to deliver social projects would have been diminished; it is a common practice by federal, state and local authorities in electoral years to increase social expenditure, especially during the months before the election. The intention is to promote any projects concluded within this period as the 'great actions' performed by the party in power, as a means of winning electoral support.

Despite the fact that some articles of *Ley Bartlett* were banned, according to some political analysts (see *La Jornada de Oriente* 14/2/2000) it accomplished Bartlett's political purposes.

Ley Bartlett briefly had a true federalist spirit, but at the same time it was an electoral tool created and used by Governor Bartlett for political purposes. The results of the 1998 local election can prove this, as the PRI recovered the state capital and Melquiades Morales, also representing the PRI, was elected governor for the 1999-2005 term (*La Jornada de Oriente* 14/2/2000).

Whether Manuel Bartlett was really concerned about promoting citizen participation schemes without any personal or political interests remains uncertain, albeit unlikely. What seemed to have happened in Puebla is that a scheme which in theory could have brought openness and a genuine participatory opportunity for citizens to get involved in

decision-making processes, was obscured by a political dispute involving Mexico's two main political forces.

The PAN-UN Initiative

The PAN claimed that its participatory initiative would have brought important social benefits to deprived areas. With the introduction of accountable and democratic practices the *panistas* were expecting to get rid of *priista* local bosses, as well as diminishing the range of clientelist activities carried out by the official party. With the primary needs of the middle classes already covered, and also bearing in mind that most were already grouped in neighbourhood organisations, it can be argued that the initiative primarily foresaw bringing benefits to the poorer sectors of the population. Despite having the support of an international organisation such as the UN, the *panista* initiative did not receive financial support, and it passed the heavy burden of collecting financial resources to citizens. It seems that *panistas* overestimated the economic capacity of the majority of Puebla's population, who – especially the poorest classes – did not have the financial capacity to sustain this project over a prolonged period of time. This class aspect has already been touched upon in the previous chapter and it emerges again in chapter 6. It appears that when participatory schemes are conceived by local or state administrations, they do not consider the basic infrastructure conditions surrounding each neighbourhood, which may influence whether or not citizens are interested in joining participatory schemes when they are not tailored to their needs. This point will be discussed further in the conclusion of the thesis.

The *panista* proposal to promote citizen participation is the simplest to follow. It provides clear definitions and guidelines on how to proceed under different circumstances, and it even includes guidelines to facilitate the presentation of monthly statements, an accountable practice non-existent under most *priista* participatory schemes. The project was also used as a political response to *Ley Bartlett* and COPLADEMUNs, although when compared to *Ley Bartlett*, it perhaps did not have the necessary legal support to succeed, especially as the lack of a budget to deliver social projects weakened it. Ironically, the *panistas* therefore were forced to reach agreements with a veteran of the Mexican political system, Manuel Bartlett. The implementation of the *Carpeta de Desarrollo Comunitario* was not consolidated because the PAN was not

able to retain Puebla's local government for a consecutive term. Despite its limited powers the returning PRI administration removed an initiative that could have been an effective response to citizen's interest in joining participative bodies at the local level. Perhaps in a less politicised environment this initiative would have succeeded.

Current participatory initiatives

Under the current *priísta* administration there is no clearly defined plan for the implementation of participatory initiatives. Instead, there are five or six different channels through which citizens can get involved in the issues which affect them, and despite having a whole department dedicated to the promotion of citizen participation, these activities are still dominated by local bosses and municipal bureaucrats. Poor people are practically forced to have a good relationship with bureaucrats and neighbourhood leaders in case they need to obtain a paved street or potable water. The current administration has strengthened the power of *juntas auxiliares*, when research has shown that these organisations have close links with the PRI and that most of them defend the political interests of this organisation (see *Agenda para la Reforma Municipal*). Most presidents of *juntas auxiliares* are appointed by municipal or state officials, and are rarely elected in an open process. These pseudo-representatives play a key political role, especially during elections or at times when unpopular measures are to be announced by local or state authorities (Alvarez and Castro1999). In the view of Alvarez and Castro, *juntas auxiliares* should be either reformed or disappear, as they have been mainly used by the PRI for political purposes:

In urban municipalities *juntas auxiliares* act as municipal authorities and they represent citizens regarding bureaucratic work and will have a large amount of political control. In rural areas, these authorities act as channels of communication between authorities and citizens, sign official documents and have a direct contact with the mayor, obviously they have a considerably influential position within their localities (Alvarez and Castro1999).

An interesting argument highlighted by Alvarez and Castro can be applied directly to the way in which COPLADEMUNs were conceived. Most citizen participation reforms have not taken into account *juntas auxiliares* for three main reasons:

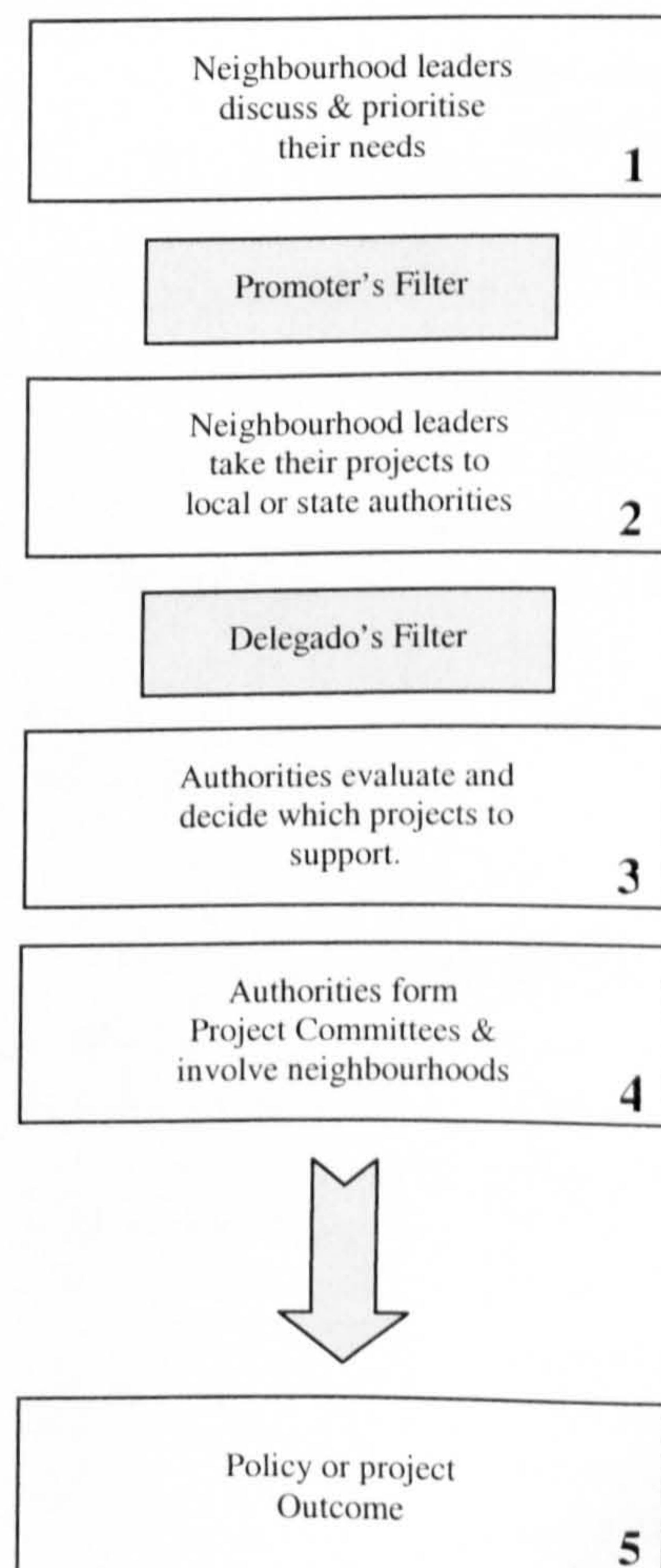
- 1) They are considered obsolete and antagonistic to any democratic principles.

- 2) They are perceived as institutions that sooner or later are going to be absorbed by municipalities and will become part of that bureaucratic apparatus.
- 3) They are expected to be elected and to have a budget assigned for community projects.

Ironically, certain participatory reforms have tried to incorporate *juntas auxiliares*, thereby increasing their influence and legitimising their *corporatist* practices. And when authorities create alternative structures, they tend to repeat the same practices performed by *juntas*; as happened with COPLADEMUNs, where most ‘elected leaders’ were representing interests, linked to the official party (PRI), or to local government officials.

The first months of the post-COPLADEMUN were characterised by a search for alternative options of citizen involvement. In a disordered way, authorities left citizens with large responsibilities and such forms of ‘citizen participation’ as *jefes de manzana*, or even local *caciques* continued operating normally, see Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Steps to follow when carrying out current Participatory Schemes



The process presented in Figure 4.2 has proven to be time-consuming and contact based. Especially when moving from step 1 to step 3, the self-organised and not entirely democratically elected neighbourhood leader structure struggles to achieve their needs, and if the community leader does not have the contacts, then his/her projects could be ignored indefinitely. There is no determined number of meetings that should take place during the year, and the functions of these community representatives are not clearly defined by any legal statutes. Most local government officials interviewed recognised the importance of creating a citizen participation law, with clear statutes and functions for citizens and authorities. Box 4.2 offers the main strengths and weaknesses of the three schemes analysed above.

Box 4.2 Comparison of the three schemes analysed

Ley Bartlett- COPLADEMUN	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong legal backup • Budget assigned in open meetings • Open election of community leaders 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulated Deliberation • Little power to influence local decisions not included in the scheme • The average citizen is powerless, as everything is negotiated at the top of the political pyramid • Strong links between local bosses (i.e. <i>jueces auxiliares</i> or neighbourhood representatives) and municipal authorities
PAN-UN initiative	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces accountability as a clue aspect to be considered in any neighbourhood schemes • Provides a set of clear rules for both authorities and citizens • Open election of community leaders • High degrees of deliberation between authorities and citizens 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a legislation behind its operations • Despite having the support of the UN, high dependency on state authorities to receive a budget for its operations • Heavy economic burden for citizens • Low impact on schemes not run through this initiative
Current Schemes	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of citizens in project committees • Operates under a department specifically established to promote citizen participation • Theoretically speaking, equal treatment to upper and lower class citizens 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming • Contact-based • No legal framework supporting its operations • No certainty regarding election processes of community leaders • Especially in the lower sectors of the population, prone to be used for <i>clientelistic</i> purposes • High dependency on promoters and <i>delegados</i> to achieve community projects • Simulated deliberation in most cases

In our view, if clear bases are not established, *clientelist* or *corporatist* practices will persist in Puebla. Especially the poorest sectors of the population seem destined to keep on playing the *clientelist* game unless structural reforms giving true influence to vulnerable groups in decision-making processes are carried out.

Conclusion

The participatory initiatives presented in this chapter show clearly that political or party interests have played a key role in their development in Puebla. The case demonstrates how the PAN and PRI have sought to gain political advantage by using participatory schemes more as a 'political weapon' than as accountable or democratic mechanisms. Put differently, both parties were seeking political advantage by using a participatory discourse, which in practice was not that participatory or democratic. Thus, at risk of simplification, at least in part Bartlett was pursuing his personal political agenda, the PAN was trying to undermine established PRI *caciquil* structures while the current PRI regime seems to be using participatory schemes to re-establish traditional PRI *caciquil* structures. This case raises important questions regarding the true intentions behind participatory schemes as well as highlighting the relevance that implementation has when these mechanisms are carried out in a highly politicised environment; these points will be discussed to a greater depth in the conclusion of this thesis.

The chapter also depicts Puebla's contact based network where populist practices are still common. Similarly to Tlalpan, in Puebla poor people remain most vulnerable to the *clientelist* practices performed by informal community leaders. Social classes play a key role when participatory schemes are implemented. Whilst the middle classes do not seem to be bothered about taking part in participatory schemes to introduce such services as piped drinking water or sewage, the poorer sectors generally hope to maximise any potential benefits that could be received when taking part in such schemes. This 'class' issue is an aspect that seems to have been forgotten by the developers of participatory schemes in different parts of Mexico, and will be discussed more extensively in chapter 6.

Puebla is also a good example of the facility with which local projects are reformed or discontinued, especially whenever there is a change of party at the local level. A major issue raised here is the uncertain future of citizen participation mechanisms in Mexico.

It seems that any type of participatory initiative implemented at the state or municipal level will always be limited by article 115 of the Mexican constitution, which avoids the establishment of intermediate decision-making bodies where citizens take the ultimate decision. If article 115 of the constitution prevents the establishment of intermediate bodies with powers to decide on public matters, then it is worth asking what is the sense of all those participatory programmes currently being implemented by local authorities in different parts of the country? Are all these programmes also violating the constitution? If the project for new federalism proposed by the Zedillo administration foresaw an active citizenry participating at the local level, then there is some doubt whether he realised that he was promoting an initiative that goes against article 115 of the constitution. Perhaps the aim is to always keep decision-making power within authorities and only share it in a very limited way with citizens. Maybe the goal of political parties is to undermine the policies of their opponents using a participatory rhetoric, but in reality carrying out schemes that circumscribe genuine participation. The creation of quasi-decision-making units is a means for authorities to tell citizens that they have a right to express their thoughts and get involved in decision-making processes, but at the same time, legally and economically speaking, these units will have few real powers. The next chapter introduces the case of San Pedro which is of interest because it differs from Puebla in three important ways. First, it has been marked by the continuity of the same policy in power for four consecutive terms. Second, the absence of strong political competition so that structures of local representation and participatory initiatives have not become politicised in the same way. Third, the primary infrastructure needs of the population have largely been satisfied. So, how have participatory initiatives developed in this very different context?

Notes

¹ This data was provided by the Head of Puebla's Urban Development Secretariat, Rufino Martínez Bruno, see *La Jornada de Oriente* (28/9/2000).

² According to Boltvinik (cited in *La Jornada* 14/11/1997) the method is one of the most advanced for measuring poverty and it was developed by Foster. For further information see United Nations 1997 Human Development Report.

³ For more information about how these indicators are used to assign economic resources see Nolan and Whelan *Resources, Deprivation and Poverty* (1996).

⁴ A *concertación* is the name given to those political negotiations that took place between the PRI, opposition political parties and social movements throughout the 1990s. The aim of the PRI was to reduce the force of these organisations negotiating political concessions. See chapter 1 for examples.

⁵ The night before the discussion and approval of the legislation around 90 members of the PAN including some mayors, obstructed the Congress' main access, forcing PRI congressmen to enter Congress by the back door. Once the session started and the new reforms were read by a *priista* congressman, a signal was given by Felipe Puelles, and a large number of *panistas*, wearing caps with the

slogan 'we want stronger municipalities,' started hitting *priista* congressmen. Only one *priista* legislator, Joel López Cuevas, was seriously injured. PAN members constantly interrupted the session, and security guards intervened to take them out. At the end of the session, the *priista* majority at Puebla's Congress approved the initiative (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998).

⁶ See articles 44 and 45 of the LNFSP.

⁷ Article 11 establishes that state authorities in co-ordination with municipalities and *juntas auxiliares* would invite the community to participate in the prioritisation of their needs (*Diario Oficial* 28/1/1998:12).

⁸ See article 15 of the LNFSP.

⁹ For more examples see articles 20, 21, 22, and 23 of the legislation.

¹⁰ For more details see article 82 of the LNFSP.

¹¹ Article 25 can be interpreted as a mechanism for involving the general public in decision-making processes and as a way to promote democracy and equality. It is a state's responsibility to promote egalitarian and integral development that can help strengthen the nation's sovereignty and democratic regime. It is through economic growth and employment that a more equal wealth distribution can be achieved. Also article 26 states that the incorporation of the public is important to achieve development. The state will organise a system of democratic planning for achieving national development based on the following characteristics: strength, dynamism, and equality, as well as independence and political democratisation (Cited from the Mexican Constitution, edited in 2000).

¹² See articles 21, 22, 23 and 24 of COPLADEMUN's statutes.

¹³ For more details see articles 25, 26 and 27 of COPLADEMUN's statutes.

¹⁴ Those facing similar circumstances, such as *panista* mayors from Coahuila, complained about a similar situation under the government of Rogelio Montemayor Seguy (*La Jornada* 28/1/1998).

¹⁵ The 13 municipalities are Puebla, Acajete, Atlixco, Chapulco, Nopalucan, San Andrés Cholula, San Gregorio Atzompa, San Martín Texmelucan, San Matias Tlalantaleca, Tehuacan, Santiago Mihuatlan, Aljojuca and San Pedro Cholula (source, *La Jornada* 6/3/1998).

¹⁶ For example, Rocio Lambera Gonzalez (advisor for several NGOs) and Vicente Arredondo Ramirez (UNESCO researcher).

¹⁷ President Zedillo (1994-2000) inaugurated the venue, while Governor Manuel Bartlett and Governor of Guanajuato Vicente Fox (currently president of Mexico) also took part.

¹⁸ The document is not clear about what this really means, but we can interpret it as getting involved in party issues, or looking after their personal interests rather than the interests of their neighbours.

¹⁹ COPLADEMUNs are bodies intended to promote citizen participation in decision-making processes, but these decisions are taken by all the members that are involved in each of these institutions, and not as argued by *panistas* [unilaterally]. The objective of COPLADEMUNs is to make budgets accountable to citizens, and at the same time to collect all those demands presented by the different groups composing each community (*Diario Oficial* 12/4/2000:49).

²⁰ Despite the large number of projects discussed and implemented via COPLADEMUNs, Mr. Medina did not comment on the way in which these meetings took place. It remains uncertain whether the meetings were 'pre-fabricated' as happened under the *panista* administration, or if these meetings were not pre-arranged.

²¹ See Marin 2000 at www.puebla.com.mx.

²² Eleven of these *juntas auxiliares* are located in rural areas.

²³ We have to bear in mind that both opinions cited here come from bureaucrats working for a *priista* administration and that they could, very possibly, have a biased perspective.

²⁴ Meaning that local politics is dominated by an 'old fashioned' type of leadership based on threatening the population

²⁵ Approximately £ 20.

²⁶ PRI 2000 presidential candidate.

²⁷ Under this scheme, the authorities would cover the majority of the costs of a project, and the residents would provide the rest, which would be deposited in bank accounts previously opened by local authorities for these purposes.

²⁸ As mentioned in chapter 4, unfortunately could not attend any of these meetings so I had to base my analysis on the views provided by those citizens who took part in these processes.

²⁹ Community leaders do not receive an 'official' salary from local authorities, and most of them rely on neighbours to pay those expenses generated by their lobbying activities. According to Mr. Ramirez, 'I never ask people for money, only when I go to the central office to do some paperwork. I do it to make them aware that in order to receive one has to first give' (Ramirez 2000).

³⁰ While the fieldwork was carried out, not a single one of these meetings took place.

³¹ 'Projects by co-operation' is the translation to *Obras por cooperación*.

³² Manuel Bartlett is considered a dinosaur (see Fuentes in *La Jornada* 14/10/1997) of the Mexican political system and became notorious in 1988, with the phrase 'the system broke down'. The phrase refers to the computer system installed for receiving electoral data during the 1988 presidential election. The story goes that once he noticed that the official party (PRI) candidate, Carlos Salinas, was losing the election, he faked a failure in the computer system and altered the result of the election to favour Carlos Salinas. Perhaps a clearer description of this politician is the one provided by PAN's 1998 national leader Felipe Calderón: 'when Bartlett was in charge of the 1988 presidential election, he was responsible for the largest electoral fraud in this country's history. He was also allegedly involved in the assassination of the journalist Manuel Buendía and cannot visit the United States, as California's Tribunal is waiting for him to respond to accusations which link him with drug-trafficking activities and the assassination of DEA agent Enrique Camarena' (*La Jornada* 30/1/1998).

Chapter 5

San Pedro

Introduction

San Pedro is considered the most developed municipality of Mexico. According to President Vicente Fox, 'a few years back, in San Pedro there were not many resources to promote development, however, today it is one of the greatest urban centres of Mexico. The people of San Pedro are leading the way, they are very advanced and have the best quality of life' (*El Norte* 28/8/2001). Governed since 1989 by the PAN, the municipality of San Pedro is the first in Mexico to have been ruled for more than ten years by the country's entrepreneurial elite. The inhabitants of this prosperous municipality are used to having the best services and the best places to go out, but have they got the best citizen participation mechanisms? This chapter analyses how the participatory agenda has been carried out in the most developed municipality of Mexico. It examines the main challenges faced when implementing participatory mechanisms where the population has already been provided with its basic infrastructure needs (i.e. electricity, piped drinking water).

The chapter is divided into seven sections. It starts with an overview of the conditions of San Pedro, which include a brief history of the main participatory schemes and some constitutional reforms that have been discussed by state authorities. The second part of the chapter covers the presentation of the current citizen participation legislation. In the third section the strengths and weaknesses of the legislation are analysed, and the next part examines San Pedro's bureaucratic structure. The fifth section covers the way the participatory agenda has been put in practice and it is followed by a short analysis of other participatory activities that have been also implemented. The chapter concludes with an overview of the participatory activities in San Pedro.

San Pedro's Characteristics

An overview of an efficient municipality

Since it was established more than 400 years ago, the richest families of the industrial northern state of Nuevo León found in San Pedro Garza García their favourite place of residence. This prosperous municipality has a population of 130,000 inhabitants, and a territorial extension of 6,968 hectares. The municipality is divided into 140 neighbourhoods inhabited, broadly speaking, by two social classes: *la residencial* (upper class) and *la popular* (lower class) with around 65,000 inhabitants each.¹ However, 70 percent of the properties in the municipality are owned by the upper class and 30 percent by the lower class. According to the Social Development Secretariat, San Pedro is considered the most developed municipality of Mexico, as it has the lowest index of marginality in the country (see *El Norte* 23/9/2000). The municipality has covered all its basic infrastructure needs. Both upper and lower sectors of the population have piped drinking water, sewage, electricity, natural gas, and paved streets.

San Pedro has become one of the most important bastions of the PAN in Mexico. Since 1988 the PAN has won every local election, allowing it to consolidate a 'panista entrepreneurial mentality' within San Pedro.

The private sector has played a key role in San Pedro's successful development. Several leading industrialists live there, such as Dionisio Garza Medina (ALFA steel industry), Eugenio Garza Laguera (VISA beer industry), and Adrian Sada González (VITRO glass industry).² The last five mayors³ that have been elected are linked in one way or another to Monterrey's industrial group, Monterrey is the capital of the state of Nuevo León, where San Pedro is also situated. This group of entrepreneurs has introduced their philosophy to the public sector, initiating a different style of local politics. Two points worth highlighting about this 'new-style' are, firstly, the performance based provision of public services, and, secondly, the bridges that the ruling class have built with the lower sectors of the municipality. In fact some of the poor neighbourhoods that have been established in San Pedro were created to provide the upper classes with the labour needed to build their mansions or to work at their homes. The citizen participation minister for the 2000-2003 administration recalls that, 'the popular sector (lower class) of the municipality was built as housing for immigrants who used to work for the cement industry. Currently these neighbourhoods are occupied by workers that carry out

most of the 'unpopular' jobs performed in the rich areas of San Pedro (i.e. gardeners, drivers, maids etc.)' (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001). The upper sector of San Pedro seems keen to develop within the lower classes an entrepreneurial and participatory mentality, so that, as discussed below, most social projects implemented in San Pedro are intended to develop the lower social classes of the municipality.

Brief history of citizen participation mechanisms implemented in San Pedro

It is difficult to determine the exact date when participatory mechanisms emerged in San Pedro. Certainly, since the 1960s there have been neighbourhood boards that have been established to deal with local problems. One of the main characteristics of these permanent participatory bodies is that they have been set up by affluent residents in the 'rich part' of the locality. Perhaps these mechanisms influenced local authorities when developing later participatory initiatives. However, more recently, it was under the Mauricio Fernández (1989-1991) administration that citizens first took part in the elaboration of San Pedro's municipal development plan, and according to the 1997-2000 mayor, Teresa García de Madero, the idea to involve San Pedro's citizens was brought by Fernández from the neighbouring state of Texas. The first consultation took place on 27 February 1990, after which another participatory process was organised on 25 March 1990.⁴ The main issue dealt with in this consultation was to ask citizens their opinion regarding the future urban development of San Pedro. The major concern expressed by citizens throughout the consultation was the chaotic way in which San Pedro was being developed. Neighbours feared that the value of their properties would diminish if residential areas continued being used for commercial purposes (i.e. establishing commercial centres). As a result of this participatory exercise, from March 1990 until February 1991 no new petitions for a construction permit within San Pedro were authorised. During the eleven months that this suspension lasted, there were two citizen encounters organised by external organisations to discuss the future urban development of San Pedro. The first meeting was organised by the CANACO (National Chamber of Commerce Monterrey branch) and the second by groups of ecologists, urban development specialists, academics, and neighbours. Despite the fact that alternative strategies of development were proposed in both forums, the discussions did not seem to influence the local authority and the original plan remained unchanged (*El Norte* 8/2/1991).⁵

A change introduced by the Fernández administration modified the way in which *jueces auxiliares* (auxiliary citizen judges) were appointed. Throughout previous *priista* administrations, *jueces auxiliares* were appointed directly by local officials and their function was primarily to support the official party with their *clientelist* practices. However, under the Fernández administration, for the first time, citizens were consulted about the most suitable person to occupy this position. Local authorities carried out a survey within each neighbourhood, and then local officials made a choice between the two or three names that were nominated the most by local residents. Whilst the process was not entirely in the hands of citizens, at least citizens had a say in the process.

One of the greatest concerns expressed by the inhabitants of San Pedro deals with the use of residential areas for commercial purposes. In fact one of the most controversial issues raised by citizens during the second year of the Rogelio Sada (1991-1994) administration was their opposition to the refurbishment and further expansion of a commercial centre located in a residential area.⁶ The PAN authorities soon realised that governing a highly demanding population was not an easy task, and this is why they thought that having closer contact with citizens was an important part of implementing any projects in the municipality. This is why the Sada administration created the San Pedro citizen councils. This new citizen participation scheme was introduced as an option to involve citizens who would work as 'advisors' for the local authority. The core principle supporting this initiative was to provide each local ministry with a watchdog that would be constantly revising all municipal policies before they were implemented. Each watchdog would be chosen by the mayor and would occupy this position for a six month period, with the possibility of being re-confirmed in this position every six months (see discussion below). Moreover, because the authorities chose those citizens involved in these forums, the structure of the citizen council was highly criticised by opposition party members. For instance, 1991-1994 PRI municipal party-leader, José Luis Castellanos Campa, questioned their neutrality when these bodies analysed the approval of a new urban *reglamento* (local law) for San Pedro (*El Norte* 3/12/1992). Despite the criticisms, these bodies have continued operating up to the present day.

Sada also introduced three important changes to increase the channels of interaction between authorities and the public. Firstly, he created the citizen participation

directorate. According to the first citizen participation director of San Pedro, Mrs. Rebeca Clouthier, 'Sada established the citizen participation direction in an attempt to interact with all San Pedro's inhabitants through *jueces auxiliares* and neighbourhood boards. Covering all poor and rich neighbourhoods with neighbourhood boards and *jueces auxiliares* is one of his greatest achievements' (Clouthier interview 6/4/2001).

The second Sada initiative was the establishment of the 1994 Citizen Participation Local Law, which still regulates citizen participation today. This local legislation provided the first legal support for such forms of participation as neighbourhood boards and for establishing consultation processes at the municipal level.

The third scheme introduced was the SAC *Sistema de Atención al Ciudadano* (Citizen Attention System). According to Mrs. Clouthier:

We created the SAC because we wanted to create a computerised database and a network to follow every social demand. The SAC was basically established to tell citizens whether their demand was proceeding or not. In the Sada administration we covered around 90 percent of citizens' demands and in the Fernando Margain administration (1994-1997) we covered all social demands. We thought that citizens should always have an answer, even if it is a 'no' citizens should always know what happens to what they asked for (Clouthier interview 6/4/2001).

