CREATIVITY BY MEANS OF SCARCITY
- A Comparative Study of Agenda 21 and the Mobilisation of Participation in two Swedish Municipalities

by

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try walking in my shoes
try walking in my shoes

you’ll stumble in my footsteps
keep the same appointments I kept

if you try walking in my shoes
if you try walking in my shoes

/Martin Gore

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the participatory dimension of the local Agenda 21-work in the two municipalities of Lund and Sjöbo in southern Sweden. It tries to unravel the methods used and the problems met in the processes of the two municipalities trying to mobilise NGOs, ordinary citizens and the business and industry in the Agenda 21-work. Another aim is to assess and analyse the success of the two municipalities when it comes to making their communities take part in the processes of formulating the local Agenda 21-documents. An overall assessment of the success of the two municipalities in mobilising their communities is also made. Systems thinking is used to grasp the system studied. Agenda 21 puts a strong emphasis on the role of local authorities and the engagement of NGOs, business and industry and ordinary citizens. Sustainable development is a contestable concept, usually divided up in a social, an economic and an ecological dimension. The social dimension consists among other things of a requirement for democracy. The representative democratic view sees democracy as a competition between political elites, which fight for the votes of the people. In the participatory democratic view much more emphasis is put on the active role of the community and its citizens. The participatory democracy seems to be more suited for dealing with environmental problems. In the Agenda 21 a green participatory democracy is put forward. As for methods used to mobilise the community, Lund’s affluent Agenda 21-group has displayed a broad spectrum, while Sjöbo has focused most of its strength on one yearly manifestation. The major problems met by Lund’s Agenda 21-group are the absence of national support and citizen engagement, while Sjöbo has experienced scarce financial and personnel resources and a harsh political climate. The process of formulating a local Agenda 21-document is assessed by the success of the two municipalities in mobilising the community in three different dimensions of participation. An overall assessment of the success of mobilising the community in the local Agenda 21-process shows that Sjöbo has been more successful than Lund. Thus, resources and political climate are not always the limiting factors in mobilising the community. Instead, scarcity can give strong incentives for other factors such as creativity, inventiveness and engagement to flourish.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Prologue
Stepping into a new century, the human society faces one challenge greater than all others. Since industrialisation, and above all during the last decades, it has been brought to our attention that the current way of life of the people on earth cannot be reconciled with a continuously sound nature and a flourishing society. Realising this, humanity has tried, during the last 10-15 years, to embark on a road leading towards a more sustainable future. One of the main events of this pursuit has been the UNCED (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The most relevant result of the conference came to be named Agenda 21. Leading us into the 21st century, this vast document sketches the changes necessary for humanity to be able to continue its life on earth.

Taking a holistic viewpoint on human society and nature, Agenda 21 sets out to lead the way into a new sustainable era of human existence. Thus, ecological and environmental, as well as social and economic issues are elaborated on and dealt with within the frames of the agenda for the new century. Even if the document helps us to think globally, it also highlights the importance of initiating efforts leading towards sustainability at all other levels of society. Consequently, the document aims at creating a sustainable future at the global and national, as well as at the regional and local levels. Here, and for the purposes of this thesis, we will take as our point of departure the local level. Hence, two Swedish municipalities will function as a starting point in a study of the local Agenda 21-process in Sweden. Focus will be put on the issue of democracy and participation. Thus, we will encounter a strong belief throughout the thesis, that the local level and the mobilisation of individuals in society are fundamental in the global pursuit for a sustainable future. To legitimise this, for now, it will suffice to refer to a by now rather old saying, however still often expressed and regarded relevant. With “Think globally, act locally” echoing in our minds; let us mobilise to take on the greatest of challenges!

1.2 Aim, Research Questions, Assumption and Scope
The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the participatory dimension of the local Agenda 21-processes in two Swedish municipalities. In short, the purpose is to reveal the tools, forums and methods used to mobilise the municipal community, and to reveal the major impediments and problems met in this pursuit. Furthermore, the thesis wants to assess the success of the municipalities in mobilising participation in the processes of formulating and implementing the local Agenda 21-documents/programmes arrived at in the two municipalities. Finally, an overall assessment of the efforts made by the two municipalities in mobilising their communities will be conducted.

The research questions, derived from this overall aim, will be stated as follows:

- Generally, how have the Agenda 21-groups of Lund and Sjöbo municipalities pursued the goal of involving/mobilising the municipal community in the overall Agenda 21-process? Which tools, means, forums (methods) have been used? What problems and impediments have been encountered during this pursuit?
- More specifically, how have the Agenda 21-groups succeeded in involving/mobilising the community citizens, NGOs and the industry in the process of formulating the local Agenda 21-documents/programmes?
- Finally, how successful have the two municipal Agenda 21-processes been, compared to each other, when it comes to the participatory dimension?
A note on the core assumption of this thesis is in place at this early stage. In discussing ways to approach the environment one can roughly distinguish between two different perspectives. Hence, we have those scholars that belong to what has been called an ecoauthoritarian approach, and those scholars that tend to see democracy as a crucial factor in combating the environmental problems (see for ex. Lidskog & Elander 2000:41-53). The first view holds that an ecologically sound development is best promoted by an authoritarian political rule, which will prioritise ecological imperatives over the freedom of the citizens (Lidskog & Elander 2000:41). However, in this thesis, we will leave out this perspective, and instead assume that the environment will and should not be saved at the expense of democratic values. Thus, the underlying assumption that can be found in the thesis is that participation and a local participatory democracy can be seen as goals in themselves in the local Agenda 21-work. This assumption is, among other things, based on the text in the Agenda 21-document itself. In the very first chapter it is thus stated that, in the efforts of the Agenda 21, the “...broader public participation and the active involvement of the non-governmental organizations and other groups should...be encouraged.” (UN 2000a:1). Moreover, in chapter 28, the chapter dealing with the role of the local authorities, the Agenda 21 is very clear in its statement on the issue:

Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt 'a local Agenda 21'. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. (UN 2000d:1).

This quote constitutes the very core of this thesis. Here it is made clear that one important dimension of the work with local Agenda 21 is the community participation in all its different shapes and forms. We will come back to a theoretical discussion on why and how this participatory dimension is so important. For now it will suffice, as Bro et al. do, to point to the fact that there exist certain studies that have shown some of the advantages of civic participation. They have concluded that the interaction between citizens leads to a stronger sense of community, which in turn is a necessary condition for a well-functioning democracy (Bro et al. 1998:162-163). One of the most interesting of these studies would be Putnam’s Making Democracy Work, in which he studies the roots of civic traditions in Italy (see Putnam 1996). Here it is argued that a strong sense of citizenship and community, and strong horizontal relations between citizens, will make both the state and the market function more effectively. In this context Putnam talks about the level of social capital in a region. The overall conclusion is that a democracy will be strengthen when situated within a strong civic community. The key to a functioning democracy thus lies in a high level of social capital (Putnam 1996:218-223). Put in the context of this thesis, a successful mobilisation of participation would obviously mean a higher level of social capital. This would probably, following the reasoning of Putnam, contribute to a more sound local democracy. Bro et al. also refer to other scholars pointing in the same direction when discussing the concept of social capital (see Bro et al. 1998:163).

The scope of this thesis is, on the empirical side, limited to the two municipalities of Lund and Sjöbo and their work with Agenda 21. The reason for choosing these two municipalities are the obvious differences between them when it comes to both size and resources put into the Agenda 21-work. It should also be stated that this thesis, and this is of course a natural consequence of the fact that two municipalities are studied, puts its focus on the local Agenda 21-process. This does not mean that the other levels, the global as well as the national and regional, are regarded in anyway less important. Furthermore, the thesis sets out to, even if primarily dealing with the local level, sketch the overall context, so that it will not give the picture of a totally isolated local level in the Agenda 21-work. This would apparently be misleading, and is not at all the purpose of this thesis. However, by turning to the Agenda itself, we will see that the
focus on the local level is legitimate: “Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives.” (UN 2000d:1).

When discussing the scope some more theoretical notes are in place. Hence, it should be stated that the theoretical parts dealing with sustainable development and democracy are obviously not intended to grasp all relevant theories in those fields. Instead, this thesis will try to give a rather short contextual description of the two fields before narrowing down the focus to what will later be called a green participatory democracy.

1.3 Method, Material and Operationalisation

The thesis uses a qualitative method. The qualitative approach or research can be, as shown by Merriam, described as striving for an understanding of the unique in a situation, which in turn is constituting a part of the bigger context. Thus, the main aim within a qualitative approach is to understand the meaning of a phenomenon. This kind of research puts the weight on process, meaning and understanding, rather than on results (Merriam 1994:30-35).

According to Merriam, the case study as such can be seen as deriving its logic from the fundamental perspective of the qualitative method. Thus, it can be concluded that a qualitative case study constitutes an intense and holistic description and analysis of one specific phenomenon. Most case studies constitute a combination of description and interpretation or assessment (Merriam 1994:30, 34, 49). The latter is also true for the case studies performed in this thesis. Here the tool of the case study is employed in investigating how two municipalities have been mobilising their citizens in the local Agenda 21-process, and in trying to reveal the major problems and impediments encountered in this pursuit. The case studies have then been used in a comparative approach studying the processes connected to the formulation of the Agenda 21-programmes/documents of the two municipalities, and how these can be assessed. It has been pointed to the great importance that should be attached to the comparative method. In a rather simplistic way two contrasting types of comparisons can be outlined. First, it is pointed to “the shock-comparison”, through which two very different phenomena are compared in the search for a solution to a problem. Through the other type of comparison, the one employed in this thesis, two phenomena that are similar to each other are compared. In this case some variables can be held constant (Lundquist 1993:101-102). Mackie & Marsh, in reasoning on the comparative method as seen within the borders of Political Science, quote a very central definition of the comparative method first issued by Rose in the beginning of the 90s. Thus, the “...comparative method involves the presentation of ‘empirical evidence of some kind in an attempt to compare systematically and explicitly political phenomena’.” (Mackie & Marsh 1995:173). In a discussion on different types of comparative analysis the type of analysis performed in this thesis has been denominated “systematic comparisons of a limited number of cases”. This kind of analysis utilises more than one case and makes focused comparisons. In this context it has been concluded that this analysis, when compared with a case study with only one case, will mean a trade-off between detail and generalisability. Thus, it will offer less detail, and more generalisable conclusions (Mackie & Marsh 1995:178). However, it should be pointed out that in the context of the method of this thesis this trade-off would be small, since it deals with only two cases. Thus, it can be stated that it should be expected that quite some details will appear at the same time as the generalisations will be rather sparse.

Another main method used in this thesis is the interview. One way of deciding upon the type of interview one conducts is to look at the level of structure of the interview. At the one end of a continuum we then find interviews with a very firm structure, almost in the shape of an inquiry-form. On the other end the open, conversation-like interview is situated. In this way one can distinguish between the well structured, the partly structured and the unstructured interview (Merriam 1994:86-89). In this thesis deep interviews loosely structured around certain questions
on some chosen themes have been conducted with key persons engaged in the Agenda 21-work in the two municipalities. Thus, one could argue that these interviews can be labelled as being partly structured, although they might lean a little bit towards the more structured end of the continuum. Patel & Davidson introduce the concept of standardisation when discussing interviews. With this they mean the level of influence the researcher has when it comes to the design and mutual ordering of the questions (Patel & Davidson 1994:60-61). Here it can be concluded that the interviews done in this thesis are rather standardised, although with room left for some digressions and rearrangements. Furthermore it should also be stated that oral communication over the telephone as well as written communication in the form of e-mails have been used in the study. Here several more inquiry-like telephone and e-mail interviews have been done with relevant individuals, engaged somehow in the municipal Agenda 21-process.

When discussing material and data it is of great importance to be aware of the fact that the material available, the material one finds, constitutes a limitation or even a restriction when it comes to solving the problem posed (Lundquist 1993:107). In the case studies primary material in the form of documents, protocols etc. from the two municipalities as well as booklets, newsletters, magazines etc. have been used. Furthermore, a desk-investigation of scientific research literature on democracy, sustainable development and participation has been done. In this later process articles, papers as well as scientific books have been studied.

One important step in the research process, at least when dealing with research represented by this thesis, is the operationalisation. Concretely this means the process by which the researcher translates the theory so that its concepts can be identified in real life. One obvious implication of this is also that the theory becomes instrumental for the selection of material, and thus for the results arrived at. In the context of the process of operationalisation two fundamental demands can be posed. Thus, the operationalisation should have a high validity and a high reliability. A high validity means that the operationalisation at hand really points to the phenomena the theory wants to investigate, while a high reliability means that the operationalisation makes it possible to measure in a precise way. However, a high validity should always be prioritised over a high reliability. It is thus of uttermost importance that the operationalisation really covers the relevant concept(s) (Lundquist 1993:99). As could be expected, this is also of great importance in this thesis. Here we deal with the theoretical concept of participation. In operationalising this concept we will draw on a theoretical framework used by Bro et al. (1998). From this, we will outline three dimensions of participation. The operationalisation will be commented more on in the theoretical part of this thesis, and finally used in the analytical part. A few words on the operationalisation of this thesis in relation to the research-questions are however in place at this early stage. For now, it will suffice to conclude that the dimensions of participation will be used as benchmarks in the pursuit of trying to assess the relative success in mobilising the municipal community in the process of formulating the local Agenda 21-programmes/documents in the two municipalities studied. In this way the operationalisation of participation is instrumental primarily in searching for the answer to the second, more specific, research question. However, the operationalisation will also play a role in the overall assessment of the two local Agenda 21-processes studied in the thesis, represented by the third research-question above (see 1.2).

Finally, a short note on the issue of intersubjectivity in the scientific research-process is in place. In short, the meaning of intersubjectivity is that a scientific study should be reconstructable for the reader of it. An obvious precondition for this intersubjectivity is that the researcher explicitly accounts for the research process. Thus, the reader should be able to understand and assess the study and its results. In turn, this intersubjectivity can be said to be a precondition for openness and objectivity within the scientific community (Lundquist 1993:52). In the context of this discussion it should be stated that one of the main implicit objectives of this thesis is to fulfil this requirement of intersubjectivity. Thus, it will try to outline its research steps as explicit as is considered possible and necessary.
1.4 Systems Thinking as a Methodological Framework

Before turning to a thorough theoretical section, it should be highlighted that this thesis is influenced by an approach usually referred to as systems thinking. This approach will function as a methodological frame for the whole study. Within systems thinking a system can be defined very broadly as "...a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole." (Anderson & Johnson 1997:2). There are also a couple of defining characteristics of systems. Thus, it has been argued that all the parts of a system must be present, and that these parts must be arranged in a specific way, for the system to work as it should. Furthermore, systems in themselves have specific purposes to fulfil within the larger systems in which they are embedded. Other observations are that systems tend to maintain their stability through adjustments and fluctuations within and outside the system itself, and that they all have feedback, which works as a catalyst for behavioural changes through transmission and return of information. The feedback occurs both within the system itself and between a system and other external systems (Anderson & Johnson 1997:3-5).

