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STRIVING FOR RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE THROUGH CONSULTATIVE POLICY MAKING

Regional hearings in the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work

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ABSTRACT:

The main theme for this study is participation as an element of public policy making and more widely, a cornerstone of responsive governance. The main purpose for this research is then to gain a wider understanding of the essential elements of consultative policy making, its possibilities to enhance better responsive in public policy making and public governance. Via a case example, the various elements of responsiveness both in policy formulation phase and in the policy contents are pointed out. The research questions of this thesis are: What are the characteristics of consultative policy-making? What is the significance of consultative policy-making in terms of contributing to better responsiveness in the field of public administration?, and How is responsiveness in the policy-formulation process and in the policy contents perceived among a) the stakeholder groups?, b) the policy formulators? These questions are further analysed by conducting both extensive academic literature review and themed key actor interviews to both the representatives of the policy makers and the stakeholder groups attending to the regional hearings in compiling the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work.

Based on literature and conducted interviews, consultative policy making can be characterised as a deliberative process which enables citizen- and stakeholder participation. Through well-defined structure and clear objectives the policymakers gather essential information to make policy decisions. The discussion thus concentrates on few, carefully selected themes. Consultative policy making can serve as a tool for informing, negotiating, persuading, motivating, networking or building up a common set of values and preferences. It enables reciprocal exchange of thoughts between policymakers and participants, although the emphasis is on administration listening to the stakeholders. Consultations can be built on wide surveys, citizens' panels, public hearings and e-governing tools as well as exploiting the everyday contacts with the clientele of administration – the citizenry and stakeholder groups' representatives.

When public administration is being responsive, it is reacting to the various needs stemming from the surrounding society. However, responding to these aspirations means that some kinds on value- and other judgements need to be made in order to decide, to whom the government is being responsive. In the case study, both the policy makers' and stakeholder groups' representatives thought that the need for this national plan exists, as does the aspiration to bring mental health and substance abuse fields closer together. In general, the hearing procedure and structure were commended, and the regional hearings acted as field's inner networking opportunity. However, these two parties saw the target group of the final policy plan differently, and more accurate information about the proceeding of the formulation process and the actual possibilities to impact on the final outcome were longed for. Furthermore, both the policy makers' and stakeholder groups' representatives acknowledged that although the web-based discussion forum offered, in theory, a possibility for anyone interested to comment on policy themes, the incorporation of citizens and individual patients or clients into policymaking process should become much more active and further developed. There is a need for establishing more collaborative settings of formulating future policy frameworks. In this research, the levels of responsiveness appearing in consultative policy making are finally divided into three (somewhat overlapping) categories, according to the width and extensiveness of each level: macro-, meso- and micro level responsiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main theme for this study is participation as an element of public policy making and more widely, a cornerstone of responsive governance. Since there are many ways, through which citizens and stakeholders can participate and have an influence on society, my study is particularly interested in what I call "consultative policy making". Therefore, although there exists a great variety of both direct and indirect ways for stakeholders and interest groups to contribute societal decision-making processes, this research is primarily targeted on consultation. The assumption is, that by enabling citizens and stakeholders to participate in the policy-formulation process and asking their opinions on particular matters, public administration can become more responsive and thus, better targeted on current needs of the people they serve. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 94–96; Niemi & Salminen 2005: 13; Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 109– 110.) Public service and public administration in general have been accused on being too technocratic, rigid and not taking sufficiently into account citizens' preferences. Moreover, policy planning has been a top-down process where politicians and civil servants together define the limits and contents of nation-wide public developmental needs. These needs have not always stemmed from existing realities among people but more from economic guidelines and international politics. (Niemi-Iilahti & Niemelä 2001: 12–16; Oikeusministeriö 2005: 83–85.)