The system created a 'demand-database' of every petition presented by citizens. All local ministries are on-line and have access to every demand previously introduced to the system. The aim of the SAC is to follow every demand until the citizen knows if his/her petition is to be accomplished or not. Each citizen received a demand number, and had a specified period of time to know the final verdict. These three schemes will be discussed more extensively below.

This 'tradition' of involving the residents of San Pedro in decision-making processes continued during the 1997-2000 administration of Mrs. Teresa García de Madero. She perceived citizen participation as essential for the development of the municipality:

I am convinced that citizens should get involved in decision-making processes and take the decisions that affect them directly in order to ensure good government. Governments where the community and each citizen have a say. Democracy is not about just voting on election day, democracy is about taking decisions on a daily basis and it is not possible that any government takes decisions without taking into account their governed. In my personal opinion, I

think citizen participation is a requisite in order to have a good government, it is a principle of a good administration, if one wants to govern 'properly', one, as an authority has to involve the community (García de Madero interview 18/5/1999).

Public consultations were one of the most recurrent participation processes promoted by García de Madero. These mini-referenda took place to discuss and decide about the actions that needed to be taken regarding specific controversial issues affecting the municipality. She also introduced other participatory exercises, one of the most successful ones being the creation of kids-clubs. The aim of these institutions is to involve children in participatory activities to improve the state of their communities. Kids-clubs and other schemes will be discussed later.

The hegemony of the PAN since 1989 has been crucial for consolidating these participatory initiatives. Governing a demanding community has proven to be a challenge that required several structural changes that included establishing more channels of communication between authorities and citizens. 'Asking before acting' now seems to be in the mind of most of San Pedro's functionaries – a 'participatory fever' that has reached the state level where further structural changes have also taken place.

Participatory Innovations at the State Level

The state of Nuevo León has been considered an innovative state⁷ for industrial initiatives and since the PAN won the 1997 state election these innovations have also reached the political arena. One of the main concerns expressed by the 1997-2003 state administration is the involvement of the community at times other than election processes. According to the referendum and plebiscite initiative promoted by Governor Fernando Canales, 'it is government's and society's duty to work together to construct more democratic institutions, and to bring the common good. Democracy is a source of legitimacy in modern political systems, today citizens require new semi-direct participatory mechanisms' (Canales 1999).

In order to achieve these purposes, Governor Canales decided to include in the constitution of Nuevo León such direct participatory forms of citizen involvement as the referendum and the plebiscite. According to Governor Canales the referendum has the following advantages:

- a) It is a dynamic method to respond to citizens' needs.
- b) It allows citizens to certify the content of those laws promoted at the local congress.
- c) It puts citizens and state representatives at the same level.
- d) It is a valuable channel of communication to promote citizens' views.
- e) It promotes collective responsibility and a feeling of solidarity between the members of society.
- f) It would give our political system new forms of plurality, forcing authorities to engage in the challenge of popular intervention.

A referendum would be organised following these criteria:

- 1) A referendum would take place when at least five percent of citizens inscribed in the state electoral list suggest it, when the governor considers it convenient or when two thirds of the local congressmen consider it adequate.
- 2) Whenever a referendum takes place, in order to cancel the legislation under discussion, at least fifty percent of citizens on the electoral registrar must vote.
- 3) Fiscal laws would not be discussed in a referendum. If following the referendum, the original legislation under discussion prevails, the matter could not be put to another referendum for three years.

In the November 1999 petition to Nuevo León's state congress, Canales also pointed out the convenience of approving the plebiscite as a form of citizen involvement for discussing general issues affecting the interests of the community. Canales suggested that the state constitution should give the capacity to the governor or to any of the 51 mayors in Nuevo León to invoke a plebiscite whenever there is a controversial decision to be discussed.

Both the referendum and the plebiscite would be organised by an independent body created for these particular purposes. The functionaries taking part in this commission would be citizens chosen by the state congress (which currently has a *panista* majority). In order to promote a plebiscite, five percent of citizens on the state electoral list, the governor, or members of congress could ask the organisation created for these purposes to carry out one. The result of the plebiscite would directly influence the course of action taken by authorities. As of July 2002, this initiative is still under discussion in the state congress.

The Citizen Participation Legislation of San Pedro (SPCPL)

Neighbourhood Boards: permanent participatory bodies

According to the legislation approved under the Sada administration, neighbourhood boards are the main permanent citizen participation forums. Article 6 states that for

legal recognition, these neighbourhood boards have to be registered at the municipality. When constituted, each neighbourhood board is obliged to present the legal statutes⁸ of their organisation, along with the minutes of the session where the members representing it were elected. The territorial area represented by each body varies, but the maximum number of houses that can constitute one neighbourhood board is 400. On the other hand, there is no minimum number of houses required to establish a neighbourhood board (see article 9 of SPCPL). All neighbourhood boards have a president, secretary and treasurer, although, more residents could be appointed to collaborate with those occupying these three positions where the size of the neighbourhood or circumstances require it. Once a neighbourhood board is elected, this institution can operate for any period between one and three years (see article 15 of the SPCPL).

The SPCPL states that citizens would determine the functions of their respective neighbourhood boards, however, the purposes of each board should be within the boundaries set in the legislation. Neighbourhood boards should only be established to discuss and improve the living conditions of each neighbourhood. The legislation states that if any of these organisations was used for different purposes (i.e. to promote a political party) from those for which it was originally established, then the municipality would have the capacity to annul the board as such.

According to the SPCPL, the functions of each neighbourhood board are to:

- 1) Represent their neighbours with local authorities and follow each of the community demands until they are either accomplished or rejected by the municipality.
- 2) Represent their neighbourhoods in any of the different types of consultations that take place within the municipality (e.g. urban development or ecological issues).
- 3) Implement actions that contribute to citizens moral, cultural and civic development.
- 4) Facilitate the establishment of permanent consultation mechanisms, also to promote democracy and increase citizen's awareness about the importance of communitarian actions.
- 5) Evaluate the quality of public services provided by local authorities. Neighbourhood boards are expected to contribute to improving the services provided by the municipality.
- 6) Promote a 'communitarian feeling' within their respective neighbourhoods and also to plan actions to take in case of emergency or natural disaster.

Neighbourhood boards are the main bodies that perform constant citizen participation activities, although the next section describes other ways in which the community can take part in decision-making processes at the local level.

Non-permanent forms of citizen participation

The SPCPL establishes three non-permanent channels of citizen participation that can be implemented in the municipality, 1) audiences, (either public or private) 2) consultations, (open or closed); and 3) written petitions. Article 22 establishes that audiences will be the participatory instruments through which residents can demand that the municipality reaches particular agreements or to present information about specific activities performed by local authorities. The mayor, any local minister, or the citizen participation director, can convoke public audiences. Each encounter must be publicised three days in advance and local authorities are expected to contact neighbourhood board leaders for 'publicity purposes'. Although most public audiences are proposed by citizens, these consultations can also be requested by local entrepreneurs, NGOs, and other types of associations (see article 23 of the SPCPL). Private audiences take place when a citizen presents an individual petition to the local authority. In this type of session, the mayor could also invite other local ministers to participate (see articles 26 and 27 of the SPCPL).

Consultations allow citizens to express their views about possible solutions to a municipal or specific neighbourhood problem. The mayor and the local minister in charge of solving the problem will invoke open consultations, and the participation process will have to be publicised seven days in advance. Authorities are expected to use such channels of communication as radio, television and local newspapers for promoting the consultation, but also neighbourhood board leaders would play a key role for these purposes. There are three different channels through which neighbourhood views can be collected: 1) surveys, 2) presentations in exhibitions, (where stalls would be dispersed throughout the municipality) and 3) citizen forums. The SPCPL requires the conclusions reached after the open consultation to be made public along with the actions that the local authority will carry out. Closed consultations are those where local authorities convene a group of specialists to discuss a specific subject or project. Citizens would not have access to this type of consultation.

The SPCPL states that the results of open and closed consultations will not determine the course of action to be taken by local authorities. However, when deciding which actions to take, local officials must fully consider citizens' or experts' opinions (see

Article 36). The SPCPL also states that citizens will be consulted whenever any of the following documents are modified:

- a) Urban development plans
- b) *Reglamentos Municipales* (local laws)

Written petitions must be addressed to local authorities in 'peaceful and respectful' terms –a rather ambiguous phrase– accompanied by a copy of the original document. Local authorities are obliged to inform the petitioner, within a reasonable period of time, about the outcome of his/her demand (see Article 40).

The three non-permanent forms of citizen participation presented in this section represent some of the most widely used participatory mechanisms introduced by San Pedro's *panistas* administrations. Each of these forms of consultation has been used to help legitimise a wide range of controversial decisions reached at the municipal level (see below).

Consejos Consultivos Ciudadanos (Citizen Councils)

Each local ministry operates under the scrutiny of a citizen council. These bodies act as a decentralised advisory body, having the following responsibilities:

- 1) Acting as an advisor for the municipality, the mayor, and all local ministries.
- 2) Expressing an opinion regarding local legislation.
- 3) Proposing new laws or reforms of law within the municipality.
- 4) Expressing an opinion regarding the municipality's urban development.

According to the San Pedro Citizen Council Legislation (SPCCL) –a chapter of the SPCPL– each citizen council will be composed of a president, an executive secretary, a delegate and up to eight councillors. The president must be an honourable citizen with a good professional and civic reputation, and preferably someone who is well known within his/her neighbourhood. The mayor will appoint the president, and the executive secretary and delegate will be members of the local administration. The mayor will also be in charge of recommending those who he/she believes are honourable citizens that can act as councillors. Each commission lasts for six months, but the councillors can be reappointed as many times as the local authority wishes.

The citizen council must meet at least once a month. Meetings are organised by the mayor. The agenda will be co-ordinated by the president or the executive secretary and

all members of the citizen council will have a right to speak and vote. The legislation establishes that each citizen council president will receive a salary, but it does not specify the amount. The other members of the council receive no remuneration, as they are already municipal employees. The position of the councillors is honorary.

Jueces Auxiliares (Auxiliary Judges)

The San Pedro Juez Auxiliar Legislation (SPJAL) – another part of the SPCPL – defines *jueces auxiliares* as collaborators of the local administration. Local authorities appoint each *juez auxiliar* after implementing a survey within the jurisdiction for which he/she will be responsible. Jurisdictions are different from those of neighbourhood boards, usually covering more than one neighbourhood. The position of *juez auxiliar* is honorary and can only be occupied by those citizens fulfilling the following requirements:

- 1) A Mexican citizen.
- 2) 25 or older.
- 3) Literate.
- 4) An honourable and honest citizen.
- 5) Having lived at least for one year in that jurisdiction.
- 6) No criminal record.

Jueces auxiliares are appointed when a new administration takes office for the same period of three years as the local administration. However, *jueces auxiliares* can be removed from their position if they incur any of the following faults:

- 1) When abusing their authority, not sticking to the functions established in this legislation, or promoting a political ideology while carrying out their functions.
- 2) When disobeying the local authority's orders.
- 3) When committing a civil offence (e.g. robbery).
- 4) When moving to a different jurisdiction.
- 5) When showing mental or physical incapacity.
- 6) When neighbours sign a petition asking for his/her removal as a *juez auxiliar*.
- 7) When not willing to participate with local authorities.
- 8) When acting against the policies of the municipality.
- 9) When not managing properly the issues for which he/she was appointed.

In effect, *jueces auxiliares* are responsible for maintaining a peaceful environment within their respective jurisdictions,⁹ as according to the SPJAL a *juez auxiliar* will have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Make sure that all his/her fellow citizens under his/her jurisdiction respect local laws and also any agreements reached with local authorities.
- 2) Be supportive to local authorities whenever they require it.
- 3) Work hand in hand with judicial authorities whenever their support is required (this is mainly for informational purposes).
- 4) Attend the *jueces auxiliares*' monthly meeting, as well as take part in any of the courses regularly organised by local authorities.
- 5) Whenever required by local authorities, write a report of all activities performed.
- 6) Address recommendation, proof of residence or other types of letters to neighbours when asked for, these documents will have to be certified by local authorities as well.
- 7) Denounce those who violate the law, and ask for the support of the police whenever required.
- 8) Report any failures in the delivery of public services.
- 9) Inform authorities when clandestine activities (i.e. toxic wastes disposal) take place within their jurisdictions, and also collaborate when health campaigns (i.e. vaccination campaigns) are organised by the municipality.
- 10) Act as a local authority representative when neighbourhood board meetings take place.
- 11) Create a directory with all the posts and telephone numbers of every local official.
- 12) When required by any of the families living in their jurisdiction, intervene as a mediator to facilitate the solution of the 'family issue' dealt in any particular case.

Finally, although in two (citizen councils and *jueces auxiliares*) of the four schemes here, citizens are given very little say, these schemes were still included in the citizen participation legislation. This is a good example of how the definitions of citizen participation vary widely between different local authorities. As noted in chapters 3 and 4, the interpretation that authorities give to these mechanisms becomes crucial when implementing any local participatory agenda.

Strengths and weaknesses of San Pedro's 1994 citizen participation legislation

San Pedro's 1994 Citizen Participation Legislation was explicitly intended to develop citizens' and authorities' participatory responsibilities. In the legislation, San Pedro's authorities divided the opportunities for citizen involvement into four categories: neighbourhood boards, consultations, citizen councils, and *jueces auxiliares*. These options were expected to satisfy the participatory impetus of San Pedro's demanding population, but how effective was this legislation?

A strength was the establishment of permanent independent bodies such as neighbourhood boards. In San Pedro's prosperous environment, these participatory groups are free to create their own statutes, giving citizens total control over their organisations and the neighbourhood agenda. An example of this independence is the

way in which residents from the neighbourhoods of Valle San Angel, Villa Chipinque, San Patricio, Lomas del Valle, Veredalta, Jerónimo Siller and Bosques del Valle have combined to promote reforms of the urban development legislation of San Pedro. The core aim of this initiative is to prevent local authorities from making reforms to local legislation without the approval of those residents who would be affected by the construction of new commercial or housing projects (see *El Norte* 28/11/2001).

A second positive aspect of the legislation is the opportunity for citizens to open consultation processes whenever they believe the issue needs discussing, as with the recent controversy caused by the possible construction of *El Forum* a large shopping centre. The project faced two main problems: firstly, the lack of vital infrastructure to receive more vehicles driving into the shopping area; and secondly, that local legislation has allocated this area for low-density commercial areas and not large shopping complexes (see *El Norte* 31/8/2001). As a result of public pressure, the municipality had to open a consultation process which took place on 23 October 2001, and which resulted in the local authority cancelling the project (see *El Norte* 31/1/2002). Authorities seem to have realised the importance of having constant open channels of communication between themselves and citizens, for three main reasons. Firstly, to know what people want; secondly, to know what people think of them; and thirdly, as it will be discussed in the disadvantages section, as a 'facilitator' of government.

Another positive aspect of the legislation is that it encourages the development of better neighbourhood leaders, as these community representatives are invited to take part in courses to improve their leadership or personal skills. These courses are mainly directed to community leaders from the lower sectors of the population, and although the topics may vary (e.g. self-esteem, motivation or numerical skills), whenever they take place they seem to be highly appreciated by the participants. As *juez auxiliar* Leticia Vargas commented, 'by taking these courses we are growing as persons, we all want to become better citizens, I have learnt many things by taking part in such schemes. I really thank the municipality for giving me the opportunity to engage in such activities' (Vargas interview 29/3/2001).

A final strength of the legislation is the way it conceives the role of citizen councils in scrutinising the performance and those decisions reached within each local ministry.

These advisory bodies are expected to provide an important input to every decision taken at the municipal level. It is like having a permanent watchdog looking after the interests of his/her fellow citizens.

San Pedro's authorities created four channels of communication or interaction between themselves and citizens as a way to improve their own performance, but also as an essential democratic measure. Yet, the disadvantages of the legislation are linked to the extensive influence that local authorities have over most of these mechanisms. Apart from neighbourhood boards, which are entirely managed by citizens, in the rest of the 'participatory' activities included in this legislation, the authorities play a key role in activating each of these bodies. For instance, when consultations are proposed, it is the authority that decides whether the process takes place or not, or whether the process would be open or closed. Moreover, even after asking the citizens' opinion, the authorities have the last word over the steps to take after the consultation, thereby diminishing the importance of the whole process. If the local authority's decision always prevails in the end then it is worth asking, what is the reason for involving citizens?

A second disadvantage can be found in the way in which citizen councils are established. Whilst citizens can perform as advisors they are appointed by local authorities, but perhaps if citizens were *elected*, we would expect these community advisors to act more freely. If the mayor proposes members of citizen councils, then their scope to scrutinise each local ministry is somewhat restricted, because the citizen chosen to perform this activity might feel compromised by their relationship with the mayor. This problem is accentuated by the short six months duration of citizen counsellors in office. It seems to have been carefully planned so that if a councillor strongly criticises the local administration, then he/she can be quickly removed from his position.

Even though that authorities implement a survey involving all community actors before deciding who to nominate as a *juez auxiliar*, again the final decision lies within local authorities. Indeed, it is ironic that San Pedro's *panista* administration did not alter the *priista juez auxiliar* structure, but instead increased its capacities and influence over the community. On the one hand, it is useful to have *jueces auxiliares* within each jurisdiction, as they have direct contact with both local authorities and citizens. But, on

the other hand, local authorities seem to have gone a bit too far in their relationship with *jueces auxiliares*. With the organisation of courses to improve the leadership and personal skills of these community representatives –which admittedly are appreciated by *jueces auxiliares* – it is worth questioning whether the apparent independence of these community representatives has been corrupted by a ‘dangerous *liaison*’ with local authorities. Who decides the limit between exercising an excessive control over citizens, or letting them carry out their community activities independently? Especially in lower class neighbourhoods, it appears to be an excessive control over residents. As discussed below, the continuity that local authorities have given to most *jueces auxiliares* seems to have contributed to the social stability experienced in a municipality where the gap between rich and poor is quite considerable. Perhaps the consecutive victories of the PAN have been based on executing a political project hidden behind the implementation of tightly controlled participatory schemes, where citizens believe their participation does count, but where in reality they have little impact in the final outcome of local policies?

The ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ mentioned above will be expanded upon below, when interviews and a more detailed analysis of each situation is included. Before that, what the *panista* municipality of San Pedro has provided (on paper) are some options for citizen involvement, nevertheless, it is important to examine how these initiatives have been implemented.

The bureaucratic structure

In San Pedro unlike the previous case studies, a quite small department controls citizen participation. The size of the municipality and its social, economic, and cultural conditions, facilitate the work done by the citizen participation directorate. The directorate has four main aims:

- 1) Promoting and revising the functioning of all neighbourhood forums for their participation in the activities taking place in the municipality.
- 2) Co-ordinating and channelling those petitions made by the population to the body(ies) in charge of solving them.
- 3) Ensuring that the functions performed by *jueces auxiliares* are in accordance with what is stated by law.
- 4) Co-ordinating the meetings between the mayor with the neighbourhood boards and the public offices operating in the municipality.

It is important to note that the citizen participation directorate has recently been upgraded to a ministry. The decision to elevate the status of the directorate to a ministry was taken by the mayor for the 2000-2003 municipal term, Mr. Gerardo Garza Sada. He claims to be a strong supporter of citizen participation:

We in the PAN believe in democracy, democracy is participating in decision-making processes constantly and the better-organised citizens are, then the better we will govern. Governors are only facilitators of those actions and projects needed by the community. It is very important to have a constant interaction with them (Garza Sada interview 12/9/2000).

Another factor that contributed to Garza Sada's decision to elevate the rank of the citizen participation directorate was the huge difference between San Pedro's rich and poor neighbourhoods. According to him, solidarity plays a crucial role when wanting poor neighbourhoods to reach a higher level of development. Garza Sada highlighted the way in which the neighbours of the San Pedro 400 neighbourhood [lower class] developed their community by taking part in participatory programmes promoted by previous administrations.

San Pedro is one of the richest municipalities of Mexico, but one third of the municipality lives in poverty. San Pedro 400 is a good example of how when the public participates you can see how the community develops. One of the main principles of the PAN is the principle of solidarity and we subsidise these poor neighbourhoods from the taxes collected from better off neighbourhoods, poor neighbourhoods always receive more resources than they provide (Garza Sada interview 12/9/2001).

Not surprisingly, the comments made by Mayor Garza Sada were fully supported by the recently appointed citizen participation minister Jorge Zubieta y Landa:

The neighbourhood San Pedro 400 is a neighbourhood properly planned, where all basic infrastructure was included since it was built. We built some gyms, football pitches, swimming pools and also cultural spaces for this community. We want to develop in them a 'community feeling,' and during Gerardo Garza's political campaign he realised the importance of citizen participation. This is why he decided to upgrade the citizen participation directorate to a ministry (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001).

There are three key positions in the municipality's citizen participation ministry. Apart from Zubieta y Landa, Mrs. Carmen Bremer is the *jueces auxiliares* co-ordinator and Mrs. Patricia Lozano is in charge of organising the neighbourhood boards.

Zubieta y Landa stresses the importance of having a constant interaction with citizens and offering solutions for their needs. He claims that 'at least three days per week we visit different neighbourhoods and we ask the community about their main needs. The mayor is present during these visits and he would tell neighbours which projects are feasible and which not' (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001). Zubieta y Landa also highlighted the benefits of the programme known as '*viernes ciudadano*' (citizen Friday) which is basically a public audience where all local functionaries are present, including the mayor. The programme aims to involve local authorities directly in solving the problems presented by citizens, and tries to ensure that citizens know who is going to deal with their problem.

Every Friday we have a public audience, but also we can have special visits to neighbourhoods with a very specific need (e.g. paving a street). What we do in these cases is that we determine the cost of the project and then we tell citizens how much we can contribute for the project and how much citizens will have to contribute (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001).

As the basic infrastructure needs of the municipality are provided for, in this case there are no negotiation processes taking place between authorities and citizens or between particular interests that under different circumstances might have developed. Petitions are quite straightforward, and because citizens and authorities are less likely to owe any favours to each other, then the interaction between authorities and citizens is more open. Zubieta y Landa recalls: 'whenever we involve the community in participation processes, their response has been very positive, because we always tell them the truth, we always tell them the "whys" the "whens" and the "hows" of every demand they present' (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001). In some cases citizens have even financed projects. For example, 'when citizens are worried about security, they can gather together and co-operate to buy a police patrol car. The municipality would pay the salaries of the officers, and neighbours would be in charge of looking after the patrol car and repairing it when necessary' (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001). Of course, this is more likely in upper class neighbourhoods than in lower class ones.

Although the department in charge of implementing the participatory agenda has been upgraded, its functions have remained almost identical. Their core aims are still to open channels of communication between authorities and citizens and to prioritise those projects to be implemented in deprived neighbourhoods.

One of the most important areas of the citizen participation ministry is the co-ordination of *jueces auxiliares*. The aim is to keep control of every *juez auxiliar* working in the municipality. All *jueces auxiliares* have a monthly meeting to receive and to give feedback to local authorities about their activities. One of the key issues promoted in this department is to give continuity to these community representatives. The reasoning behind this policy is that over time *jueces auxiliares* get to know their communities and the main problem affecting their jurisdictions. It would be time-consuming and less productive for the municipality to be constantly changing *jueces auxiliares* administration after administration. According to *juez auxiliar* co-ordinator Mrs. Carmen Bremer:

The idea is that they (*jueces auxiliares*) keep performing this activity for a prolonged period of time, because we invest in their preparation to become *jueces* and we would like them to stay as such. We are interested in their all round development, we do not want them to become *caciques*, we try to educate them to not take advantage of their position, and if they start doing so (taking advantage of their position) then they are immediately removed. They are aware of this situation. The great majority of *jueces auxiliares* are well behaved, if there is a problem with any of them, then he or she would be immediately removed from occupying that position (Bremer interview 29/3/2001).

According to Mrs. Bremer she only recalls two cases where *jueces auxiliares* were removed after using their position for particular party purposes (basically in favour of the PRI). Both cases occurred during the first years of the PAN in office (Bremer interview 29/3/2001).

The claim is that the *juez auxiliar* post is reserved for people with a genuine 'civic spirit' and for those who do not look to benefit from the position. The surveys applied before choosing these representatives play an important role in selecting each *juez auxiliar*. As Carmen Bremer puts it, 'after applying the survey, we would then choose the candidate who is more positively perceived within his/her community' (Bremer interview 29/3/2001). The authorities are constantly interacting with these community representatives so they would quickly know when one of them is trying to take advantage of its position. Because the municipality has a 100 percent coverage of their basic infrastructure needs, it is very difficult to have the 'classical' local leaders found throughout the country, who would offer to lobby for the introduction of public services

if during election processes citizens vote for a particular candidate. In San Pedro, we can say that there is nothing material to offer.

In the upper classes *jueces auxiliares* are also selected based on residents' opinions. Because upper class people have, generally speaking, busier lifestyles and would not have enough time for community activities, these positions are mostly occupied by the same person for long periods of time.

In residential areas, there we ring neighbourhood boards and then the members of these bodies would recommend someone for the position. We also contact people with a high 'serving spirit' and we would then ring them and ask them whether they are interested in occupying the post. In a way it is easier to choose *jueces auxiliares* in residential areas, than in lower sectors, because in the lower sectors you have more conflicts between neighbours wanting the post (Bremer interview 29/3/2001).

The person who co-ordinates San Pedro's neighbourhood boards is Mrs. Lozano. According to her the problems which affect upper and lower class neighbourhoods vary widely: 'poor areas and rich areas have quite different demands. Poor neighbourhoods' main problems are related to drugs and public security, in rich neighbourhoods they are mainly concerned about keeping their green areas' [but when compared to those problems affecting other municipalities of Mexico, they are all much easier to solve] (Lozano interview 5/4/2001).

According to Mrs. Lozano, these bodies have total independence when constituting and electing their representatives. The role of municipal authorities is only to witness these processes, not to influence the way in which sessions are carried out or the principles of the organisation.

Citizens manage the whole process, we do not intervene in the formation of these bodies. Neighbours create their own statutes (i.e. meeting-wise and function-wise). Election processes vary, in some places they do it every year, in others every three years and in others they stay for more than that, as long as this is accepted by neighbours, then we do not see a problem doing so (Lozano interview 5/4/2001).

Local authorities encourage citizens to establish community organisations, furthermore, whenever a new neighbourhood is erected, authorities meet with neighbours and highlight the importance of taking part in decision-making processes. Mrs. Lozano recalls, 'whenever a neighbourhood wants to establish a Mesa-Directiva,

(neighbourhood board) we provide a list with all the benefits that it could bring to the municipality and to them and we encourage them to create their own representative body' (Lozano interview 5/4/2001). In the view of neighbourhood board advisor Mr. Juan Ignacio Duran, these boards were conceived as a solution to the high number of demands presented to local authorities by the inhabitants of San Pedro.

In San Pedro the authorities decided nine years ago that due to the large number of demands posed by citizens, they should use neighbourhood boards as a channel to process those demands. This is why neighbours were motivated to create their own neighbourhood boards, which they would registrar with municipal authorities (Duran interview 4/4/2001).

It might seem that three full-time co-ordinators are not enough to cope with the participatory needs of the municipality, however, the recently upgraded ministry has proven very effective. These neighbourhood co-ordinators keep a daily contact with *jueces auxiliares* and neighbourhood representatives, and their job is facilitated by the fact that the municipality has totally covered its basic infrastructure needs. Ironically, one of the structures that have been strengthened throughout the *panista* years is the *juez auxiliar*, which traditionally was linked to the PRI's *clientelistic* activities. This concept seems to be effective when implemented in areas where all the basic infrastructure needs of citizens are covered, as the possibility to negotiate or blackmail citizens is considerably reduced if their primary needs are already solved.

How do San Pedro's participatory bodies work?

Neighbourhood boards

The way in which neighbourhood boards are organised in San Pedro is directly linked to class. While upper class neighbourhood boards are highly organised and have their own budgets, lower class neighbourhoods generally have less developed organisations and gather to discuss community issues sporadically, only when a problem affecting their neighbourhood arises. A good example of an upper middle class neighbourhood organisation is the Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board. Founded in 1969, this neighbourhood board was established to achieve the following purposes:

- 1) Defend the interests of the neighbourhood.
- 2) Represent the interests of any particular individual living in the neighbourhood.
- 3) Scrutinise the quality of the services provided by the municipality.