In dealing with, and understanding systems it is important to reason in terms of structure. Here, structure can be seen as the invisible interrelationship between a system’s parts. This structure then explains all the visible events and trends within a system in the real world. Thus, the structure constitutes a deeper level of understanding. Moving to this level means to start thinking in causal connections and this will in turn allow us to anticipate events and even to change trends and patterns (Anderson & Johnson 1997:5-8). Thus, “...changes made at the system level, rather than at the pattern or event level...often prove to be the most long-lasting and self-sustaining.” (Anderson & Johnson 1997:8). The ability to influence the future will increase as we move from basing our thinking on the event-level, on to the pattern-level, and then to the structural level. Apart from offering a tool, systems thinking also offers a framework with which to approach issues as systemic wholes. (Anderson & Johnson 1997:9, 17). This is exactly what this thesis will try and do. Regarding those issues, concepts and events relevant for this thesis as a system will allow for a greater understanding of them.

In a discussion on systems thinking it can be fruitful to shortly look at the main principles characterising this kind of thinking. Here it is emphasised that there is a need for recognising that all problems are parts of larger systems. To look at the bigger picture is an important principle within systems thinking. Furthermore, there is a need for balancing short-term and more long-term perspectives, for looking at both short-term and long-term impacts of a strategy. Another, rather obvious principle within systems thinking is the recognition that everything in real life is complex, dynamic and interdependent, and that simplification often is a limited strategy for solving problems. Moreover, there is the principle of using both qualitative (non-measurable) and quantitative (measurable) data in assessing a situation. Finally, one leading principle of systems thinking tells us that, since we are all part of those systems in which we function, and since we are both being influenced by and are influencing the systems, we tend to contribute to the very problems we are facing. Thus, unintended consequences as well as erroneous assumptions, values and beliefs can influence the systems we are functioning within, creating problems of various kinds (Anderson & Johnson 1997:18-20). In taking environmental problems in general and Agenda 21 in specific as points of departures, it becomes obvious that these principles are relevant within these fields. That humans themselves take part in the system that creates the environmental deterioration is an understatement. Furthermore, the principle of recognising both the short-term and the long-term is a fundamental feature of all environmental work. This might be best exemplified by the discussion of whether to include the rights of future generations into the environmental discourse, or not. Other systematic principles with enormous value in the local Agenda 21-work in specific is the principle that states that we have to look for the bigger picture and the principle that concludes that real life is complex, dynamic and interdependent. Simplifying environmental problems and not regarding the above principles as relevant would of
course be a deadly sin in working with sustainability issues. Instead there is an apparent need for taking a holistic viewpoint when dealing with creating a sustainable society. One further implication of systems thinking, in relation to this thesis, is that we have to recognise that the system studied in this thesis is only part of a much larger system of environmental problems, as well as societal, economic and political relations and values.

From this introduction to systems thinking we will now move on to look at some theoretical discussions focusing on sustainable development, democracy and participation. However, bearing the method of systems thinking in mind will help us in studying these issues. We will also return to this way of thinking when, in the end of the next chapter, we move on to modelling the concepts and theoretical discussions. This will then constitute the basis for the analysis of two Swedish municipalities and their work with the participatory dimension of Agenda 21. In this way a mental model and a Casual Loop Diagram (CLD) of the system studied will be drawn (see 2.3.2).
2 The Environment and Democracy

2.1 Sustainable Development and Agenda 21

2.1.1 Setting the Scene; the Concept of Sustainable Development and the Agenda 21-document

As for the concept of sustainable development, it is a contested concept and a lot of different interpretations have therefore been given when it comes to explaining what it entails in practice. In this way some of the interpretations have been defending the existing economic order while others instead have supported a radical restructuring of the current political and economic organisations and arrangements (Connelly & Smith 1999:200-201). A lot of scholars have highlighted the contestable character of the concept. Hence, Elliot states that it is “...one of the most contested ideas in global environmental discourse.” (Elliot 1998:179). Bro et al. conclude that it is because of the fact that the concept is so unclear that it has been met with such a broad acceptance in society (Bro et al. 1998:28). In the same vein Jacob states that one “…of the most well known features about sustainable development is that the meaning of the concept remains unclear to policymakers and academics alike.” (Jacob 1996:21). She goes on to argue that the reason for building ambiguity into the concept seems to have been to create some kind of minimal level of consensus, despite the fact that the actors working with the concept have divergent agendas and interests (Jacob 1996:21). The critique of the concept can however be taken even further. Richardson argues that for the concept to have any utility in the future, it has to be radically redefined. He concludes, in addressing the inherent contradictions of the term, that there actually is a good case for abandoning it totally. In the end however, he seems to see “just” a redefinition as being justifiable (Richardson 1997:48). Having made obvious the contestable feature of the concept of sustainable development, it will suffice, in the light of the purpose of this thesis, to conclude that the most well known definition of it, however often criticised as will be shown, is dated 1987. In that year the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), more often referred to as the Brundtland Commission, stated, in its report Our Common Future, that for humans to make development sustainable, they need “…to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (WCED 1987:282).

It takes no expert to realise the obvious fallacies of this definition. It is apparently too broad and fuzzy, for it to have any real practical use. As stated above, it has also been criticised. In this way, Connelly & Smith realise that the definition, and the report as such, have, through becoming widely accepted by the international society, marginalised more radical accounts of sustainable development. In this way the report emphasises the role of continued economic growth for environmental protection to come about. This strong case for continued economic growth was of course understood by international economic organisations as well as by many states as reaffirming their legitimacy. The report also sees economic growth, social development and environmental protection as being mutually reinforcing. What are needed, according to it, are a higher level of multilateral co-operation and a reformation of different economic practices such as aid, finance and trade. However, even if marginalising certain more radical views, Connelly & Smith point to the significance of the report, stating that this should not be understated, since it was actually this report that introduced the concept of sustainable development into more common usage (Connelly & Smith 1999:201-203). For the record however, it should be pointed to that the Canadian government had begun to use the term already in the early 80s (Richardson 1997:46). Furthermore, addressing the importance of it, Connelly & Smith argue that the Brundtland report “…was instrumental in the launch of the United Nations Conference on
Environment and Development (UNCED) ...” (Connelly & Smith 1999:203). And, as Elliot concludes, even if the content of sustainable development is not defined in any of the Rio agreements, not even in the Agenda 21-document “...it [the concept] echoes the basic principles and emphases of the Brundtland Report.” (Elliot 1998:183).

So, 20 years after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, resulting in raising the consciousness among governments concerning the importance of the environmental problems, it was time for a new large United Nations Conference. This time it was to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992, and it addressed the environment and development. Thus, it became the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Connelly & Smith 1999:201, 203, Palme 1992:7, 12). The major aim of the conference was to function as an international forum for discussions on environment and development. It resulted in five agreements; the Rio Declaration, the Declaration on Forest Principles, the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Agenda 21-document. The name of the latter stems from the facts that it was the 21st paragraph of the agenda of the conference, and that it concerns the new 21st century. The document gives global directions for the creation of a sustainable society (Bro et al. 1997:2-3). The UNCED-conference was to become unprecedented as an international event on the environment. 176 national delegations attended the conference, which also got a lot of attention in media and from the public. Moreover, a parallel event called the Global Forum gathered around 30 000 NGOs from all around the world (Connelly & Smith 1999:203).

So, what is the actual content of the Agenda 21-document? Well, Agenda 21 is a legally non-binding agreement with recommendations for achieving sustainable development. The document is also closely related to the other documents signed at the conference. Even if not legally binding the document still makes the signing countries both politically and morally obliged to follow its directions. In this way Agenda 21 is a forceful request for action. The document is very extensive and contains around 800 pages. It has 40 chapters divided into one preambule (chapter 1) and four sections. When it comes to the format each chapter is alike. They start out with identifying and elaborating the issue, before describing the proposed programme and estimating the cost of the programme at hand (Miljö- och Naturresursdepartementet 1997:5-6, Elliot 1998:22). The first section of the document (chapter 2-8) addresses social and economic dimensions and looks into poverty, trade, debt, population, consumption and health in relation to environmental problems. The second section (chapter 9-22) deals with the conservation and management of resources for development, and emphasises the importance of managing seas, land, waste and energy in promoting a sustainable development. Other issues taken up in this context are desertification, agriculture, forestry and biological diversity. The third section (chapter 23-32) sets out to discuss the strengthening of the role of major social groups. In this way the focus is put on the importance of involving women, young people, indigenous populations, NGOs, trade unions, workers, scientists, farmers, business and industry and local authorities in the Agenda 21-work. Finally, the last section of the Agenda 21 (chapter 33-40) discusses the means of implementation. Here the roles of governments and non-governmental agencies when it comes to technological transfer and funding are addressed. In this context research as well as capacity building and education are emphasised (Connelly & Smith 1999:204, Miljö- och Naturresursdepartementet 1997:passim). In discussing the Agenda 21-document it should also be pointed out that it is a result of long, protracted negotiations by a large number of actors participating in the run-up to the conference and at the conference. Hence, the resulting text is often contradictory. This is due to the urgent need to find compromises that all the interests engaged in the negotiations could accept (Connelly & Smith 1999:204-205).

Before turning to a more thorough discussion on sustainable development and then on the theoretical features of a local Agenda 21 it is in place to conclude that the Rio-process as a whole, as it is described above, has not been left uncriticised at all. The issue is probably best addressed by Connelly & Smith when concluding that the...
"...significance of the Rio-process divides greens – some argue that it should be seen as an important turning point in the move towards more sustainable practices, others that it was simply "greenwash" and that the conference actually subverted the environmental movement and reinforced existing political and economic relations. Where does the truth lie?" (Connelly & Smith 1999:205).

2.1.2 The dimensions of Sustainable Development

It is said in the Agenda 21, chapter 8, that the goals of a national strategy for sustainable development "...should be to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations." (UN 2000b:2). In saying this Agenda 21 sets the focus on the three dimensions that are often seen as making up the foundation of the concept of sustainable development (see for ex. Bro et al. 1998:28-31, SOU 1997:12-15). Thus, the social as well as the economic and ecological dimensions of sustainable development are highlighted. In this way, the concept of sustainable development can be seen as an umbrella containing different parts that together make up a greater wholeness. When discussing it, it is therefore fundamental to grasp the wider meaning of it, even if, as is the case in this thesis, focusing mainly on certain parts.

Following the reasoning on the dimensions of sustainable development it has been stressed that the concept of sustainability is spanning over several disciplines. One way of operationalising it, initialised by the World Bank and also adopted by the Swedish Agenda 21 National Committee, has been to see it as built on the three dimensions mentioned above. Here the social dimension has been given indicators such as health, life quality, housing, freedom of religion and speech, equality between the sexes, democracy and the power to influence your own life-situation (Bro et al. 1998:28-31). Furthermore, indicators such as education, the power to influence the societal development and the right to free information have been mentioned in this context (SOU 1997:14). As for the economic dimension, the highlighted indicators have been resource-allocation, between and within countries, production- and consumption-patterns, consumer-power, the evolution of technology, the role of industry, the possibility to employment and subsistence and international aid and trade (Bro et al. 1998:30, SOU 1997:14). Finally, when dealing with the ecological dimension of sustainable development, the relevant indicators are biological diversity, the conservation and protection of cultural and aesthetic values in nature, the limitation of waste-products to air, ground and water, the economising with non-renewable resources and the conservation of ecosystems and other life-supporting systems (Bro et al. 1998:30, SOU 1997:14).

In addressing the relationship between the three dimensions, the Swedish Agenda 21 National Committee concludes that in the short run, they can conflict or mutually support each other. However, in the long run the dimensions are each other's preconditions. A successful politics of sustainable development must therefore aim at creating measures that will favour several of the aspects of a sustainable development. In this context the committee refers to so called "double gains" (SOU 1997:15).

When, as in the case of this thesis, focusing on just one small part of this overall framework inherent in the pursuit for a sustainable society, it is especially important to not loose contact with this broader picture. In this way, this thesis should be seen as picking out one part, the participatory dimension in the local Agenda 21-work, that actually belongs to, and is given its ultimate meaning by, a much broader context; the context inherent in the concept of sustainable development, as it has been sketched above. Thus, the red thread can, and should be, followed from the overall framework of a sustainable development, via the social dimension of this development, and down to the level of democracy and participation.
2.1.3 Local Agenda 21

Already in the introduction of this thesis it was argued that participation and a local participatory democracy could be seen as goals in themselves in the local Agenda 21-work. This was then justified among other things by the text in the chapter 28 of the Agenda 21-document itself. It is now time to expand on the issue, so as to try and set the scene for the case studies on local Agenda 21 that will follow in the next chapter.

In this pursuit the third section of the Agenda 21-document, on the strengthening of major social groups, and in particular the chapters 27, 28 and 30, are vital. As we have seen above, section three of the Agenda 21 deals with the strengthening of the roles of young people, women, indigenous populations, local authorities, workers and their unions, NGOs, farmers, science and research, and business and industry. In this thesis the focus is put on those groups that are regarded as most relevant in the context of the Swedish local Agenda 21-work. Hence, chapter 28 on the local authorities functions as a basis for the whole thesis. Also chapter 27, on the role of NGOs in the work with Agenda 21, and chapter 30, on the role of business and industry, are deemed relevant. Thus, this thesis looks at how the local municipalities studied try to mobilise the citizens as well as NGOs and business, in their pursuit of getting the community to participate in the Agenda 21-work at the local level (for an account of the chapters in Agenda 21 see Miljö- och Naturresursdepartementet 1997).

As we have seen above (see 1.2) chapter 28 of the Agenda 21 calls upon all local authorities to enter into a dialogue with its citizens, private enterprises and local organisations. The reason for this is also made clear, as the first sentence of chapter 28 proclaims that it is because “...so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives.” (UN 2000d:1). That the role of the local NGOs also is of great importance in the pursuit for a participatory local Agenda 21-work becomes obvious when the Agenda 21 states in its 27th chapter that NGOs play a vital role in the implementation and shaping of a participatory democracy. Furthermore, it is concluded that the independent character of NGOs is the precondition for creating real participation (UN 2000e:1). As for the business and industry, the Agenda argues that they “...should be full participants in the implementation and evaluation of activities related to Agenda 21.” (UN 2000c:1). From this, the main focus of the next chapter of this thesis should be clear.

Several scholars have pointed to the importance put on the local level in Agenda 21. Thus, in outlining the key conclusions arising from chapter 28, Deby has stated that the participation of local authorities is essential for the achievement of the objectives in the Agenda 21 (Deby 1993:197). Furthermore, Månsson points to how the Agenda 21 puts emphasis on the local level when it comes to translating the decisions taken in Rio into practical action. Moreover, he argues that the local work with Agenda 21 should be open and transparent, so that it encourages citizens as well as corporations and organisations to take part (Månsson 1994:11-12). Elsewhere, it has been stated in much the same vein that it is “…a key role of local authorities to take responsibility for introducing, interpreting, adapting and eventually implementing the most relevant aspects of Agenda 21 for their local communities.” (Lafferty & Eckerberg 1997:2). Furthermore, it has been argued that a need for increased activity at the local level was a main theme during the whole UNCED-process. However, Lafferty & Eckerberg also conclude that this key role given to the local authorities, and this is a very relevant comment, does not mean that national governments should not guide and assist local authorities in their pursuits of a satisfactory local Agenda 21-work (Lafferty & Eckerberg 1997:2). The Agenda 21 itself also summarises this view when stating that the successful implementation of the Agenda “…is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments.” (UN 2000a:1).