Although organizing consultative hearings, in which citizens and stakeholders can express their opinions on matters defined beforehand, is a big step in the right direction, it would be interesting to examine, what is the actual impact of these consultations in terms of making policy processes more receptive. Thus, my research concentrates on analyzing consultative hearings as a special form of participation. By taking into account both sides of the story –i.e. the expectations and anticipations of the participants on the one hand, and those of the policy-formulators on the other, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the profound relevance of these consultations in terms of responsive governance. However, from general experience in organizing public consultative hearings, it is expected that these events may not "lure" the average citizen to tell

his or her view on how mental health and substance abuse work should be organized (Frederickson 1980; Chi 1999; Yang & Callahan 2007). Thus, a wide survey might not be suitable way to study the phenomenon of consultative policy-making in the context of upcoming Finnish national plan for mental health and substance abuse work.

This has led me to decide that instead of drawing up a survey for the participants of these consultations to inquire their views on the significance of that event as such, I aim for analysis with more depth. This means that based on literature and guided by the theoretical framework, I will interview both the policy-makers of this national plan as well as different stakeholder groups' representatives. This qualitative analysis will broaden our understanding on consultative policy-making as such and clarify, whether or not organizing these kind of hearings will enhance wider participation and lead to more responsive governance.

1.1. Background for the study

Since I started my internship in July 2007 in the Ostrobothnia-project (a ten-year project for developing mental health and substance abuse work within the hospital districts of Vaasa, South Ostrobothnia and Central Ostrobothnia), mental health and substance use service provision and structures have become fields that interest me. When talking to different actors that work in this arena, it became obvious that prevalent status needs developing. The service users are not being heard and the service system itself does not function in a well-targeted, integrated way. When I heard that this kind of national plan for organizing mental health and substance abuse work in the near future was under preparation and that the intention was to improve society's members' chances on making themselves heard in it, I became interested in analyzing these particular consultations.

As I got through material on this national plan, it became obvious that the participatory approach was, above all, consultative. The hearings were to proceed according to a structured plan and clear order of subjects under discussion. This kind of setting differs

from spontaneous, citizen-led initiatives suggested to policy-makers and politicians. Rather, consultative policy-making relies heavily on discussions and dialogue around specifically defined themes. The consultation process as such is then a series of events designed to enlighten policy-formulators on the needs of the target group on certain matters.

My personal interest towards studying participatory issues has further increased via the existing academic educational surroundings, revolving around themes of citizen participation at my "home department". The Faculty of Public Administration at the University of Vaasa has commenced in 2008 a three-year research project *"Citizens First? Ethical Government in Terms of Citizens"* with funding from the Academy of Finland. The objective of this wide research project is to broaden the theoretical understanding of administrative ethics as well the practical application of ethics issues in the society. With the help of this project, public sector organisations have better possibilities to exercise their managerial powers ethically. Furthermore, the ethical codifications for the government are to be defined. (University of Vaasa 2009.) The basic report of this research project was recently published (Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009), so in the final conclusive chapter, some similarities in findings between that report and my thesis are briefly described.

1.2. Research problems and the purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine consultative policy-making as a means to enhance stakeholder participation and responsiveness in governance. The study will be based on both domestic and international literature and scientific articles on citizen participation, responsiveness, consultation and policy-making. The nature of this study is qualitative, and the objective is to broaden our understanding on consultative policy making, its characteristics and contribution to better responsiveness and wider participation in the field of public administration. The case of this study, the regional hearings in the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work, will become analyzed through conducting themed key actor interviews.

Themed interview is a semi-structured form of interview. This means that although there are pre-set themes and specifying questions, the order of the queries can vary and there is always the possibility to ask some additional questions. This flexibility allows the interviewer to have a sort of dialogue with the chosen interviewees. Simultaneously, this method enables the voice of the interviewed to become heard. Themed interviews take into account the important element of people's interpretations on experienced events as well as the fact that these interpretations are born in social contacts with other people. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 47–48.) Detailed information about the framework of the themed interviews as well as the interviewed people can be found as appendixes of this study.