- 4) Participate actively in events organised for improving the conditions of the neighbourhood.
- 5) Whenever required, intervene with local authorities to protect the value of their properties.
- 6) Co-operate with political bodies when required.
- 7) Stimulate the development of programmes or policies intended to improve the living conditions of the neighbourhood.
- 8) Provide a forum for discussing freely any public issues affecting the neighbourhood.
- 9) Co-operate with charitable causes.
- 10) Deal with any legal aspects that could affect or benefit the association.

There are 40 articles in the statutes of the Fuentes Del Valle neighbourhood board. The core issues covered in this 'neighbourhood constitution' are the board's main functions, the rules governing the election and functions of neighbourhood representatives and the different types of meetings organised by the board.

Transparency is one of the main concerns for these neighbourhood organisations. Every month, most boards publish a bulletin that includes a financial report of their monthly income and expenses. Table 5.1 has been adapted from the bulletin published by the Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board in April 2000.

Table 5.1 Fuentes Del Valle Neighbourhood Board Statement

Revenues	February-2000
Neighbours' fees	48,705.00
Municipal contributions	0.00
Diverse sources	2,500.00
Total in	51,205.00
Expenses	
Salaries (Accountant, secretary)	4,887.50
Water (to water the parks)	1,224.90
Employees Social Security	1,899.25
Office bills (water, electricity and telephone)	2,002.00
Gardeners' salaries	6,853.17
Valeria Park expenses	1,000.00
Office expenses	1,807.78
Other expenses	219.66
Stationery	1,431.79
Gardening expenses	1,595.51
Special services (fee collectors)	3,226.50
Bulletin	0.00
Street lights for the neighbourhood	10,000.00
Loans to employees	400.00
Total Out	36,545.06
Amount remaining this month	14,659.94
Neighbourhood board savings	25,034.53
Total amount	39,694.47

Amounts in *Pesos*, approximately 14 *pesos* = £ 1

The Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board monthly bulletin is a cost-free publication financed by banks or businesses that have been established near or in the neighbourhood. The publication includes a detailed list of all the actions performed throughout the month, and also the dates and the issues to be dealt with in any future neighbourhood meetings. According to the Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board secretary, Guadalupe Gómez:

Through the bulletin we try to promote our meetings and we are constantly trying to find sponsors. We mainly try to find sponsors that are situated within the neighbourhood (banks mainly). The idea is to inform citizens about the dates of the meetings and also of any relevant changes taking place in the neighbourhood (Gómez interview 29/8/2000).

Most upper class neighbourhood boards have a voluntary monthly fee, which as Table 6.1 illustrates, represents the main income received by the Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board. Gómez observes, 'we collect a 50 *pesos* (around £ 3.20) fee from neighbours on a monthly basis, but because this payment is voluntary, most neighbours do not pay it, there are approximately 1,500 houses in the neighbourhood and on an average only around 700 pay' (Gómez interview 29/8/2000).

This organisation's main expenses originate from paying the salaries of the personnel working at the neighbourhood board headquarters and of employees such as gardeners. An important of upper class neighbourhood boards, is that most have an 'operation centre.' The Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board, has an operational office located near the entrance to the neighbourhood.¹⁰ The neighbourhood board uses this office to hold their internal and general meetings. It also houses a small library where office services (e.g. photocopying) are available.

Although Table 5.1 shows no registered financial support from the municipality, these representative bodies do receive a symbolic contribution from local authorities. The Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood board received a 12,000 *pesos* (around £ 850) grant in 2000, which was used to pay the salaries of some gardeners hired by the neighbourhood board (Gómez interview 29/8/2000).

A point emphasised by Gómez was that there is no space for political organisations, in their neighbourhood board:

The members of this neighbourhood board do not have a political interest, in fact we stated in the statutes that no party or religious interests could be promoted in any of the meetings taking place in the neighbourhood board. When we have local elections, political parties contact the board and then a meeting is set to listen to a determined candidate, we have no political preference, all parties are treated the same (Gómez interview 29/8/2000).

By contrast, lower class neighbourhood boards do not have such developed organisations or strategic planning, and only gather when issues that affect them arise. The fact that the lower sectors of San Pedro have their primary needs covered has contributed to the relaxed way in which their neighbourhood boards are organised. Neighbourhood board leaders do not need to collect a monthly fee from citizens; they only do so when their co-operation is required to finish a local project.

An interesting feature of working class neighbourhood boards is the way in which local authorities try to 'invest' in their leaders to make them better representatives. One example is Mr. Isaías Ramírez, who has been re-elected several times as neighbourhood board representative for the Del Monte (working class) neighbourhood. According to Mr. Ramírez, 'the municipality is always inviting me to participate in courses to improve my neighbourhood representative skills' (Ramírez interview 28/3/2001). The courses given to improve neighbourhood representatives' skills are mainly directed at the poorer sectors of the population and in the view of local officials, such as Zubieta y Landa, have helped increase their awareness about the importance of their role in society.

Because the municipality has already provided all the basic infrastructure services required by residents, citizens are more concerned about other types of issues affecting their respective neighbourhoods. In the view of neighbourhood board advisor, Mr. Duran,¹¹ most communities present a large number of proposals, despite the fact that generally speaking, they know little about municipal statutes:

Neighbourhood boards are generally quite active demand-wise. But the types of demands solicited here are generally unjustified. This is caused by the lack of knowledge that characterises most of the inhabitants of San Pedro. Neighbourhood boards last for one year and there is a lot of apathy about studying the law. It is also because neighbours participating as community leaders do not get paid, there are a few incentives to make people community representatives. Most upper class citizens demand local authorities to implement actions without reasoning. For example, if they would like to have a more frequent collection of rubbish, they do not think about the costs this would

imply, or they would not think to make a comparison between the taxes they pay and the services they receive (Duran interview 4/4/2001).

The PAN has been under the scrutiny of a highly educated and demanding population, in an environment where it is difficult to implement populist practices of government, and where even in poor neighbourhoods, citizens have their basic infrastructure needs covered. However, having an 'educated' and demanding population does not necessarily mean that citizens know their rights. According to neighbourhood board advisor Mr. Ignacio Duran, there are some cases where the inhabitants of San Pedro ask for services or for the solution of a determined problem without knowing the limits of local authorities' areas of influence.

We demand that authorities get involved in issues that are not their responsibility, here it is a very common practice. Let me give you a very common example, most of our neighbourhoods are built on a pre-sale basis. Private construction companies develop a project for a determined area specifying the dimensions of the roads, type of electrical wiring etc., but this specific neighbourhood has not been handed over to the municipality. Once the developers of the project sell all the spaces available, neighbours realise that they have been cheated, and there is nothing that they can do, or who to complain to about these types of issues. Then once neighbours start living in the new neighbourhood, they complain about the quality of the roads or other issues, but it is not the municipality's fault, it is the company that sold all the properties that is to blame. Then neighbourhood boards fight with municipal authorities for an issue that is not their fault, this is what I was telling you in reference to the lack of information neighbours have regarding the functions of local authorities (Duran interview 4/4/2001).

Due to such problems, the municipality has recently tried to involve the community more in decision-making processes, as will be further discussed in this chapter. Cases like the one presented above are some of the most common problems faced in the 'developed' municipality of San Pedro, Nuevo León.

Internal organisation of neighbourhood boards

The main deliberative activities in San Pedro take place within neighbourhood boards. Again, class plays a key role for the internal organisation of these meetings. For instance, most upper class meetings are, generally, organised months in advance and the issues on the agenda are also of common knowledge. As commented by San Pedro resident Mr. Antuan Kuri:

In our neighbourhood we have a pre-set agenda. We always start our gatherings reading the minutes from the previous meeting, and then we move on to discuss the main issue(s) to be dealt with in the present meeting. The third part of the session covers a section dedicated to the analysis of the issues dealt with throughout the meeting and also we discuss any suggestions presented by the public. In the last part, we might have 'mini-voting processes' over particular topics before the neighbourhood leader announces the main agreements reached (Kuri interview 26/22/2001).

Attendance at these sessions would be directly related to the issues dealt in the agenda, and one of the most important characteristics of these meetings is that citizens interact in an 'equal-environment,' there are no dominant leaders exercising blackmailing methods over the residents. As commented by (2000-2003) neighbourhood board coordinator Mrs. Lozano, 'it would be very difficult to find *clientelist* practices in neighbourhood meetings, even within the lower sector of the population. As unlike other municipalities, in San Pedro neighbourhood leaders have not got anything to offer (i.e. the introduction of services)' (Lozano interview 5/4/2001).

In the poorer sectors of the municipality meetings are not organised in advance and as noted above, they take place only when necessary. But, as in the richer areas, deliberation takes place openly and all citizens have a chance to express their views in these gatherings. Neighbourhood board leader Isafas Ramírez reflects: 'in our meetings everyone has the opportunity to participate, the sessions are open and all views are respected. Sometimes the mayor attends these gatherings and promises the solution to problems that affect us. These meetings are a good way to learn more about our communities and also to learn more about the people we live with' (Ramírez interview 28/3/2001).

Despite these positive views about the internal operation of both upper and lower class neighbourhood boards, there are citizens who would not necessarily agree with these perspectives. For instance, Mr. Felipe Luna, had lived for more than three years in San Pedro and was not even aware of the existence of neighbourhood boards. Luna was ignorant of the advantages of such bodies, and of taking part in meetings. More importantly, when Mr. Luna has a problem in his neighbourhood he goes directly to the local authority and demands action. Luna would not bother deliberating with his neighbours and would just point out his problem to local authorities, in his view: 'local authorities are there to solve our problems, that is why we elected them, I see no point in

deliberating in neighbourhood boards, as the effects of these talks are not felt immediately in actions of government' (Luna interview 23/11/2001). On the other hand, another resident Mr. Roberto García, believes that neighbourhood boards are necessary to have a more direct channel of communication between citizens and authorities. In his opinion, 'neighbourhood boards promote the interaction of residents and authorities, we have solved many problems through this scheme, it is a good way to promote deliberation and democracy' (García interview 27/11/2001). It seems that there is no unanimous view about the internal operation of neighbourhood boards, as each citizen has a different perspective depending on his/her personal experience. However, it does seem that these organisations have sometimes proven to be useful instruments outside these organisations.

External effects of neighbourhood boards

The aim of this section is to provide a better perspective on the main issues raised by neighbourhood boards. One of the most common problems faced by upper class neighbourhood boards concerns the construction of new roads that could increase local traffic or noise. Based on a survey of local newspapers, it was found that the issues dealt with in lower class neighbourhood boards do not receive the same media attention, as no cases were found in the local press. For example, the Colonial de la Sierra neighbourhood protested against the use of the Bosques del Encino Street as an entrance for the American Institute School. According to the protestors, local authorities should intervene and force parents picking up their children to use Perseverancia Street – as previously – reducing the traffic and noise caused by the amount of vehicles driving through their neighbourhood (*El Norte* 16/9/1994). As a result of the protest, the school was forced to use the original entrance to pick up the children studying there.

Another example of neighbourhood board intervention, quite similar to the one above, took place when neighbours from the El Rosario neighbourhood protested against the construction of a new road that would 'destroy' their privacy. The aim of the road was to connect the exclusive sector to one of the main roads of the municipality. The project was conceived as an alternative exit for traffic from the neighbourhood. The role of the neighbourhood board was critical in stopping the project, Mrs. Ernestina Lozano de Salas, neighbourhood board leader, and San Pedro's 1997-2000 citizen participation director, Mrs. Alejandra Medina, planned a consultation process. Neighbours from El

Rosario neighbourhood delivered 229 questionnaires throughout the neighbourhood, which were collected four weeks later. Seventy-six percent of the neighbours that participated in the consultation voted against the construction of the road. As a result of the survey, authorities decided to suspend this project. The resources that were allocated for this project were used instead for improving other roads within the municipality (*El Norte* 10/8/1998).

The second most common claim of upper class neighbourhood boards deals with cancelling the construction of commercial spaces in residential areas. For example, neighbours from the Carrizalejo neighbourhood protested against the construction of a corner shop. According to the neighbours, the shop should not be built in a residential area and they stopped the construction when they took the case to the municipality in 1995. Residents also considered that the establishment of the shop would bring traffic and pollution problems to their neighbourhood. Two years after the legal dispute began, the municipality decided in favour the commercial chain and the construction of the corner shop was completed in August 1997 (*El Norte* 27/8/1997). In this case citizens were unsuccessful and had to accept the decision reached at the municipality, which followed the statutes stated in the local urban development legislation.

The way in which each neighbourhood board operates varies, and as shown above it seems that the main difference between each of these organisations is based on class. While upper class organisations have a well-structured set of legal statutes and quite clear objectives, lower class boards are more informal organisations which organise whenever there is something to discuss. The main strengths and weaknesses of these community institutions will be discussed later in the chapter.

When neighbourhood organisations are ignored

Although in most of the cases presented above, the authorities seem to have been receptive and respected what the majority of the population decided, there are also cases where even when the community shows its opposition to a project, the authorities do not bother consulting them. A recent controversy concerns the construction of a bridge that would unite the municipalities of Monterrey and San Pedro (both governed by the PAN). At a cost of 550 million *pesos* (approximately £38 million) (distributed as follows: 120 million from the Municipality of Monterrey, 60 from San Pedro and the

remaining 370 million from state authorities) the project represents a heavy burden on both state and municipal finances. At the core of the controversy is the fact that the community was never informed about the construction of the project and, more importantly, of its cost. As Cesar Garza Livas representative of the *Alianza por San Pedro* (Alliance for San Pedro: this organisation represents a group of neighbourhoods of San Pedro) comments: 'we have the right to "have a say" because the project would be funded with public resources. Through a public consultation we could reach an agreement that would be beneficial for solving both the traffic problem, and moreover, also to reduce the cost of the project. I invite state and local authorities to listen to what their governed have to say regarding this matter' (*El Norte* 21/12/2001).

The state authorities asked for the elaboration of two projects, one was developed by a local University (*Universidad Regiomontana*), and the other by CEMEX.¹² At a cost of 420 million pesos (approximately £30 million) the *Universidad Regiomontana* proposal foresees six traffic lanes and the possibility of expanding it if necessary. On the other hand, despite the fact that CEMEX's project looks more stylish, it has only four traffic lanes, with no possibility of expansion. Moreover, it is 130 million pesos more expensive than the project of the University. According to some experts, the government is looking for a 25 years traffic solution, when the project proposed by the University foresees a 75 years option (see De Zamacona Escandon in *El Norte* 20/1/2002).

Despite these differences, the state authorities favoured the second project and did not bother organising a public consultation to discuss the issue. The only contact with citizens was when they were informed –but given no opportunity to deliberate or influence the decision– of the 550 million pesos project by the chief of the urban development secretariat, Oscar Bulnes, in a meeting with members of some neighbourhood organisations. Bulnes defended the project stating: 'we have a duty to search for the best options for our citizens, the fact that the other project was cheaper does not mean that it was better. In the long run we believe that this project would be cheaper than the other option, as it will be constructed following international standards of quality' (*El Norte* 15/1/2002). According to Bulnes, Garza Livas' demand for information regarding the project was outside the law, in his view, 'we are not going to give any information to him, we do not know why he is so interested in the project,

maybe because he is a constructor and perhaps he has some hidden interests behind the project' (*El Norte* 15/1/2002).

On 31 January 2002 the construction works for the 'Unity Bridge' (as the project has been christened) were symbolically initiated by Governor of Nuevo León, Fernando Canales. He defended the construction of the bridge by stating that: 'whenever there is a project of this magnitude there are always controversies around it, there was a time for us to analyse all the possibilities, we took a decision and now we have to stick to what we decided. I know the cost of the bridge could have been reduced, however, architecturally speaking I'm sure this is the better option' (*El Norte* 1/2/2002).

The case presented above is a good example of how local authorities do not always listen to what citizens have to say regarding certain projects. Some questions raised by this case are why did the 'democratic' authority of San Pedro decided not to listen to the views of the public, and why did they favour a more expensive project, which in the view of the experts would not offer a practical solution to the traffic problem?

Consultations

Each time a new administration takes office in San Pedro, the local authority initially seems to be highly concerned about the view of citizens before implementing any policies within the municipality. When Fernando Margain took office in 1994, he stated, 'I am indebted to the community of San Pedro, this is why I am going to consult them about any possible amendments to the urban development plan, and to other local laws' (*El Norte* 28/8/1994). Although some consultations did take place, not surprisingly, most of these processes did not convince opposition parties, especially the PRI. Some members of the PRI criticised the fact that amendments to the citizen council local legislation were not openly discussed with the public, as promised by the mayor. According to San Pedro's (1994-1997) legal representative, Mr. Sánchez Gutiérrez, he respected the views of the critics but he thought their comments were unjustified. He defended the local authority autonomy and stated that the law gave it the option to decide on its internal procedures without opening them up for general discussion on a regular basis (*El Norte* 12/11/1994).

Despite the criticisms, the municipality continued its consultation agenda and organised another process to receive citizens' proposals regarding the 1994 citizen participation

legislation. The consultation was inaugurated by the 1994-1997 mayor, Fernando Margain, who stated: 'the forum is taking place to provide a solid base for establishing the citizen participation legislation for the municipality' (*El Norte* 5/10/1995). In this consultation process 24 people participated in the discussions and 19 provided written proposals. Local authorities stated that all the views of those who participated were going to be seriously considered when elaborating the new legislation (*El Norte* 5/10/1995).

Mayor Fernando Margain (1994-1997) also organised another open consultation to discuss possible reforms to San Pedro's urban development plan. The consultation targeted the general public but special emphasis was stressed on inviting groups of experts. Those who took part in the consultation were divided into six groups, each one led by an expert on the subject, with the aim of facilitating the interaction between authorities and citizens. The results of the consultation were presented on the second day of the process (*El Norte* 8/8/1995). This consultation was, again, highly criticised by some NGOs, who questioned the speed at which the workshops took place and also the way in which the whole consultation was organised. According to Francisco Leal, director of ADVIC (an NGO that promotes development projects): 'my organisation could not analyse in depth the different reforms that were introduced because they were not notified sufficiently in advance about the sessions, hence most of the members of the organisation were not present' (*El Norte* 7/7/1995). Another criticism of this open consultation came from *prilista* Mrs. Yvonne Salazar who considered the whole process appalling: 'it is a shame that the discussion of such important reforms was not publicised properly, *Sampetrinos*¹³ should have been informed sufficiently in advance about this consultation. Local authorities should not limit access to only a few' (*El Norte* 7/7/1995).

One of the most publicised recent consultations dealt with a possible extension to the closing time of nightclubs. The initiative to discuss nightclubs' closing time was promoted Mayor Teresa García de Madero in August 1998. San Pedro's nightclubs had a closing time of 3:00 am, and the consultation was to decide whether this closing time should remain or if nightclubs should close at 4:00 am instead. In a survey promoted by the municipal authorities before the consultation took place, 59 percent of the parents, 76 percent of youngsters and 68 percent of the general public was in favour of the one-

hour extension to closing time. Furthermore, 77 percent of parents, 66 percent of youngsters and 72 percent of the general public affirmed they would take part in the consultation process.

This consultation process was openly publicised in the most important newspapers and by authorities themselves. According to Mayor, García de Madero, 'it is very important that the civil society produce an opinion regarding this subject, we all together can take the decisions which affect us the most in this municipality' (*El Norte* 6/9/1998). Mayor García de Madero was convinced that the consultation was the best way to solve conflicts between authorities and citizens: 'this is a democratic process that we will see more often, not only in San Pedro but all over the country. Citizens have the decision in their hands' (*El Norte* 6/9/1998).

On 'consultation-day' the polling stations remained open from 8:00 am until 7:00pm. However, citizen participation in this consultation was low, only 9.9 percent of San Pedro's 25,000 citizens enlisted participated and the absence of those who do most of the night-clubbing was rather evident. Parents had the highest turnout, mostly in favour of keeping closing time at 3:00am. The result of the referendum was 77:23 in support of keeping closing time the same. The total number of votes was 2,481, from which 1,925 were against expanding the closing time and 556 votes in favour of the one-hour extension. Despite the low index of citizen participation, local functionaries thought it was a good civic exercise, as authorities did not unilaterally impose a decision regarding this subject. Mayor García de Madero stated, 'citizens must know to participate when authorities give them the possibility to do so, it is a good way for us to know what citizens want' (*El Norte* 7/9/1998).

Another consultation exercise was organised in 1999 to ask the community of San Pedro about their most important needs (see Table 5.2 below).¹⁴ These examples of consultation processes are a good parameter to understand better the procedures and the issues dealt with in each of these participatory forums. Clearly, none of the consultations is perfect, but there is an apparent desire by the authority to involve citizens in these exercises. The advantages and disadvantages of the way in which the municipality of San Pedro organise their consultations is discussed below.

Table 5.2 Result of San Pedro's 1999 Community Survey

Road construction	
Motorways	18 percent
New Roads	21 percent
Fixing the paving	61 percent
Urban equipment	
Street light post	33 percent
Public parks	20 percent
Pedestrian bridges	49 percent
All of the above	2 percent
Building Construction	
Libraries	20 percent
Education Centre	12 percent
Health Centre	22 percent
Schools	18 percent
Gymnasiums	14 percent
Sports Centre	14 percent
None of the Above	2 percent

Citizen Councils

Although these watchdogs have been constantly criticised, (primarily because they are appointed by the mayor), they have continued operating in San Pedro for more than three administrations. According to San Pedro's 2000-2003 mayor, Gerardo Garza Sada, 'the role that citizens perform in these representative bodies is crucial to achieve all municipal plans. They are here to watch closely all the actions we carry out, so they play a key role in the municipal scheme' (*El Norte* 3/30/2001).

Yet citizen councils are hardly open to the 'average citizen.' Most are municipal employees. The fact that a small number of citizens already chosen by authorities perform this activity leaves serious doubts about the independence of this institution. It is true that it is useful, accountability-wise, to have a permanent watchdog scrutinising all the activities performed by local authorities. However, maybe if citizens were able to promote the candidature of their own counsellors this would help bring even greater transparency to the way in which this body operates.

Jueces Auxiliares

The activities performed by *jueces auxiliares* are different from those of neighbourhood boards. It is a more 'isolated activity,' but those who perform it have more authority than neighbourhood board presidents. *Juez auxiliar* Mr. Arnulfo Briones recalls:

As a *juez auxiliar*, I do not share this activity with other community members it is only myself. We work along with neighbourhood boards on community issues, but we have a different function. The neighbourhood board's function is to look after the structural needs of the neighbourhood, and our function is more related to supporting the community regarding bureaucratic processes (i.e. recommendations, official documents) or personal problems (i.e. marital problems). We are like the 'local authority' of our respective neighbourhoods (Briones interview 28/3/2001).

The method for selecting these municipal representatives is based on citizens' opinions, although municipal authorities have the last word. In some cases the citizens that are recommended by their neighbours to become a *juez auxiliar* do not even know they were recommended for such activity, as *juez auxiliar* Mrs. Díaz Ibarra recalls:

When they asked me in the municipality if I would like to become a judge, I thought thoroughly about it because I had no clue about the function that I was going to perform, I did not even know that my neighbours suggested me as a candidate. Once local authorities explained to me the functions I would carry out, I agreed to participate as a *juez auxiliar* (Díaz Ibarra interview 29/3/2001).

According to some *jueces auxiliares*, political preferences do not play an important role when local authorities decide whom they would appoint as a *juez*. According to *juez auxiliar* Arnulfo Briones:

Our function is with the members of the community and with municipal authorities, it is a social service we give the community, we do not have a salary. In fact political preferences do not matter, for example I belong to a different political party from the PAN and I have been re-confirmed several times in the same position. Political preferences do not matter (Briones interview 28/3/2001).

The type of problems dealt with by these community representatives varies, but most are related to problems with noise, or personal problems between neighbours. *Juez auxiliar* Leticia Vargas recalls:

Most people contact me when they have problems with other neighbours, for example recently I was visited by someone who complained about a neighbour who was throwing water on to the street and was affecting all the

street because rubbish was accumulating outside her front door (Vargas interview 29/3/2001).

In order to improve the security of a specific neighbourhood, *jueces auxiliares* could also co-ordinate with the police when required. According to *juez auxiliar* Mr. Gaytán, 'we also aim to work in co-ordination with the police, we do it to improve our public security, we are constantly in contact with local authorities regarding aspects of public security' (Gaytán interview 2/4/2001). Another *juez auxiliar*, Mrs. Díaz Ibarra, comments on the main activities performed by her:

I have done some community work, especially with children who unfortunately do not have the support of their family. I have acted as judge in several neighbourhood problems related with rubbish collection or family issues. I also write down recommendation letters or letters to prove residence (Díaz Ibarra interview 29/3/2001).

One of the most important aspects that has helped to consolidate the figure of the *juez auxiliar* in the municipality of San Pedro is their continuity in the post. Most of the *jueces auxiliares* interviewed have been performing this activity for 10 to 12 years. Since the Mauricio Fernández administration (1988-1991) *panista* local authorities have followed the same policy in an attempt to not having to start from 'zero' their interaction with the community. *Juez auxiliar* Mr. Gaytán recalls, 'I was appointed by Mauricio's administration, (1988-1991) and I have been reconfirmed each new term since then' (Gaytán interview 2/4/2001).

The 'participatory' structure of the *juez auxiliar* seems to have been positively accepted by San Pedro's community, and although it was devised by the *priistas* to perform a different function – to win votes – the *panistas* have made a quite effective use of it; as it has become one of the main channels of communication between authorities and citizens. The fact that those citizens participating as *jueces auxiliares* do not meet with their respective constituents on a regular basis may not have impeded their representative function. By enrolling most *jueces auxiliares* in human relations courses to improve their personal skills, local authorities seem to have created an invisible bond between these neighbourhood functionaries and the local administration. Furthermore, although the SPCPL states that these individuals are not supposed to receive an economic contribution for their activities, off the record we were told that they receive some food vouchers as an incentive for the activities they perform. This only happens

with lower class *jueces auxiliares*, and the payment is they receive is approximately of 250 pesos per month (around £ 16). It is a minimal contribution if we compare it to the social stability that these bodies seem to helped bring to different sectors of the municipality.

There are also differences between lower and upper class *jueces auxiliares*. While interaction between these representatives and neighbours is constant in lower class neighbourhoods, in upper class neighbourhoods this does not necessarily happen. In lower class neighbourhoods, and as a consequence of the current economic situation, arguments between couples (husband and wife) are more common and noise related problems are also frequent. There are greater public security problems and close interaction between *jueces auxiliares* and the police is constant. On the other hand, in upper class neighbourhoods, these local representatives are not often solicited, they only sporadically take part in personal problems, and as almost every neighbourhood has a private security body, their interaction with the police is not necessary.

Other participatory activities

Kids-Clubs

The municipality of San Pedro is also concerned about children's participation in their respective communities. Mayor García de Madero:

In San Pedro the community participates mainly in the neighbourhood boards, but we also have participatory groups of children. We have 17 'kids-clubs' where approximately 1,200 kids participate and learn that in order to develop their respective communities, everyone must get involved to accomplish their neighbourhood goals, and most importantly, we inculcate them to respect the environment (García de Madero interview 18/5/1999).

The activities performed by these organisations are mainly related to ecological activities and are mostly carried out in *popular* (lower class) neighbourhoods. On 25 August 1998 a group of children collected plastic, glass and paper disposals from the 'Fraternity-Park' in San Pedro. All of them belonged to different kids-clubs and the Ministry of Ecology was in charge of this particular event. The aim of organising events like this one is to educate children to preserve their green areas. In the long run, the project is expected to develop more environmentally friendly citizens, aware of the

importance of citizen participation, but also about the contribution that working together can make to improving their living conditions.