Even when having said this, it should be stated that the Agenda puts strong emphasis on a bottom-up perspective. The consequences are several. In this way a bottom-up perspective implies that every municipality formulates their own solutions, taking into consideration their
own possibilities and problems. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on a bottom-up perspective also means that it is not only the municipal organisation, but also other actors in the municipal region that shall come up with the solutions. In this way different actors are supposed to learn from each other. Some obvious advantages arise from this perspective. Hence, the right of different groups to decide over their own future is guaranteed. Moreover, when people in a community work with their own problems, the local knowledge as well as interest are being utilised. Finally, it has been argued that a deeply rooted local consensus makes up a good precondition for implementing more radical ideas and measures (Månsson 1994:12). Discussing these issues in relation to the local Agenda 21-documents/programmes implies, which is being highlighted by Bro et al., that the programmes should be formulated by the politicians and the municipal officials in co-operation with the municipal inhabitants. In this way it is important that the different groupings have an equal status in the process, even if it is the politicians and the municipal officials that are inspiring and leading the process (Bro et al. 1997:4). This aspect is of great importance for the analytical part of this essay, which among other things will look into how the two studied municipalities have succeeded in making the community participate in the formulation of the Agenda 21-documents/programmes (see 3.2.4). Another important point of departure when working with the local programmes, which closely reflects the above discussion on the bottom-up perspective, is that the programmes should take into consideration local problems and conditions. In this process, as also seen above, the experiences and knowledge of the local community become valuable. Moreover, yet another important aspect when working with the local Agenda 21-documents/programmes is that they should be holistic, in the way that they should integrate ecological aspects with social as well as economic aspects. Thus, cooperation between the different sectors of the municipal organisation is fundamental in the local Agenda 21-work (Bro et al. 1997:4). This last point is of course a direct reflection of the above discussion on the different dimensions of sustainable development (see 2.1.2).

As seen above, there is a lot to be said about a local Agenda 21. However, most probably, no one summarises the above discussion better than Lafferty & Eckerberg: “In the case of charter 28, the goals are the process itself, i.e. the process deemed necessary to bring Agenda 21 down to the level of most immediate impact on citizens, organisations and business.” (Lafferty & Eckerberg 1997:4). Let us now widen our view, and look into different perspectives on democracy in relation to Agenda 21.

2.2 Democracy and Participation

2.2.1 Perspectives on Democracy

Taking initially a rather broad approach towards a discussion on democracy allows us to distinguish between two opposing ideal type democratic perspectives. In putting a discussion on democracy in the context of environmental issues and Agenda 21, it will be fruitful to look into these two distinct perspectives on democracy. Here we will call them participatory democracy and representative democracy. It should however be stated that these views constitute abstract stereotypes, which will not be found in real life in their pure forms. Furthermore, in the below reasoning somewhat differing views will be grouped together into the two opposing perspectives, so as to make the discussion less complex and more fruitful for our purposes.

2.2.1.1 The Representative Democracy

This view will here be represented by discussions held by several scholars. Thus, Bro et al. address what they call an elitist democracy in this context. Here they paint a picture of a democracy where the political elites compete over the voters. The character of this democracy is the competition between elites and the risk of losing one's political power in elections. There are no anticipations of any strong citizen participation in this approach. Instead the citizen as such is
seen as being more or less passive. (Bro et al 1998:19). Göransson et al. also distinguish between several democratic theories. Among other things they address what also they have chosen to call the elitist democracy-theory. In this view on democracy it is deemed unrealistic that there should be any kind of genuine will of the people. Instead democracy is seen as an institutional arrangement with the purpose of taking political decisions. In this way the competing for the votes by the different political elites is the basis. The elites are here seen as the representatives of the people. The moment of the election is the crucial one, and what happens in between the elections is of less importance. Stability is a norm and the apathy of the not so involved citizens makes sure that ignorant persons tend to not vote at all, which in this view is seen as a good thing (Göransson et al. 2000:21). In addressing what she calls representative democratic theory, also Lundmark draws upon this view of democracy when summarising that this theory has as its pillars “...competing political elites and governments chosen by citizens in free and frequent elections by means of secret balloting”. (Lundmark 1998:6). In picking some of the prominent figures putting this view forward Lundmark chooses Schumpeter, Dahl and Tingsten (Lundmark 1998:6).

Lundmark has shown that even if it is recognised that ideally each citizen should get a chance to express her/his preference, it is argued within the representative democratic theory that this is unrealistic in political practice. This in tum is primarily due to the complexity and size of contemporary democracies. In this context Lundmark shows that it has even been argued by Tingsten as well as by Schumpeter that an excess of participation actually can be detrimental to democracy, mainly because this can create a system overload. In this way, representative democratic theory instead puts the emphasis on political representation, which in tum means that when discussion participation, this view, as we have seen above, tends to end up discussing voting: “Citizens elect officials who make political decisions.” (Lundmark 1998:26).

In reflecting upon democracy and participation Teorell also recognises the representative democracy, which he calls the dominant democratic view in the post-war period. The advocates of this democratic view are labelled “competition democrats” by Teorell. This as a result, as we have seen above, of the fact that democracy is seen as an institutional order within which elites compete over votes in free elections. Thus, focus is put on behaviour of voters, campaigning and party-activities (Teorell 1999:1). Also Lafferty & Meadowcroft, when discussing what they call well-known ideal type descriptions of the operation of contemporary democracy, are describing the representative democratic view. They have chosen to call it “democracy as elite competition and responsiveness”. Reasoning about this democratic ideal type they paint a picture of a society where the political decision-making at large remains within the political elite and a skilled bureaucracy. As for the masses, they are seen as too ignorant to make judgements on politics:

Democracy is here understood as a system which allows for the selection and renewal of the political elite through electoral competition and for the relative autonomy of other functional elites. Elections provide a mechanism for replacing a government team at periodic intervals should it prove incompetent, excessively corrupt, or become divorced from the concerns of the electors. (Lafferty & Meadowcroft 1996:10)

2.2.1.2 The Participatory Democracy

This view will, in the same way as the representative view above, be represented here by discussions held by different scholars. Hence, Bro et al. talk about a participatory democracy, in which the demand for citizen participation is strong and is actually seen as a goal in itself. Furthermore, this demand can be seen as a means for creating legitimate and efficient decisions. Emphasis is put on democratic “education” of the people and the creation of public understanding when it comes to political decision-making. Here community, solidarity, confidence and fellowship can be enhanced as norms. In this view, without these values, preferably dispersed in a local setting, there will be no functioning democracy. Thus, this is a more direct democracy than the elitist democracy, also addressed by Bro et al. In this participatory democracy a democratic
citizenship requires some level of political activity and not just putting in one’s vote every fourth year. Passivity is in this view just a result of the fact that meaningful channels for participation are missing (Bro et al. 1998:19). The participatory democratic theory, outlined by Göransson et al., comes close to the above view outlined by Bro et al. In this way the participatory democratic theory puts emphasis on the fact that the human is a social creature which needs to live in community with other humans. These humans ought to be guaranteed active participation in politics. To participate is seen as a duty rather than as a right, and a strong decentralisation is advocated in this view. One obvious problem however, is the fact that the ones who participate most, are the ones which will gain most. No solution to this problem has been put forward as of yet (Göransson et al. 2000:22). Another criticism directed towards this participatory democracy is that it represents an obsolete and unrealistic form of government, which seems to require very small political units, like for example city-states (Lundmark 1998:29). This critique is also highlighted by Hayward when pointing to the fact that the most common ground for criticism of participatory democracy is “...that in today’s large communities, methods of decision-making based on citizen deliberation are too cumbersome or time consuming.” (Hayward 1995:219). Even though this criticism has been refuted, it is still true that the local level is cherished by theorists within the participatory democratic approach (Lundmark 1998:29). However, the participatory democratic theory has been criticised on other grounds as well. Firstly, it has been pointed to the problem of co-ordinating those local activities that aim at combating transboundary environmental problems. Moreover, critics have been considering invalid the assumption that the understanding of global complex environmental problems actually will build from more direct experiences in decision-making at a local level. Thirdly, in a process of decentralisation, there can be inadequate attention paid to the context. For example, the fact that natural resources might be distributed unevenly between the communities, may be neglected (Hayward 1995:220).

However, Lundmark shows that the participatory democratic theory also tends to criticise representative democratic theory, as it has been outlined in the above section, for leaving political power in the hands of a few persons, not giving all citizens equal opportunities to participate in politics. In this view it is held that a strong public participation will bring about both desired personality traits such as solidarity and responsibility, and a better implementation of a rule by the people. It is also argued in the same vein that basic citizen rights will and can not be fully implemented without extensive political participation and equality as for political opportunities. Thus, there is a strong need for politically active inhabitants in this view. This is in fact seen as a precondition for democracy. Another important feature in this participatory democratic theory is that it extends the political arena, including in it also participation at workplaces and in neighbourhoods. Some prominent figures here are Pateman and Barber (Lundmark 1998:7, 26-27). Thus, Lundmark quotes Barber’s definition of participation “…as common action for common goals at all stages of public decision-making, from the setting of the agenda to implementation.” (Lundmark 1998:27). This is a main difference compared to advocates of a representative democratic theory, which instead will tend to give almost exclusive responsibility to elected representatives and the public administration after the first stage of the agenda-setting. In trying to sum up, Lundmark also concludes that both Pateman and Barber put emphasis on participation in local decision-making. However, both also point to the fact that political representation is inevitable. However, they both argue that the participatory idea ought to supplement the ill-functioning system built on this political representation. In this way considerable involvement by the people can be reassured. The result, put in the terminology of Barber, will be a strong democracy (Lundmark 1998:27-29). As we will see below, this concept has also been used by other scholars.

In discussing participatory democracy one of the democratic theories outlined by Teorell is labelled direct participation. Thus, the advocates of this branch of democratic theories are called “participatory democrats”. Teorell points to the heritage from Rousseau’s responsible citizen, when outlining this perspective. Here, advocates have put emphasis on the fact that
citizens as fullworthy decision-makers should take part in political life. Thus, as we have also seen above, they argue that the representative democracy needs to be complemented by more extensive opportunities for direct participation in spheres outside the formal governmental institutions (Teorell 1999:2-3). When discussing the participatory democracy in the same way as the above scholars Lafferty & Meadowcroft choose to call it “democracy as popular movement”:

In democratic discussion individuals and groups must justify their claims by an appeal to what is right and good for the community. Thus democracy is not the rule of the largest faction or ‘the majority’, nor simply a mechanism to accommodate competing interests. Rather it is a process through which an interest common to the whole community can be constituted and come to hold sway over public institutions (Lafferty & Meadowcroft 1996:8).

2.2.2 Green Participatory Democracy and Agenda 21; The Case for Participation
When now having elaborated on two major democratic theories it is time to introduce the environment. In short, the discussion below will focus on outlining a green participatory democracy. In other words, we will try and show how a participatory democratic approach will be more fruitful when dealing with environmental problems, than the representative counterpart. We will also relate this to the Agenda 21 itself and try to sketch what here will be labelled a green participatory democracy.

Lafferty & Meadowcroft are instrumental in showing how a representative democratic perspective will create difficulties when dealing with environmental problems. They show how a political elite in a representative democracy tend to pursue objectives given a high priority by itself, instead of adhering to a growing public consciousness of environmental deterioration. A further extension of this problem appears since the political elite has a natural tendency to rely on other elites in society, especially the business elite, on which the political elite even tend to be dependent. Thus, there is a great risk of status quo, since the elites in society have interest in continuing existing patterns. This will also mean that existing abuses on the environment will be upheld. The issue is not made any better by the fact that the political elite usually settle things behind closed doors. This means that the current abuses will not only remain, but also escape public scrutiny (Lafferty & Meadowcroft 1996:10-11). Instead, several scholars have shown how more extensive public participation tends to facilitate the work with environmental problems.

As for the Agenda 21, Bro (1997) and Bro et al. (1998) have shown how it takes a view that lies close to the participatory democracy. In this way Bro argues that ideas of a sustainable society that guarantees democratic processes, that in turn give real influence to the citizens, characterise the Agenda 21-document from Rio. This Bro bases on the fact that Agenda 21 itself, as we have seen, urges local politicians and municipal officials to formulate, in collaboration with the citizens, a local Agenda 21-programme for the creation of a locally sustainable society. Here Bro shows that, according to Agenda 21, the citizens must be active in this process. In discussing this, Bro also points to another scholar, Barry, who has argued that the ecologically sustainable society can only be reached within a political system that is characterised by a dialogue between experts and citizens (Bro 1997:166). In this way Barry has concluded “...that the achievement of sustainability makes democracy a core, non-negotiable, value of green political theory.” (Barry 1996:117). Furthermore, he states that since the policies emanating from the principle of sustainability are likely to have extensive impacts on the lives of the citizens, they should also be given opportunities to accept and participate in realising the principle. Barry asserts that for a green democracy to be created, representative institutions should be supplemented with a participatory democracy. He then goes on to conclude that a discursive understanding of sustainability will more or less require both representative and more direct forms of participation. In this way Barry recognises a strong need for active citizenship. Thus, he shows how a green conception of citizenship emphasises an obligation ‘to do one’s bit’ in the collective aim for sustainability, and a duty to take responsibility for one’s choices and actions. In his argument one main advantage with active citizens is that they become bound both morally and legally to
policies and decisions they themselves have prescribed (Barry 1996:119, 121, 123-129). Also Lundmark has pointed to the importance of citizenship. In taking the reasoning one step further than Barry does, Lundmark argues that the notion of an eco-democracy implies an environmental citizenship where citizens have rights and obligations not only towards other citizens, but also towards other species, life-forms and ecosystems. In this view even the participatory democracy is challenged (Lundmark 1998:71). Apparently, it is a rather radical view that is put forward by this Swedish scholar.

In assessing the concept of participation, several other scholars have, in the same vein as Barry, pointed to the importance of participation when dealing with the environment. In this way Barns argues that the vulnerability and restrictiveness of what he chooses to call liberal democracy are stimulating the search for an alternative democracy, which can guarantee a richer and more extensive democratic practice. Here Barns asserts that a more radical democracy can provide a stronger public dialogue and a better context for the promotion of green ideas and practices. Moreover, it will allow for a participatory, more active citizenship (Barns 1995:103-104). In concluding Barns states that "...it is through the development of the discursive conditions of a radical democratic polity that a green agenda might be best formulated and achieved." (Barns 1995:126). In much the same way Hayward points to the fact that several scholars have argued that a more participatory democracy, in which the citizens have more input into decision-making, constitutes the means necessary for dealing with environmental problems. He also concludes that for most of the environmentalists it appears as if the participatory democracy provides a way that will give better-informed environmental decisions (Hayward 1995:216,220).

Bearing the above discussion in mind it is fruitful to return to the Agenda 21-document again. In analysing it and the general principles put forward at UNCED, Bro et al have asserted that they give voice to a pronounced participatory democratic perspective. Thus, according to the ideas of Agenda 21, citizens should have strong opportunities to influence the societal development through direct channels to the arenas of decision-making. In the same way an enhanced public participation with a broad consultation with the local inhabitants is seen as a precondition for a successful sustainable development. In this pursuit there is a need for reaching outside those formal organisational frameworks that are usually used (Bro et al. 1998:25). This can be interpreted as if the representative democratic institutions are not sufficient when it comes to the creation of the sustainable society. Bro et al. conclude in the same vein that one of the democratic criteria presented by the UNCED, which also appears to be one of the more important ones, is participation. They also point to that at UNCED, it was also emphasised that the process of Agenda 21 should be guided by a view on democracy that lies close to what has been called a strong democracy. Thus, democracy is seen as very important, and a broad engagement and participation are central. In this way it is important that the engagement is apparent in the political organisation as well as within societal organisations and groups and among ordinary citizens (Bro et al. 1998:25, 152). Also Prugh et al. have recognised the concept of a strong democracy in the context of discussing sustainability. Here they point to a democracy, although still not present in reality, in which direct democracy engages people and where power is distributed more evenly. In this ideal situation a strong tradition of self-governance and civic engagement prevails. People get educated, by participation, into citizenship. In this way ordinary people will be able to take informed, broad, social decisions on complex environmental issues, creating a common environmental future. Moreover, in this ideal view, it will also be possible to aggregate autonomous local communities into larger regional or national bodies (Prugh et al. 2000: 161-162).