By conducting themed interviews of both policy-makers and those who participate in the consultations, the significance of these consultative hearings will become analyzed. The intention is to find out, whether different parties have differing expectations (realistic or not) regarding to the actual influential possibilities for the representatives who participate in the consultations. The research problems are set in a way that broadens our understanding on consultative policy-making and its' key components: participation and responsiveness. The assumption is that by taking all the relevant stakeholders along the process this can lead to a better targeted, more responsive final policy plan (Arnstein 1969; Barber 2003; Irvin & Stansbury 2004). The themes of interest in this research relate to the characteristics of these kinds of deliberative meetings and how do a) the participants themselves and b) policy formulators see the relevance of these consultative meetings in terms of increasing the potential responsiveness of the governance. The main research questions can be summed up as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of consultative policy-making?

2. What is the significance of consultative policy-making in terms of contributing to better responsiveness in the field of public administration?

3. How is responsiveness in the policy-formulation process and in the policy contents perceived among

   a) the stakeholder groups?

   b) the policy formulators?

1.3. Execution of the study

This study is constructed on the basis of a) building up a theoretical framework for participation, responsiveness and consultative policy making and b) conducting themed interviews guided by the theoretical foundation. The main purpose for this research is to gain a wider understanding of the essential elements of consultative policy making, its possibilities to enhance better responsive in public policy making and public governance, and finally, via a case example point out the various elements of responsiveness both in policy formulation phase and in the policy contents. The second chapter constitutes a basis for participatory approach in general and a foundation for the importance of stakeholder participation more specifically. As incorporating different constituent groups and stakeholders' representatives into policy making begins from the very idea of participation, this perspective is crucial in building up a framework for the following chapters. Participation is a central idea of many of the "New" administrative doctrines. Moreover, the variation in incorporating citizens and stakeholders into administrative processes is wide, so it is acknowledged that consultation and developing e-democracy are merely small parts of the overarching idea of participation.

The third main chapter examines the idea of responsiveness. Since being responsive is reacting to the needs and aspirations stemming from the society, the important question is then, to whom administration is being responsive. Furthermore, the ideas of common public good and different perceptions of responsiveness are studied. Responsiveness is also closely linked to administration acting responsibly, and the thought of moving from responsiveness towards close collaboration is further presented. In the fourth chapter, consultation as a means to formulate public policies is analyzed. Consultation from the

public administration's point of view will be looked at more carefully, and the general outline for the idea of consultative policy making is formulated.

The fifth chapter then presents, what consultative policy making could mean in practice by studying the regional hearings in formulating the Finnish national plan for mental health and substance abuse work. Through themed key actor interviews the characteristics of this kind of policy process as well as its potential responsiveness will be disentangled, and the possible similarities and discrepancies between the policy makers and the stakeholder representatives' insights in terms of responsiveness will be discovered. Finally, some conclusive remarks will be made on the basic elements of consultative policy making, the potentials that it possess in enhancing responsive governance – both from the viewpoints of the policy formulators and the participants of the regional consultative hearings.

2. THE IDEA OF PARTICIPATION

Promoting citizen- and stakeholder participation in public policy- and decision making is widely recognized as one of the cornerstones of modern-day good governance. The idea of good governance contains a combination of different traits. Among these are, inter alia, the obeisance to the rule of law, free elections, freedom of speech and assembly, citizen participation, governance responsibility, openness, transparency and partnership. These values then guide the processes, through which administration is being carried out. Moreover, the reasoning behind much appreciated involvement of the people has to do with themes such as arranging governance ethically, giving the citizenry education on where and how to participate as well as creating circumstances for reciprocal learning to take place. By enabling citizens to participate in public policy-making, many beneficial phenomena can be outlined: citizens feel like their aspirations are being heard and taken into account, the overall quality of public policy increases through broadened base of information and offered solutions in use, the group of those implementing policies becomes larger, participatory approach will lead to more responsive and open governance, citizens are more likely to trust their government, new forms of co-operation are being generated and the overall level of well-informed public becomes higher. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 94–96; Niemi & Salminen 2005: 13; Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 109–110.)