In the San Pedro 400 neighbourhood, groups of children have been organised to look after their green areas and walls. This neighbourhood has been affected by 'graffitiers,' who in conjunction with local gangs have devastated some green areas and 'redecorated' the walls of the neighbourhood. The aim of the children patrol is to denounce anyone who sprays the walls with paint or who destroys the green areas of the neighbourhood (*El Norte* 25/8/1998). Each kid-club operates under a similar scheme to the neighbourhood board. A children board is elected on an annual basis and there are also three key positions, a president, a secretary and a treasurer. Mayor García de Madero claims, 'the programme has been accepted by the community of San Pedro as an important participatory and educational activity, and in some neighbourhoods the number of walls painted has been reduced' (García de Madero interview 18/5/1999).

Viernes ciudadano

The aim of the *viernes ciudadano* (Citizen's Friday) initiative is to give citizens the possibility to express directly their problems to local functionaries, including the mayor. The idea was brought from the municipality of Leon in the state of Guanajuato, where the programme was pioneered by the 1988-1991 mayor Carlos Medina Plasencia. The logistics of the encounter are as follows: firstly, citizens are required to fill a numbered form that includes the solicitor's personal details, preceded by a brief description of the problem and its location. After personnel at the reception desk have decided which department would be responsible for solving the problem, citizens are asked to discuss their issue with the local functionary responsible for that particular area and a tentative date of response is also provided by the local officials. According to local authorities, the exercise has proven successful because citizens realise that their demands are analysed directly by authorities.

It is about receiving citizens without an appointment, the mayor and all cabinet members are here. Each citizen fills a form and depending on the problem he/she wants to solve we will take him/her to the person in charge of solving that need. Citizens and functionaries exchange views about the problem and a date is established for giving citizens an answer about the subject dealt with during the visit. The authority will also give citizens a telephone contact number, in case neighbours would like to approach them regarding that particular matter. All the data collected in these encounters is included in the

SAC and is followed until it is concluded. Each demand has a number and this is the number that we use to find out about the status of the problem (Zubieta y Landa interview 27/3/2001).

The process does not finish with the presentation of the problem to authorities, but each citizen demand is placed in a queue and included in the SAC. Depending on the issue to be dealt with, authorities' response could take around a week or two, when it does not require a large amount of economic or human resources to be solved, and more than that when the issue requires a large budget.

During the first weeks the programme was implemented, a considerable number of people visited local authorities demanding the solution of their different problems. The number of citizens taking part in this particular programme diminished a few months after its initial implementation, because a few months after taking office, local authorities have learnt which are the main problems affecting the municipality. According to Rebeca Clouthier, who was the first citizen participation director (between 1994-1997) and who brought the programme from the municipality of Guanajuato: 'the first weeks an administration is in office, it is normal to have a couple of hundred citizens in these sessions, however, once each administration settles down the number of people attending these gatherings reduces considerably' (Clouthier interview 6/4/2001).

The future of citizen participation in San Pedro

Local authorities asked citizens to participate in the elaboration of the 2000-2003 development plan. Several workshops were organised and the final document is said to reflect the views of most *Sampetrinos*. One key point stressed is the commitment to citizen participation and to promoting participatory values in San Pedro. The development plan says the aim of citizen participation is to promote solidarity and community development in a responsible environment (SPDP 2000:36). The strategies for achieving these aims spell out:

- a) Promote a 'citizen feeling.'
- b) Promote citizen co-responsibility.
- c) Facilitate communication and feedback between authorities and citizens.

Each of the strategies visualises an active citizenry engaged in different participatory activities to improve their living conditions, but also to promote community values. The steps suggested to promote a 'citizen feeling' are, firstly, through citizens' surveys

which would take place both in upper and lower class sectors of the population to discover the main problems affecting the population. The second step is to monitor constantly the citizenry for any aspect(s) that might affect them. The third point deals with promoting 'citizen awareness' and it is mainly directed at the upper sectors of the population with the objective of making them aware that not all the individuals living in the municipality have the same economic resources and to promote a feeling of solidarity towards the less privileged.

There are two strategies for promoting citizen co-responsibility. Firstly, in all of San Pedro's primary schools participatory values are going to be promoted, to 'educate' children to participate in decision-making processes within their respective communities. The main channel available for children's involvement in participatory activities is through the kids-clubs. Secondly, in partnership with local construction companies, inhabitants from deprived areas would be subsidised to refurbish the facade of their houses. University students would support citizens from poor neighbourhoods, who at the same time would benefit from carrying out this activity, as it is expected to raise students' humanitarian awareness.

The strategies promoted to facilitate the communication and feedback between authorities and citizens are quite straight-forward:

- 1) Continuous communication with the community.
- 2) Continuous contact with neighbourhood boards and *jueces auxiliares*.
- 3) Regular encounters between citizens and authorities.
- 4) Diffusion of those activities performed by all the secretaries.
- 5) Open communication with the press (television, printed and radio).
- 6) Promotion of municipal activities and projects.

This list of activities is intended to make people aware of the importance of taking part in those projects aimed at improving their living conditions. Most of these initiatives are directed to support the less developed areas of the municipality, and to enhance a 'social awareness' and a feeling of solidarity between the members of the upper classes about the 'social compromise' they have with the less privileged. These steps are intended to consolidate San Pedro's citizen participation structure, bringing greater transparency and democracy to the municipality.

Another initiative¹⁵ mentioned by the 2000-2003 mayor of San Pedro, Mr. Gerardo Garza Sada, deals with the possibility of letting citizens decide how to spend a budget assigned by the municipality:

One of my core projects is to return to each neighbourhood around 25 percent of the council tax they pay letting them decide how to spend this amount. This is why I perceive citizen participation as something very important, because these projects would be based on what citizens want, and not on authorities' preferences (Garza Sada interview 12/9/2001).

In his view this initiative could help consolidate the participatory agenda of the municipality. It could be a good participatory experience, although close attention would have to be kept regarding the efficient utilisation of those resources spent by citizens. The project has not yet been implemented, as its feasibility is still under the scrutiny of state authorities.

The role of technology and citizen participation

In the modern municipality of San Pedro, technology is soon to be linked to citizen participation schemes. Initially used to facilitate the provision of municipal services (i.e. paying council taxes) the access to technological advances is expected to be a useful tool for participative purposes too. Currently, the municipality of San Pedro has engaged in a partnership¹⁶ with several parties to bring modern technology to deprived areas. In April 2001 municipal authorities inaugurated the first of eight 'cyber-kiosks' that will be built between 2001 and 2003. The project is targeted at poor neighbourhoods within the municipality and is expected to increase citizens' interest in the community and also to facilitate their participatory activities. The project also aims to 'educate' adults and children in the use of new technologies and to make them more productive citizens.

Analysis of citizen participation mechanisms

Neighbourhood Boards

Because the municipality has already provided its basic infrastructure needs and also due to the large number of wealthy inhabitants in San Pedro, the problems dealt with in these units seem to not be that profound. Fighting to stop the construction of a commercial centre, banning the construction of a road or noise related problems are some of the most 'scandalous' troubles raised by neighbourhood boards in the richest

municipality of Mexico. There are contrasts in the way in which neighbourhood boards are organised in upper and lower class neighbourhoods. While upper class neighbourhoods have an independent budget and a well-structured meeting schedule; lower class boards do not have a budget and meet only when an issue affecting their neighbourhood arises.

Although these bodies operate with a great degree of internal independence, their scope for external action is limited by local officials. Consequently, in some cases, even if legally speaking the representatives of these organisations are correctly defending their rights, they could be ignored by local officials and the 'municipal will' will prevail. Local authorities could be playing a key role by reducing the potential development of a more politically aware community. One of the positive aspects of these organisations is that citizens seem to be able to freely express their thoughts during meetings, a point distinguished by both authorities and neighbourhood board leaders. However, there are also some members of the general public who are not aware about the exact advantages of participating in this scheme.

Consultations

These encounters are the most popular forms to involve the community in local decision-making processes. However, close scrutiny of each process is necessary to determine whether authorities are influencing, or even biasing, the process or not. Consultations can be targeted at a particular group of the population, so if those independent experts explaining the pros and cons of a determined project are biased, then the consultation could take a pre-determined direction and not necessarily what the majority of the population wants. Another point to stress is the possibility of using these mechanisms only to legitimise decisions that have been already taken beforehand. Suspicion can be raised when the general public receives an extremely short notice to participate, which makes citizens doubt the real intentions behind these processes, as they think that maybe authorities want to speed-up the process for a particular reason (e.g. as in the consultation organised by Mayor Fernando Margain).

Finally consultations do not necessarily always take place, even when the majority of the population is in favour of them. In the case of the controversial bridge, the local and state authorities ignored the views of the public regarding this matter and a decision was

taken without any apparent concern. Perhaps the aim of consultations is to use them in uncontroversial matters, furthermore over issues that would not affect previously reached agreements between different groups of power.

Citizen Councils

This is the first of the two 'citizen participation mechanisms' which are not that participative. Establishing citizen councils is a measure that can bring greater transparency to government actions. What seems dubious here is the way in which these counsellors are chosen. The fact that citizen counsellors are appointed by the mayor and not openly elected constitutes the main obstacle to having a truly independent 'watchdog body.' Its statutes seem to have been purposely created to avoid a long stay of its members as public scrutinisers. For instance, there is a critical difference between the way in which *jueces auxiliares* and citizen counsellors are appointed. While *jueces auxiliares* are re-confirmed every three years, citizen counsellors are re-confirmed every six months. These six monthly re-confirmations are quite controversial, in the sense that if a counsellor questions or obstructs local authorities plans, then he/she could be immediately removed after the six months period expires, leaving the position to someone who fully agrees with local authorities' agenda. This is not to recommend that the relationship between counsellors and local authorities should be a tense or conflictual one, but to note that impartiality may be less likely if these councillors have to be re-confirmed on such a short-term basis. This 'selection procedure' diminishes the potential of a structure that could bring more benefits if, perhaps, the average citizen had a greater say in the whole process.

Jueces Auxiliares

These positions cannot be considered a genuine citizen participation body. It is ironic that the *panista* administrations of San Pedro have strengthened a position created by *priistas* for clientelist purposes. The figure of the *juez auxiliar* as employed by the *panistas* has proven to be a useful channel of communication between local authorities and citizens. *Jueces auxiliares* interact regularly with the community and for local authorities it is like having a permanent correspondent in each neighbourhood. The majority of these representatives have been involved as *jueces auxiliares* for a prolonged period of time, as most of them have been re-confirmed in their position since 1991. These representatives are constantly invited to participate in courses to improve

their personal skills. However, local authorities have a strong control over the activities these neighbourhood representatives perform. *Jueces auxiliares* meet on a monthly basis to discuss with local officials the main problems affecting their neighbourhoods and municipal functionaries have the legal capacity to dismiss any of these community representatives if they misuse their functions. In short, anyone not following the 'municipal-script' will lose their position.

Perhaps *jueces auxiliares* represent a useful tool when employed under conditions where clientelist practices are less prevalent. As the basic infrastructure needs of San Pedro have been covered there is less potential for populist practices. Consequently, the authority can focus on the functions they were created for, which is simply to act as a channel of communication between authorities and citizens, along with performing minimal bureaucratic duties.

Other participatory initiatives

Kids-clubs represent the hope that the children of the municipality will get involved in one way or another in participatory initiatives from a young age. These bodies are visualised as a sort of education institution that will have a positive input in each neighbourhood. As long as they do not repeat patterns found in other participatory organisations (i.e. dominant leaders), there much to commend them. The '*viernes ciudadano*' programme complements the rest of the participatory channels available as it enables residents to chat to the person in charge of solving their problems, and helps functionaries become more sensitive to people's needs whilst allowing citizens to identify who is in charge of their problem.

The future of citizen participation in San Pedro looks to be dominated by the use of modern technologies to facilitate citizens' service provisions and also their involvement in community issues. Authorities have also stressed the importance of caring about the less privileged groups of the municipality and to get involved in different participatory or developmental initiatives for these purposes.

Conclusion

After analysing the participatory mechanisms that have been implemented in the most developed municipality of Mexico, we can conclude that despite the apparent concern of

local authorities to provide participatory schemes for their citizens, the impact of these practices on local authorities' decision-making processes remains limited. All the mechanisms presented above, except internal neighbourhood meetings, require the intervention of local authorities, so the scope for influence is totally dependent on the authorities. Moreover, in such schemes as the citizen councils, authorities decide who their scrutinisers will be, diminishing the impact of a policy that, theoretically speaking, is supposed to bring greater transparency to the local administration.

Given the limited powers and functions made available to citizens through these participatory schemes, what are the San Pedro authorities hoping to achieve with them? In practice, it seems that the authorities are more interested in maintaining social order and avoiding confrontations than in any genuine sharing of decision-making with the public. Thus the consultations are rarely on contentious issues. Neighbourhood boards and *jueces auxiliares* seem to function as a form of demand management for the municipality, by shifting out many demands and complaints before they go to the authorities. At times the whole process seems paternalistic, especially when dealing with the poorer sectors of the community; here it is about 'improving' and 'educating' the lower classes.

Thus an element of paternalism that characterises the participatory structure of San Pedro is that local authorities have involved local leaders, especially from deprived areas, in courses to improve their self-esteem or their skills as community leaders. Indeed, despite the apparent 'good' intentions behind this scheme, with such actions authorities could be creating links that go beyond the 'proper' citizen-authority relationship, and which could potentially be used for electoral purposes – in a traditional Mexican clientelist fashion! However, no evidence was found to support this speculation. Nonetheless, the paternalistic way in which San Pedro's local authorities implement their participatory agenda further suggests that the authorities are using participatory mechanisms that are closely controlled by authorities, mainly to prevent social conflicts from developing, but leaving little space for genuine democratic intervention by the general public. This may have positive benefits for citizens, particularly the affluent property-owning classes, but it does not give them decision-making power.

Similarities can be drawn between the way in which San Pedro's neighbourhood boards and the PAN-UN initiative analysed in chapter 4 function, as they both include accountable practices as one of their main priorities. Perhaps the aim of the PAN is to introduce schemes that have proven to be efficient – at least in the middle and upper class areas – and disseminate the same sorts of principles in the lower classes as a way to educate the population. However, an aspect that does not seem to have been considered by the *panistas* before transferring middle upper class initiatives to the working classes, is that the lower sectors of the population face very different needs and earn much less. Indeed, if we compare the amounts presented in Tables 4.1 and 5.1 respectively, it becomes rather obvious that there is no way that the lower classes could expect to match the amounts collected by the middle and upper classes, who on top of that have already covered their primary needs. This issue of class will be discussed to a greater extent in the conclusion of the thesis to which we now turn.

Notes

¹ See interview Zubieta y Landa Citizen Participation Minister of San Pedro (2001).

² All three personalities appear in FORBES 2001 list of the richest 500 people in the world.

³ The last four mayors are Mauricio Fernández (1989-1991), Rogelio Sada (1991-1994), Fernando Margain (1994-1997), and Teresa García de Madero (1997-2000). Gerardo Garza Sada (2000-2003) is the current mayor.

⁴ *El Norte-INFOSEL* CD (1986-1991).

⁵ The main dispute centred on the territorial limits of future housing projects built on the Sierra Madre, see *El Norte* 8/2/1991.

⁶ The shopping centre is called Plaza Fiesta San Agustín, and unfortunately for the protestors the 1990-2010 urban development plan, which in those days was still under scrutiny at the local congress, visualised the expansion of the commercial area, consequently, protestors did not succeed in their efforts to stop the enlargement of the commercial centre see *El Norte* (28/8/1992).

⁷ See President Fox cited in *Reforma* 28/8/2001.

⁸ 'Legal statutes' refers to what is known in Mexico as *Acta Constitutiva*, which is a document with legal validity that would include the main aims of the organisation and its members.

⁹ According to article 52 of the SPJAL, each *juez auxiliar* is also in charge of looking after the morality and local traditions of their respective jurisdictions.

¹⁰ This office was the first construction built when the developers of the project started to sell the properties included in Fuentes Del Valle.

¹¹ Mr. Juan Ignacio Duran works as an advisor for several neighbourhood boards, NGOs and the private sector.

¹² CEMEX is the third largest Cement Company in the world.

¹³ Inhabitants of San Pedro.

¹⁴ The survey was carried out by Mireya Guzmán who asked 500 inhabitants of San Pedro about their most important needs (source *El Norte* 3/1/1999). The source does not specify the background of the citizens interviewed.

¹⁵ This initiative is not included in San Pedro's 2000-2003 Development Plan.

¹⁶ The parties involved in building each cyber-kiosk are the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank Microsoft, Starmedia, and the Committee for Democratising Information of Brazil). The municipality of San Pedro is financing a small part of the project.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has demonstrated the recent growth of participatory initiatives in Mexico. But why are these policies implemented? In whose interest (s) are participatory mechanisms being promoted? What is the impact of citizen participation on Mexican politics and its people? The two main theoretical claims made on behalf of participatory democracy, as discussed on chapter 2, are that it will bring citizens together to become the participants in those decisions that affect their daily lives and that the process of participation will educate people in the advantages and desirability of extending participation throughout society. How far has this happened in Mexico? What is the relationship between the theoretical principles of the participatory democrats and the way the participatory agenda has been implemented in Mexico? This chapter analyses the links between the participatory initiatives in Tlalpan, Puebla and San Pedro and the participatory aims discussed in chapter 2 and assesses the role of citizens participation in the wider Mexican political context as examined in chapter 1.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section covers the sources of inspiration from where these mechanisms were brought and also the main theoretical principles behind the three participatory agendas here analysed. The second section analyses the forms of participation in each of the case studies. The third part highlights the relevance that taking into account the basic infrastructure and the class conditions of each locality before implementing participatory schemes. The fourth section deals with issues of implementation and the fifth with issues of empowerment. Section six discusses the overall argument of the thesis, and the last section covers the contribution and avenues for further research identified in this thesis.

Sources of inspiration and main theoretical principles

Where did the idea of a participatory agenda come from?

Chapter 2 showed that participatory democratic theory draws inspiration from many sources, including 'classical' political philosophers such as Rousseau and Tocqueville, and contemporary academic theorists such as Pateman and Macpherson. However, it is difficult to detect any direct influence of the vast body of participatory democratic theory on recent participatory initiatives in Mexico. During the 1960s and 1970s such writers as Pateman or Macpherson saw in the establishment of citizen participation mechanisms a response to the problems (mainly social inequalities) produced by a liberal democratic system. It must not be forgotten that the liberal democratic system was attacked in two fronts: the first questioned the 'free and equal' status of citizens promoted by the liberals, and the second challenged the effectiveness of representative democracy. Although in the cases analysed here no direct links with these ideologies were found, as discussed in chapter 1, social movements and political parties did have an impact on the way participatory mechanisms have been developed in Mexico. But where did the idea to carry out participatory mechanisms in each of the localities of analysis come from?

Although the 1995-2000 National Development Plan highlights the importance of implementing citizen participation mechanisms to bring greater transparency, democracy and a feeling of belonging to each locality, it does not set any guidelines to follow. We can say that the document stresses more the importance of implementing a national decentralisation strategy,¹ rather than focussing on providing guidelines for the implementation of a participatory agenda. However, citizen involvement in decision-making processes is expected to receive more direct positive incentives during the current (2000-2006) presidential administration. With the creation of the *Coordinación Presidencial Para la Alianza Ciudadana* (CPAC) federal authorities expect to increase the number of participatory practices of government. Suddenly, it seems that a federal participatory strategy has become a core issue on the governmental agenda.

The first locality that promoted an alternative to the previous *prísta jefe de manzana* (block representative) structure was San Pedro (although this structure still operates). Since 1989² the PAN has introduced a wide variety of participatory options giving the

citizenry 'a say' in those issues affecting their lives. This is how the community got involved in the discussion of the local development plan and later in referenda or plebiscites dealing with local problems. San Pedro's geographical proximity to the state of Texas played a key rôle during this process, as it was from this state that the 1989-1991 mayor Mauricio Fernández brought the idea to implement the first participatory schemes.

In a similar vein, the 1996-1999 *panista* local administration of Puebla, took the principles to establish an alternative participatory agenda to the prevailing *jefe de manzana* structure from a UN document. A difference between San Pedro's and Puebla's participatory agendas is that in the case of Puebla, the aim was to substitute the *jefe de manzana* structure by introducing the UN participatory agenda. This particular issue caused them political tensions with groups of *priistas* leaders who were local representatives under the 'traditional' *clientelistic* scheme. Parallel to the *panista* local reform, and in opposition to the 1997 Fiscal Co-ordination Law, the 1993-1999 *priista* Governor Manuel Bartlett developed a piece of legislation (*Ley Bartlett*) allegedly to protect his political interests. There was a twofold aim in this political manoeuvre, firstly, to get hold of more resources that the state government would have discretion to distribute and secondly, to diminish the power of the PAN at the local level, bearing in mind the 1999 local election. The structure known as the COPLADEMUN was at the core of Bartlett's project, and within it, in appearance, a series of democratic practices of government. However, when the policy was implemented those principles had nothing to do with the way they were carried out. We can say that in a way the PRI produced a participatory agenda as a reaction to the *panista* initiative to substitute the old corporatist structure of local pseudo-participation. We can clearly identify that the motivations of the PAN were to end with the clientelistic practices of the PRI, while the motivations of the PRI behind *Ley Bartlett* and COPLADEMUNs seem to have been merely for particular political purposes.

The result of all these controversies has left Puebla without a legal document supporting the participatory agenda currently implemented there. The *priista* 1999-2002 administration reversed the PAN-UN participatory agenda and based its participatory operations in three or four isolated policies.³

Similarly to the cases of San Pedro and the *panista* side of Puebla's story, the PRD developed a participatory agenda trying to end with the corporatist practices of the PRI. After their historical electoral victory at the government of the capital in 1997, the PRD initiated a participatory reform based on discussing and creating a citizen participation legislation. The approval of such legislation was perceived as essential to get rid of the *priísta* local structure, and this is how the 1998 participatory law emerged. In this case, the idea to carry out a participatory agenda came from the government of the city (the equivalent to a state government), and although several local forums took place to discuss the contents of this document, the whole responsibility of approving the legislation was in the hands of congressmen at the ALDF (Congress of Mexico City). The document includes diverse aspects of the agendas followed by some Latin American leftwing parties –Brazilian and Uruguayan to be more specific.⁴ For instance, there are similarities between the ways the participatory units are divided, as well as providing the 'open opportunities' for citizens to have a say via referendums or plebiscites. There are also similar elements that can be found in the legal structures, and in the way which meetings are organised.

There are two main conclusions about the origins of the participatory initiatives in the three case studies:

- There is no national participatory strategy setting out the guidelines to follow when implementing participatory mechanisms at the local level.
- In designing participatory schemes, local politicians have drawn on a wide variety of influences, including neighbouring countries and the UN, but each scheme is mostly 'home grown' and designed for the specific local political context.

The philosophy behind the participatory agenda: principles and main purposes

The first impression gained from the three cases is that it seems that participatory mechanisms were established more as a response to wider party and political factors than in an attempt to follow a particular participatory philosophy. When comparing the principles behind the participatory agendas analysed here, it was not difficult to discover that the main 'philosophy' that seemed to be shared – especially in those localities governed by the PRD (Tlalpan) and the PAN (San Pedro) – was to deactivate the *clientelistic* local structure that favoured the PRI for so many years. Clearly, the PRD and the PAN were motivated by political ends – undermining PRI political bases – as well as democratic ones. On the other hand, in Puebla, the purpose of participatory

schemes (at least on paper) was to promote accountability, democracy and greater interaction between local politicians and citizens. Yet Puebla's participatory agenda also proved to be driven primarily by political, rather than democratic or accountable objectives (see Box 6.1 below).

Box 6.1. Participatory Principles Underpinning the Three Cases

PRD in Mexico City

- Establish participatory schemes that would not repeat the *clientelistic* practices of *priísta* administrations (i.e. SOLIDARIDAD or *Jueces Auxiliares*)
- Redefine the type of actors, representative bodies, the power of these bodies and the relationships between state and society.
- Issues related to accountability, neighbourhood elections, decentralisation and such participatory forms as the plebiscite and the referendum.

Ley Bartlett in Puebla

- Seeks to increase people's decision-making power, to make authorities accountable and to promote a more democratic environment.
- The scheme includes the provision of greater financial resources to Puebla's less developed municipalities, along with the involvement of all those official and unofficial bodies interacting at the local level in the institutions known as COPLADEMUNs.

PAN UN in Puebla

- The strategy was intended to remove the archaic local *priísta* 'participatory structure' that operates in most municipalities of Mexico. The core idea behind the *panista* neighbourhood forum scheme was to involve the public in decision-making processes, where authorities and citizens would decide on the matters that affect their respective communities, with the issue of accountability paramount.

Current priísta participatory schemes in Puebla

- The aim of the current participatory schemes is to develop channels of interaction between authorities and citizens to offer solutions to those necessities faced by the lower sectors of the population.

PAN in San Pedro

- As a measure to diminish the influence of the PRI in the structure known as *Jueces Auxiliares* operating in the municipality.
- Involve the community in decision-making processes at the local level (especially in the discussion of the local development plan). The interaction of local politicians and citizens is perceived as essential to achieve a better government.

The absence of a dominant theory behind any of the participatory agendas analysed here, meant that in each case it was important to identify theoretical trends and link them to the approaches presented in chapter 2. For instance, one of the main concerns of each of the administrations analysed in this study is the implementation of accountable

and democratic participatory mechanisms where citizens and politicians interact. In a way, these principles can be linked to the writings of the new left, which stress the importance of a two-way process involving three actors: governments, political parties and citizens. In the view of these writers (see Pierson 1995) the state should be democratised by being more open and accountable to citizens, and on the other hand, citizens (through diverse organisations) must ensure that society and the state are subject to procedures that ensure accountability (Held 1997:266). Stoker adds, 'opportunities for political participation matter because they help reduce inequalities in the redistribution of power and encourage a responsiveness to individual and collective needs' (Stoker 1996:188).

Although the three localities might appear to share the same sort of left-wing concern for accountability, differences can be identified in their participatory theoretical principles. For instance, in the PRD's (Tlalpan) participatory agenda – although it cannot be affirmed that it was influenced by it – there are similarities with the ideas promoted by Pateman (1970) and Macpherson (1977). In both approaches, the social differences created by the liberal economic model are the problem identified as needing a solution. The core idea is that if citizens are not taken into account in any decisions dealing with the economy, which has led to their impoverishment, then at the very least unprivileged groups could participate in those decisions affecting their localities. In the view of Pateman, 'if authorities provided the lower socio-economic sectors with the possibility to participate in the democratic control of those key institutions in which most people live out their lives, they would feel taken into account' (Pateman 1970:104).

We must not forget that a main issue for the new left is to what extent the concept of the 'free and equal' individual praised by the liberal theory of democracy actually exists. Since its foundation in 1989, the PRD has manifested its rejection of the implementation of the neoliberal economic model carried out in Mexico. Furthermore, when we analyse the bases of the 1998 citizen participation legislation, it is not difficult to detect the aim to empower the less advantaged. However, what Mexico City PRD did not seem to take into account are the series of '*caciquil* practices' that still exist at the local level, and which prevented the consolidation of the PRD participatory agenda; (see below). It is also notable that in Mexico City (PRD) only one participatory scheme – neighbourhood

collaboration or *fideicomiso* – seems to share the principles promoted by such international organisations as the UN, WB, or OECD, where the costs of social projects are shared between authorities and citizens.

Due to the changes of administrations that took place in Puebla, their participatory mechanisms have been in constant flux and no distinctive theoretical trend was identified. In the three schemes analysed here, Puebla's local participatory agenda has encompassed a strange mix of 'Rousseau style meetings' with 'pure' *priista caciquil* practices (i.e. *Ley Bartlett-COPLADEMUN*). There are also traces of Pateman and Mapherson's influence, in the sense that authorities seem to be concerned to provide participatory opportunities for Puebla's deprived groups, as the principles of the three initiatives presented in Box 6.1 (above) show. The PAN-UN initiative saw citizen participation (financially speaking) as essential for the implementation of their participatory agenda; a characteristic that international organisations seem keen on promoting, as observed by Craig and Mayo: 'citizen participation is perceived as a strategy to promote savings and to improve the living conditions of those who desperately need it. More importantly, the aim is to shift costs from the public sector onto communities' (Craig and Mayo 1994). However, once the PRI recovered Puebla in the 1998 local election, the participatory agenda shifted back to implementing *priista* 'traditional' participatory schemes (i.e. *juez auxiliar*), that do not seem to be influenced by any set of participatory principles. Nevertheless, as in Tlalpan, in Puebla the *fideicomiso* scheme also operates, and which can be associated to the principles above highlighted by Craig and Mayo.