So why then is participation so important when discussing democracy? Answering this Bro et al. have concluded (see also 1.2) that the interaction between citizens is leading to a stronger sense of community. This, in turn, is a necessary condition for a well-functioning democracy. When people get together and discuss an arena for confidence, openness, tolerance
and respect is created (Bro et al. 1998:162-163). In the same way (see 1.2) Putnam has argued that a strong sense of citizenship and a feeling of community tend to strengthen democratic governance. As we have seen, here Putnam talks about the level of social capital within a society. Thus, a strong sense of community and citizenship results in a high level of social capital, which in turn is seen by Putnam as the key to a vital democracy (Putnam 1996:218-223). In the context of Agenda 21, which emphasises consensus, this sense of community can then create common norms and values through dialoguing and collaboration, which in turn will reinforce the level of consensus (Bro et al. 1998:163).

From the above discussion it seems rather apparent that there exists a strong connection between the environment and participatory democracy. In this thesis, we will therefore argue that the democracy put forward in the Agenda 21 may best be labelled as a green participatory democracy with representative features in it, however with a strong emphasis put on the participatory requirements. Thus, we will argue that the more explicit dimensions, consisting of the economic, ecological and social dimension, put forward in the Agenda, can be supplemented by a demand for a participatory dimension. This participatory dimension can be seen as emanating from the social dimension, thus representing the strong call for extensive public participation in Agenda 21. As a matter of fact, in this way it is stated already in the preamble of the Agenda 21-document that the “...broadest public participation and the active involvement of the non-governmental organizations and other groups should...be encouraged.” (UN 2000a:1).

2.3 Modelling Local Democracy and Participation

2.3.1 Operationalising Participation

The operationalisation of the concept of participation employed in this thesis is adapted from Bro et al. (1998). Here they outline different levels of participation that can be found in a local Agenda 21-process. Thus, the levels of participation range from a society that passively receives information to an active society that takes part in a consultative, consensual dialogue with the municipal Agenda 21-organisation. The discussion below is adapted from, but somewhat changed compared too, Bro et al (1998:155-157). It will in the analytical part below (see 3.2.4) be used to assess the levels of participation in the processes of formulating and creating a local Agenda 21-document/programme in the two municipalities studied in this thesis. It should also be recognised here, as it is in Bro et al. (1998), that the different dimensions of participation applied to the work with the Agenda 21-document should be seen in the light of the goal set out in chapter 28 of the Agenda 21-document, stating that by “...1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on ‘a local Agenda 21’ for the community...” (UN 2000d:1).

In operationalising participation we will distinguish between three different dimensions of the concept. In this way the three dimensions correspond to different levels of participation. Thus, the first dimension, which shows the level of transparency, aims at measuring the success in the two municipalities in spreading information to society on and about the local Agenda 21-document during the process of formulating it. This can be seen as the first, or the “lowest” form of participation. The second dimension, which we will label dialogue, shows the level of dialogue. Here we assess and measure the success in the two municipalities when it comes to creating a dialogue with society, and to taking in views and ideas from the community, when working with formulating the Agenda 21-document. This is seen as a “higher” form of participation than transparency. The third dimension, also seen as the “highest” form of participation, measures the level of inclusiveness, i.e. the success in getting the society to play an important part in a broad consultation when it comes to the formulation of the final document in the respective municipalities. The underlying question here is whether the voice of the community is heard can be seen in the finally accepted document.
In working with this operationalisation in the analytical part of this thesis the different dimensions will be assessed and measured in three distinctive continuums ranging from "very small success" to "very large success". The framework will also consist of a fourth continuum. Here the municipal results on the three dimensions of participation as well as the overall situations faced by the two municipalities when it comes to methods used and problems met are used in an overall assessment of the participatory efforts made by the two municipalities studied. In this last assessment the weight put on the third dimension of participation will be stronger than the weight put on the second dimension, and the weight put on the first dimension will be the smallest one (see 3.2.4).

2.3.2 Systems Thinking: A Mental model and a CLD of the System

This part will outline a mental model and a Causal Loop Diagram (CLD) of the system dealt with in this thesis as a whole. They will take as their point of departure systems thinking (see 1.4). In this way of thinking, as we have seen above, a system is defined very broadly as "...a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole." (Anderson & Johnson 1997:2). In the same vein it has been argued that the main attribute of a system is that we need to view it as a whole, in order to understand it. Thus, through systems thinking we observe the dynamic relationships between all parts in the system studied. To understand a system we also need to grasp the concept of feedback. This concept shows how actions can either balance or reinforce each other, and can be defined as a reciprocal flow of influence. In this context it is also crucial to recognise that nothing can be influenced in only one direction. Instead, every influence constitutes both cause and effect (Haraldsson 2000:2, 4-6). This will be made obvious in the Casual Loop Diagram (CLD) made up of the system studied in this thesis. Before turning to this CLD however, we will look shortly at the mental model of the system. This model aims at explaining the basic relations among the concepts and issues studied.

Figure 1. A Mental Model of the System Studied.
Figure 1 describes the relationships within the system studied in this thesis. Starting from the top it shows how both the UNCED-conference and the Agenda 21-document have been instrumental in spreading the concept of sustainable development. On the other hand, the concept of sustainable development existed before the UNCED, and was stressed already in the Brundtland report in 1987. In this way the concept itself was also important for the UNCED-process and the Agenda 21, creating a two-way relationship between them and sustainable development. Furthermore, this thesis has shown that the concept of sustainable development is usually seen as consisting of three dimensions, them being the economic, the social and the ecological dimension. In this thesis focus is however put on the participatory dimension, most strongly connected to the society and the social dimension. Here this dimension is derived mainly from the writings in the Agenda 21, in which a participatory green democracy is put forward. In this way the key concept of this thesis is participation. Participation is seen as emanating from and constituting the base of the participatory green democracy that is put forward in the Agenda 21. In the study the concept of participation is then operationalised. Three dimensions of participation; transparency, dialogue and inclusiveness, are here used as the benchmarks for assessing the relative success of the processes of formulating a local Agenda 21-document/programme in the two municipalities that are being studied. Furthermore, the study aims at looking into the participatory aspects of the local Agenda 21-work in general in Lund and Sjöbo municipalities.

Now turning to figure 2, we need to bear in mind that it was argued above that every influence should be seen as both cause and effect. In this way, the key "...to seeing reality systematically is seeing circles of influence rather than straight lines." (Haraldsson 2000:6).

Figure 2. A Casual Loop Diagram (CLD) of the System Studied.

The systems thinking-approach lets us transform traditional linear thinking into circular arrangements, in turn allowing us to understand cause and effect between the components in a defined system. The circular system will be made up of feedback loops in a self-regulating
system, in which the effects of the last element will influence the input of the first of the elements. In this way the system regulation can be either self-reinforcing (a system in growth) or self-balancing (a system in balance) (Haraldsson 2000:7). In the CLD above, the letter R is the label of a reinforcing system of loops and B implies that the loop-system at hand is balancing. In this way figure 2 above outlines the workings of the system studied in this thesis with the relevant feedbacks. In “reading” the system, it suits best to start from its core, this being the green participatory democracy put forward in the Agenda 21. As the operationalisation of this thesis has tried to show, higher levels of the three dimensions of participation will create a stronger green participatory democracy. The reasoning also works the other way around. Thus, if the green participatory democracy increases we will see an increase in the level of transparency. In the same way an increase in transparency will give an increase in green participatory democracy. Here we have a reinforcing system within the larger overall system. The reasoning is the same for the two other dimensions of participation. The more green participatory democracy we have, the more dialogue we will experience, and the more green participatory democracy we have the more inclusiveness we will experience. And it works the other way around too, as we have seen. The more dialogue and inclusiveness we have, the more green participatory democracy we will get. The results are a second and a third reinforcing loop within the overall system. Also a larger system starting from green participatory democracy can be spotted. Hence, the more green participatory democracy, the more transparency we will have. The higher level of transparency will create the preconditions for a stronger dialogue, which in turn will give incentives for a higher level of inclusiveness. This in turn will of course increase the overall level of the green participatory democracy. Here it should be stated that the three dimensions of participation could be red in a larger context than they are put in when operationalised and used to assess the processes of formulating the local Agenda 21-documents in this thesis (see below 3.2.4). Thus, here, transparency can be seen as an “openness” in the relation between the administration and the politicians and the community in large. Dialogue implies that there exists a two-way communication between the politicians and the administration and the community. As for inclusiveness, this means that the voice of the community is heard and transformed into the decisions taken by the politicians and the administration.

If reading the system the other way around, its right side consists of three balancing smaller systems within the overall system. Here, it is shown that the more green participatory democracy we have, the less measures for mobilising for participation we will see, since a high level of green participatory democracy will create a sense of satisfaction within the system. However, this decrease in measures will in turn create a decrease in green participatory democracy. Moreover, this decrease in measures to mobilise will mean that there will be a larger room for the limiting factors to play a role. Thus, a decrease in measures to mobilise will give an increase in the workings of the limiting factors. However, as always in systems thinking, there will be a feedback. Here the increase in the workings of the limiting factors creates stronger incentives again for measures to mobilise. In this way the measures taken will increase again, which in turn, will create a stronger green participatory democracy. The CLD also highlights that the more room left for the limiting factors to play an important role, the less will the level of green participatory democracy be. In this way there is a direct relationship between the limiting factors and the green participatory democracy. In reading these balancing parts of the system, some clarifications are in place. It should be stated that the measures to mobilise can be defined as those different methods used by the two municipalities in their pursuit of a participatory local Agenda 21-process at the local level (see 3.2.2 below). In the same way the limiting factors should be defined as those problems and impediments met by the two municipalities in their pursuits (see 3.2.3 below).

As for the top part of the system in the CLD above we see five reinforcing systems within the overall system. In this way the CLD shows that the more green participatory democracy we experience, the higher will the level of participation be. Furthermore, an increase in the level of
participation will in turn create an increase in social sustainability, which in turn will lead to a more successful local Agenda 21-process. In the same way the stronger local Agenda 21-success will increase the level of social sustainability, which in turn will increase the level of participation. This constitutes two reinforcing loops within the overall system. The other two small reinforcing systems in the top of the CLD also show how increases in the other two dimensions of sustainability also will create an increase in the success of the local Agenda 21-process. In turn, this higher level of success will increase the two sustainability-levels. Finally there is a larger reinforcing loop in the top part of the CLD, highlighting how a higher level of green participatory democracy will create a higher level of participation. This in turn, as we have seen, will give an increase in social sustainability and thus also in the success of the local Agenda 21-work. This increase in the success of the local Agenda 21 will then increase the level of green participatory democracy further (for a more thorough account of the workings of a CLD, see Haraldsson 2000:5-13).

So how then will the system behave in the end? Or to put it in a more scientific way: What will the Reference Behaviour Pattern (RBP) of the CLD look like (see Haraldsson 2000:13-18)? Well, above it has been concluded that a system can be either reinforcing or balancing. In the CLD in figure 2 both sorts of systems are represented. Thus, the reinforcing loop-systems in the CLD indicate a growing RBP. However, as the balancing systems are included in the assessment, it becomes clear that the growth will not be eternal. Instead it will in the end be balanced out by the balancing systems within the overall system. Therefore, the RBP will initially be increasing, but will then tend to balance out over time.

Now leaving all theoretical discussions and reasoning behind, it is time to move on to the empirical section of the thesis. In chapter 3 we will study the local Agenda 21-processes in two Swedish municipalities, before trying to assess their success.
3 Local Agenda 21 in Lund and Sjöbo Municipalities

3.1 Local Agenda 21 in Sweden

Chapter 28 of the UNCED agreement 'Agenda 21' asks for implementing sustainable development at the local level of government. Sweden is amongst the fore-running nations in having responded quickly to these demands. Virtually all of Sweden's 288 municipalities have decided to embark on the Local Agenda 21 process [...] LA21 has sometimes inspired more far-reaching goals at the local than at the national level... (Eckerberg & Forsberg 1998:333).

So, what then, is a local Agenda 21? Well, a lot has been written on the issue and it has not surprisingly been concluded that there exist several possible interpretations when one discusses what local Agenda 21-work in Sweden actually is (Dekker Linnros 1998:25). However, one definition of the concept of a local Agenda 21 stands out as being very clear. It was issued already in 1993 by Månsson, when he stated that a local Agenda 21 refers to the consensual process where the municipality, in an open dialogue with different local actors such as associations, industry and citizens, creates holistic and environmentally sound development programmes for the municipality (Månsson 1993:5).

In Sweden, when it comes to the follow-up of the Agenda 21 since 1992, local activity has been the most prominent part. Thus, it has been stated by the National Committee for Agenda 21 that widespread involvement and a host of activities have resulted in a success for Agenda 21 at the local level. In 1995, all the 288 municipalities in Sweden had initiated the local Agenda 21-work, and half of the municipalities had a special Agenda 21-coordinator. In 1996 as much as 40% of the Swedish population had heard about Agenda 21 (SOU 1997:174-175, 218). From the above it is also clear that Agenda 21 has had a strong position in the Swedish political debate (Dekker Linnros 1998:23).

In looking at some of the surveys done of the Swedish municipalities and their work with Agenda 21 one can get a deeper picture of the process. Thus, already in 1995, as seen above, in an inquiry with all the 288 municipalities taking part, it was deemed that all the municipalities had initiated the work with Agenda 21. It is also shown in this inquiry that by 1995 three out of four municipalities had Agenda 21 as a post in their budgets. However, as for the Agenda 21-coordinators, existing in around half of the municipalities by 1995, a clear majority were only hired for a project period, which points in the direction that a lot of the municipalities saw the Agenda 21-work as limited in time. At the time, about 90% of the municipalities had made efforts to inform their citizens on Agenda 21 and 207 municipalities had provided some kind of education on Agenda 21-issues. Moreover, in 175 of the municipalities, projects aiming at engaging the citizens in the environment had been initiated (SALA 1995:8-26). Another inquiry, dated to 1997 and consisting of 111 of the 288 Swedish municipalities, shows that more than around 50% of the municipalities, which was the number in 1995, namely 80 out of 111 municipalities, had an Agenda 21-coordinator in 1997 (q2000 1997). In a more recent survey made in 1998, in which almost all municipalities took part, this trend is continued and in more than 70% of the municipalities there exists at least one Agenda 21-coordinator. The survey also shows that in 1998, 56% of the municipalities had passed a local Agenda 21-programme. In most of these municipalities this was done in 1997. Furthermore, the survey tells us that the initiative when it comes to the Agenda 21-work much more often rests with municipal officials within the municipalities than with politicians. In concluding the survey, Brundin & Eckerberg state that it is obvious that the Swedish municipalities have taken the work with Agenda 21 seriously, and that the level of activity in this field is high in a majority of the municipalities. Thus, the local Agenda 21-work in Sweden is broad and has got a central position in the municipal organisation (Brundin & Eckerberg 1999:3-20).
One reason for the strong response to the Agenda 21-document on the local level has been the, in international comparison, far-reaching local autonomy and the strong local responsibilities given to the municipalities by the Swedish political system. There have thus been a long tradition of local environmental work before Agenda 21 (SOU 1997:174-175, 218). It can even by stated, in a more general sense in this context, that Swedish municipalities have a unique role when compared internationally. It has been stated that few, if any, countries are as decentralised as Sweden. This evolution of the Swedish municipality into a strong, rather independent unit was initialised after the 2nd world-war and since then, successively, more and more responsibility has been handed over to the local level (Robert & Lahti 1995:6).