The basis for citizen and stakeholder participation can be found in the Finnish legislation: for instance, the constitution (731/1999) guarantees the freedom of speech, the right to receive information about the records of the officials as well as the rights to participate and influence on public decision-making (VM 2005: 15). The term "participation" means that someone is taking part. This is then to say that the participant has a role to play in certain activity, and that this person taking part actually contributes to the final outcome. Furthermore, participation can be divided into *actual* and *perceived* participation according to the effect that the participatory activity has on the ultimate decision. If participation is perceived, this means that the individual feels that his or her input has been important in the process, whether or not this is the case. In turn, some peo-

ple might even feel that they do not have any significance in the final outcome, even if they actually had. In order for actual participation to happen, there needs to be both genuine opportunities to participate and the willingness to take advantage of these possibilities. Moreover, participation can be categorized as either *formal* or *informal*. An example of formal participation could be that of voting in elections, while informal participation is carried through individual relations. (Vroom & Jago 1988: 15–18.)

Eklund (1999: 34) presents Oakley's thoughts on participation in general. Oakley has concluded a typology of participation that is based on the purpose of participation, i.e. whether enabling citizens to make a contribution is means or an ends. When people are being heard in order to achieve a certain goal, then the final outcome of the participatory act is more important than the actual event of consultation. However, if participation is regarded as the ultimate ends itself and if with wider involvement it is possible to develop the process, then the outcome is of less importance. The latter type offers a useful insight into consultative policy-making.

According to Frederickson (1980: 67) the participatory approach to developing and formulating public services means also confrontation of different actors. Although public servants might know that citizens are not satisfied with the range and form of services available, confrontation is good because it brings administration closer to the grass-roots level and to the people it is (or at least should be) designed to. Slowly some sort of mutual agreement will be developed and best possible, although not perfect, services can be provided. Thus, the key for becoming more responsive is the ability to change and to adapt functions if needed.

As the traditional participation through political action has decreased, new forms of making a contribution to one's neighbourhood and community issues have emerged. For instance, the concepts of e-democracy and electronic participation have brought opportunities to attend to people's homes and nearby surroundings. Moreover, people influence strongly through their reference organisations, such as 3rd sector bereaved fellowships. The roles of active citizens are thus myriad, so being active through electoral processes is just one manifestation of it. Furthermore, being active member of the com-

munity can mean also promoting values such as human rights and social responsibility, the democratic rule of law as well as communality, tolerance and empathy towards variety in society. Taking people actively along with all decision- and policy making processes as partners is simultaneously promoting the very idea of active citizenship. (Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 27–28.)

2.1. Theoretical framework for citizen and stakeholder participation

Although it is nowadays uncommon to find democratic systems where there are only few opportunities for the citizenry to make a contribution to public policy formulation, this has not always been the case. As new doctrines in public administration (such as New Public Management, New Public Administration and New Public Service) have emerged, it is useful to examine more carefully, how the administrative branch has evolved throughout time.

Although it is somewhat misleading to talk about all the "New" approaches on public administration, governance and public services, they have something new to bring to the table as regards to the "Old" versions. However, we can not examine new ways to organize public administration and its service structures if we do not first understand their predecessors. The old (or perhaps a better way to call it would be traditional) public administration has several distinctive elements. First, it has focused on providing services through well-defined and regulated public institutions. Second, these services are designed to be put into action in a way that serves a specific, politically defined goal. The civil servants and public administrators function mainly as implementers, not so much as governance formulators. The accountability of these administrative practitioners is thus mostly to democratically elected politicians and not as much to the citizens as today's insight into good governance assumes. Via rational and efficient conduct of policy implementation, the traditional way of organizing public administration operates quite hierarchically and in top-driven manner. Since it is assumed that public institutions are closed systems, citizen participation in everyday policy-formatting has been limited, if not non-existent. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 11–12.)

2.1.1. New Public Management – reducing costs through effective management

New Public Management (the abbreviation NPM used from here on) criticizes the way that the government runs public sector. The basic assumption has been that the size of the public sector has become too big and that mandatory services could be provided in a much more cost-efficient way. Furthermore, it is stated that the more private sector-like management models can be transmitted to the public sector, the better. NPM originates from the Great Britain, from where the doctrine has disseminated its principles also to Australia, United States and New Zealand. Although the first signs of the NPM were to be noticed as early as in the 60s, it was not until the late 70s and early 80s that this doctrine gained wider consciousness among politicians and governments. (Lane 2000: 3– 17.)