Not surprisingly, the right-wing *panista* local government of San Pedro has not drawn inspiration from the new left in carrying out its participatory programme. Like Tlalpan, San Pedro's authorities have sought to open up opportunities for the interaction of local politicians and citizens, but, unlike Tlalpan this interaction is based on installing accountable mechanisms and not on countering the impact of the neo-liberal system on the Mexican social culture. Perhaps by coincidence, some of San Pedro's neighbourhoods have been implementing since the late 1960s similar agendas to those proposed by such international organisations as the World Bank or the IMF. In this prosperous municipality the withdrawal of the state has become rather evident, and as discussed in chapter 5 even allegedly accepted, as partnerships with the private sector

are increasingly common. In a way, these policies indirectly admit the failure of the state to meet those social demands faced by deprived groups of the society.

One common feature in all three case studies is that local authorities retain a high degree of control over all participatory initiatives. This way of proceeding has diminished considerably the possibility of affecting the outcome of local policies, because the decisions taken within most of the participatory schemes analysed here continue to be taken by a few people, when theoretically speaking they should be shared with the majority of the population (see below).

However, an important difference to highlight between the agendas of the three localities is that in San Pedro alone there is a connection between their programme to improve the skills of their community leaders and the 'educative sense' of participatory democracy highlighted by Mill or Pateman. As observed by neighbourhood board representative for the (working class) Del Monte neighbourhood, Mr. Isaías Ramírez, 'the municipality is always inviting me to participate in courses to improve my neighbourhood representative skills' (Ramírez interview 28/3/2001). In neither Tlalpan nor Puebla were such schemes identified. Nevertheless, despite the apparent good intentions of San Pedro's local authorities, we cannot affirm that those citizens involved in these courses are being 'educated' through participation itself, but instead at least some representatives seem to be educated through the courses provided by local authorities. This issue reflects the paternalistic and top-down way in which the participatory agenda is implemented in San Pedro.

The following conclusions can be reached after analysing the main theoretical principles behind the three participatory programmes:

- There is no coherent set of theoretical principles underpinning any of the participatory programmes.
- The main objective of the PAN and the PRD participatory agendas was to get rid of the *priísta* local *clientelistic* pseudo-participatory structure (i.e. political ends). In Puebla, the PRI used these mechanisms as a tool against its political rivals.
- International organisations such as the UN have had little impact on these participatory initiatives, with the exception of the *panista* scheme in Puebla.
- Local administrations irrespective of political complexion maintain tight control over all their participatory initiatives.

- Despite the paternalistic way with which they carry out their participatory agenda, only in San Pedro are the authorities concerned about promoting the educative advantages of participatory democracy.

Forms of Participation

Legislation and types of participatory units

During the analysis of the three case studies, it was discovered that there is a great diversity in forms of citizen participation schemes. In fact, the legal statutes of the cases analysed here offer a wide variety of schemes that range from permanent forms of participation to non-permanent ones such as plebiscites or referenda. As stated in chapter 2, in permanent participatory units, citizens meet on a regular basis to discuss community issues, whilst in non-permanent units, authorities organise discussions with citizens as a ‘one-off’ event dealing with a specific matter and for a designated period of time. In non-permanent forms, once the matter is discussed and the course of action to be taken decided, then the structure created for this particular purpose is dismantled. In the next section we compare the main characteristics of each legislation here analysed.

a) Characteristics of non-permanent participatory mechanisms

Legally speaking, the locality that provides most non-permanent participatory options is Tlalpan, followed by San Pedro and Puebla. In the participatory legislation of Tlalpan and San Pedro, there is a clear definition of what non-permanent participatory bodies stand for. Mexico City’s 1998 legislation offers nine non-permanent participatory options, ranging from plebiscites to referenda and official visits. Although the municipality of San Pedro does not include such a large variety of non-permanent participatory options, in practice the three options offered in their local legislation – public audiences, consultations and written petitions – cover the same functions as in Mexico City’s legislation. In both Tlalpan and San Pedro the legislation regards these mechanisms as a tool to be used mainly under three circumstances: when authorities are dealing with a controversial issue, when citizens believe that authorities are performing badly, or have not informed the community about a particular issue; and when authorities have implemented policies that oppose citizens’ interests. In Puebla, none of these mechanisms has been implemented by local authorities.

However, in both Tlalpan and San Pedro the legislation gives authorities the last word whenever a non-permanent participatory mechanism is implemented, thereby diminishing the actual input of citizens on the outcome of public policies, an issue discussed later in this chapter. One of the main characteristics that we identified in the non-permanent agenda is the fact that in some schemes (i.e. *fideicomiso*) local authorities are promoting the principles of the UN or the WB which highlight the importance of citizen cooperation (in some cases financial) to finish community projects.

b) Characteristics of permanent participatory mechanisms

In Tlalpan and San Pedro, the permanent participatory unit that takes the burden of the participatory agenda is the neighbourhood committee or neighbourhood board. Aiming to offer an alternative non-partisan structure of citizen involvement, neighbourhood committees or boards are expected to offer a real democratic alternative to the previous *clientelist* role performed by local *caciques*. Ideally speaking, through neighbourhood boards there would be a constant flow of information between authorities and citizens regarding local matters. Yet, in San Pedro such *priísta* participatory structures as *jueces auxiliares* have continued operating along the new participatory agenda, apparently producing a positive effect in the community. The *clientelistic* purposes with which the PRI used this pseudo-participatory structure were changed by the PAN to create a group of citizens that receive incentives for informing authorities about any problems in their areas of residence. It can be argued that the *jueces auxiliares* structure has been transformed into a sort of 'alarm mechanism' that prevents social problems from reaching local authorities' offices.

Once the PRI recovered the municipality of Puebla, the PAN-UN project introduced by the *panista* 1996-1999 administration was abandoned and the *jefes de manzana* scheme was re-introduced. Although this permanent participatory initiative is perhaps not the most democratic option, it is still the main participatory mechanism of many municipalities in Mexico. Especially when used within the lower sectors of the population, the *jefes de manzana* structure maintains the traditional practice of mobilising informal leaders for particular party or electoral purposes.

In Tlalpan and San Pedro, there was great concern to create alternative permanent forms of citizen participation to the prevailing *clientelist* structure of the *jefe de manzana* or *juez auxiliar*. Tlalpan's permanent participatory agenda is based on the structure of the neighbourhood committee or board, and those interested in leading these bodies must be voted in by open election. The election processes vary. In Tlalpan, citizens form slates and the slate that receives most votes would occupy the majority at the neighbourhood committee. However, as losing slates are also represented on a proportional basis this three yearly election process has effectively instituted permanent internal divisions within most neighbourhood committees. Due to the political preferences generally professed by most members of each of the competing slates, once the winning slate takes office, its actions are often obstructed by members of slates sympathising with a different political party. Political preferences play a crucial role when particular actions are achieved by any neighbourhood committee as committee leaders could claim those actions as the responsibility a particular political party.

In San Pedro things operate differently, as the system is based on individual candidatures. Citizens can run as candidates to occupy the positions of president, treasurer and secretary of each neighbourhood board, also for a three-year tenure. In both San Pedro and Tlalpan, the legislation states that none of these neighbourhood organisations can be used as a forum to promote a specific religion or party ideology. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter 3, political parties have been involved in neighbourhood election processes and play a crucial role for the internal operations of each committee. The San Pedro local authorities try to avoid possible political conflicts by only letting individuals and not slates stand for the positions contested within each neighbourhood organisation, nevertheless this is not a guarantee of having conflict free citizen structures.

In Puebla, *jefes de manzana* and *jueces auxiliares* are also elected in an open process over a three year period, however, there were cases where election processes did not take place and community leaders occupied this position for a longer period of time. It is in such situations where not having a legal document supporting the implementation of a participatory agenda becomes a problem; because political parties and informal community leaders could take advantage of these circumstances to use neighbourhood representative positions for purposes other than promoting participation or democratic

values. Some of these problems are illustrated in chapter 4 where – especially among the poorer classes – there seems to be strong political utilisation of the ‘pseudo-participatory mechanism.’ For instance, the open political support which community representatives give to the official party when asked by local officials (see chapter 4).

Rules governing the frequency of neighbourhood meetings vary too: in two out of the three cases, citizens have the liberty to meet as often as they consider it convenient. The exception is Tlalpan where the 1998 legislation establishes that at least two meetings per year should take place. But, in practice, in each case the internal organisation of the participatory bodies is left to citizens’ consideration, with meetings taking place whenever there is something important to discuss and attendance varying depending on the issues dealt with in the agenda. Although nowhere does the legislation distinguish between the use of neighbourhood committees, neighbourhood boards, or *jefes de manzana*, by different social groups, there are important differences that will be highlighted below regarding how different social groups constitute these bodies.

Despite the internal independence that is experienced within permanent participatory mechanisms, like non-permanent participatory mechanisms, the impact of these organisations is limited because there are legal restrictions which prevent citizens influencing those actions of government that affect their daily lives (see below).

Types of participatory forms

When comparing the types of participatory mechanisms implemented in Mexico to those presented in chapter 2, we find that they are represented by versions that vary, but which maintain the ‘consultative’ essence highlighted by writers such as Cook and Morgan (1971) and Stewart (1996) (see Box 6.2 below). The perception of the neighbourhood as the most important permanent participatory unit prevails in the three cases analysed; however, there are important differences from the way Cook and Morgan (1971) or Kotler (1969) perceive these bodies. In Tlalpan and San Pedro the authorities developed legal frameworks that contain the sorts of issues that can be dealt with in these units, with characteristics that clearly vary when compared to those of rule-implementation or rule-making authority presented in chapter 2. For instance, in Tlalpan, the functions of neighbourhood committees remain more like those of a representative body with few powers to promote local change. The examples discussed

in chapter 3 reflect some of the most important conflicts that neighbourhood representatives face, especially when local authorities give priority to informal leaders. In San Pedro, too, although citizens have independence to arrange their neighbourhood organisations internally, the impact on the outside is highly dependent on authorities.

Box 6.2 **Types of participatory units found in each of the case studies**

Type of Initiative	Tlalpan	Puebla	San Pedro
<i>Neighbourhood organisations</i>	X	X	X
<i>Citizens' Juries</i>	-	-	X
<i>Consensus Conferencing</i>	X	-	X
<i>Standing citizens' panels</i>	-	-	X
<i>Referenda</i>	X	-	X

In Puebla, the absence of a participatory legislation leaves citizens, especially the poorer classes, without a real opportunity to influence decision-makers. Political bargaining and blackmail are still a constant presence, an issue ignored by participatory theorists. The impact of these organisations, especially in Puebla, seems to be based on the quality of the relationship that individual neighbourhood board leaders have with local authorities.

Although no citizen juries were found, one body that operates under similar principles is the citizen council in San Pedro. In San Pedro's citizen council, citizens scrutinise local projects and produce a decision that is given to local authorities regarding the pros and cons of a particular initiative. However, one initial difference is that authorities appoint directly those citizens taking part as jurors, showing little regard for such factors as their gender, race, or level of education. San Pedro's legislation simply establishes that citizen counsellors have to be 'honest' citizens with a proven will to help their respective communities. Another difference is that these 'functionaries' do not have to present their conclusions to the public. Finally, the citizen counsellors also receive a salary. There is nothing similar to a citizen jury in Tlalpan or Puebla.

Consensus conferences are known as neighbourhood consultations under the principles of the 1998 Mexico City participatory legislation. Although neighbourhood consultations have very similar principles to those defined by Joss and Durat (1994), again, there are differences, especially related to the selection process of those taking part in them. While Stewart (1996) recommends an open selection process to determine those who would lead the consultation, in Mexico City the consultation is led by

authorities, and citizens receive the information from the experts selected by them. In Mexico City, these panels have been established mainly to discuss environmental issues. In San Pedro, 'informational conferences' have taken place as a mechanism to air the views of citizens dealing with controversial matters (see *El Norte* 15/1/2002).⁵ Although authorities do not have any legal obligation to translate citizens' thoughts into actions of government, these processes appear to be democratic exercises of citizenship. Nonetheless, San Pedro's local authorities retain control of these processes and the decisions reached by these mechanisms are not necessarily shared with the general public and generally do not influence any governmental policies.

The principles of standing citizens' panels are similar to those of the citizen councils that operate in San Pedro. The aim is to have a group of citizens acting as permanent watchdogs. The main difference between Stewart's proposal and the way this body operates in San Pedro deals with the number of citizens taking part in it, as Stewart proposes that around 100 to 200 representative members of the community would be selected to perform this activity. In the case of San Pedro, there are only 11 people who constitute this body, all selected by the local authority; which clearly reduces the independence with which these bodies are likely to operate.

Regarding non-permanent participatory bodies, it is clear that the way referenda and plebiscites are implemented in Mexico does not match the guidelines established by Stewart (1996) or Held (1997). One of the key controversies concerns the rules governing their use. In Mexico City and San Pedro, there are problems with the interpretation of when is the 'best moment' to implement a referendum, as authorities do not seem to know which issues should be consulted in such processes. There are also problems with the types of questions asked, as the plebiscites and referenda implemented so far are quite elaborate and not based on a simple yes/no format, as well as complications regarding the time and the place of each consultation. In some cases the community does not seem to be well informed or given enough warning of the referendum which probably contributes to low indices of participation. Another feature is the frequency with which such processes should be carried out, as the Mexico City legislation is quite permissive, as it requires just 1 percent of the population to sign a petition to secure a referendum compared to the 3 percent recommended by Held (1997). Nonetheless none has been called using this clause.

The establishment of all these mechanisms in the Mexican local context demonstrates the variety of participatory practices that have been introduced. Yet, despite the wide number of opportunities, citizens still frequently possess little power to influence the outcomes of decisions taken by their respective local authorities. On paper, these mechanisms appear to open up local decision-making processes to participation. However, in practice these mechanisms operate not as presented on paper, but according to the way they are implemented by local authorities, which retain total control over them.

The three cases reflect a diversity of participatory mechanisms that range between non-permanent ones to permanent ones. In the three cases it seems that the main motivation behind its implementation has been to get rid of the *clientelistic* practices of the PRI. Unlike the original motivations of the participationists, who aimed to struggle against the inequalities of the neo-liberal capitalist system, in the cases analysed here the struggle seems to be motivated by different goals. The three political parties under scrutiny seem to have used these mechanisms to promote a pseudo-democratic environment, perhaps to keep their respective organisations in power and effectively leaving aside the original aims for which these mechanisms were supposedly created. Although the core aim of the different participatory schemes presented in chapter 2 is to involve citizens in those decisions that affect their daily lives, in these cases there is little evidence of happening. Despite the diversity of participatory mechanisms introduced in each case, it can be argued that neither the liberal nor the radical views of participatory democracy have been implemented in any of them. The authorities retain close control over all the participatory mechanisms and there is little scope for citizen control.

The key conclusions to be drawn from this section are:

- There is an enormous diversity across the three case studies in the legislation and policies underpinning participatory schemes and the types of mechanisms which include numerous permanent and non-permanent forms.
- The role of local authorities is critical: they are responsible for introducing the participatory schemes and they retain tight control over their operation.
- The keenness of local authorities to retain control probably reflects their limited ambition for democratic reform and their real underlying political aims.

Infrastructure Conditions and Class

In the 1960s and 1970s, participatory mechanisms were often conceived as a radical response to the social differences characterising capitalist liberal democracies, but the participatory theorists in that era gave little attention to the social differences in each locality. However, in Mexico, class has proven to be a crucial issue that needs to be considered before implementing any participatory scheme. Previous participatory programmes like SOLIDARIDAD were created mainly to solve the basic infrastructure needs of the poorer classes. However, in most of the schemes analysed here people from all social backgrounds are expected to take part in participatory processes even though the outcomes might not benefit a particular social class. Politicians seem to develop each participatory programme without considering the needs faced by each neighbourhood and the type of citizen living there. In particular, as demonstrated in chapter 3, the upper middle classes might not necessarily need or agree to participate in mechanisms which would not be of any direct use for them. This research found out that such issues as *basic infrastructure conditions*, *neighbourhood conditions* and *class differences* play a crucial role when carrying out any participatory agenda.

It was found that the *basic infrastructure conditions* of each locality are directly related to the way the participatory agenda has been carried out. While the local governments of Tlalpan and Puebla are still dealing with population which lack such basic infrastructure services as sewage or electricity, the municipality of San Pedro has already covered its primary infrastructure needs.⁶ This initial difference makes Tlalpan and Puebla more susceptible to the presence of informal community leaders that could obstruct the 'official' participatory agenda.

Due to its size Tlalpan has traditionally experienced frequent illegal invasions of land. Throughout the years that the PRI was in office, illegal invasions became accepted and were even promoted by local authorities, indeed, they were used as ways to control the population or to offer concessions to win citizens' support during electoral processes. Development plans were not an issue for *priísta* administrations, and the disordered way in which Tlalpan developed is the main source of the problems currently faced there (i.e. lack of sewage, electricity or piped drinking water). Another factor that has contributed to Tlalpan's uneven development is the mix of urban and rural traditions within the same locality. There are some places where still farming takes place and

where the needs of this sector of the population are very different when compared to those faced by groups living in the urban parts of the locality. The PRD 1997-2000 administration visualised citizen involvement as necessary to create a community consciousness and to solve some of the main problems faced by the locality. Attempting to reduce the proliferation of irregular settlements, *perredistas* have tried to prevent land invasions and any new housing projects are thoroughly studied by special commissions that measure the ecological impact of these developments as well as its social pros and cons.⁷

Puebla is also a large municipality that includes mixed zones (urban and rural) and where a lack of basic infrastructure services exists. Puebla has most of the industrial activities in the state. With the proliferation of several industrial parks, the municipality constantly demands labour, which attracts migration from other parts of the state to the capital, as people seek to improve their living conditions. This migration creates a demand for housing, which in a way links Puebla's and Tlalpan's problems, as land invasions are also at the core of Puebla's governmental agenda. It is common to find at the outskirts of the municipality groups of people who would invade land, build their houses and only then worry about who owns it. Authorities play a crucial negotiating role in this situation as they have to deal with the original owner of the land, sometimes buy the land from him or her, and then sell it or rent it to the new residents. The main issue behind this confused process is that authorities cannot introduce any public services if the neighbourhood has not been officially recognised as such.⁸ Although in Puebla's city centre the majority of the population has already covered its primary needs,⁹ on the edge of the municipality this is not always so. Providing sewage, water, and electricity for these less developed areas is still one of the core issues at Puebla's local agenda. This problem has been dealt by the *priista* administration as most problems were dealt in the past, through local leaders who negotiate with authorities about the best ways to cover the lack of services needed by citizens.

One of the advantages of San Pedro over Tlalpan and Puebla is that the authorities of this rich municipality have already managed to cover its basic infrastructure needs. Even in the poor part of the municipality, citizens have all their basic infrastructure services. Irregular invasions of land are absent, and urban development planning is at the core of the local agenda. Out of the three case studies, San Pedro is the locality that has been

better planned, and where the existence of a long-term vision has proven positive for its development.¹⁰ Thus, it can be argued that neighbourhoods where the basic infrastructure needs are provided are less prone to the influence of informal community leaders. This aspect is directly related to the way the participatory agenda has been carried out in each the three cases, as a correlation between uncovered infrastructure needs and the presence of informal community leaders was found. Whilst in San Pedro informal community leaders have little presence, in Tlalpan and Puebla there are still plenty of them offering their services, especially to the poorer classes.

The second characteristic identified in this research deals with the *neighbourhood conditions* where each of the participatory mechanisms is implemented. For instance, one of the main characteristics of Tlalpan is the mix between rich and poor neighbourhoods, an aspect that complicates the implementation of the participatory agenda. Due to the differences between poor and rich neighbourhoods, it would be difficult for authorities to expect citizen interaction to try to solve common needs if they do not share the same problems. Rich people have less need to participate in the mechanisms promoted by the local authority, because (mostly) they live in isolated neighbourhoods that do not have any infrastructure problems, and their 'private participatory agendas' deal mainly with issues of noise or the environment.¹¹ On the other hand, the poor areas of the municipality face such basic infrastructure problems as the introduction of basic public services, and probably have little direct interest in the environment.

In Puebla, rich and poor zones are clearly delimited, and it is very rare that they interact with each other. Indeed, both the PAN-UN initiative and COPLADEMUNs were entirely dedicated to solving the needs of the poorer sectors of the population, as authorities realised that the upper classes had already covered their basic infrastructure needs. In Puebla, authorities take for granted that upper class citizens would not use participatory mechanisms. Usually when the richer sectors of the population face a problem, they would confront authorities directly to seek a solution. On the other hand, the poorer sectors of the population living in both the urban and the rural part of the municipality seem to be condemned to have a mediator between them and authorities, a role that local informal leaders normally assume.

As the richest municipality of Mexico San Pedro is a more homogeneous locality, in the sense that better off citizens do not interact with lower class ones, due to the fact that a natural landmark (the Santa Catarina River) divides the two areas. This factor facilitates the implementation of the participatory agenda, as in both rich and poor areas people share the same problems, there are few contrasting conditions that could create tensions if citizens interact when taking part in participatory activities. It therefore seems easier for authorities to develop programmes for either region, because there is certainty over the conditions that would prevail during their implementation. Another factor that contributes to San Pedro's smoother implementation of the participatory agenda is the fact that it does not have any rural areas, so all its problems are urban in nature.

Indeed, one of the most revealing findings identified when comparing the way each municipality carries out its participatory agenda is the importance that *class* has for the participatory organisational process. In each of the three municipalities there are important differences between the way the upper classes and the lower classes organise their respective participatory agendas. When getting involved in permanent participatory activities, the affluent sectors of the population normally possess a budget and in some cases even have offices to organise their community meetings. On the other hand, in the poorer sectors of the population, neighbourhood organisations generally operate under a 'project basis,' and residents gather whenever it is required, with meetings mainly organised to discuss unfinished projects or an unexpected problem that requires a rapid solution.

In Puebla and San Pedro, the authorities are aware of the differences between the upper and lower sectors. For instance, in Puebla, both the PAN-UN initiative and the COPLADEMUN project, were designed for the lower sectors of the population, assuming that only those neighbourhoods that would require the introduction of basic infrastructure projects would follow these schemes. In San Pedro, as it is clear that the municipality is only divided into two areas (rich and poor), it becomes easier to design specific policies for both sectors. Nonetheless, because in Tlalpan rich and poor areas are mixed, it is difficult for residents to interact, and the creation of specific programmes becomes harder. To deal with these problems, authorities usually work on a project basis, so even if the 'rich part' of particular area would not require the

introduction of a basic infrastructure project, the 'poor part' would be able to engage in the activities required to solve the addressed problem.

Although the creation of specific programmes could be a solution to the marked class differences prevailing in each of the three cases, analysis of the participatory laws, uncovers no mention of these contrasts. The 1998 CPL and San Pedro's legislation takes for granted that both the permanent and non-permanent participatory options would be unaffected by these differences. Yet, one of the most interesting issues perceived in San Pedro is that whenever a plebiscite takes place, generally the lower sector of the municipality does not get involved; in fact, all the non-permanent participatory processes presented in this research project were promoted by the upper classes. The uniformity with which authorities seem to be carrying out the participatory agenda jeopardises its success, as all issues are 'seen through the same lens.' This, distortion of reality (i.e. perceiving all localities as the same) seems to be one of the main problems faced by local administrations. Although recently the *Agenda para la Reforma Municipal* stresses the importance of differentiating between types of municipalities for a successful participatory agenda, this perception has not yet influenced the participatory agendas implemented all over Mexico.

If the three aspects highlighted in this section are not considered by local authorities, it might affect the operation of participatory mechanisms. Ignoring the infrastructure or social differences prevailing in each locality might, especially amongst the poorer classes, allow local *caciques* or politicians to abuse the ignorance of these classes to exploit participatory mechanisms to serve their own interests. Whether implementing a referendum or a neighbourhood committee, consideration of the basic infrastructure and social classes of each locality are important aspects of implementing any participatory mechanism. In the next section we will discuss further how the participatory agenda has been implemented in the three localities of research.

The main findings in this section are:

- Considering the basic infrastructure conditions of each locality where participatory mechanisms are implemented can play a crucial role in avoiding the proliferation of local *caciques*.

- There are important differences between the way middle and upper classes and the lower classes organise their respective participatory agendas. Whilst the middle and upper sectors are concerned about issues such as pollution or ecological problems, lower class ones aim to solve their basic infrastructure needs.
- The 'issue of class' is an important aspect to be considered when carrying out any participatory scheme.

Implementation in the Mexican Local Context

When analysing any public policy, it is always important to examine the *political context* in which these policies are implemented, especially when electoral factors may play a crucial role. For instance, in San Pedro, the fact that *panista* administrations have been in office since 1989 has been crucial for the consolidation of a '*panista* mentality' within the municipality. There has been greater continuity to all the participatory programmes and citizens are used to the way the participatory agenda is carried out. The inhabitants of San Pedro know how to proceed when facing a problem and which department is in charge of solving it; in short, they know what to do and who to go to. In Puebla, a new participatory agenda was initiated by the 1996-1999 *panista* administration, and although the PAN-UN project was implemented in most of the municipality, once the PRI recovered power in 1999 the local citizen participation agenda changed. As a result, the PRI fell back on the previous participatory agenda, based on the *jefe de manzana* structure, and so far no legislation has been developed in this municipality. On the other hand, in Tlalpan, the victory obtained by the PRD in 1997 played a crucial role in activating a new participatory legislation. Without this electoral triumph, the participatory agenda would still be dominated by *priista* schemes.

The *top-down* way in which authorities carry out participatory mechanisms leaves limited scope for citizens to control or at least to have some impact on the outcomes of schemes, which on paper appear to be a genuine participatory option, but which in practice do not operate in this way. Both non-permanent and permanent participatory mechanisms follow the typical top-down implementation pattern characteristic of most governmental agencies. For instance, one of the first characteristics identified with the implementation of non-permanent participatory mechanisms is the repetition of the 'federal pattern.' Under this pattern, decisions emanate from the top of the political pyramid – in Tlalpan from the government of Mexico City and in San Pedro from local authorities – and the input of other authorities or citizens is practically non-existent. Indeed, the government of Mexico City, contrary to the participatory principles

discussed in chapter 2, has promoted all the consultations that have taken place there, (none has been initiated by the public) simply assuming that the issues dealt with on the agenda are important for citizens. In San Pedro the situation has been similar. Nonetheless, because the government of this municipality is dealing with a highly educated and economically powerful electorate, the pressure exercised by this sector through the press has played a crucial role in the implementation of several consultations. Box 6.3 illustrates the types of consultations that have been promoted in both localities.

Box 6.3 **Types of consultation implemented in Tlalpan and San Pedro**

Type of Consultation	Aims	Number of participants
Plebiscite (Government of Mexico City)	To persuade indirectly opposition political parties (the PRI and the PAN) to conclude the political reform started in 1998 (May 1999).	163,000 citizens took part
Plebiscite (Government of Mexico City)	The aim of this process was to learn what the public thought about creating a new legislation for protest marches in Mexico City (January 2001).	56,000 citizens took part
Consultation (Municipal Government)	Introduce reforms to the participatory legislation (May 1995).	24 Citizens took part
Referendum (Initiated by citizens through public pressure and seconded by local authorities)	Determine whether the closing time of nightclubs should change or not (September 1998).	2,481 Citizens took part

An important observation about the processes presented in Box 6.3 is that only one had a direct effect on government policy – the referendum promoted in San Pedro regarding the closing time of nightclubs. In the other consultations, despite strong citizen interest in concluding the political reform of Mexico City, their concern to create a protest march legislation or to introduce reforms to San Pedro’s participatory legislation, none of these processes had a direct impact on the way authorities proceeded. As the issues consulted were not entirely in the hands of local authorities, there was little that could have been done to act immediately, according to the outcome of the consultation. In both cases, there were other governmental bodies involved in the possible approval of the topics raised by local authorities, reducing considerably the immediate impact of each consultation process.