However, in looking at the local Agenda 21-work it is still important to conclude that the variations between different municipalities in their work with Agenda 21 have been large when it comes to content as well as form and activities. Some municipalities have been working with Agenda 21 in a broad holistic way, while others have been focusing just on certain sectors. Yet others have been more slow in responding to and working with Agenda 21 (Naturvårdsverket 1996:15). In this way one can, in accordance with Eckerberg & Forsberg, classify Swedish municipalities into two different categories based on their respective response to the call for a local Agenda 21. Thus, we have the pioneers and the lingerers. The pioneers, consisting of around 40-60 municipalities, have initiated a wide range of activities since 1992 and most of them were actually already before UNCED heavily engaged in local environmental activities. The most significant criterion for being a pioneer seems to be that there exists a combination of power (politicians) and interest (municipal officials), which both are engaged in the work. Most of the lingerers on the other hand, experience a lower level of political support for environmental action, and the work with Agenda 21 has taken more of a symbolic character (Eckerberg & Forsberg 1998:337). Possibly, the lingerers can be divided up into two groups. Here one group can be seen as more or less inactive when it comes to the work with Agenda 21, while the other group can be represented by municipalities that at least have some Agenda 21-ambitions (Forsberg 1999:40).

3.2 The Cases of Agenda 21 in Lund and Sjöbo Municipalities

3.2.1 Background

3.2.1.1 Lund Municipality: Affluence in the Agenda 21-organisation

The municipality of Lund is situated in the southeastern part of Scania, the most southern of the regions of Sweden. In 1999, the whole municipality had 98 312 inhabitants, among which 75 673 were living in the city of Lund (Lund 2000).

As for the Agenda 21-work in Lund it can be stated that the resources available for the Agenda 21-organisation have been very extensive. Municipal documents accounting for the budget of the Agenda 21-activities undertaken by the Agenda 21-organisation in Lund show a picture of a department that has been working in affluence over the years. Thus, since the year of 1995 the Agenda 21-organisation has been showing a surplus in its budget. During these years the total budget for the Agenda 21-group has been varying between 6,7 and 3,5 million SEK, although with a declining trend over the years. In 1999 the budget was 3,5 million SEK. The surplus has been varying over the years between 1,1 and 2,2 million SEK, in 1999 ending up at 1,1 million SEK (Lunds Kommun 1996, 1997a, 1998, 1999, 2000). One obvious conclusion is that the Agenda 21-group in Lund has been affluent in its undertakings and activities. It seems as if it even has been hard to spend all the resources available. It should also be stated when discussing the budget of the Agenda 21-organisation in Lund that a national level initiative in the form of contributions to so called local investment programmes has played an important role for the environmental work in Lund municipality. According to the Swedish Government this national initiative as such has two major aims; to help increase the employment in Sweden, and to
increase the speed of the transition of the Swedish society into an ecologically sustainable society. To fulfil these aims the national parliament has allocated 6.5 billion SEK to different local investment programmes in Sweden during the years 1998-2002. In this way municipalities have been given the opportunity to apply for resources to planned investments aiming at enhancing the ecological sustainability in a municipality. The government then chooses which of the applying municipalities should get a subsidy. In the process the results in the form of more employment and positive environmental effects are put in focus (Regeringen 2000a). In 1998, Lund was fortunate enough to get contributions to its local investment programmes for the period of 1998-2000. Out of a total investment of around 458.5 million SEK, within which around 420.9 million were budgeted for environmentally related investments, Lund municipality got 126.3 million SEK of the total investment from the government as a subsidy (Regeringen 2000b, Regeringen 2000c). It is an understatement that this amount of money plit into the environmental work in Lund municipality also has had a profound positive effect on the Agenda 21-work. This as an obvious consequence of the fact that a large majority of the different investments planned has a direct connection to the Agenda 21-work (Regeringen 2000d).

During the years, the personnel engaged in the Agenda 21-group has been varying too. Today the Agenda 21-organisation is consisting of three full-time employed so called environmental strategists. However, one of these posts is at the moment vacant. Furthermore a number of employees are and have been hired on a project basis. Currently around five people are working on different projects within the Agenda 21-organisation. The two currently employed environmental strategists both have a background within the natural sciences. However, one of them also has a journalistic background (Fontell 2000a).

3.2.1.2 Sjöbo Municipality: Scarcity in the Agenda 21-organisation

Sjöbo municipality is situated in the middle of southern Scania. It has somewhat more than 16 600 inhabitants all together, among which around 6 600 live in the town of Sjöbo (Sjöbo 2000).

This municipality is facing a rather different financial situation than Lund does when it comes to the Agenda 21-work. Thus, the whole budget for 1999 for the Agenda 21-group was made up of one part time employment-salary of about 130-140 000 SEK, plus the group used up 7 400 SEK for other small expenses. For the year 2000, 68 900 SEK emanating from the national level as a subsidy to the municipality in its capacity as a countryside-municipality was added to the 130-140 000 SEK salary. Furthermore, 18 800 SEK have been used for minor expenses so far this year. Also the years before 1999 the budget of the Agenda 21-organisation was made up of only the part time-salary. In this context it should however be stated that over the years two additional persons have been working with Agenda 21 in Sjöbo. These employees have not, however, been hired by the municipality. Instead they have taken part in labour-market measures organised by the public sector. In this way they have been paid by the state and not by the municipality of Sjöbo. Currently, one of these two employees is still working with Agenda 21. Over the years, 4 persons have been working with the agenda in Sjöbo. However, at the same moment in time the staff has not been made up of more than 3 persons, among whom one has been a part-time employed Agenda 21-coordinator. Currently 2 persons are engaged in the Agenda 21-work, one being the part-time employed coordinator and one being, as stated above, a publicly hired employee. Their backgrounds differ largely, the Agenda 21-coordinator being a natural scientist and the other person having his background in marketing (Strömbeck 2000, Cornmark 2000a, Nielsen-Osterman 2000).

One very interesting conclusion in the context of a low budget, also drawn by one of the interviewed municipal officials in the municipality, is that a small budget can lead to more cooperation with other sectors of the municipal organisation, since the money needed for the Agenda 21-work exists only within these other sectors. Thus, rather ironically, a low Agenda 21-budget can be the source that creates a broad Agenda 21-process (Nielsen-Osterman 2000), which is exactly one of the main aims of Agenda 21 (see for example UN 2000b:passim). Even if
situated in the outskirts of this thesis, this ought to be a very interesting conclusion in the context of local Agenda 21-work. Another interesting conclusion, also emanating from the discussion of the budget available for Agenda 21-work in a municipality, and pointed out by another municipal official, is that with a low budget, engagement, fantasy, interest and ingenuity within the Agenda 21-group become the critical factors limiting the whole process (Commark 2000a). These factors are obviously more important in a small municipality with small economic means, than in a large one with extensive resources. In this way the employee with the background in marketing has been instrumental in taking care of large parts of the work needed for exhibitions, seminars etc. In this way the Agenda 21-group has been able to lessen expenses that otherwise would have been needed for ordering in services in the form of marketing products etc. (see for ex. Commark 2000a).

3.2.2 Tools, Forums and Methods for Mobilising the Inhabitants

In the below sections (3.2.2.1 and 3.2.2.2) the discussion will be based on deep interviews conducted with leading municipal officials in the two studied municipalities. If also other sources have been used, these will be found in the text. The interviewed individuals can be found in the reference list in the end of the thesis.

3.2.2.1 Lund Municipality: “The Multi Method Strategy”

So, how has the municipality of Lund solved the problem of getting the society to participate in the local work with Agenda 21? Well, initially it can be concluded that several different methods have been used in this pursuit. In Lund, one of the largest efforts to reach the public, pointed to by one of the municipal officials, has been the so-called Agenda 21-booth, which was moved around in the municipality in 1995. In this booth three environmental informers worked with the aim of getting a direct contact with the citizens, informing them on and discussing with them about Agenda 21. Thus, here the method of mouth to mouth to create a dialogue and to inform was used. It has been estimated that more than 10 000 people, among which 2 500 were children, visited the booth during the year (Lunds Kommun 1996).

Furthermore, a newspaper on Agenda 21, named “Agenda 21”, was issued and sent out to all the households in the municipality. Five numbers were published during the period between 1995-97. The municipality even had a journalist hired for a period.

In following the goal in chapter 28 in the Agenda 21, saying that by 1996 the municipalities should have achieved, through undertaking a consultative process with the community, a consensual local Agenda 21-programme (UN 2000d:1), Lund municipality set in motion a process in March 1996. This was to become one of the largest efforts done by Lund municipality in getting the society to participate. Here the municipal officials initiated the work with creating different forum-groups for the citizens. In this way five different discussion/dialogue-groups were created, dealing with traffic, energy, housing/building, city/countryside and consumption/lifestyle respectively. Through ads in the local press these meetings were announced and thus they were open for all citizens. The aim of these forums was to bring about a basis for the formulation of the local Agenda 21-programme, and the process continued for almost one and a half years. An estimation points in the direction that around 100 citizens took part in the five forums, and all together around 40 meetings were held only in 1996. The results of the work in the five groups were five different so called “documents of consensus” from each one of the groups. Parallel to the workings of these open forums five groups were active within the municipal organisation, dealing with the same issues as the citizen-groups, and also in dialogue with these citizen-groups (Lunds Kommun 1997a). However, the influence of these forum-groups on the final Agenda 21-document became limited in the end (see 3.2.4). In working with the industry and corporations Lund municipality took part in a special working group with the largest companies in Lund. This work was however initialised after an initiative
from the business sector. Since January 1996, they were all meeting up in a special industrial Agenda 21-forum, parallel to the other Agenda 21 forum-groups. 5 formal meetings were held only during 1996, and the meetings continued in 1997, 1998 and 1999. Furthermore companies in Lund have been taking part in so called “breakfast meetings” with each other and with people from the municipality, discussing issues such as energy and transports (Lunds Kommun 1997a, Lunds Kommun 1998, Lunds Kommun 1999, Lunds Kommun 2000, Svensson-Smith 2000). The work with creating a local Agenda 21-document continued during the year of 1996 and in a process lasting until the beginning of 1997 the document was referred to organisations, corporations, municipal instances and to citizens for consideration. The public could also order a copy of the document through the newspaper “Agenda 21”, which was issued to all households (Lunds Kommun 1997a). In September 1997 the document was passed by the municipal parliament (Lunds Kommun 1997b).

Furthermore, in summarising the different tools used to mobilise the community, the municipal officials also point to the use of different conferences, evening activities and seminars. Through these tools Lund municipality has tried to reach citizen-groups, the regional Agenda 21-network and ordinary citizens. For example, in 1996, a regional Agenda 21-conference was held by order of the National Committee for Agenda 21. In 1998, the Agenda 21-group in Lund was participating in the process of initialising a regional network, Agenda 21-forum Skåne, for municipalities, universities, organisations and corporations in the region. Within the Agenda 21-forum Skåne, networks exist within the overall network, and these networks deal with one specific issue respectively, such as traffic, health or greener cities. As for the contact with the schools in Lund municipality, the work with this has been delegated to a special instance called “the Nature School”. This instance have among other things been engaged in educating employees at schools, to make them become so called “resource persons”. These environmental representatives shall work as engines in the agenda-work at the schools. Another way to reach the public is over the municipal homepage, on the Internet. The Agenda 21-group has had information here since the year-shift of 97/98 (Lunds Kommun 1996, Lunds Kommun 1997a, Lunds Kommun 1998, Lunds Kommun 1999, Wandt 2000:9).

Yet another way used by Lund municipality, and highlighted by one of the municipal officials, is the method of supporting other citizen-groups in the community working with Agenda 21, through for example organising meetings for or with them. The most famous one of these groups is probably “the Rio-group”. Co-operation with adult study associations, primarily the “Studiefriamjandet”, has been another way of trying to reach the society.

Chronologically, documents from the municipality show that initially, in 1995, the work with Agenda 21 was much focused on the spreading of information to the public, to schools, to organisations and to corporations. Furthermore, a collaboration with the university in Lund was initiated and also seminars and lectures were held and exhibitions shown. Moreover booklets were issued and the work with educating environmental representatives within the municipal organisation was initiated. Around 250 persons were chosen to become representatives, with the aim of functioning as engines in the Agenda 21-work at the municipal working-places (Lunds Kommun 1996). In 1996 the education of the environmental representatives continued. At the same time efforts to educate all the employees in the municipality were made. In this way more than 5000 employees were attending half-day lectures during the year. The information spreading as well as the collaboration with the university were upheld, and more seminars were also held (Lunds Kommun 1997a). As for 1997, the main event was probably, as stated above, that the first version of the local Agenda 21-document was passed in the municipal parliament in September. Furthermore, the work with seminars and education, and the spreading of information continued (Lunds Kommun 1998). In 1998, Lund became one out of five Swedish municipalities to become pointed out as a “challenger municipality” by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. The idea behind this is that the challenger municipality shall challenge industry, other municipalities, the national parliament and the government, associations and citizens to make efforts to create a
fossil fuel-free future. During the year the work with educating the environmental representatives was continued. Furthermore, those political parties that agreed to it got a half-day of environmental education (Lunds Kommun 1999). Last year the work with being a challenger municipality as well as the work with the environmental representatives were continued (Lunds Kommun 2000). Over the years, the Agenda 21-group has also been helping out a local natural protection association and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation in organising an environmental week with different happenings from year to year (see for example Lunds Kommun 1998. 1999, 2000).

3.2.2.2 Sjöbo Municipality: “The Once a Year Impact Strategy”

In focusing on Sjöbo municipality and its work with mobilising the society and getting it to take part in the Agenda 21 we see a somewhat different pattern than in Lund, even if a lot of the efforts made are similar when comparing the two municipalities. However Sjöbo has had an interesting way of organising the work with mobilising the citizens. In this way they have chosen to put a lot of energy into one manifestation every year and then to just work with small projects, for example together with other sectors of the municipal organisation, except for this large yearly manifestation. Thus, one big happening has taken place every year since 1997. This choice of strategy is of course influenced by the very limiting situation when it comes to resources available experienced by the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo. In 1997 a big exhibition on Agenda 21 was presented to the public. This exhibition was also trying to focus on the 15 national environmental goals. School-classes as well as the public and politicians were invited to the exhibition. It should also be stated that in the end of 1996 and in the beginning of 1997 the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo undertook a public inquiry based on personal interviews with municipal employees, people from industry and ordinary citizens. This inquiry has then been functioning as a basis for the continuing projects undertaken.