Traditional New Public Management has been criticized of making maybe too simplistic assumptions on replacing public sector's procedures and practices with those of private sector models. Contracting, decentralizing and liberalizing administration are all characteristics of the traditional NPM, but in the 21st century people have started to long for something more. This modernization of NPM thus brings to the table a phenomenon such as updating services to better meet the needs and expectations of the intended clientele. The concept of citizenship and active participation are then in the centre for developing policy-making processes in future public administration. Although the public sector is still encouraged to strive for effectiveness and to allocate efficiently the scarce resources, flexibility and responsiveness are also seen as core elements for public sector success. While opting for economically sustainable ways to deliver public services, it is still possible (and recommended) to listen to citizens' opinions on policy development. Decision-making will move from institutional co-operation towards relationship-building through dialogue and incorporating public aspirations in planning from the very beginning. (Newman 2002: 78–87.)

2.1.2. New Public Administration – being responsive to the clientele

New Public Administration (NPA), as we understand it today, can be seen as a product of the late 1970s. It was the time when issues such as ethics, values, responsiveness and good governance were emphasized more than before. Furthermore, the conference of "young Public Administrationists" that took place in September 1968 initiated the debate on the concepts and perceptions of NPA. This particular conference has since been also referred as the Minnowbrook conference, which has served as an umbrella term for all themes concerning the birth of conscious aspirations toward this "new" way of organizing public administration. As a characteristic feature, new public administration brought social, economic and physical equity to the table as an equal partner in line with those elements conventionally seen as the core of public administration: cost-efficiency and economic action. Instead of pondering whether or not public services are delivered in a way that optimizes the scarce resources, the administrators and public servants are now challenged to deliver these services sustainably and in socially equal manner, fostering responsiveness to the people. New public administration challenges the traditional bureaucratic, almost technocratic-driven administrative model by enhancing power distribution to citizens, involving the "clientele" in the decision-making processes and emphasizing the broadened view of increasing responsibility. (La Porte 1971: 32–48; Waldo 1971: xiii–xvi; White 1971: 64–66; Frederickson 1980: 1–12.)

Biller (1971:103–106) analyses the concept of publicness in New Public Administration. When practitioners talk about something being public, what are their perceptions and preferences on, how "public" is defined? Traditionally public organizations have been those that have the mandate of making quite independent (even coercive) decisions that deal with citizens' everyday life. This sovereign power and guarding the public interest have been the characteristics of "old" public administration. However, as services are being produced through private and third sector organizations, these boundaries have been blurred. Instead, in the framework of the NPA, the word public could then be better defined via the specific relationship that these governmental representatives (i.e. public actors) have with the rest of the society. The dynamic nature of the public field (either following the electoral cycle or the transitions occurring in a society) is the best

single defining theme of public administration. NPA thus emphasizes organizations' adaptation capacity and readiness for change.

2.1.3. New Public Service – building a relationship with the people

The roots of the New Public Service (or the NPS) can be found through examining theories of democratic citizenship, community and civil society models, new public administration as well as postmodern public administration. In different democratic citizenship theories the emphasis is naturally on, how to get people participate more actively on policy formulation and decision-making. Although some of this activation is based on legal definitions (such as citizens' rights and obligations qualified in legislation), the major concern in citizenship theories is in empowering people to make a difference among their communities and broader contexts. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 27–30.)

The New Public Service values citizen and client participation in the service-formulation procedure. The main theme is to serve citizens, not customers, which means that instead of merely responding to different needs and demands, the administrative branch should *build a relationship* with the people. Although each person ought to be treated and respected as an individual, the overarching reason to conduct specific services is, above all, public interest. The ideal situation would be, if civil service became actual *service*, not just a means to implement politics. Bringing services closer to the people through decentralization processes can be one solution to bettering accessibility and effectiveness. The decentralisation of services, while granting the civil servants more autonomy, and thus more accountability, could pave the way for more responsive service solutions. (Epstein 1990: 38–66; Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 42–43.)