In both consultations promoted in Mexico City, it would not have been difficult to guess the outcome. Considering that a political reform for the capital is necessary, and also

that the number of protest marches increases year after year, it seems that both processes could have been avoided. Perhaps the authorities – bearing in mind that only one plebiscite can take place per year – might have ‘saved’ both consultation processes for more controversial issues? Similarly, in San Pedro, especially the consultation regarding possible reforms to the participatory legislation, surely the views of 24 citizens are not representative of the views of 130,000 people and that perhaps the consultation should have been invalidated. In this case, again, authorities implemented a participatory mechanism that maybe should have not taken place. In both cases, local authorities – perhaps purposely – used participatory mechanisms in situations that were not that controversial, or where an immediate impact could not be felt. With the implementation of non-permanent participatory mechanisms entirely in the hands of authorities, there is little that citizens could do to stop such processes, which have proven expensive to carry out. One obvious inference is that the final decision of each consultation had already been made, prior to the consultation, so that citizens were invited to participate just to legitimate those decisions.

Comparison of the way the permanent participatory agenda is carried out in each of the three localities finds a similar pattern to that identified in non-permanent mechanisms. Despite the fact that citizens can control the internal organisation of permanent forms such as neighbourhood committees, the impact that these organisations might have is still highly dependent on a yes or no given by local authorities. In each of the three cases the determination of local authorities to retain their power is evident and will be discussed more fully in the *citizen empowerment* section below.

The relevance of having a top-down implementation model

One feature of each case is that politicians are not taking the lessons of the participatory literature seriously. Instead, they seem to be obsessed with keeping tight control over the different mechanisms they implement. Furthermore, on some occasions it appears as if policy implementers did not really understand the nature – or perhaps did understand but used for particular party purposes – of participatory policies. When this dissertation was started, it was assumed – wrongly – that the authorities had a clear understanding about how participatory mechanisms should be implemented. According to both the Tlalpan and San Pedro legislation the reason for establishing consultations (e.g. plebiscites or referenda) should be to aid a decision of government over a controversial

local issue. The issue might deal with such aspects as traffic, pollution, or a specific construction, and in theory, through their participation citizens would 'have a say' in the decision to be taken by local authorities. Yet, in the cases analysed here this seems to not have been the case. For instance, the 'bridge controversy' in San Pedro is a good example of how authorities could have implemented a participatory scheme yet, for unknown reasons, it did not happen. Despite the interest in the consultation exercise shown by the community, the state and local authorities stuck to their decision and ignored what the public wanted.

After years of corruption and unilateral decision-making by the governing PRI, the inclusion of non-permanent forms of participation was widely perceived as a necessity. Political parties played a crucial role, as illustrated by the participatory legislation promoted by the PRD and the PAN in these cases. However, although both legislations set out the different criteria that authorities should follow to carry out a referendum or a plebiscite, the cases show these processes are not necessarily implemented in practice. As the decision whether to organise a consultation or not is left completely in the hands of authorities, – something that is not necessarily the ideal – perhaps three out of the four consultations presented in Box 6.3 could have been avoided. Authorities seem to be obsessed (especially the non-*priísta* ones) with using these mechanisms to show public opinion that their administrations are open to public opinion, via sharing their decision-making power with citizens. However, it seems that authorities find it difficult to determine when it is or when it is not convenient to use such mechanisms. With the consultations presented in Box 6.3, common sense should have told the authorities that finishing the political reform of the capital was necessary and that a protest march law should have been included. Perhaps the real aim was to consult the population over an issue which was not that controversial, thereby preventing or delaying a referendum over a truly controversial issue as only one mechanism can be implemented per year in Mexico City. Thus, local authorities seem to be keen on presenting themselves as open and democratic, whilst avoiding controversial issues or actually taking the final decision before the consultation even takes place.

In the case of San Pedro, the number of consultations is not an issue, as the legislation does not limit them to one per year, but as in Tlalpan there seems to be confusion as to when to implement participatory schemes. Furthermore, the small number of people that

participate in such processes seems hardly representative of the whole locality, so perhaps a minimum percentage of citizens taking part should be required to legitimise each process.

The way in which participatory policies have been implemented has often failed fully to inform the population when such mechanisms take place. Lack of information is another characteristic of the top-down implementation process followed by each local authority. For instance, when authorities perceived that a consultation process was needed to decide over a specific issue, they did not necessarily promote it. In both San Pedro and Tlalpan, people commented that sometimes authorities give insufficient warning to citizens about these processes. For instance, when San Pedro (1994-1997) Mayor Margain organised an open consultation to discuss possible reforms to San Pedro's urban development plan, it was heavily criticised by members of NGOs and opposition political parties. As commented by Mrs. Yvonne Salazar: 'it is a shame that the discussion of such important reforms was not publicised properly, *Sampetρινos* (inhabitants of San Pedro) must have been informed sufficiently in advance about this consultation. Local authorities should not limit access to only a few' (*El Norte* 7/7/1995).

In Tlalpan, residents claimed that authorities usually do not inform them when a consultation process takes place. Community leader Julieta comments, 'there is a tremendous lack of information regarding issues dealing with citizen involvement, we are never informed on time about any consultation processes' (Julieta 2000). A related issue is that authorities could provide information about the consultation taking place, but not provide the information about the issue dealt with. Not surprisingly, this may translate into low indices of participation, or into having a community that participates over issues which are not necessarily what people think they are. Clearly, informing the locality about times and forms is a crucial element of a successful consultation process.

Perhaps one of the greatest temptations faced by local authorities when carrying out participatory mechanisms in a top-down way is to shape the outcome of any consultation. Especially when dealing with highly controversial issues, authorities could obviously be tempted to bias the process to favour a preferred position. For instance, both consultations presented in Box 6.3 were used by the PRD to tell the PRI and the

PAN that reforms were necessary. One of the recommendations given by Stewart (1996) is the establishment of panels with experts defending opposite positions to take place before any consultation is carried out. Whether such bodies could be established in Mexico is highly questionable, especially in such a complex political environment.

Another aspect related to the bias point is that when authorities implement a highly controlled participatory agenda, many of the issues included might not necessarily interest the majority of citizens. When authorities decide to involve the community in what they regard as inessential matters, in the long run, these 'tactics' could have a negative effect for the development of participatory practices of government. For instance, in Mexico City, the authorities did not consult the population on essential matters so that perhaps the turnout of people would have improved considerably if they involved different issues.

In San Pedro, most of the consultations have dealt with issues that affect the richer sector of the municipality, and are unimportant for the rest. For example, poorer sectors of San Pedro do not possess expensive properties that would lose value with the construction of particular shopping centre(s). If the authorities genuinely want to give greater legitimacy to these mechanisms they must raise controversial issues over which the decision of the 'all' the members of the public could have an immediate impact.

Although chapter 2 identified a trend to involve NGOs in the implementation of participatory schemes, in none of the cases analysed here was this the case. For instance, in the 'save the park' initiative in Tlalpan, the involvement of NGOs was limited to attending community meetings. Overall, these organisations have played a minor role in the implementation of schemes and have had little direct impact on their outcome. In San Pedro, NGOs have participated more as spectators than as implementers or assistants in carrying out participatory schemes. Despite a considerable number of NGOs operating in San Pedro, like Tlalpan, their intervention has been limited when participatory schemes are implemented. Yet, it is understandable that local authorities do not accept the involvement of external actors such as NGOs in participatory mechanisms, especially bearing in mind the top-down way in which they are implemented.

The use of a top-down implementation process when carrying out a participatory agenda is not ideal as it has allowed citizens participation mechanisms to have been used for legitimisation purposes rather than to nurture genuine participation.

The key implementation findings:

- The use of a top-down implementation process enables local authorities to use participatory schemes primarily as a means of legitimisation rather than as genuine participatory tools.
- However, the flaws in the top-down implementation process have limited the effectiveness of this legitimisation strategy.

Citizen Empowerment

Barriers to participation

Although on the surface the value of participation seems obvious – as it provides a broad source of legitimisation for policy change – two core difficulties were worth considering in this thesis. Firstly, the process of canvassing a wide spectrum of opinion and incorporating the interests that they represent into the decision-making process can lead to information overload and make decision-making slow and cumbersome. Secondly, open conflict between competing groups ultimately leads to clientelism and the privileging of certain elite groups. A sectional interest or alliance of sectional interests will ultimately win the war of ideas and there would then be a mobilisation of bias in favour of that sectional interest or alliance of sectional interests. This could lead to more limited participation.

The merit of a participatory view of decision-making is really a normative question and may be couched in terms of elitist versus participatory views of democracy. The former is a realist theory that emphasises a belief in the inevitability of elite rule and the limits to public participation in public affairs. In this minimal conception of liberal democracy, apart from the process of voting, political participation is not taken to be an important measure of the quality of democratic life. Political representation or elite responsiveness to the ruled is considered more important, what Giovanni Sartori (1987: 156) has termed the ‘responsiveness of the leaders to the led’. This elitist or ‘top-down’ conceptualisation of democracy would include the following forms of political institutions and processes – a majoritarian or ‘first-past-the post’ electoral system, executive dominance over the legislature, limited access to governmental information,

low levels of participation in the system of government, persistent inequalities in power resources, a centralised unitary state, and a media system that is vulnerable to manipulation by government.

By contrast, a participatory view of democracy would take as its key aim the establishment of pluralism through a societal-led conception of the national interest and the creation of open, decentralised and democratic political institutions and processes based upon popular control and political equality. Examples of institutions and processes which would reflect a 'bottom-up' or participatory view of democracy would include – the protection of individual rights, freedom of information and other forms of open government, electoral systems based on proportional representation, the decentralisation and territorial devolution of power, and, high levels of participation in the system of government anchored in the twin concepts of popular control and political equality. The decisive test of a democracy lies in its capacity to encourage its population to play an active role in its government.

Moreover, technological advances and mature consumerism should make participatory decision-making more feasible and help:

- with problems of information overload;
- provide basic information about rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
- inform and educate about politics and about issues of public concern;
- help voters to make up their mind about candidates, parties and issues in election process;
- promote/offer opportunities for citizens to deliberate on public issues, on draft (in preparation) laws, social problems (allow experience of analysing complicated issues);
- promote/offer communication between citizens and politicians;
- guide citizens through the growing jungle of publicly available government and other official information; and,
- offer citizen participation in real decision-making.

The contrast between these rival conceptions of democracy and the way in which they underpin approaches to decision-making is illustrated in Figure 6.1 below.

Extensive
Sharing
Inefficient?



Limited
Consultation
Efficient?

Figure 6.1 Participation and Decision-making

Although the discussion above focuses on two core barriers to participation, in this thesis we also found linkages to the seven obstacles identified by Stewart (attitude of some elected representatives, raising expectations, apathy, lack of information, practical problems, democratic exclusion, and inappropriate use of particular approaches). The following sub-sections examine these similarities.

Perceptions of Participation

The comparison of the three localities found different perspectives about how authorities and citizens see these participatory mechanisms. The authorities seem to perceive any participatory practice beyond normal election processes as providing a 'value added policy' for citizens. When authorities were questioned about the reasons for carrying out a participatory agenda, not surprisingly, they responded that they were engaged in democratic practices of government because these mechanisms would, almost automatically, bring positive benefits to their citizens. As Puebla's citizen participation director Alejandro Armenta-Mier put it, 'the aim of this directorate is to give attention to the lower sectors of the population, and to take progress and development to deprived areas. By promoting social participation, we open channels to help citizens reach those wishes and aspirations that all the members of this community have' (Armenta-Mier 2000). In Tlalpan and San Pedro, authorities perceived citizen participation as a means of getting rid of the pre-existing *prilista caciquil* structure operating at the local level, in the hope that the PRI would lose its political strength once these mechanisms were implemented. Whilst the participatory theorists speak about achieving greater transparency, democracy, or even development, it is apparent that in Mexico, many other things will need to change if participatory mechanisms are to achieve such an outcome.

One factor is that just as the constitution is |not applied as it should be, these participatory mechanisms are often not applied according to the book either. In a country where institutions are struggling to keep pace with the series of recent structural changes, it is difficult to consolidate such participatory schemes in a short period of

time. There is a tremendous lack of information within bureaucratic bodies about what participatory mechanisms stand for or how these initiatives should be carried out. For instance, in Tlalpan residents complained about the short notice they were given when neighbourhood elections took place. In San Pedro, NGOs have questioned the way diverse consultation processes, mainly dealing with local development planning, have been implemented by authorities, as these processes appear to be biased.¹² Perhaps one of the best examples of how citizen participation mechanisms can be misused is the way Governor Bartlett implemented the COPLADEMUN initiative. It was a policy that on paper aimed to bring greater transparency to local administrations, but which in practice became a political tool just like SOLIDARIDAD.

On the side of citizens, whenever a participatory mechanism is implemented, it usually generates a high expectation within each community. Especially in the lower sectors of the population, a participatory process can be perceived as a 'divine policy' that would have an immediate impact on the lives of those taking part in it. This perception has been spread mainly because when politicians present a participatory initiative they do not mention its limitations; instead authorities focus only on explaining the benefits it would bring for each community taking part in such processes. As neighbourhood committee leader of Tlalpan, Irma Zuchitl Dávila observed, 'citizens think that we have the power to solve all their problems, they are not aware that our scope of action is very limited. This is one of the reasons why there are still so many informal leaders operating here, because they know about the limitations of the legislation' (Dávila 2000).

In each of the three cases analysed participatory mechanisms are presented as a democratic solution that would inevitably open up decision-making processes for citizens to 'have a say' on those issues that affect them. Yet, authorities have designed the legal frameworks to avoid losing their political control. To illustrate, Mexico City's citizen participation law contains a series of conditions that limit citizen involvement in decision-making processes. The twelve functions that can be performed by neighbourhood committees in practice allocate citizens very little power over decisions reached at the local level. As stated by neighbourhood committee co-ordinator Martín Flores, 'people participating in neighbourhood committees want to have more faculties, they would like to propose and to decide, they would like to participate in the projects, but it seems that this legislation does not contemplate this to happen' (Flores 2000).

Consequently, rather than using participatory bodies, people still fall back on traditional methods of influence; for instance, Tlalpan resident, Alfonso García Sánchez stated, 'whenever I have a problem I go directly to the local authorities' (García Sánchez interview 5/11/2001), a view echoed by fellow residents Gustavo Carrizales and Fabiola Jiménez, who do not believe that their neighbourhood representatives could be expected to solve these problems. The same happens in San Pedro, where the role of authorities is paramount for the implementation of the whole participatory agenda, and in Puebla, where after the controversies surrounding the PAN-UN initiative and COPLADEMUNs, the prospect of a new participatory legislation has not even been discussed.

To sum up, there are still many issues that need to be addressed dealing both with authorities' and citizens' perceptions of what participatory mechanisms stand for. If the hopes of both are dashed, it might lead to rapid disillusionment with these schemes that could result in even less effective mechanisms and to having low indices of participation.

Low indices of participation

The indices of participation of these mechanisms can be reduced considerably if they are misused by local authorities. The criticisms identified in chapter 2, especially those dealing with citizens having more interesting things to do, seem pertinent. However, authorities also play a crucial role in motivating or demotivating citizens to take part in consultation processes. If the population perceives the authorities as not acting as expected, nor implementing the results of the consultation process, then the number of people taking part in future consultations could be reduced. If citizens are not informed in enough time in advance about the consultation, then the turnout might be low. For instance, in the consultation organised by the PRD in May 1999, although 2,820 ballot boxes were installed throughout the 16 localities of Mexico City, only 163,000 citizens took part (see *La Jornada* 17/5/1999). This consultation was heavily criticised by opposition political parties (PRI and PAN) as being 'biased and expensive' (see *La Jornada* 14/5/1999). There is also the consultation that took place in San Pedro in 1995, where only 24 people participated. As Barber has observed: 'people are apathetic because they are powerless, not powerless because they are apathetic. There is no

evidence to suggest that once empowered people will refuse to participate' (Barber 1984:272). It seems likely that there is a direct relationship between not informing the community with enough time in advance, the types of issues raised and the levels of participation.

Costs of Participation

In the three case studies analysed local authorities did not seem to be very concerned about the costs (economic or temporal) of participatory democratic initiatives. However, not surprisingly, one element that was identified in those localities under political dissent (Puebla and Tlalpan) was that the party that was not in power criticised the implementation of participatory mechanisms. For instance, the plebiscites organised in Mexico City in 1999 and 2001¹³ were criticised by opposition political parties (PRI and PAN) as being 'biased and expensive' (*La Jornada* 14/5/1999). The cost of the 1999 consultation was 4.5 million *pesos* (approximately £ 320,000) over an issue that perhaps was not that controversial or which could have been decided by authorities without being consulted. Mexico City PRD authorities showed little concern for the costs of these processes and seemed more interested about the political impact that the implementation of these mechanisms might have for future election processes, as these mechanisms show a 'democratic PRD' to the outside. Cleverly, the PRD promotes in the media their consultations, but minor local issues are not given the same coverage. Such consultations (i.e. plebiscites) are not time consuming, as citizens are only asked to vote for a yes or no and do not have to 'waste' their time for days or weeks attending several meetings or holding discussions with other members of the community.

In the case of San Pedro, where a tight top-down participatory agenda seems to prevail, and where the PAN has practically no opposition, the economic costs of these consultations do not seem to be relevant for local authorities. However an aspect to highlight is that, unlike other places where participatory initiatives have been carried out,¹⁴ in San Pedro middle and upper classes do not seem to mind spending their time defending the value of their properties organising public debates or consultations. This research showed that middle-upper classes – if necessary – have the time and the will to defend their interests and to promote participatory initiatives that might oppose the views of government. Overall, it can be argued that the costs of participatory democracy

(economic or temporal) are not going to stop the 'participatory willingness' shown by Mexico's three main political forces. The costs of participatory democracy in the Mexican context are an aspect worthy of analysis to a greater depth in further research.

Limited Empowerment

Obviously, a core issue in all three cases is the limited decision-making power given to citizens in these processes. This trend is easier to identify in permanent participatory mechanisms. For instance, throughout the years of PRI dominance, the neighbourhood was perceived as a 'power keeping body' where the interaction between local politicians and informal community leaders played a key role. A simple reason why the PRI managed to keep certain localities under its control for so long was that these localities required the intervention of informal leaders such as *caciques*, and the *clientelistic* relationship between authorities and citizens was seen as normal. Greater political competition – triggered when the PAN and the PRD started occupying more positions of government – brought a series of changes, which included an attempt to establish a different relationship between authorities and the participatory organisations operating at the neighbourhood level. The core aim of the PAN and the PRD was, and in some localities still is, to eliminate the local *corporatist* networks under the dominance of the PRI. Significantly, citizens played a key role pushing for the introduction of more transparent forms of interaction between authorities and the general public, as is evident in such affluent municipalities as San Pedro, where citizens had no need to maintain *clientelistic* relationships with informal groups of power representing the PRI and decided to express this desire for change in the ballot box.

In San Pedro, the PAN has won the last five local elections. Yet, rather than get rid of such permanent *priista* participatory units as *jueces auxiliares*, instead, *panista* local authorities have strengthened these positions, but have managed to remove the political functions formerly performed by these community leaders. Currently, *jueces auxiliares* play a key role as contacts for local authorities and are encouraged to take various courses for improving their personal skills. Because municipal authorities have already introduced most of the basic public services required by the citizenry, these community leaders have been removed from the main sources of protest (i.e. a fight for the introduction of a public service). Another factor is that *jueces auxiliares* are appointed directly by local authorities and that if any act against the functions for which they were

appointed, they would be forced to resign. Thus the PAN in San Pedro has managed to transform its former worst enemies into their best allies.

The other two permanent channels included in the legislation deal with the figure of the citizen counsellor and neighbourhood boards. Although citizen councils are at the core of the participatory governmental agenda, objectively speaking it would be very difficult to define them as 'genuine participatory mechanisms' because the local authorities choose who will occupy these positions, (diminishing their capabilities considerably) as personal compromises can be created.¹⁵ It cannot be argued that citizens are empowered when taking part under such scheme.

Neighbourhood boards are the third permanent participatory mechanism implemented in San Pedro. Although there are great differences between upper and lower class neighbourhood boards, in San Pedro this mechanism has become the main representative instrument at the neighbourhood level. For example, rich neighbourhoods generally have a well structured yearly agenda, possess a budget and even some offices to hold meetings; on the other hand, poor neighbourhoods meet whenever there is something to discuss and would not possess an internal budget. It is difficult to calculate the average attendance that takes part in these meetings, however a characteristic that was emphasised by both functionaries and citizens, is the fact that attendances vary depending on the issue dealt on the agenda.

When we compare how the opposition governments of Tlalpan and San Pedro managed the previous pseudo participatory body, they operated quite differently. While the PAN in San Pedro strengthened the *jueces auxiliares* structure, the PRD followed two different routes: either, confronting the political influence of pre-existing *prista* forms of local participation, or, making them work for their political organisation. One of the main issues during the discussion of the 1998 participatory legislation concerned banning the intermission of political parties in permanent forms of neighbourhood participation. However, due to the large number of informal leaders operating for particular political organisations, there has inevitably been party involvement in these forums. Even the 1997-2000 administration admitted that for their own records they catalogued how different neighbourhood committees have particular political preferences.¹⁶

Although the statutes of the 1998 legislation ban all type of party involvement when neighbourhood election processes take place, perhaps the idea of the PRI¹⁷ to legalise the intervention of political parties in neighbourhood elections is more realistic? If citizens are going to get involved in political organisations anyway, then perhaps it is better to bring it out into the open? As a consequence of the problems mentioned above, currently only around 50 percent of these forums are still meeting on a regular basis. Half of the forums have been involved in controversies dealing with political parties or the role of such influential community leaders as local *caciques*.¹⁸

In Puebla, there has been a return to the *clientelist* route. When the PAN was in office (during the 1996-1999 administration), the PAN-UN participatory agenda was promoted, but once the PRI recovered the capital in the 1999 local election, any hopes of finishing with the corporatist practices of government vanished. The permanent participatory agenda operates under a loose structure where meetings are held whenever there is something to discuss, and where citizens' only chance of implementing a community project would be through a *fideicomiso*, which cannot be defined as a permanent form of participation. Citizens complained that neither the PAN nor the PRI has provided the permanent participatory agenda they deserve, there are still plenty of informal leaders operating at the local level, and close relationships between officials (co-ordinators and promoters mainly) and informal community leaders sometimes obstruct achieving any community development.

The examples presented in this section show that citizens have been empowered in a very limited way. Even when taking part regularly in participatory schemes, realistically speaking the impact on the outside is limited. The next section uses the typologies presented in chapter 2 to measure the level of empowerment that citizens received when taking part in the participatory schemes here discussed.

Measuring Empowerment

The aim of this section is to apply Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett's model to measure empowerment in the three case studies. Firstly, Tlalpan's participatory agenda ranges between the non-participation and the citizen participation sections of the ladder. It would be difficult to place it on a specific rung because the locality performs some activities that put it high on the ladder, but others that place it on the lower rungs.¹⁹ For

instance, the new governor of Mexico City has introduced a series of measures that can be identified as delegated control. The motion of the *presupuesto participativo* (participatory budget) is at the core of Andrés Manuel López's participatory agenda, a measure that empowers citizens to decide how to spend a budget assigned by local authorities. On the other hand, when neighbourhood committees operate, there is often poor levels of information and civic hype. Moreover, both consultations promoted by the PRD in Mexico City can be categorised as cynical consultation processes.

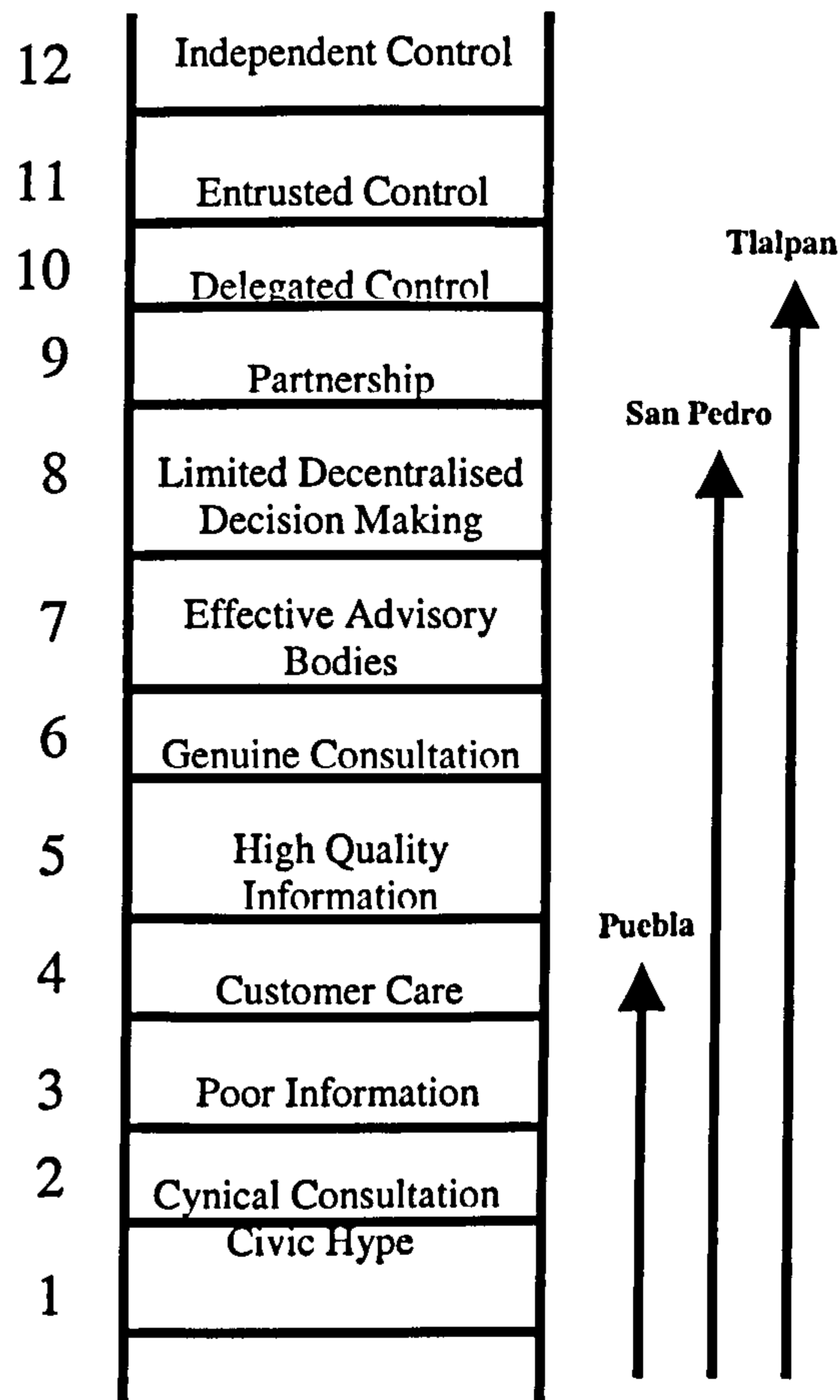


Figure 6.2 Level of empowerment of the three cases in Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett's ladder

Puebla can be placed on the non-participation section of the ladder. When the *panista* 1996-1999 administration governed the municipality, and introduced the PAN-UN participatory agenda, the aim was to develop practices that could bring greater transparency and democracy to local government. At that time the locality was engaged in activities that could have been placed in the participation section of the ladder. However, when the PRI returned to power in 1999, the programme was stopped and everything went back to 'normal' under the implementation of the same old *priista*

schemes. When COPLADEMUNs were operating, it would have been placed on the second rung of the ladder, as a type of cynical consultation. The current participatory agenda, based on the block representative scheme, could be placed on the lower rungs of the ladder, as the *clientelistic* way in which it is normally carried out does not even promote citizen participation in an open way (see Figure 6.2 above to find the location of each locality in the ladder).