The next year, in 1998, the Agenda 21-group organised a large exhibition hall on the issue of environmentally friendly energy. With this exhibition the aims were to spread knowledge on how to save energy among the citizens, and also to engage local industry and corporations in the process. In connection to the exhibition seminars were held. The financial situation was handled through taking up rent from the participating companies, through sponsors and through handling the marketing part within the Agenda 21-group where a former marketing manager, as also shown above, is working, thus leaving only the material cost to be paid for in this field. The exhibition was a success and between 2000 and 3000 people, which is a high number in a municipality with around 16 000 inhabitants, visited it. However, among the visitors there were of course also people from other municipalities.

In the autumn of 1999 it was time for an exhibition hall on the issue of eatables. Aims here were to put the focus on nearly produced products and a healthy diet for the inhabitants. Industry was welcomed again, as well as associations and citizens, and a seminar was held for the public. Here a local celebrity was giving a speech on health, diet and life-quality. The exhibition this year was visited by around 7000 people, which is a high number for being in the countryside, especially for an exhibition organised with limited resources (Sjöbo Kommun 1999).

In the year of 2000 a new large project has been initiated. Here the Agenda 21-group has prepared a special manifestation called “How do you live?” aiming at showing how one can live a healthier life considering different aspects such as exercise, diet and recreation. Several seminars were held during this manifestation.

Small activities undertaken by the Agenda 21-group in between the yearly large projects should also be mentioned. Here the Agenda 21-group has been working with for example theme-days at schools, informational ads in local newspapers, lectures and distribution of small booklets. The latter have however not been distributed to all households, but only at special lectures, because of limited resources. The Agenda 21 has also tried to reach out to the press, making it write about the different projects undertaken. Information on Agenda 21-work is also published in
a magazine, which goes out to all the employees within the municipality several times a year. Furthermore, the Agenda 21-group has, as it seems being a pioneer among municipalities, produced a film on Agenda 21 and the 15 national environmental goals, with the aim of educating people. Moreover, the municipality tries to reach the public through the municipal home page on the Internet and over a local television channel. The Agenda 21 group has also been using municipal show-windows in the town to inform about projects. Furthermore, the Agenda 21-group has during the year of 2000 been working with a project aiming at the collection of old bulbs with mercury in them. Here different companies selling new energy-saving bulbs have been engaged. In the same way as Lund municipality, the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo has been working with engaging citizens as environmental representatives out in the municipal organisation. These representatives have then been educated and informed so that they in turn have been able to inform and educate other people at their respective working-places within the municipality. Later on these representatives have also formed small groups among each other’s, so that they can exchange experiences and information. Sjöbo municipality has also been involved in regional cooperation with other municipalities in the region, in which also industry has taken some part.

Primary documents also show that, over the years, the large yearly manifestation has been complemented by a lot of other small activities (see for example Sjöbo Kommun 1997, Sjöbo Kommun 1998a).

3.2.2.3 General Discussion on Tools, Forums and Methods for Mobilisation

Bro et al. (1998) provide us with a very fruitful discussion on the forms of participation, i.e. on different ways of mobilising the inhabitants. In this way, it is argued that the participation of the citizens takes a variety of shapes at different times and places. However, it is possible to pinpoint some different categories that a municipality can turn to in its pursuit of mobilising the citizens to take part in the local Agenda 21-process (Bro et al. 1998:151-152).

The first form of mobilisation of the inhabitants is focused on the spreading of knowledge and information. Under this heading lies all kinds of information and educational material that has been issued and spread in different ways. Thus, public buildings such as the library as well as the local press or municipal magazines can be seen as channels leading to the public. Exhibitions, lectures and information-meetings, and also information spread in schools, are other ways to reach the public. The information can be dealing with different issues. Theoretical information on the Rio-conference and Agenda 21 as well as more practical information on how to live more sustainable are relevant under this category. As argued by Bro et al. this form of mobilisation constitutes the without doubt most usual contact between the municipality and the local society (Bro et al. 1998:153).

Another form used to mobilise and make the citizens participate in the Agenda 21-work is questionnaires, inquiries or surveys on what the inhabitants know and on their standings. In this way the municipality can get different ideas, suggestions and views from the public. This procedure can be organised in a few different ways. For example, the municipality can put up post-boxes by public buildings that urge the citizens to take a stand on certain issues. Another way is to enclose proposal-pages in information material or to make ordinary inquiries by mail or by telephone (Bro et al. 1998:153-154).

The third form discussed by Bro et al. is the creation of a discussion or a dialogue with the public on certain arenas where broad dialogues can take place. The main problem here is to get people to actually attend such meetings. In a study made by Bro et al. both large and small municipalities have experienced these problems. One way to create this arena has been to form it around the formulation of the local Agenda 21-programme (Bro et al 1998:154-155). This last way of creating an arena was tried by Lund municipality and, as we will see, this was not an easy pursuit.
Finally Bro et al. bring up a form of participation called *direct action/project work*. Here we face the challenge of initiating certain Agenda 21-projects for the citizens to take part in. The objectives behind these efforts can be to show what can actually be achieved, to change behaviour, to spread information and knowledge, to influence people’s ideas and thinking and to put these new ideas and ways of thinking into practice. These projects more often turn out to deal with the ecological rather than the economic or social dimension of sustainability (Bro et al. 1998:155).

If we take this discussion first to a more general level of local Agenda 21-work in Sweden it has been shown in a recent study that the “information distribution to the household” is the one form of mobilisation that has been used by most municipalities. Thus, it is concluded that 42 % of the Swedish municipalities have engaged in this form at least once, while as many as 31 % of the municipalities have made more continuous efforts in this field. Altogether that makes up 73 % of the municipalities. The corresponding figures for the forms of mobilisation labelled “education” (34 % + 31 %) and “open meetings/discussions” (38 % + 26 %) are lower, but still very high (Brundin & Eckerberg 1999: 10).

If we take the discussion down to the two case studies made in this thesis we have seen above that the two municipalities have been using several of the forms of mobilisation accounted for by Bro et al. In this way, as would be expected, we have seen how both municipalities have put a lot of efforts into spreading information and knowledge through written material as well as through lectures and seminars. Furthermore, we have seen how Sjöbo municipality has conducted a rather extensive inquiry. As for the creation of arenas for discussions and dialogues both municipalities have taken measures, such as Lund municipality’s forum-groups and the appointments of environmental representatives, which in turn are supposed to initiate dialogues at their respective work-places, in both of the municipalities. As for the direct projects-form of participation measures in both municipalities have been sparser.

3.2.3 Problems and Impediments in the Process of Mobilisation

In the below sections (3.2.3.1 and 3.2.3.2) the discussion will be based on deep interviews conducted with leading municipal officials in the two studied municipalities. If also other sources have been used, these will be found in the text. The interviewed individuals can be found in the reference list in the end of the thesis.

3.2.3.1 Lund Municipality: The Absence of National Initiatives and Public Engagement

In interviews with leading municipal officials in the Agenda 21-organisation in Lund municipality one person has stated that the overall mission of mobilising the citizens has been rather successful. However it is admitted that it could have been better, i.e. more people could have been mobilised. This has been dependent on how much the different municipal parts has done in their respective parts of the municipality. The background to this picture is that Lund municipality has been divided up, through a reform, into different smaller parts, which on their own have been working with the Agenda 21. This reform has however been wined up and cancelled again as of today. Another municipal official, in assessing the mission of mobilising the inhabitants, concludes that there have been good intentions but points to that only a small part of the whole population of the municipality has been mobilised. However, it is also argued that the municipal parts, before the reform was cancelled, were much more successful than the overall municipal Agenda 21-organisation has been in mobilising the inhabitants. In this context it is also pointed to the strength inherent in these smaller municipal parts when it comes to working with Agenda 21. In a wider context it is also concluded here that it seems like it is easier for smaller municipalities to mobilise their inhabitants than it is for bigger ones like Lund, where the overall supply of “happenings” is greater.
When asked about the major problems in mobilising the citizens one official referred to the problems in influencing people to make vast changes in their lives when it comes to large issues like consumption- and transportation-patterns. In this context it is stated that it has been much easier to get people to start recycling their garbage than to get them to listen to advice about their overall behaviour and lifestyle. Here it is also pointed to how hard it is to make people change their lifestyles and to make them understand that this does not have to imply a more uncomfortable way of life. Another problem that is brought up in this context is the problem experienced when trying to engage people. Thus, it is argued that too few people tend to attend meetings and forums. Furthermore there have also been complaints about the fact that it is always the same persons showing up at different meetings. It is also argued in a comment on this that there might be a need for creating new forms of participation. Here it is concluded that people seem to be easier to mobilise when it comes to engaging campaigns than when it comes to ordinary meetings. Another municipal official refers to the importance of both national and international decisions when it comes to mobilising the inhabitants, even on a local scale. Here it is also suggested that a lot has been left to the municipalities, but the tools necessary have not always been available. It is pointed to for example the transport sector and how hard it is to influence certain aspects of this sector for local municipalities, even if there is the issue of private transports to work with for the municipality. Implied in this reasoning is the view that a stronger national initiative has been missing in the Agenda 21-work. It is argued in this context that too much responsibility has been handed over to the local level. Another municipal official, commenting on the collaboration with the national level, also concludes that extensive support from the national level has been missing. In this context it is stated that it would have been desirable, especially for smaller and poorer municipalities than Lund, with a stronger national steering of the local Agenda 21-work.

3.2.3.2 Sjöbo Municipality: Scarce Financial Resources and a Harsh Political Climate

In interviews with leading municipal officials in the Agenda 21-group it has been stated by one official, when assessing the overall success in mobilising the citizens, that this process has been going well, even exceeding the expectations. Another municipal official, in assessing the overall success when it comes to this, concludes that this process has been rather successful. However, it is argued, there are more things to be done.

In turning to the main problems and impediments met in the process of mobilising the inhabitants it was stated by a municipal official that Olle obvious problem had been the weak economic situation of the Agenda 21-group in the municipality. With more money, it is said, even more efforts would have been possible. In addressing potential problems it is also mentioned that sometimes it has been hard to keep up the interest of those persons out in the municipality that have been engaged as environmental representatives in the Agenda 21-work in Sjöbo. However, often in these cases the representatives themselves have organised for someone else to take over as representative when they left their engagement. Another impediment taken up, which is in a way connected to the economic problems, is the political situation. Up until the spring of 1999 and a shift in the regime, the political majority, with a local party called the Sjöbo-party in the lead, was actually combating and counteracting the Agenda 21-group’s existence. However, this negative view, it is stated, did not seem to be very outspread within the population of the municipality, which instead supported several of the Agenda 21-projects. When asked about how the co-operation with the national level has been evolving, it has been stated by one of the municipal officials that better feedback would have been desirable. However, another municipal official stated that there has been a well-functioning input in the form of information from the national level and a well-functioning collaboration with the national level, even if some doubt of whether the politicians at the national level really understand the perspective of the individual municipality has been felt. In large, however, this municipal official seems satisfied with working independently, without too much national steering, even if admitting that in some cases, dealing
with some issues, there is a need for larger national efforts. Furthermore, some disappointment, concerning the fact that Sjöbo did not get any money for their "local investment program" set up with the aim of getting subsidies from the national level, has been expressed. This disappointment could also be traced back to another municipal official, stating that it has been tougher for the smaller municipalities to get means from this national subsidy-program. Moreover, it has been stressed by one official that there is a problem, however of a more general sort, when it comes to the difficulties inherent in measuring the success of the mobilisation-efforts. A problem concerning getting the right message out is also mentioned. In this way it has sometimes been hard to get the knowledge about Agenda 21 out to the inhabitants. It seems as if they have not really been able to grasp the concept of Agenda 21. This latter problem has led to a name-change. Today the Agenda 21-work in Sjöbo goes under the name of "Sustainable Future" (my translation). Moreover, in this context, it has been pointed to the problem of getting the small corporations to change things, for example when it comes to the working environment. The main reason for this, it is stated, is probably a time-management problem. Small companies have too little time and too few resources to be able to make any big changes. The economic problems are also returned to by another municipal official, but here it is stated that the small amount of resources in a way has functioned as an incentive for a broader collaboration with other sectors of the municipality, since the money has been located at these departments. This is of course a very interesting conclusion, which we will return to below.

3.2.3.3 General Discussion on Problems and Impediments

In taking the above discussion on problems and impediments met in the specific efforts to mobilise citizens to a more general level of the overall work with Agenda 21 in all the Swedish municipalities, it is easily concluded that most of the problems found in the two case-studies seem to re-appear at this more general level.

Thus, it has been concluded in a conference report on obstacles for local Agenda 21-work that the main obstacle for the local Agenda 21-work is the absence of national Agenda 21-work. In much the same vein as did the municipal officials in the case studies, it is argued that the absence of national objectives and strategies works as a major impediment for the local level Agenda 21-work. If there is not a political will to provide the prerequisites and to carry through with major changes it will not help to engage the citizens either. It is said that to be informed about a problem, when there is not a will to solve it, is just frustrating for people. The reasoning is taken even further, and it is concluded that if the local level Agenda 21-work is to survive, national actors need to give signals that this work needs to be of a long-term character. There is a great need for new rules, laws and resources to make the local Agenda 21-work live on (Lunds Miljödelegation 1996). From the above it becomes obvious that the absence of a national steering of the Agenda 21-work is one of the most serious threats against the whole Agenda 21-project in Sweden. This is also argued by Brundin & Eckerberg when they show results from a survey pointing to the fact that two out of three of the Swedish municipalities deem the national support for Agenda 21 to be either insufficient or rather insufficient. Only one out of four of the municipalities states that the support has been rather good. In the survey many of the local Agenda 21-coordinators point to the difficulties of pursuing a local Agenda 21 without any national follow-up (Brundin & Eckerberg 1999:16-17). This is also made clear by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA) when concluding that the representatives of the municipalities "...would like to see a more coherent, energetic and clearer national environmental policy..." (SALA 1997:32). Also elsewhere the insufficient support from the national level has been recognised (Magnusson 1996:19-21, Hultman 1996:passim).

Another problem brought up in the case study of Sjöbo is the political situation. It was here concluded that the politicians did not want to support the work with Agenda 21. On a more general level this problem is highlighted in the conference report referred to above, when it argues that one of the most obvious obstacles to the Agenda 21-work is the lack of insights that
prevails among politicians (Lunds Miljödelegation 1996). This has obviously been the case at least in Sjöbo municipality. That this is a more general trend is also shown by the fact that the impediment of “difficulties in engaging politicians” comes up as the third largest impediment met by the municipal respondents of a questionnaire (q2000 1994:5). The conference report referred to above also points to another problem, which has also been experienced by the small municipality of Sjöbo. In this way the lack of resources given to the local Agenda 21-work is taken up (Lunds Miljödelegation 1996). Also elsewhere the problems of a lack of resources and a lack of support and interest among local politicians have been pointed out (SOV 1997:219). As for the problem of getting people to change their lifestyle, mentioned by one of the municipal officials in Lund municipality, a study confirms that this is also a more general problem, when showing that this ranks among the five or six largest impediments met (q2000 1994:5). As for yet another problem brought up in the case studies above, namely the problem of engaging and getting the message through to the citizens, less evidence on a more general level can be found. Instead, it has been shown that only in every sixth municipality the lack of interest from the public has been a problem (SALA 1997:32). However, in another survey this impediment, in the form of difficulties to reach out to and to engage the public, turned out to be the second most frequent answer when asking about impediments (q2000 1994:5). The reason for this latter result is probably that this survey was done in the initial phase of the Agenda 21-work when the public possessed less knowledge of the issue.