The practices in San Pedro could be placed in the participation zone of the ladder, as genuine consultation processes take place, but responsibilities are not shared between authorities and citizens. Because most of the agenda and even the outcomes of consultation processes are in the hands of authorities, we cannot place San Pedro higher up the ladder. The reality of a highly directed participatory agenda becomes evident where authorities say they share the power with citizens, but which the practices or government seem to indicate exactly the contrary.

Although this typology can help us to understand better the levels of power given to citizens by local authorities, it has its limitations. Most important, it is only a typology and can provide no explanatory power. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 2, whilst this model has been used in other countries, we cannot say that the reality of local government in different parts of the world is the same.

Citizens: truly empowered or political instruments?

A key aspect to consider when analysing the impact of participatory mechanisms in the Mexican context is the role that citizens themselves are expected to take when getting involved in such processes. In the view of Ramírez, ‘in the case of Mexico, the series of changes recently introduced to several participatory legislations (i.e. Mexico City) are ignored by the majority of the population. There is only a limited number of citizens who are fully aware of the magnitude of the changes introduced’ (Ramírez 2000:19). Consequently, the ‘informed ones’ have become a limited group – mainly led by political parties – who in many cases will fight against each other via the courts to stop specific reforms, similar to the way the PAN proceeded with *Ley Bartlett*.²⁰ History tells us that traditionally, authorities have taken advantage of citizens’ ignorance to implement specific policies, so could this be happening again?

The main claim by the authorities regarding the implementation of participatory practices of government was that citizens would be truly empowered. For the PRD and the PAN administrations in particular, the declared aim of the policy was to involve citizens in decision-making processes that would directly influence future actions of government. Nonetheless, when we analyse the participatory legislation it is clear that in each case the role of citizens is very limited. In short, it involved no significant shift of decision-making power from the authorities to citizens. Although it has been demonstrated that opposition administrations have indeed introduced some changes, they continue to retain total control over the way all participatory mechanisms are implemented. This characteristic puts at risk the implementation of the whole participatory agenda, as these policies may become merely legitimisation instruments. Although the theory of participatory democracy perceives the role of citizens at the local level as crucial in bringing transparency and democracy to local administrations, this has not occurred in these Mexican examples.

In some cases citizens have been called to participate in consultations over non-controversial matters or which could have been directly decided by authorities, without any citizen intervention. For instance, the plebiscites that have taken place in Mexico City and which are related to the electoral and political reform of the capital cannot be considered as processes that empowered considerably the community over a decision-making process. In fact, if so inclined, the authorities might have avoided both consultations and 'saved' them for a time when a more controversial issue was raised. The views aired by those citizens who took part in the processes were not even followed by an immediate action of government that could have 'legitimated' the aims of the consultation and the participation of citizens themselves. In San Pedro, there have also been some rather non-transparent processes which, as in Mexico City, only worked as a means of legitimating specific actions of government. In these circumstances, the implementation of participatory mechanisms becomes an issue that needs to be heavily scrutinised, because patterns from the past could be repeated (as with SOLIDARIDAD) and the government could be tempted to use determined policies for particular political purposes.

One of the main problems faced throughout the research has been to define what it means to empower citizens. In Mexico there are some politicians who believe that the

people should be fulfilled just by taking part in free elections and that any policy which goes beyond the normal election process is a sort of a bonus. Moreover, politicians seem to be prepared to bias the outcome of what would later become governmental decisions discussed in open forums. For instance, both consultations promoted in Mexico City were motions that would, hypothetically speaking, benefit the PRD.

Despite the reduced level of empowerment enjoyed by citizens when taking part in any of the participatory schemes analysed here there are still some positive aspects that can be highlighted. By participating in permanent or non-permanent schemes, citizens can vent their views regarding local matters and it is undeniable that greater interaction between authorities and citizens has taken place. It is more common to have authorities willing to be scrutinised by their citizens or citizens demanding greater information about such issues as public spending. Authorities can also receive feedback regarding the quality of the public services they provide. In the long-run it can be argued that these mechanisms would have a positive impact in Mexico's overall democratic process. Similarly to what happened with the social movements discussed in chapter 1, which later became the source of the implementation of participatory policies, the current participatory agenda could become the springboard for the introduction of more empowering policies in the future not only at the local, but perhaps at the state or national level.

The main findings found in this section are the following:

- Authorities play a crucial role in motivating or demotivating citizens to take part in participatory schemes.
- The level of empowerment citizens received when taking part in any of the participatory schemes was minimal.
- Nonetheless, the citizen participation mechanisms implemented here might potentially bring a series of advantages that can help Mexico's overall democratic process.

Overall Argument

This research establishes that there is limited evidence of citizen participation bringing about the kinds of changes anticipated by the participatory literature in terms of empowering citizens, bringing decisions closer to local level or educating them.

However, some positive benefits were identified. During the implementation of each of the three participatory agendas, citizens, realistically speaking, had little input in these processes. Most issues consulted through these mechanisms are part of agendas already set by authorities, and only on very few occasions (especially with non-permanent participatory practices) were citizens able to influence authorities to implement mechanisms where their voice could be heard. These cases were mainly in San Pedro, where the middle and upper classes of the municipality used the media as a pressure mechanism. By contrast, in Tlalpan, the main input of citizens to the participatory agenda comes through getting involved in activities promoted by 'unofficial participatory leaders.' Due to the limitations of the 1998 participatory legislation residents are still inclined to exercise pressure primarily through these community leaders. Circumventing the official channels of communication has sometimes proven to be more effective than sticking to the participatory mechanisms. It still seems preferable to confront authorities rather than to work with these powerless participatory structures.

In Puebla, the input of citizens to the participatory process is practically non-existent. Especially within the lower sectors of the population, residents are expected to use their community representatives to promote particular projects. This process has proven to be time-consuming and contact based, and there are many political interests at stake. The absence of participatory legislation makes the consolidation of a truly participatory agenda even more uncertain.

Although we could say that the input of citizens in permanent participatory mechanisms such as neighbourhood forums is constant, they are still highly dependent on authorities' decisions to solve most of the issues raised in such agendas. While residents are free to organise their respective committees, set the agendas, and discuss any matters that affect them, the impact outside these organisations depends on whether or not the authorities regard the issue as a priority.

In the three case studies, the participation of citizens is limited to discussing issues and proposing solutions to local problems, however, the extent to which these discussions are effective or not remains uncertain. There were no mechanisms where citizens shared control with authorities, or where they possess total control of it. However, there are some schemes where citizens could get involved by using their labour or financial support to finish specific projects (i.e. *fideicomiso*). The functions of citizens in both

permanent and non-permanent participatory bodies seem to be more as a means of legitimating the actions that authorities will take after the process is finished. Even if citizens show their willingness to introduce policies through participating in a referendum or a plebiscite, the changes consulted may not be made effective immediately after. Furthermore, in the case of San Pedro, authorities will have the last decision even after a policy was favoured, jeopardising the whole sense of any consultation processes.

For the reasons above discussed, we need to look at the themes discussed in chapter 1 to understand the role that these initiatives play in contemporary Mexican politics, as these mechanisms seem to have been used mainly as consultative rather than as 'true power sharing' participatory units. One initial finding is that despite the longstanding pressure from a diverse range of social movements for greater citizen participation in government policy making, there was little evidence of social movement involvement in the implementation of the participatory mechanisms in the three case studies. Rather, in each case, it was the political parties that designed and implemented the participatory initiatives. In the case of the traditional opposition parties – the PRD and the PAN – the main aim of the participatory initiatives was to undermine pre-existing PRI local structures of power. Both parties saw participatory initiatives as part of a wider process of democratisation and wished to demonstrate their capacity to govern in a more democratic manner than the old PRI system. However, in practice these mechanisms have been used primarily to legitimate their position by giving a democratic image to their regimes, rather than genuinely share power with the citizens – as illustrated, for example, by the limited powers allocated to these diverse mechanisms to validate decisions effectively already made by authorities. If neither the PAN nor the PRD seemed genuinely committed to effective participation, this conclusion was even more apposite for the PRI in Puebla. It is hard not to conclude that the *Ley Bartlett* was little more than a cynical attempt to further Bartlett's personal political agenda, and the subsequent PRI authorities seem to be more interested in reinforcing traditional informal mechanisms of mediation. This thesis has demonstrated (especially in the cases of Tlalpan and Puebla) that divided government, political tradition and the nature of Mexico's political institutions are key barriers to participation.

Obviously, these conclusions are based only on these three case studies, so it is difficult to be certain whether these are representative of broader patterns in Mexican politics. Nonetheless, at the very least, the extensive interest in participation at the local level is playing its part in ensuring that the issues of accountability and citizen participation continue to be part of broader national debates on democratisation. Moreover, although the overall flavour of these conclusions may be rather negative for the cause of participation, it is possible to draw more positive messages. Public policies frequently have unintended consequences. Even if political parties are currently insincere in their public support for participation, by setting up new democratic mechanisms which give people some opportunity to influence policies, then as Pateman might argue, people might develop a taste for participation, simply by participating. Moreover, they may also demand that these supposedly democratic mechanisms be implemented properly, so that citizens are given genuine power and influence over local decision-making. In this way, it is just possible that the use of participatory mechanisms could evolve to become true instruments of accountability and democracy. But only time – and further research – will tell.

Contribution of the Study and Avenues for Further Research

This section presents the main contributions and possible avenues for further research identified in this study. The first point to highlight is it includes three detailed empirical case studies that uncover what is really going on with the participatory agendas of three localities governed by Mexico's main political parties. The study analyses the relationship between political parties, citizens, and authorities and also the role that each of these actors has taken in the implementation of different participatory schemes. This thesis offers an overview of three localities with very different problems and it shows that irrespective of which political party is in power, citizen participation mechanisms today play an important role in the governmental agenda of many Mexican localities.

The study highlights the diversity of participatory schemes implemented in each of the three case studies analysed. Whether participating in a referendum, plebiscite or in neighbourhood forums, citizens now have a wide variety of options available to participate in those decisions that affect their daily lives. Nevertheless, the extent to which this diversity has been translated into a true empowerment of the public remains doubtful. This shows that authorities have been really thinking about offering alternative

forms of participation, but there have been such problems as the fact that the basic infrastructure or social conditions of each neighbourhood have not been taken into account before implementing each of these schemes.

One key contribution of the thesis is to highlight how the socio-economic and social context influences the implementation of participatory mechanisms. This point is of paramount importance because citizens of different social backgrounds face very different problems and by no means can it be argued that authorities should develop the same participatory schemes for everyone. Whilst the upper classes seem to be more concerned about problems such as pollution or the construction of shopping centres, the lower classes are preoccupied with solving their basic infrastructure problems. Although there might be occasions when upper and lower classes are affected by the same problem, and take part in the same sort of participatory scheme (e.g. a referendum), there will still be differences that local authorities would have to take into account when such schemes take place. More specifically, the issue of class discussed above does not seem to be considered by the participatory theorists. Whilst participatory theorists are concerned about the positive benefits of participatory democracy (e.g. the educative impact), they have ignored the different conditions that prevail in each neighbourhood which means that citizens from different backgrounds do not necessarily react similarly to the implementation of participatory schemes. In Mexico clientelistic relations have developed between politicians and poorer communities seeking solutions to basic infrastructure problems. Participatory democratic theory has not addressed the ways that clientelistic practices may be either used within participatory mechanisms or to bypass them. Clearly, both class and clientelism are aspects that would have to be considered for the establishment of participatory mechanisms in the future.

The research also questions the way the participatory agenda has been implemented in Mexico. While participatory theorists recommend carrying out participatory schemes where citizens take a central role, the three cases presented here show that a top-down implementation process prevails in Tlalpan, Puebla and San Pedro. Despite the apparent intention (on paper) of authorities to share some of their decision-making power with citizens, the examples introduced in this thesis demonstrate that this has not necessarily been the case. The top-down way in which the participatory agenda has been carried out in Mexico contradicts the principles of the participatory democrats and raises important

questions about the role that citizens are expected to take. Moreover, it also brings to the participatory discussion such aspects as authorities' interpretation of the best uses that can be given to participatory schemes. As the cases show, the democratic principles behind these schemes could be manipulated for particular party or political purposes.

There are three avenues for further research identified in this thesis. Firstly, it would be interesting to determine the impact of continuing democratisation or political change on citizen participation initiatives. The more frequently that participatory initiatives are implemented, the more that these schemes could be improved, and as a result, contribute positively to the whole democratic process of Mexican politics. But would this necessarily be the case? Although currently the implementation of participatory schemes has not been really reflected the vision of the participatory democrats, perhaps in the future the way participatory agendas are carried out might genuinely give greater power to citizens. On the other hand, it is also possible that citizens may become increasingly disillusioned by supposedly democratic initiatives that promise much but in practice deliver very little.

Another aspect that would be interesting for the analysis of participatory initiatives in Mexico is to show the participatory realities of other localities. This study has demonstrated that within the same country there are regional differences that play an important role when participatory schemes take place. For instance, studies analysing the participatory agendas of indigenous municipalities would probably provide a very different perspective on the way participatory schemes are implemented in a non-urban environment. It can be argued that the more participatory schemes are analysed the richer the discussion of the Mexican participatory democracy would be.

Finally, it be useful to explore more about the role that civil society and social movements can have in pressing for citizen participation mechanisms to become more participatory. The argument behind this avenue for further research is that civil society and social movements have played a crucial role in the past for the establishment of more transparent practises of government. Nevertheless, the extent to which the civil society or social movements can influence the way local participatory agendas are carried out remains uncertain as they were not very significant in the three cases studied here. Currently, there are a wide range of participatory practises taking place in Mexico

and perhaps civil society and social movements can put pressure on authorities genuinely to share more decision-making power with citizens?

Notes

¹ This under the banner of *El Nuevo Federalismo* (the New Federalism).

² Although the current participatory legislation was approved in 1993, before its approval there were a series of participatory practices that were promoted (see chapter 5).

³ See chapter 4.

⁴ See interview with Zermeño (1999).

⁵ The case of the conference that took place to defend the 'union bridge' discussed in chapter 5 can be mentioned as an example.

⁶ There are also differences we must point out in the sense that each of these municipalities have different budgets. In San Pedro only 30 percent of their resources come from federal sources, and the remaining 70 percent is collected from local forms of taxation. Puebla is highly dependent on state or federal governments to receive economic resources.

⁷ See *La Jornada* 27/12/1999 for examples.

⁸ See chapter 4 for a discussion to a greater detail.

⁹ According to the CEDEMUN (1999) 2.59 percent of the population does not count with electricity, 12.03 percent does not have piped potable water and 8.30 percent does not count with sewage.

¹⁰ See 2000-2003 San Pedro Local Development Plan.

¹¹ See interview with Zermeño (1999).

¹² See chapter 5.

¹³ See chapter 3.

¹⁴ See INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANK www.iadb.org

¹⁵ See chapter 5 for examples.

¹⁶ See interview with Eliseo Moyao (2000) and chapter 3.

¹⁷ See chapter 3 for more details on this *priísta* initiative.

¹⁸ See interview with Eliseo Moyao (2000).

¹⁹ See chapter 3 for examples.

²⁰ See chapter 4.

Appendix 1

Research Framework and Methodology

Introduction

In this appendix we present the research framework and methodology that was used in this thesis. The appendix is divided into six sections, beginning by setting out the research questions that shape the study. The second part briefly examines the role of the implementation process in the analysis of Mexican policy and politics. The next sections explain the use of qualitative methods and of the comparative case study method. The fifth section justifies the selection of Tlalpan, Puebla and San Pedro as case studies. The appendix finishes by outlining the way in which case study findings were presented.

Research questions

The research questions that drive this study emerge from both the discussion of the role of citizen participation in Mexican politics discussed in chapter 1 and the theoretical literature on participatory democracy analysed in chapter 2. It must not be forgotten that – as has already been pointed out in the introduction of this thesis – the literature on participatory democracy is used here normatively. The participatory democratic models are presented as ideal types, as a benchmark against which to measure the participatory programmes of the three case studies analysed.

The overall aim of the thesis is to examine why political parties and authorities have shown such interest in citizen participation and what these initiatives have actually achieved. These overall aims can be broken down into the following research questions.

- What do political parties hope to achieve by introducing participatory mechanisms?
- What are the sources of inspiration and principles underpinning these initiatives? To what extent have they drawn on the principles of participation as set out in the literature or have been influenced by external actors?

- What forms of participation have been introduced? What functions and powers have been given to these mechanisms?
- How significant is social context in shaping the design and use of participatory mechanisms?
- How have these participatory mechanisms been implemented?
- How do local actors – politicians, bureaucrats, citizens – perceive these participatory initiatives?
- How far have citizens been empowered by the participatory mechanisms?

These broad questions are supplemented throughout the thesis by a range of supplementary questions (e.g. barriers and costs of participation, real intentions behind the implementation of these mechanisms). For instance, in trying to discover the motivations behind these participatory initiatives, it is clearly vital to determine whether political parties are genuinely committed to extending citizen participation or whether they are simply paying lip-service to the language of democracy and accountability. However, these core questions will shape the analysis of the case studies and the comparative analysis in the conclusion.

As these research all beg some understanding of the nature of public policy implementation in Mexico, the next section provides a brief account of the top-down implementation model that characterises Mexican government.

The implementation process in the Mexican context

Based on what was already observed by Gonzalez Casanova in chapter 1 – that in Mexican politics what is stated in the constitution (or in any other legislation) is not necessarily related to the way policies are carried out – the implementation process acquires great relevance when analysing the Mexican local political context. Grindle highlighted the distinctive characteristic of the policy implementation process in Mexico. Her research analysed the nature of the relationship between the three levels of the Mexican government: federal, state, and local. She described the Mexican political system as highly centralised:

In Mexico, the administrative apparatus of the national government is central to the process of formulation and implementation of public policy. It also

has a key role in the satisfaction of demands made upon the political system, the management of economic development, and the provision of social welfare benefits to the population. Moreover, the regulatory, welfare, and entrepreneurial activities of the centralised administration have a profound impact on the daily lives of Mexicans; the masses of the population increasingly receive their political experiences from contact with representatives of the national bureaucracy rather than from party officials or local notables (Grindle 1977:1-2).

Thus, public policies are usually conceived, developed and imposed from federal offices based in Mexico City, without taking into account the different conditions (social, economic, or cultural) prevailing in the city, town or village where the policies are to be implemented.¹ Grindle's work is now somewhat dated but, despite efforts to decentralise the political system,² Mexican politics is still very centralised. One structural reason for this situation is the design of each *sexenio*,³ which contributes to the prioritisation of national rather than state or municipal projects. The National Development Plan, presented at the beginning of each presidential administration, sets out the priorities of the new government and it becomes a crucial point of reference for state and municipal governments, as their policies would inevitably be shaped by the policies laid out in this document.

Theoretically speaking, the top-down implementation model assumes that organisations have clear and consistent objectives, a hierarchical control structure, and an optimal allocation of tasks between the relevant sub-units (whether that be internal organisational divisions or other agencies). Grindle's characterisation of the Mexican process of policy implementation as top-down, was influenced by the first generation of implementation studies developed during the 1970s in the US.⁴ These studies attempted to understand the failures experienced after implementing several federal social programmes (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973). Pressman and Wildavsky, in a path breaking book, defined implementation as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and the actions geared to achieving them (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973:15). Some of the first findings reached by the implementation theorists concluded that there were many factors, including bureaucratic distortions, local resistance, inter-governmental conflicts and personal interests that were being ignored when developing social policies, hence causing policy failure (Bardach 1974).⁵ As commented by Marsh and Rhodes, 'in fact, policy-making is not a simple top-down process. It is subject to shortfalls at every stage. Given the conditions required for effective implementation, no

government, not even one with illusions of grandeur, is either omnipotent or omnicompetent' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992:34). In response to these criticisms several alternative approaches to implementation were developed, notably the bottom-up (see Barrett and Fudge 1981) and various integrated (see Sabatier 1986) models. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to debate the relative advantages and disadvantages of these models of implementation. Rather, the purpose of introducing the concept of implementation is to describe the approach to implementation that prevails in Mexico, and which was found to characterise the implementation of participatory initiatives in all three case studies. The obvious question that arises is whether a top-down pattern of implementation is appropriate for instigating participatory democratic practices which, as Benello and Roussopoulos put it, 'cannot be imposed from above, but must be built from the ground up' (1971: 9).

The importance of using qualitative research

A qualitative approach was used to address the questions identified earlier in this chapter. Because we aimed to learn more about a series of aspects that involved the views of politicians, bureaucrats, community leaders and the general public, we thought that the only way to gather all these perspectives was through interacting with them. As observed by Bryman: 'the most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied...the strategy of taking the subject's perspective is often expressed in terms of seeing through the eyes of the people you are studying' (Bryman 1988:61). A qualitative type of research allowed us to probe further, in depth, and to build trust with the respondents, an aspect that is very important when analysing Mexican politics, as they are characterised by high levels of mistrust. As commented by Silverman, 'the methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief, basically that they can provide a "deeper" understanding of the social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data' (Silverman 2001:32).

Data sources play a crucial role when a qualitative type of research using case studies is carried out. The utilisation of the case study method requires the extraction of information from several sources (Yin 1994:13). Documents constitute the first source of information used throughout this research project: books, newspapers, official documents, letters, conference papers, and journals are all widely used. Of course, as

Yin points out, their usefulness is not necessarily based on their accuracy or lack of bias. In fact, documents must be used carefully and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place (Yin 1994:81). For case studies, Yin recommends that documents should be used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin Ibid).

The second source of information came from 68 semi-structured interviews⁶ carried out with politicians, local authorities, government officials, academics, neighbourhood leaders, individuals taking part in meetings, and members of the general public. Semi-structured interviewing was used, whereby questions are specified, but the interviewer is free to probe beyond the answer. This type of interview allows people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised structured type of interview permits, but still provides a greater structure of comparability over that of the focused interview. The potential disadvantage of semi-structured interviewing is that it might be prejudicial to the aims of standardisation and comparability (May 1997:111). Whilst a structured interview –where the same questions are repeated for each interviewee– is appropriate for surveys, it does not allow the interviewee to probe deeper and elicit a fuller, more detailed account (see Frey 1994).

Despite its advantages, one of the main risks when conducting semi-structured interviewing is that respondents could bias their answers depending on whether they are defending particular interests.⁷ In countries like Mexico, there is also the problem of convincing people that their answers would not compromise their economic, political, or social situation. It was difficult to get people to express what they really thought about their local authorities and also about the different participatory schemes implemented in their respective municipalities.

In order to facilitate people's understanding, each of the interviewees was provided with a basic background of the aims of the research. Three sets of questionnaires were designed for each group of respondents: politicians, neighbourhood leaders and citizens attending community meetings. The aim of interviewing members from each of the previously mentioned groups was to compare the perspectives that each of them had regarding the implementation and functioning of citizen participation mechanisms. Overall it proved to be a useful exercise, especially because opposing perspectives were

obtained from each group depending on their perception of the participation mechanisms under analysis. Participatory initiatives varied considerably from region to region, from tightly controlled forms of local involvement (as in Puebla) to more liberal participatory activities (Tlalpan). The quotes from interviews included in the text were firstly translated and later transcribed by the author. The information collected from semi-structured interviewing proved to be the most revealing source of information, requiring previous ideas about the operation of participatory mechanisms to be re-thought.

In the current era of fibre communications, the third source of information came from the internet. Different websites constituted a valuable source of information and also functioned as a sort of 'facilitator,' especially to get hold of distant information from the three localities. The internet also proved to be an efficient tool to gather information from international organisations and to follow news from local newspapers. Finally, it was also used to contact some interviewees and to organise interviews that were carried out during the fieldwork.

Thus, for our research purposes, a qualitative type of methodology offered more practical advantages than a quantitative one. For instance, carrying out a survey implies collecting data from a large number of people, as observed by May, 'nearly all surveys are characterised by the collection of data from large, or even very large, numbers of people' (May 1997:82). Ferber's definition of a survey establishes that a survey is: 'a method of gathering information from a number of individuals, a "sample," in order to learn something about the larger population from which the sample is drawn' (Ferber 1980:3). Depending upon its aims, the procedures it adopts and the number of people who are interviewed, generalisation can then take place from the sample of people interviewed to the population as a whole (May 1997:85). According to May, data collection in surveys is assembled mainly through three types of questionnaires:

- Mail of self-completion
- Telephone survey
- Face to face interview

Although we could argue that the mail or self-completion questionnaire offers a relatively cheap option to collect information, a major problem would have been who to

send the questionnaires to, especially bearing in mind such issues as levels of education and the mistrust which most Mexicans feel towards these types of methodological instruments. A telephone survey could have also been used, however, a great obstacle was that in some of the poorest neighbourhoods where our research was carried out, residents did not have access to a telephone. Finally, face to face interviews could have also been carried out, nevertheless when information is collected through this tool it tends to be too general and without the depth required to answering our research questions. Moreover, applying a survey would have resulted time-consuming and perhaps expensive when our resources and time were limited. The most important reason why we chose for the utilised qualitative methods is that a quantitative framework only provides superficial information when we wanted detailed knowledge about the participatory agenda carried out in the three localities.

Weaknesses of the qualitative method

Despite the advantages above presented, there are a series of problems that a researcher using a qualitative methodology faces. The first problem concerns the interpretation of the data collected. As qualitative data is based on descriptive narratives, the critics of the approach question the categorisation of the events they describe. Hammersley calls this the problem of reliability, which basically refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley 1992:67). Similarly, Bryman argues that readers cannot readily decide for themselves whether researchers have genuinely put themselves in a strategic position to enter the world-view of their subjects, whether they have adequately understood that world-view, and whether their interpretations of actions and events are congruent with the subjects' understandings (Bryman 1988:77). Moreover, Silverman establishes that when people's activities are audio or video recorded and transcribed, the reliability of the interpretation of transcripts may be gravely weakened by a failure to note apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses, overlaps or body movements (Silverman 2001:33). Mehan (1978) and Hester (1985) express similar concerns regarding this issue, however Buchanan, Boddy and MacCalman (1988) propose a solution to the problem of interpretation by using what they define as respondent validation. Due to time limitations in our research we could not implement respondent validation, which is basically to submit a copy of the researchers' findings to the subjects under research.⁸ To address this problem, a copy of

the researcher's findings will be donated to the local library of each of the three local authorities under analysis.

A second problem is anecdotalism, which refers to the way research reports sometimes refer to a few informants, telling examples of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data (Silverman 1989). According to Bryman:

There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews...are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed (Bryman 1988:77).

A related criticism deals with the issue of validity, or what Silverman defines as another word for truth (Silverman 2001). Sometimes one doubts the validity of an explanation because the researcher has clearly made no attempt to deal with contrary cases (Silverman 2001:34). The critics believe that when qualitative researchers get immersed in their fieldwork, they could misinterpret the data under consideration. To avoid this problem, the researcher always tried to analyse with the same criteria the different points of view expressed during the fieldwork; so that the views of authorities and citizens were given the same importance. Also, the policies of the three political parties under scrutiny were analysed without favouring a particular ideology.

Finally, the aspect that seems to cause most distress for critics of qualitative methods is the problem of generalisation. This problem is mainly linked to the use of case studies, –like this thesis–. The accusation is that it is impossible to generalise from a single case study, or even from a series of case studies (Ball 1981 and Burgess 1983). This drawback of the qualitative method will be discussed later in this chapter.

Despite these disadvantages, it was felt that a qualitative approach was the best option for this research because it proved to generate much richer and detailed data on the nature of participatory schemes that could be obtained through survey methods.

The Comparative Case Study Method

Why the case study method?

Given the inevitable scarcity of time, energy, and financial resources, the intensive comparative analysis of a few cases may be more promising than a more superficial statistical analysis of many cases (Lijphart 1971:685). The case study method seeks to evaluate explanatory links in social situations that are too complex for survey or for experimental techniques (Yin 1994:15). At the simplest level, case studies provide descriptive accounts of one or more cases (Mcgoverg 1982). When used in an intellectually rigorous manner to achieve experimental isolation of selected social factors, they offer the strengths of experimental research within natural settings (Hakim 1987:61).⁹ The three cases presented in this dissertation are Puebla, located in the state of the same name; Tlalpan, situated in Mexico City; and San Pedro, positioned in the northern state of Nuevo León. Each of the cases is analysed as an independent empirical entity, where the perceptions of those individuals implementing and taking part in the participatory initiatives provide the main source of information. The core aim of this interaction with local actors is to collect and compare the views of official authorities and ordinary citizens, regarding the implementation of citizen participation mechanisms. For instance, in Puebla, authorities and citizens had quite different perspectives regarding citizen participation mechanisms. The authorities saw these bodies as a way to avoid corruption and to promote democratic values; by contrast, many citizens perceived these participatory bodies as closely linked to the party in power and as a tool of political control (see chapter 6).

Based on previous research, notably Almond and Verba (1980) and the detailed analysis of Mexican federal and local hierarchies performed by Grindle (1977), we believed that the utilisation of case studies was crucial the most appropriate method to answer the questions addressed in this project. As stated by Schramm, the essence of a case study, the central tendency amongst all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm 1971). Furthermore, the case study method is viewed by Ragin (1992) as a methodological tool providing a link between theoretical and empirical concerns.

Difficulties with case study research

An important issue to consider when carrying out a case study research concerns the way in which the data is presented. According to Hakim, 'a practical problem is that the analysis and presentation of case study data requires more skills than reports based on a single type of evidence. Two common errors are to present an indigestible mass of detailed evidence in the report, or to report only the researcher's conclusions' (Hakim 1987:74). To avoid this problem, in this study we will present –in chapter 6– a comparison of the three cases that we analysed. Identifying key themes and bullet-pointing the main findings that we identified in this research project. The chapter is organised around the research questions presented in the first part of this chapter.

Case study research is also criticised for its lack of rigour. According to Yin, 'too many times the case study investigator has been sloppy and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions' (Yin 1994:9). Of course, bias is a common problem that has been identified when other research strategies have been carried out. For instance, Rosenthal (1966) highlights how bias can enter when conducting experiments, Sudman and Bradburn (1982) identify bias in the use of survey questionnaires, and there is also bias in historical research (Gottshalk 1968). In our research, we always attempted to not favour a particular position.¹⁰

Another difficulty with case study framework is the limited scope for generalisation provided by such research. According to Yin, a frequent question asked when carrying out case study based research is how is it possible to generalise from a single case study? Yin's response is that similarly to when experiments take place, case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. So the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation) (Yin 1994:10). That said, there have been some attempts to generalise by adding the evidence of several case studies to establish a certain degree of generalisation as evidence is accumulated (Kennedy 1976). However, it is important to state clearly that from the data gathered in our study it would be difficult to generalise and establish that the same patterns occur in each of the remaining 2,424 localities that we did not study. Due to the various regional disparities in Mexico,

we believe that any attempt to generalise from the information here collected would be a mistake. What we did though, was identify policy trends, situations (i.e. the way politicians and citizens behaved), and then compare them between each of the selected cases, thus we can argue that we attempted to generalise but only between the cases studied in our research.

A final problem with case studies concerns their length. According to Yin, in the past (see Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg 1991) some case studies result in massive, unreadable documents. He suggests that this criticism emerges from a confusion between the case study method and methods such as ethnography or participant observation.

Ethnographies usually require long periods of time in the 'field' and emphasise detailed, observational evidence. Participant-observation may not require the same length of time but still assumes a hefty investment of field efforts. In contrast, case studies are a form of inquiry that does not depend solely on ethnographic or participant-observer data. One could even do a valid and high-quality case study without leaving the library and the telephone, depending upon the topic being studied (Yin 1994:11).

To avoid this problem, in our research we carefully selected the topics that we believed were more important for the aims of these research and tried to be as direct as possible when describing each case. We must also not forget that a doctoral thesis has a word limit, which must constrain the writing up of the thesis.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the case study method was deemed the most adequate tool for this research, particularly as some of the main problems could be anticipated in the research design.

The comparative method

Normal behaviour and norms cannot be studied without acknowledging deviations from the normal. Actually, no social phenomenon can be isolated and studied without comparing it to other social phenomena...trying to understand and explain variation is a process which cannot be accomplished without previous reflections on similarities and dissimilarities underlying variation (Oyen 1990:4).

Comparing case studies is a heuristic device stimulating hypotheses in relation to theoretical concerns, rather than as a means of evaluating precise similarities and differences, or 'proofs' (Lijphart 1975:159-160). The case study method can and should be closely connected with the comparative method, certain types of case studies can

even be considered implicit parts of the comparative method (Lijphart 1971:691). The comparative method is a general term denoting the procedures and differences displayed by phenomena (or class phenomenon), based on the researcher's criteria, for comparing or classifying causal factors in the emergence and development of such phenomena and patterns of interrelation both within and between such phenomena or classes (Dictionary of Social Sciences 1964). Making comparisons is crucial for the aims of this research, especially for the future implementation of participatory mechanisms in Mexico.

Theory provides both a way of organising and a way of interpreting data. Data or evidence then allows us to test hypotheses generated from theory, but only if we have developed robust concepts; that is, concepts which can be utilised across time and space. As a result of this testing, concepts may be adapted, hypotheses reformulated and perhaps theories recast. The point here is that comparative analysis plays a key role in these processes (Mackie and Marsh 1995:176-177).

This study is based on making comparisons between the ways in which participatory initiatives have been designed and implemented under different party administrations (the municipality of Puebla is governed by the PRI, San Pedro is governed by the PAN, and Tlalpan is governed by the PRD). The research also involves issues of how the different party administrations understood participatory democracy and designed these initiatives to suit their respective understandings and interests. The study identifies two levels of analysis: firstly what we call the 'official level,' which is composed of local authorities and all those functionaries involved in one way or another with the implementation of the participatory initiatives analysed. Secondly, the 'citizenry-level' which is composed of community leaders and those citizens taking part in these community initiatives. The aim of analysing both levels was to obtain the fullest picture of these local participatory initiatives, drawing on a range of perspectives.

When methodologists talk about the comparative method, they tend not to distinguish between cross-national and intra-national comparisons, (see Mackie and Marsh 1995 and Yin 1994) and most debates centre on the utilisation of cross-national comparisons rather than in comparisons within countries. Yet, Holt and Turner observe that, 'in principle there is no difference between comparative cross-cultural research and research conducted within a single society. For example, the scholar studying political parties in ten different states in the US will encounter dialect differences that will have to be considered during the research' (Holt and Turner 1970:6). Although this research

was carried out in one country, the three cases present dialect and cultural differences that had to be considered when analysing the data.¹¹ An example is the way in which Nuevo Leon's proximity to the US influences state or local authorities to look for policy models implemented in Texas rather than those carried out in other parts of Mexico. The mayor (1997-2000) of San Pedro, Nuevo Leon, Teresa García de Madero, commented that the idea for installing neighbourhood participation units was brought back by the former mayor, Mauricio Fernández (1988-1991) in 1988 after visiting Dallas, Texas. By contrast, authorities in Mexico City tend to find more affinity with projects implemented in Latin American countries than those implemented in the US. For example, Tlalpan's authorities drew lessons from citizen participation programmes implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil or in Montevideo, Uruguay (see Zremeño 1999). Thus, although this research takes place within the same borders, there are differences (i.e. political, cultural, social) that make it similar to a cross-national study. As Holt and Turner have observed, 'the differences –between intra-national and cross national-comparisons– lie, rather, in the magnitude of certain problems that have to be faced' (Holt and Turner 1970:6).

The utilisation of the comparative method is crucial for the aims of this research: 'if political scientists are to generate a body of theory and concentrate their efforts on making the theory more general and valid, comparative cross-cultural research is absolutely essential' (Holt and Turner 1970:5). Furthermore, comparative research has the potential to check against narrow thinking by its production of studies in alternative cultures and societies. Ragin also argues that the comparative method is a case based method, inherently unsuited to statistically based variable analysis (Ragin 1981:17).

Weaknesses of the Comparative Method

The principal problems facing the comparative method can be succinctly stated as: many variables, small number of cases (Lijphart 1971:685). According to the critics of the comparative method, one of the key constraints when carrying out comparative research is bias. In the view of Mackie and Marsh, 'comparativists, like other social scientists, need to appreciate that reality is, in an important sense, socially constructed' (Mackie and Marsh 1995:187). In the cases analysed, this proved to be a challenge for the researcher, as although the research covered cases within the same country, the customs and attitudes of public servants and the public did vary greatly between

regions. For instance, Daland points out that some aspects of politics can vary more within nations than between them (Daland 1969:17). Moreover, some methodologists argue that in order to understand a culture, we have to know the rules which are employed in that culture (see Winch 1990). For instance, when carrying out the research, one of the first elements of confusion was to find the equivalents, within each municipality, of the department in charge of promoting citizen participation at the neighbourhood level. While in Puebla the department in charge of promoting citizen participation is a directorate, in San Pedro, it is a secretariat; both bodies perform very similar activities, but their formal positions in their respective organisations are different.

Language differences, even if researchers have a proficient understanding of a language, require a cultural understanding of words to allow for the equivalence of meaning. This becomes particularly important when dealing with dialects where the meanings of words vary, or entirely different words may be employed in referring to the same phenomena (Mackie and Marsh 1995:191). As commented by Foddy, 'the meanings of ordinary words are not necessarily shared even by those socialised within a single cultural framework' (Foddy 1993:39). In the cases analysed, language differences did not prevent the researcher from understanding what authorities or citizens said; but what was difficult was to determine the meaning each of the interviewees gave to such key concepts as democracy or citizen participation. For example, in the municipality of Puebla, for some members of the local bureaucratic structure the meaning of democracy was very narrow, involving no more than free elections, so any form of participation beyond election processes was perceived as a bonus for the population.

These are further specific tactics that need to be addressed when making comparisons in Mexico because, 'there are differences among regions in Mexico in terms of economic development, land-tenure patterns, occupational structure, ethnicity, religiosity, political participation, relationships with the federal government, and other dimensions' (Craig and Cornelius 1980:337). There is also some evidence of important intra-regional variations in patterns of community participation, interest-group formation, and competitiveness of politics, associated primarily with intra-regional differences in resource base, economic development, and government contact (Almond and Verba 1980:337). These differences were evident while carrying out the fieldwork, as will be

discussed in each case study, where the types of community demands presented to local authorities varied depending on certain social factors. Generally speaking, the lower income groups in the population give priority to basic infrastructure services such as piped potable water or sewage, whereas the middle and upper communities are more concerned about the quality of public services.

The main problems with comparative studies involve issues of equivalence, appropriateness and language (Smelser 1976). Nevertheless, if the researcher is aware of these potential problems, then the comparative method remains a useful tool to carry out case oriented research.

Why Tlalpan, Puebla, and San Pedro?

The selection process

Due to time and resource limitations, it was of paramount importance to select the most appropriate cases that met our research expectations. Stake states that the first criterion in selecting a case study should be to maximise what we can learn. If possible, we also need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and with actors (the people studied) willing to comment on certain draft materials (Stake 1995:4).

There were several facts that influenced the choice of Tlalpan, Puebla and San Pedro. As this study was intended to analyse the way in which the three main political parties of Mexico (PRI, PAN and PRD) implement participatory initiatives at the local level it followed these steps. Firstly, a list was drawn up of those municipalities ruled by the PRI, the PAN and the PRD, and from this initial list, those municipalities where no citizen participation mechanisms existed were eliminated. From the remainder those municipalities were selected where the researcher had a contact, a facilitator that could make the research easier, as well as having access to local officials. Contacts play a crucial role when trying to analyse Mexican politics, as otherwise politicians can literally 'close the door' to researchers trying to analyse any political phenomenon. However, it must be stated clearly that contacts were only used to facilitate the initial access to local officials and some community leaders. This way of proceeding produced a 'snowball' effect as through these initial contacts the researcher started interacting

with more people (who implemented or participated in the participatory mechanisms under analysis) from whom vital information was obtained.

It is widely agreed that the victory of the opposition in the 1997 Governor election of Mexico City represented a crucial step in Mexico's democratic transition. Our interest in this unique circumstance was increased when the recently elected government – the leftwing PRD – announced a reform of the participatory agenda of the city. With the creation of the 1998 Citizen Participation Legislation, any of the 16 localities of the city would have been an interesting place to carry out a study on the new participatory legislation and its implementation process. However, Tlalpan was chosen because it possesses certain characteristics that seemed interesting for the purposes of this study, namely the way in which rich and poor areas of the city have been grouped together to implement participatory mechanisms. A core aspect that influenced our research interest in Tlalpan was to determine whether the PRD was – as it claimed to be – implementing a new style of government through the implementation of citizen participation mechanisms; and to determine the role which citizens played in these schemes. Finally, the researcher also had several contacts, who facilitated access to local officials and community leaders.

Three main factors made Puebla an attractive case. Firstly, the capital of the state is considered a *priísta* bastion, yet in the 1996 local election the PRI was defeated by the PAN. Secondly, the particular way in which the PAN attempted to implement an alternative participatory agenda to the traditional *clientelistic* structure offered an interesting case. Thirdly, Manuel Bartlett's (1993-1999 PRI Governor of Puebla) COPLADEMUN initiative which sought to diminish the influence of the PAN and to recover the supremacy of the PRI in the capital was also an interesting development. Once the PRI recovered the capital in the 1999 local election, Puebla's government returned to carry out the 'traditional' *clientelistic* mechanisms which were implemented before the 1996 election of the PAN. This case shows the implications of the co-existence of a PRI state government with a participatory agenda, and a PAN local administration with its own participatory schemes; thus it seemed likely to bring out the conflicts faced when different participatory agendas are carried out. Thus Puebla offered an interesting example of the evolution of the participatory agenda from a PRI administration to a PAN administration and then back again to a PRI administration.

However, the fieldwork in this locality encountered a series of obstacles that will be commented upon later in this chapter.

San Pedro, an affluent municipality located in the north of Mexico represented a good opportunity to analyse the way participatory mechanisms have been implemented under the dominance of one single party – the PAN – in power for more than 10 years. In theory, this locality is one of the most efficient, modern, and democratic localities of Mexico, so it offered an opportunity to investigate a participatory agenda in a locality that has already covered its basic infrastructure needs and where initiatives such as referenda have been taking place for more than 8 years.

The researcher was aware of the importance of analysing each case as an individual entity: ‘case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case’ (Stake 1995:4). It is true that a greater number of cases might have provided a broader vision of the participatory agenda implemented at the local level in Mexico, but the price would inevitably have been a loss of depth and detail. As Hakim comments, ‘once the number of cases increases to substantial figures, the logic of statistical inference begins to complement, and even replace, the logic of analytical inference from a small number of carefully selected cases’ (Hakim 1987:64).¹² We believe that the analysis of the three selected cases offers a credible account of the dynamics of the participatory mechanisms of democracy in each locality, but also demonstrates the diversity of experiences of participatory democracy in Mexico.

Difficulties in carrying out the research

Inevitably, the fieldwork encountered several obstacles. For instance, in Puebla, the main problem was the lack of access to any kind of community meeting, so we had to base our analysis of these gatherings on secondhand data provided by actors who attended previous sessions. The main reason for this problem was that the schemes promoted by the PAN are no longer being implemented and the PRI current participatory agenda does not include frequent community meetings. There was an obvious risk of collecting biased versions regarding the way these participatory mechanisms operated, however, by listening to different perspectives the researcher

tried to interpret these views and maintain a neutral position. Despite this drawback the Puebla case study was retained because it provides an interesting account of the way in which local policies evolve when there is a change of administration, particularly as it was one of the most important bastions of the PRI before the PAN came to power between 1996-1999.

Another common difficulty faced was the restricted access to information, especially when inquiring about issues related to financial matters. For instance, in Puebla, despite repeated promises to be given an account of some COPLADEMUN budgets, these never materialised. Also, in San Pedro, the mayor promised a fuller explanation of a scheme where citizens would decide about a budget, but, on the day of the interview, he cancelled the appointment (it was learned later that due to legal restrictions the scheme had to be cancelled).

A third problem was that some potential interviewees 'stood up' the researcher. Several appointments had to be re-scheduled or cancelled, which in large cities such as Mexico City is quite normal, but highly disruptive for the research schedule.

Thus the collection of information is rarely a smooth process and it is important to recognise any consequent weaknesses in the data or analytical framework. There are a series of obstacles that will inevitably be faced and which are part of a researcher's learning process. Nevertheless, the fieldwork proved to be a fascinating experience that provided a series of positive experiences for the researcher, including learning more about carrying out semi-structured interviewing and the realities of local politics).

Presenting the Case Study Findings

The cases are presented individually in three chapters. In each case study, a brief description of the prevailing circumstances – economic, political, and social – is presented, followed by an analysis of the legal structures that underpin the participatory agenda. There are also sections dedicated to analysing the types of meetings taking place in each locality, as well as highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each participatory initiative. In all of these sections the views of those interacting at the two levels of analysis this study covers are introduced, the aim of comparing these perspectives is to avoid having 'one-sided' case studies. A case study that fails to

account for different perspective would rightly raise a critical reader's suspicions. The investigator may not have collected all the relevant evidence and may have attended only to the evidence supporting a single point of view. Even if the investigator was not purposefully biased, different descriptive interpretations were not entertained, thereby rendering a one-sided case (Yin 1994:149). In chapter 6 we evaluate the research questions this research project aims to tackle. The theoretical ideas about participatory democracy introduced in chapter 2 are compared to the evidence collected from the case studies and the findings are analysed in the wider context of Mexican politics as described in chapter 1.

Notes

¹ See Ornelas (1998).

² For discussion of decentralisation see Assad and Ziccardi (1988).

³ Is the name given to each presidential term in Mexico (it lasts for six years).

⁴ For general reviews see Yin (1980), Barrett and Fudge (1981), Alexander (1982), and Sabatier and Mazmanian (1983).

⁵ See Murphy (1973).

⁶ All interviews were recorded and are listed in Appendix 2.

⁷ See May (1997).

⁸ See Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman (1988) for greater details.

⁹ For more advantages of the case study method see (Yin 1994, Ragin and Becker 1992, and Stake 1994).

¹⁰ For more discussions regarding this matter see Dalton (1964) and Lacey (1976).

¹¹ This diversity matches with May's idea regarding the convenience of executing cross-national comparisons if within the society or country under research there is sufficient diversity between regions (May 1997:186).

¹² See Mitchell (1983) and Glasser and Strauss (1967).

Appendix 2

List of Interviews

- 18.05.1999 Teresa García de Madero 1997-2000 Mayor of San Pedro**
- 29.05.1999 Sergio Zermeño 1997-2000 Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Tlalpan Mayor Advisor**
- 10.04.2000 Eliseo Moyao 1997-2000 Tlalpan Citizen Participation Director**
- 14.04.2000 Martín Flores Rodríguez Tlalpan Neighbourhood Coordinator**
- 24.04.2000 Alejandro Pérez Tlalpan Neighborhood Coordinator**
- 25.04.2000 Jaime Alvarado Tlalpan Neighborhood Coordinator**
- 26.04.2000 Jaime Chavez Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 27.04.2000 Juan Mújica Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 27.04.2000 Gérman Gúzman Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 27.04.2000 Judith Reyes Tlalpan Neighborhood Coordinator Assistant**
- 2.05.2000 Irma Zuchitl Dávila Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 3.05.2000 Julieta Informal Community Leader Tlalpan**
- 8.05.2000 Alicia García Tlalpan Neighborhood Coordinator**
- 9.05.2000 Pedro López Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 12.05.2000 Maurilio Vázquez Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 16.05.2000 Samuel Moreno Neighbourhood Committee Leader Tlalpan**
- 18.05.2000 Socorro Jiménez Informal Community Leader Tlalpan**
- 19.05.2000 Agustín López García Citizen Participation *Delegado***
- 23.06.2000 Alejandro Armenta Mier Puebla 1999-2002 Citizen Participation Director**
- 23.06.2000 Antonio Medina Ramírez Puebla Citizen Participation *Delegado***

17.07.2000 Eduardo Váldez Puebla Citizen Participation *Delegado*

18.07.2000 Ixel Moreno Puebla Citizen Participation Promoter

18.07.2000 Josefina Andrade Puebla Neighbourhood Committee Leader

19.07.2000 Antonio Caso Puebla Citizen Participation *Delegado*

19.07.2000 Raul Méndez Puebla President of Street Committee

20.07.2000 Alvaro Mendoza Puebla Neighbourhood Committee Leader

21.07.2000 Rafael Ramírez Puebla Neighbourhood Committee Leader

29.08.2000 Guadalupe Gómez San Pedro Fuentes del Valle neighbourhood Board Secretary

12.09.2000 Gerardo Garza Sada San Pedro 2000-2003 Mayor

27.03.2001 Jorge Zubieta y Landa San Pedro 2000-2003 Citizen Participation Minister

28.03.2001 Arnulfo Briones *Juez Auxiliar* San Pedro

28.03.2001 Isaías Ramírez San Pedro Neighbourhood Board Leader

29.03.2001 Carmen Bremer San Pedro *Juez Auxiliar* Coordinator

29.03.2001 Leticia Vargas *Juez Auxiliar* San Pedro

29.03.2001 Marisela Díaz Ibarra *Juez Auxiliar* San Pedro

2.04.2001 Juan Manuel Gaytán *Juez Auxiliar* San Pedro

4.04.2001 Juan Ignacio Duran San Pedro Neighbourhood Committee Advisor

05.04.2001 Patricia Lozano González San Pedro Neighbourhood Committee Coordinator

6.04.2001 Erika Treviño San Pedro Citizen Participation Assistant

6.04.2001 Rebeca Clouthier San Pedro 1991-1994 Citizen Participation Director

27.04.2001 Carlos Albicker Puebla 1996-1999 Community Promotion Director

30.04.2001 Felipe López Puebla Citizen Participation Promoter

30.04.2001 Rafael Ramírez Soto Puebla Citizen Participation Promoter

1.05.2001 Pablo Rodríguez Regordosa Puebla 1996-1999 Community Promotion Sub-director

2.05.2001 Ana Luisa Espinoza Puebla Citizen Participation Promoter

5.11.2001 Alfonso García Citizen

5.11.2001 Gustavo Carrizales Citizen

7.11.2001 Nallely Estrada Citizen

8.11.2001 Edith Cruz López Citizen

8.11.2001 Fabiola Jiménez Citizen

9.11.2001 Aramis Aguilar Citizen

10.11.2001 Cesar Octavio Ortega Citizen

13.11.2001 Adalberto Reyes Citizen

14.11.2001 Adrian Martínez Citizen

15.11.2001 Elena Manzo Citizen

20.11.2001 Carlos Toma Ortiz Citizen

20.11.2001 Carolina Davison Citizen

20.11.2001 Adrian Aguilar Citizen

21.11.2001 Jaime Gómez Citizen

21.11.2001 José Guadalupe Reyes Citizen

22.11.2001 Andrés Espirido Citizen

22.11.2001 Patricia Portillo Citizen

23.11.2001 María Teresa Alvarado Citizen

23.11.2001 Felipe Luna Citizen

26.11.2001 Ciro Fuentes Citizen

26.11.2001 Antuan Kuri Citizen

26.11.2001 Rosalia Lira Citizen

27.11.2001 Roberto García Citizen

Appendix 3

Questionnaires

Questionnaire applied to local government officials

- 1) Which are some of the factors that have contributed to the increase in the establishment of such participatory initiatives as neighbourhood forums or others in Mexico?
- 2) Who wins with the implementation of participatory mechanisms?
- 3) Are there any losers when participatory initiatives are implemented?
- 4) Which role do you think different organisations (i.e. NGOs), besides local authorities, have had in the promotion of these mechanisms?
- 5) Which is the role of International Organisations (i.e. World Bank) in order to promote these mechanisms?
- 6) Do you think that the promotion of these mechanisms has been recently growing as a response to the economic crisis affecting our country?
- 7) Do you think that this 'empowerment policy' which has been recently promoted has been established as a response to the demands of ethnic minority groups and the poor?
- 8) In the case of your municipality, where do these initiatives come from (i.e. the national development plan or plans coming from within the party's structure)?
- 9) What is your opinion about the benefits the community has obtained after participating within these structures?
- 10) Do you think the community is satisfied with the outcomes received after participating in these forums?
- 11) How have these policies contributed for the democratic development of your municipality?
- 12) Do you think that authorities gain the legitimacy and the credibility of the public after implementing these mechanisms?
- 13) Does the community have a direct impact on the outcomes of the topics dealt at these forums?
- 14) Which is the role that political parties have had for the implementation of such mechanisms?
- 15) From your own perspective, which are some of the major obstacles that these type of organisations have faced?
- 16) Do you think these forums could be used as political platforms by the members of certain political party (ies)?
- 17) Do you think the number of this type of participatory institutions is going to increase in the near future?
- 18) Would your administration continue promoting this type of initiatives?

Questionnaire applied to neighbourhood group leaders

- 1) How and when did your organisation come to exist as such?
- 2) What are the aims of your organisation?

- 3) Do you count with any kind of moral or financial support from official authorities?
- 4) If you do not count from any 'official support' how do you finance your organisation?
- 5) Have there been any NGOs involved in the formation of your organisation?
- 6) Do you think the decisions you take within your organisation have an impact in the outcomes of the public policies implemented in your municipality?
- 7) Have you had any difficulties with such local leaders as caciques for the operations of your organisation?
- 8) Do you think your organisation contributes for the development of democracy in your municipality?
- 9) Has your organisation ever supported a political party?
- 10) Do you think authorities take into account your decisions for the implementation of local projects?
- 11) Do you think this type of organisations promote democracy and democratic values?
- 12) Have these participation structures impacted your daily activities?
- 13) How is your relationship with official authorities?
- 14) How many members does your organisation have?
- 15) Which are the expectations of the members of your organisation (when attending the meetings)?
- 16) Which have been some of the major achievements of your organisation?

Questionnaire applied to the general public

1. What do you expect to receive after participating in this forum?
2. Is someone forcing you to attend these meetings?
3. Do you think the meetings are a good option to deal with the problems faced by your community?
4. Do you think your local authorities are going to listen to your views before implementing policies that could affect your area of residence?
5. When you attend the meetings, do you previously know the issues that are going to be dealt in it?
6. Do you understand what the majority of the issues dealt in the meetings are about?
7. Do you think that all the members who participate in the meetings have the same opportunity to express their views?
8. Do a few people dominate the discussions?
9. Do you think that democratic values are promoted through this type of neighbourhood meetings?
10. What do you think about the structure of the meeting?
11. Do you think the outcomes of the meetings have been agreed before between group leaders and politicians?
12. Do you feel that your views have a direct impact on the outcomes of the policies to be implemented?
13. Do you think that the objectives of the consultation are generally reached?
14. Do you think your participation in these meetings has been for political purposes? (i.e. party purposes)
15. Do you think the frequency of the meetings is the adequate?
16. Do you think the time at which the meetings are held is a convenient one for the majority of the group?
17. Do you find the consultation process time-consuming and tedious?
18. Do you think these forums promote democracy and democratic values?

19. Have these forums had a direct impact on your daily life?
20. Do you think these forums represent the best way of involving the community in decision- making processes?

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La Jornada 21/2/1998.

La Jornada 21/2/1998.

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La Jornada 6/3/1998.

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La Jornada 21/3/1998.

La Jornada 21/3/1998.

La Jornada 23/3/1998.

La Jornada 17/4/1998.

La Jornada 3/5/1998.

La Jornada 23/5/1998.

La Jornada 23/5/1998.

La Jornada 13/6/1998.

La Jornada 10/7/1998.

La Jornada 14/7/1998.

La Jornada 26/07/1998.

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