So what is the official standpoint on the problems and impediments met in the local Agenda 21-process? Well, the National Committee for Agenda 21 has, apart from the fact that it has concluded that the local Agenda 21-work in Sweden has been an overall success, admitted that some obstacles have been identified. Among other things it is pointed to the lack of resources and to a low level of co-operation across sectorial boundaries within the municipalities. When it comes to the issue of a lack of national steering of the Agenda 21-work the National Committee recognises that this has been pointed out by several of the municipalities. Thus, there have been calls for, among other things a national action programme for sustainable development, more support from legislation and regulatory activity, a stronger national co-ordination of Agenda 21-activities and nationally organised marketing efforts (SOU 1997:218-220).

3.2.4 The Processes of Formulating the Local Agenda 21-Programmes: Results and Analysis

In operationalising participation we have seen above (2.3.1) that we will distinguish between three different dimensions of the concept. The first dimension, which shows the level of transparency, is aiming at measuring the success in the two municipalities in spreading information to society on and about the local Agenda 21-document during the process of formulating it. This is the “lowest” form of participation. The second dimension shows the level of dialogue. Here we measure the success in the two municipalities when it comes to creating a dialogue with society, and to taking in views and ideas from the community, when working with formulating the Agenda 21-document. This is a “higher” form of participation. The third dimension, the “highest” form of participation, measures the level of inclusiveness, i.e. the success in getting the society to play an important part in a broad consultation when it comes to the formulation of the final document in the respective municipalities. In this context the underlying question is whether the voice of the community is heard in the final document or not.

In working with this operationalisation below, the different dimensions will be assessed and measured in three distinctive continuums ranging from “very small success” to “very large success”. The basis for this analysis (see 3.2.4.3) will be the results emerging from the information gathered primarily through telephone interviews. These have been done with important persons, which have taken part in the processes of formulating and working with the Agenda 21-documents in the two studied municipalities. In Lund municipality the Agenda 21-
document was passed in the municipal parliament in September 1997 (Lunds kommun 1997b), while in Sjöbo municipality, the document was not passed until March 1999 (Strömbeck 2000). Thus, before the analysis we turn to an account of the results. As also touched upon above, this below account of the results (see 3.2.4.1 and 3.2.4.2) will be based on a multitude of telephone and/or e-mail and/or deep interviews with relevant individuals in the two municipalities. If any other sources are used, these will be accounted for in the text. As for the interviewed persons, they will be found in the reference list in the end of the thesis.

3.2.4.1 Lund Municipality: Results

Transparency: When the transparency-dimension for Lund is assessed by the municipal officials themselves the result is rather mixed. In this way one of them is very content with the process, while two other municipal officials are more reserved towards the success. One of the main methods for getting the information about the Agenda 21-document out was the very broad remittance round, from which 51 (!) instances replied (Lunds kommun 1997c). Furthermore, the forum-groups (see also 3.2.2.1) within and external to the municipal organisation constituted important ways to spread knowledge about the process, and these also were supposed to function as a basis for the actual construction of the document. Except for these measures, a summary of the document was published in the newspaper “Agenda 21”, which was sent to all households in the municipality. In this paper, citizens could also order a copy of the whole document from the municipality. Also other local newspapers were used in spreading information about the document. Moreover, in the process the industrial Agenda 21-forum in Lund was also important. One of the involved politicians also points to the importance of the collaboration with Lund University. This, it is argued, made the university more aware of the process. However, this politician was not totally content with the transparency-dimension in general. Instead she argued that the municipality was probably most successful in informing employees within their own organisation about the document, rather than the public. Reactions from activists within society are in general rather critical of the transparency-dimension of the process. One of the activist, however, puts emphasis on the fact that the municipality at least made good efforts and tried. A more critical voice points to the fact that only around ten persons were engaged in her forum-group, which is a rather low number for a municipality as large as Lund. However, one activist was more content with the process, pointing to measures such as the forum-groups, youth-groups and the broad remittance round. As for the industry and business, the experiences seem to be mixed. Thus, one of the interviewed corporatists concludes that the process was rather successful, pointing to workshops and presentations on Agenda 21. Another voice is more critical, arguing that newspapers, booklets and contacts with Environmental Directors of the companies are not enough. If the management of a company is to be engaged more efforts are needed. However, a third voice points to how the industrial Agenda 21-forum was rather successful.

Dialogue: In the views of the municipal officials the dialogue was a bit more successful than the transparency. Asked about the most important methods in this process they point to the forum-groups as well as the broad remittance-round and the 51 (!) responses to the remittance. In general it has been stated that a lot of positive answers to the remittance came in. Also a politician points to the importance of the forum-group structure, within which more than 100 persons were involved, and to the broad remittance round. It is also emphasised that the communication between the municipal central organisation and the small municipal parts that existed before the reform took part (see 3.2.3.1), was crucial in dialoguing and reaching out. Summarising the process however, it was judged as rather, but not very, successful, by the politician.

Commenting on the dialoguing skills of the municipality the activists within society seem to have had very different experiences. One activist seems to be very content, while others are more negative. Yet others fall somewhere in between these polarities. In summarising, one of the activists concludes that, according to some voices in the association he is engaged in, the
municipal Agenda 21-group has not been very penetrating, taking to few initiatives. Another, even more critical activist points to the fact that there was no follow-up on the work in the forum-groups. Instead, the whole project was finished off at one mutual meeting, where all the forum-groups presented their proposals. Almost no politicians were attending this meeting. Even if recognising the potential in the efforts made to create the forums, the activist is also critical of the fact that no resources were given to the groups. Furthermore, no real initiatives were taken by the Agenda 21-group. Instead, the activist concludes, the municipality should have tried harder when it comes to engaging fiery spirits throughout the municipality. In these spirits, it is argued, lies a lot of potential, and networks based on the mapping out of these fiery spirits should have been initialised. Moreover, as a constructive critique, the activist argues that the Agenda 21-group should put more efforts into trying to become a link between the grassroots and the politicians.

In judging the dialogueing the industry is also rather critical. Two corporatists conclude that the dialogue was not successful at all. One of them points to the fact that when the industrial Agenda 21-forum at last came to see the document the process had gone quite far already. Olle corporatist is a bit more content, arguing that meetings as well as the remittance round made up forums for dialogueing.

Inclusiveness: So, how did Lund municipality do when it comes to getting the voice of the community into the final document? Well, searching for the answer among the municipal officials will not give us an answer. Instead they tend to assess the success in this pursuit in different ways, ranging from not so good, to rather good, and on to good. Two of them recognise a major problem when it comes to the inclusiveness. One main idea when working with the forum-groups was that the groups themselves were to make their own “documents of consensus”. These would then be presented and the idea was for these to become a base for the final document. However, the process of formulating a local Agenda 21-document within the municipality, and the process of finishing the “documents of consensus” in the forum-groups became unsynchronised. In this way the municipal proposal for a document was referred for consideration to the forum-groups before they had finished their own consensus-documents. Thus, the forum-group work was not finished when the municipal document went out for consideration. Even though the forum-groups got the chance to reply on the remittance, some of the groups were of course disappointed by this. Other comments about the final document from the municipal officials have recognised that it is a very political document, and, however in a more timid way, that even though the document is a municipal officials-product in its fundamentals, the politicians were the ones deciding it. In summarising her view on the inclusiveness-dimension, one of the municipal officials states that they made a good try, but it did not last all the way. One of the leading politicians in the process paints a brighter picture, when concluding that the final document was not only political. Instead she argues that the voice of the engaged citizens (i.e. in the forum-groups etc.) was actually heard in the final document, and that the ideas from the forum-groups were taken into consideration.

The view of the activists within society is in general positive when it comes to the inclusiveness-dimension. One activist concludes that “his” association supported the document that was sent out for consideration. Another voice recognises the fact that it is a good document. However, it is also admitted that the connection to the practicalities of the real world is missing in it. Thus, there have been problems in its implementation. Some other critical voices have been heard too. Hence, it has been stated that the political parties were probably the most important actors in the process, and that the municipality tended to ignore certain suggestions from society. Furthermore, one voice argues that the majority of the politicians did not listen to society.

Another activist makes an even more critical assessment, when saying that the final document was more or less torn apart by the politicians and that she did not recognise anything in it. Moreover, it has been proposed that the municipality should have listened more to what the grassroots had to say.
Finally, the corporatists give a somewhat mixed picture of the inclusiveness. One of them concludes that the process has been not at all successful. Another one takes a more neutral position when arguing that the industrial Agenda 21-forum actually got the chance to make some last alterations in the document. In this context it is however emphasised that it would have been better if the industry would have been let in at an earlier stage of the process, i.e. in the dialogue. Yet another voice gives a rather positive picture, when concluding that the municipality has been discussing with the large companies during the whole process. However, it is summarised that a broader effort would have been necessary if the Agenda 21-work was to become more strongly anchored in the companies.

3.2.4.2 Sjöbo Municipality: Results

**Transparency:** As for the dimension of transparency in Sjöbo municipality, the municipal officials seem to be rather satisfied with their work. In this context, the former Agenda 21-coordinator points especially to the broad inquiry made by the Agenda 21-group before the document was formulated. Here the Agenda 21-group contacted the public as well as associations, industry and employees and instances within the municipality. The respondents were here able to put forward ideas and proposals. The answers were then functioning as a basis for both the overall work with Agenda 21 and for the document itself. One of the municipal officials concludes that a couple of 1000 of people were included. Elsewhere it has been stated that more than 1000 of the citizens were involved (Hjorth 1998). Either way, these are big numbers in a municipality with a total of 16 600 and some inhabitants. Furthermore, the Agenda 21-document was referred for consideration. In this way it went out to the municipal organisation as well as to some associations. However, outside the municipal organisation, only somewhat below ten groups were targeted (Sjöbo kommun 1998b). Also, the municipality did not receive very many replies on the remittance. Another important channel used to spread information about the document was the local press. Furthermore, a more general exhibition on Agenda 21 was shown to politicians, citizens, municipal employees and school children. One of the municipal officials also points to the small resources as being one major impediment without which the municipality could have done much more to get the attention needed.

Also the former Environmental Director of the municipality shows an overall contentment with the work of spreading information. Here he points to strong efforts when it comes to informing school children. However, he also puts emphasis on the inquiry, as well as more specific information meetings and contacts with associations and the industry, aimed among other things at creating networks. He also points to the fact that the political climate was rather tough, and that some of the politicians had a negative attitude towards the document. One of the politicians involved in the process however came to play a crucial positive role, according to the Environmental Director. This was the chairman of the Environmental Committee. The chairman himself, however, is not totally satisfied with how the municipality succeeded in spreading information on the document. When taking into consideration persons engaged in associations in society the picture gets even more complex. From the interviews made it seems like it was the initiatives from the activists themselves which were the crucial factor in deciding how involved they became. Thus, one activist, who was very involved, seems to be very satisfied with the information received on the document, while another is quite disappointed in this sense. Another relevant comment here is that the document itself seemed to be too general, not focusing enough on the local conditions in Sjöbo municipality. Moreover, when it comes to the success in spreading information to industry and business, it seems as if the industry’s contacts with the Agenda 21-group have been rather sparse.

**Dialogue:** As for the dialogue created, the municipal officials seem rather satisfied with this too. However, the problem of small resources was brought up also in this context. The broad inquiry (see above), referring the document for consideration, information meetings and discussions at
schools, organisations and associations, as well as the system with having environmental representatives within and outside the municipal organisation, all represent ways used by the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo to create a dialogue. One estimation is that 1200 citizens responded to the inquiry, and when at its highest peak the environmental representatives-project engaged around 120 people. However, as for the remittance, as we saw above, not so many responded. The Environmental Director of the municipality is also very satisfied, summarising his view of the dialogue process arguing that it was very successful considering the resources available. He especially points to the importance of the dialogue created with the school. One leading politician instead points to the crucial role played by the inquiry, from which a lot of opinions that then constituted the basis for the document, stemmed. As was the case for the transparency above, it seems like the engaged activists in society experienced different situations when it comes to the possibilities for dialoguing. One activist is rather pleased with the way things were, while another is disappointed by the small role his association was given in the process. The industry however, seems more agreed when concluding that not a lot of companies were involved in a dialogue with the municipality. Instead, it has been stated that an already finished idea, the document that went out for consideration, was presented to them.

Inclusiveness: When it comes to the success of getting the voice of the people into the final document the municipal officials are a little bit more cautious in their assessment. This of course mainly as a result of the fact that the document presented by the municipal officials was not approved by a majority of the politicians. Instead the passed document became a summary of the document that was sent out for consideration to the society. In this way the passed document has been described as a non-democratic, political product. Furthermore, some of the formulations were changed by the politicians. Hence, “shall” became “ought to”, and the final document, it has been stated by the former Agenda 21-coordinator, ought to have been more offensive and more directed towards agreed upon goals for the future than it actually was in the end. Another voice states that the passed version is tame and not very ambitious. In this context there is also a call for a new sharper version of the local document to be agreed upon. Thus, the municipal officials are rather disappointed with the passed document. On the other hand, taking into consideration the hostile political climate at the time, the former Agenda 21-coordinator is content with the fact that there was a document passed at all. Moreover, the politicians were more or less fooled, since both the thicker original document and a summary of the responses from the broad inquiry, were put as appendixes to the passed document. In this way they are juridically binding too. Also the former Environmental Director of the municipality is content with the fact that a document was passed at all, stating that it was a good compromise. One of the leading politicians in the work with the document also recognises that the politicians came to influence the document, so that the society was left behind in a way. Also one of the activists points in the same direction when concluding that the political parties were the most important actors in the formulation of the document. As for the industry and business, it does not seem to have a real opinion in the matter. However, also silence says something about the way of the world.

3.2.4.3 Analysis and Discussion: The Three Dimensions of Participation

Transparency: Lund municipality has had a very broad process going on when it comes to referring the document to the society for consideration. Sending the document out for a broad consideration automatically means that a lot of instances get to see it. This is turn, is one guarantee for a high level of openness. This constitutes a crucial factor when assessing the transparency-dimension. It was also possible for the citizens to order a copy of the document through the newspaper “Agenda 21”, handed out to all households in the municipality. Furthermore, as we have seen, a summary of the document was also published in “Agenda 21”. Also other ways of informing the society were used by the municipality. Thus, the forum-groups as well as the industrial Agenda 21-forum also played important roles in the process. This gives a
very high ranking on the transparency-level, even though we have seen how some rather critical voices have made themselves heard when assessing the transparency in Lund.

As for Sjöbo municipality, it also referred their document for consideration. However the remittance-process was not as extensive as the process in Lund was, and the replies were sparse. The inquiry effort in Sjöbo municipality was very admirable, but was not focused on informing about the document in particular, but more generally on asking about Agenda 21 and the environment. Also other measures taken give the picture that the efforts at the time were more directed towards the spreading of a general knowledge of Agenda 21-issues, rather than towards informing the community specifically on the document. Thus, the level of transparency seems to have been lower in Sjöbo than in Lund.

**Dialogue:** The 51 replies from the consideration-round are bearing witness of a strong dialogue taking place in Lund municipality. These replies are here seen as fundamental in proving that there actually existed an exchange of ideas and views about the document. Furthermore the efforts in the form of the creation of the public and municipal forum-groups as well as the formation of the Agenda 21-forum for the big corporations in Lund points in the same direction. The conclusion must be that there was a rather strong dialogue going on in Lund municipality. Even so, critical voices seem to suggest that there have been some problems when it comes to the penetrating skills of the Agenda 21-group. Furthermore, somewhat more than 100 persons engaged in the forum-groups is not a high number for a municipality as big as Lund.

As for Sjöbo, again, the inquiry done by the personnel was very admirable, and of course resulted in a strong dialogue with the citizens. Over 1200 respondents in such a small municipality as Sjöbo bear witness of a very successful communication. The municipality also worked hard with reaching schools and organisations. Having as many as 120 environmental representatives in such a small municipality is also impressive. Especially if compared to Lund, who had around 250, since Lund is a much larger municipality. The overall work however, seems sometimes to have been more general Agenda 21-efforts, rather than efforts for creating a dialogue on the document. On the other hand, a dialogue is always a dialogue, and obviously some of the ideas and proposals left to the Agenda 21-group through the inquiry have constituted the base for the document. Furthermore, the actual suggestions and ideas from the respondents of the inquiry were put as an appendix in the finally passed Agenda 21-document. Hence, Sjöbo ranks a little bit higher than Lund on the dialogue-level. This is mainly due to the very extensive inquiry conducted before formulating the document. However, the levels of the dialogue for both municipalities are lower than their success on the transparency-continuum.

**Inclusiveness:** In Lund, as we have seen above, some rather fundamental problems occurred when the views of the forum-groups should have been incorporated into the final document. The two processes of creating a document within the municipality and the work of the forum-groups with their own “documents of consensus”, which then were supposed to influence the local Agenda 21-document, were unsynchronised. When the municipal document went out for consideration the forum-groups were not finished with their “documents”. Furthermore, it seems like only a few politicians took part in the meeting where the forum-groups accounted for their views and ideas. As seen above, it has also been said about the final document that it is a political document. Lund gets a rather low ranking on the inclusiveness-level.

Also Sjöbo municipality experienced some problems when working with the formulation of the document. There was a hard bargaining process with the politicians before any document could be decided upon. In the end, the document that was accepted by the politicians was just a politically acceptable summary of the initial document made by the municipal officials, who were working with Agenda 21 in the municipality. The much thicker initial document was put as an appendix to the summary. The resulting accepted final product is thus a compromise. However, the results of the extensive inquiry made before the document was formulated, also got a place in
the appendix, which is a real success. Here, the views of ordinary people, the citizens, actually were passed in the municipal parliament. Without getting these juridically binding appendixes into the passed document, Sjöbo’s ranking on the inclusiveness-dimension would have been much lower. Whether this was a direct consequence of the fact that the Agenda 21-coordinator at the time had a juridical background (see for ex. Cornmark 2000a) will be left unsaid here. However, considering the whole picture gives Sjöbo a higher ranking on the inclusiveness-dimension than Lund gets. In concluding, it can however be stated that both municipalities rank lower on the inclusiveness-continuum, than on both the transparency- and the dialogue-continuum. Taking into consideration the fact that the municipalities also rank lower on the dialogue-continuum than on the transparency-continuum, this suggests that the higher the level of participation is, the lower will the level of success be. Not surprisingly, this points to the fact that it is harder to become successful when it comes to dialoguing or to working with inclusiveness, than when working with increasing transparency. Below the results of the analysis are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. The Three Dimensions of Participation.

1. TRANSPARENCY: Information to society on the local Agenda 21

   2. DIALOGUE: Dialogue with society, views and ideas from society

   3. INCLUSIVENESS: Society has played an important part in a broad consultation

   source: adapted from Bro et al. 1998:156

3.3 General Discussion and Final Analysis

As for the final assessment, this will take into consideration the overall situations in which the two municipalities have been working with the Agenda 21 during the whole period since the work was initiated. Thus, the work with the local Agenda 21-documents, assessed according to the three dimensions of participation above, as well as the situations experienced by the two municipalities when it comes to both methods used for creating a participatory Agenda 21-process and problems and impediments met in this pursuit of mobilising participation, will be taken into consideration. In this way, all the research-questions of the thesis are dealt with in this final assessment of the overall success of the mobilisation of participation.

One of the obvious observations that comes to mind when making this overall assessment is the enormous differences experienced by the two municipalities when it comes to financial and personnel resources. Adding to this the major differences experienced by the two municipalities concerning the political climate they have had to work within gives us a rather clear picture. The overall judgement of the pursuits of the two municipalities when it comes to mobilising
participation in the local Agenda 21-work will therefore be in favour of Sjöbo municipality. Thus, the overall success of the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo is exceeding the overall success of the Agenda 21-group in Lund. In this context however it should be recognised that Lund’s Agenda 21 group actually presented a somewhat broader spectrum of methods for mobilising participation than did Sjöbo’s. Even when having said this, the above judgement seems justified also when studying the three dimensions of participation in close. Here Sjöbo matches the results of Lund, despite their disadvantageous conditions relative to Lund. Thus, even though the relevant conditions in Sjöbo, in the forms of small financial and personnel resources and a harsh political climate, have been much tougher to work under than the more affluent conditions experienced by Lund, the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo has been able to match the efforts made by Lund’s Agenda 21-group. Hence, it seems as if financial and personnel resources and the political climate are not always the limiting factors in the Agenda 21-work at the local level, at least when it comes to the participatory dimension. Supporting this view, it has been concluded by Hjorth that a lot of money is not a guarantee for success when it comes to Agenda 21. Comparing 20 Scanian municipalities and their work with Agenda 21 has shown that Sjöbo is the one municipality that has had the smallest resources available for Agenda 21, while Lund has had the most extensive budget of all the municipalities. Despite of this, Hjorth concludes, in much the same vein as this thesis does, that the Agenda 21-work in Sjöbo has been more successful than in Lund. The main reason for this, according to Hjorth, is the broad inquiry that was conducted with over 1000 inhabitants, which resulted in a lot of important contacts that have been instrumental as sources for new ideas. Furthermore, Hjorth summarises, Sjöbo has realised that the Agenda 21-work should be seen as a process (Hjorth 1998).

In trying to summarise this discussion, and the findings of the thesis as a whole, we will use a continuum showing the level of overall success in mobilising participation within the local community for the two municipalities. Thus, when taking into consideration the overall picture presented of the two municipalities in this thesis the overall conclusion will be that the Agenda 21-group of Sjöbo municipality has been more successful than that of Lund municipality when it comes to the participatory dimension of the local Agenda 21. This assessment is presented in figure 4 below.

Figure 4. The Level of Success in Mobilising Participation.

If we also chose to bear in mind capabilities shown by the personnel in the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo municipality, when it comes to personal engagement, inventiveness, creativity and commitment, the overall assessment seems even more justified. In this way this thesis will argue that it has been these capabilities that have filled the gap created by the large differences in resources available between the two Agenda 21-groups. Thus, without these capabilities, Sjöbo’s Agenda 21-group would not have been able to match the performance of the Agenda 21-group in Lund. In this way it has been proved that if you do not have the resources to “hire” someone else to do things for you, you have to turn inwards to yourself and your own human capital to find the solutions. Furthermore, you have to be creative also when it comes to turning outwards in search for funding in society in large. These strategies have been instrumental in Sjöbo. As for the importance of the personal characteristics of the personnel in the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo,
Hjorth also provides support for this conclusion when he asserts that the right person in the right position can be a crucial factor (Hjorth 1998). In Sjöbo municipality it seems as if especially one person has played an instrumental role in the work with Agenda 21. Thus, his creativity and engagement, in combination with the inventiveness of the whole Agenda 21-group, have constituted a winning recipe. In taking this reasoning one step further this instrumental individual also proves that having a natural science-background does not in itself represent a crucial factor in the local Agenda 21-work. Instead, his background within marketing has allowed for both creativity and inventiveness to play important roles within the local Agenda 21-work. Thus, this thesis wants to put forward the view that, for a local Agenda 21-group to function well, there is a need for multidisciplinarity. In this way it is believed that a group represented by individuals that have their backgrounds within different fields constitutes a prerequisite for addressing the vast environmental problems met in today’s societies.

Finally, even if it has been pointed to above, a note on the method used in making this final overall assessment is in place. It can thus not be enough emphasised that what is actually assessed in Figure 4 is the success in mobilising participation in the local Agenda 21-work, considering the overall situation experienced by the two municipalities. Thus, the conclusion here is that, considering the extensive problems met by Sjöbo’s Agenda 21-group in their efforts, this group has been more successful than the Agenda 21-group in Lund, considering the latter’s rather pleasant situation when it comes to problems and impediments. If we were to take away the larger picture, and instead focus only on the success as for the three dimensions of participation, the successes of the two Agenda 21-groups would probably have been closer to each other than they actually are in Figure 4. Thus, in showing Figure 4, we do not suggest that the local Agenda 21-work in Lund municipality has been a failure. Instead, it is easy to draw attention to successful features of these efforts too. For once, it appears as if the Agenda 21-group in Lund has presented a broader spectrum of methods for mobilising participation than did Sjöbo’s Agenda 21-group. Furthermore, as we have seen above, 10 000 people visited the Agenda 21-booth in one (!) year. More than 5000 municipal employees were educated on Agenda 21 during 1996, and several numbers of a newspaper on Agenda 21 have been issued and sent out to all the households in the municipality.

An important last note in this context is that working with Agenda 21 in the municipalities is however not a matter of competing. Instead, it is an ongoing process. In taking part in this process, the municipalities are supposed to learn from and support each other.

4 Conclusions

- The main methods used in the process of mobilising the community for participation in the local Agenda 21-work in the two studied municipalities are rather similar, spanning from the publication of information material and booklets to exhibitions, educational efforts and the creation of forums for discussion. However, the Agenda 21-group of Lund seems to have been working in a broader way than the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo, which instead has been focusing on making one big impact every year. A more general conclusion is that both municipalities have been working mostly with information spreading, education and discussion, rather than with more concrete projects.

- When concluding on the main problems and impediments met in the process of mobilising the community for participation in the local Agenda 21-work the two studied municipalities account for somewhat different experiences. Thus, the major problems met by the Agenda 21-group in Lund seem to have been the absence of national level initiatives and support and the difficulties in engaging the municipal inhabitants in large. The Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo however, have been working under tougher conditions, in the forms of small financial and personnel resources and a harsh political climate.
In judging the success of the two municipal processes in formulating their local Agenda 21-documents/programmes this thesis shows that as for the transparency, Lund has been very successful. In assessing the dialoguing skills the conclusion is that the two Agenda 21-groups have been achieving almost the same level of success, with a plus for the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo. As for the inclusiveness, the Agenda 21-group in Sjöbo has been more successful than Lund’s Agenda 21-group.

In an overall assessment of the two municipal Agenda 21-processes, taking into consideration all aspects taken up in this thesis, it can be concluded that Sjöbo’s Agenda 21-group has been more successful. The reason for this is that it has been able to match, and sometimes even outshine, the achievements of Lund’s Agenda 21-group, even if it has been experiencing much more disadvantageous conditions than the latter.

Some more general conclusions can be drawn too:

- This thesis has shown that available personal and financial resources, as well as political climate, are not always the limiting factors in local Agenda 21-work. The case of Sjöbo shows that with a strong engagement and a lot of fantasy, inventiveness and creativity one can reach high goals when it comes to spreading awareness and mobilising the community for the local Agenda 21-work. This can be achieved without having large resources, and when working in a harsh political climate.

- As a consequence of the above reasoning, it can also be argued that not only are large resources not always an advantage. Instead, small resources and a harsh political climate can give incentives for the development of other critical factors such as inventiveness, engagement and creativity. It can even be suggested that these factors have a stronger influence in small and poor rather than in larger and more affluent municipalities. Thus, with less financial resources the incentive for turning to “alternative” factors becomes larger. These factors might not be deemed as important in larger municipalities with more resources. In this way we have seen how the Agenda 21-group of Sjöbo municipality, in its search for funding has had to turn outwards to other sectors of the municipal organisation, which have more resources. In doing this, it seems as if it has come further towards achieving one of the major goals of the Agenda 21-document, namely the collaboration between different sectors of society. In this way it can work with the environmental problems in a more holistic way.

- An extension of the above reasoning also suggests that the right man at the right place can play a crucial role in the participatory efforts in the local Agenda 21-work. In this way this thesis has shown that in a small municipality with scarce resources, the creativity and engagement of specific individuals can fill the gaps that can appear between this “weak” municipality and more affluent municipalities.
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Appendix 1

Deep Interviews: Local Agenda 21 in two Swedish Municipalities

A. Organisation

- Taking the Agenda 21 as the point of departure, how does the municipal organisation look?
- Is the work with Agenda 21 spread over different sectors of the municipality or is it undertaken within one specific sector, or is it separated from the other activities? Is there any collaboration on Agenda 21 between different sectors of the municipality?
- How many persons are engaged in the Agenda 21-work? What are their titles? Does an Agenda 21-coordinator exist?

B. Participation

- Which forms/forums/methods have been used when it comes to creating a dialogue with, and to mobilise citizens, citizen-groups, industry etc.?
- How has the participation functioned? Which have the problems/impediments been?
- Who has dominated the Agenda 21-process? Industry, citizens, citizen-groups/associations, politicians or municipal officials? Whose interests have been prioritised?
- Is it your opinion that the citizens have had any direct influence over the political decisions in the process, or is the influence only indirect?
- Have a lot of actors or a few actors been involved in the process?
- Has the engagement of the citizens been largely passive (Information etc.) or active (discussion-groups etc.)?

Summary: Has the pursuit of mobilising the citizens gone well or not?

C. Resources

- From where have the resources used in the Agenda 21-work come from? The Local Investment Programme?
- How much resources have been used? Budget?

D. Politicians

- What have the opinions of the municipal politicians on Agenda 21 been?
- Has there been any shifts in regime that has influenced this?
- In general, have the politicians been listening to the citizens or have they taken the “wrong” decisions?

E. The Local Agenda 21-document

- Which focus has the local Agenda 21-document in your municipality? Which dimension(s) of sustainability have/has been emphasised? Economic, social or ecological?

F. Integration

- Have you experienced a good collaboration with the regional and the national levels in the Agenda 21-work? Has there been any problems or impediments concerning this?
Appendix 2

Telephone and E-mail Interviews: Participation in the Process of Formulating the Agenda 21-document

1. Transparency

How successful was the municipality when it comes to spreading information to the society (citizens, associations, organisations, industry) on the local Agenda 21-document? Estimate your answer on a scale and motivate:

Not at all successful – Rather successful – Very successful

Which forms and methods were used in this pursuit?

2. Dialogue

How successful was the municipality when it comes to creating a dialogue with the society and to take in ideas/proposals from society, when working with the document?

Estimate your answer on a scale and motivate:

Not at all successful – Rather successful – Very successful

Which forms and methods were used in this pursuit?

3. Inclusiveness

How successful was the municipality when it comes to getting the society to play an important role in a broad consultation according the formulation of the document? (Is the voice of the society heard in the document?)

Estimate your answer on a scale and motivate:

Not at all successful – Rather successful – Very successful

Which forms and methods were used in this pursuit?