New public service owes a lot to the ideas of civil society and community as channels to increase human contacts in administrative processes. The community could then act as a mediator between the state bureaucrats and the common people when plans and strategies are being planned and implemented. Civil society has the potential of strengthening democracies by interlinking actors from all social spheres and ideologies. Through mu-

tual exchange of thoughts a higher level of social trust and consistency between community's actors can be attained. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 32–35.)

2.2. Citizen participation

Barber (2003: 155) states that "*to be a citizen is to participate in a certain conscious fashion that presumes awareness of and engagement in activity with others*". Moreover, he continues that while citizens are attending to public policy formulation and pursuing their own interests, they are simultaneously formulating a group, a community that is in charge of its own governance. Thus, the concepts of participation and community are the underlying features of citizenship.

Arnstein (1969) finds that the question about citizen participation is inevitably a question about the amount of power that is re-allocated to them. Moreover, by taking part in societal policy making, the people occupy an efficient tool to make sure that benefits and public services are produced and shared in a sustainable way. However, different forms of citizen participation vary quite a lot in terms of, how much actual power is given to the ordinary people taking part in decision making processes. The traditional classification of citizen participation separates the forms of citizen involvement into actual citizen power, the token forms of participation and the forms through which no actual power is granted to the people. This so called *ladder of citizen participation* begins from manipulation and therapy, which are at the bottom of non-participatory approach. When moving upwards on the ladder, one encounters the apparent participatory processes, informing, consultation and placation. The ideal situation, a genuine power allocated to citizens, consists of partnership, delegated power and at the top, citizen control.

Wide citizen participation is perceived as promoting effectiveness of the policy planning, facilitating the empowerment of the citizenry and maintaining a certain level of stability in the political-administrative system. Furthermore, citizens are considered not only as voters or clients but rather as collaborative partners, with whom the public officials are willing to negotiate. The know-how of the members of civil society has bet-

tered as has the overall willingness to participate in consultative processes. This all leads to a system where the public administrators are, above all, answerable to the citizens and their representatives. (Irvin & Stansbury 2004: 55–58; Kathi & Cooper 2005: 559–565.)

There are two essential elements that affect on the level, according to which the citizens participate. The first prerequisite for participation is the personal interest, and the second factor is constructed of the opportunities and possibilities for participation. Especially the latter dimension is the one which the governing bodies can enhance and fortify by developing versatile ways for its citizenry to be active in expressing their opinions and concerns. (Kohonen & Tiala 2002: 6–8.) Getting citizens to commit and building a functional community are in the core of new public service. The very essence of implementing any policy option successfully requires active citizen engagement that is not to be undermined. The ideal case would, then, be a kind of shared responsibility between community, citizens and the civil servants in pinpointing possible problems and seeking solutions to tackle them. During this complex process all parties have the potential of learning form one another: the citizens can improve their knowledge on dealt policy issues as well as how the government actually works, while administrators become better informed of all the hopes and expectations that the citizenry might possess. The fundamental role of civil servants will thus eventually shift towards creating genuine possibilities for citizens to exploit their full personal capacities in making a difference as well as encouraging activities among communities with regards to on-going policy processes. It could be concluded, that although in democratic societies the citizens are not always right, they nevertheless have the right to be citizens – and as such being treated equally in public systems. (Bolongaita 2001: 5–6; Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 114–117.)

However, incorporating citizens into governmental decision- and policymaking has its own drawbacks. First of all, organising public hearings, discussion events and conversational boards takes time and money, and in some cases does not bring anything new to the table that the administrator could have not considered beforehand. If the negotiations cause major disagreements among the participants, the end result might actually be

worse than without the dialogue. Moreover, those who actually show up in public hearings are already active members of the community, although their personal opinions might differ greatly from the general opinion of their peer group. As people are enabled to participate in public hearings and bring out their central matters of concern, the participants might develop an unrealistic set of expectations about the actual effects their input has, and if these various standpoints are being neglected over and over again, the administrators' decisions begin to lose authority and legitimacy. (Irvin & Stansbury 2004: 58–60.) Both the potential advantages as well as disadvantages of citizen participation in government decision making is being presented in the table 1.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of Citizen Participation in Government Decision Making (adapted from Irvin & Stansbury 2004: 56, 58).

ADVANTAGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING		
	Advantages to citizen participants	**Advantages to government**
Decision Process	- Education (learn from and inform government representatives - Persuade and enlighten government - Gain skills for activist citizenship	- Education (learn from and inform citizens - Persuade citizens; build trust and allay anxiety or hostility - Build strategic alliances - Gain legitimacy of decisions
Outcomes	- Break gridlock; achieve outcomes - Gain some control over policy process - Better policy and implementation decisions	- Break gridlock; achieve outcomes - Avoid litigation costs - Better policy and implementation decisions
DISADVANTAGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING		
	Disadvantages to citizen participants	**Disadvantages to government**
Decision Process	- Time consuming (even dull) - Pointless if decision is ignored	- Time consuming - Costly - May backfire, creating more hostility toward government
Outcomes	- Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by opposing interest groups	- Loss of decision-making control - Possibility of bad decision that is politically impossible to ignore - Less budget for implementation of actual projects

2.3. Stakeholder participation

In post-modern societies there are actually very few *direct* interactive occurrences taking place between the government and citizens. Instead, the civil society has arranged its functions and aspirations through organizations and collectives. This has also led to a situation where those who have the power to influence on policy formulations, direct very little of their attention towards the "ordinary" people. It is through different kind of collective action and stakeholder perceptions that the interaction between power elites takes place. The collectives and their sub-collectives then create a framework, inside which the policy-formulators need to act. This reciprocity has led to aspirations of companionship where structures are being disentangled and made more open –the essential elements for any instance to foster its responsiveness. (Etzioni 1968: 432–438.)

Those who can be labelled as "stakeholders" of organisations (whether they are private or public ones) are the individuals and groups who have the potential of influencing organisations' goals and aspirations, or vice versa, are affected by these goals. In other words, those who are at some level influenced by the organisation's operations and plans or can make a contribution to either of them in terms of personal interests, are the constituencies that need to be taken account when talking about involving stakeholders. Despite the fact that stakeholder theories have originated from the private sector's business world, they have nevertheless been vastly applied to public sector organisations, as well. As more and more interest groups are being able to participate in public policy-making through the opening up of governmental processes, the need to recognize potential stakeholder groups becomes essential. (Scholl 2001: 4–6, 13–14.) Lépineux (2005: 99–100) argues that the traditional business-driven stakeholder theory has neglected the importance of civil society as a stakeholder. Consequently, a deeper acknowledgement of civil society as *the* stakeholder group needs to be developed. Furthermore, the civil society and all its members represent actually *all* the stakeholder groups, since all other stakeholders belong to some community and society.

The model for stakeholder participation can be also specified as a procedure in which the various constituent groups affect and share some control over the developmental

plans of government's policies, made decisions as well as the decided resource allocation. As the resources available at following through consultative processes are limited, some kind of selection of those stakeholders whose insights are being invited has to be executed. The benefit of selective participation lies in the accurate knowledge that these groups of communities and organisations may possess regarding to the particular matter that is being discussed. However, the selection narrows down the potential variety in opinions and might also disregard the bigger scale economic or social sustainability. (Warner 1997: 415–416, see also Bolongaita 2001.)

Learning experiences also the other way around

Although many of the reforms conducted in the public sector have stemmed from private sector's business- and market-oriented models (such as the NPM-doctrine), there are lessons that the private sector actors could learn from the public sector – like those in stakeholder participation. As in both the private and the public sector there exists the so called principal-agent problem and aspiration towards more transparent and responsive governance, some of the experiences gotten from public sector reforms can benefit private firms. Moreover, in the 21st century economy, a newly-found interest for enhancing "Corporate Social Responsibility" or CSR, has increased the demand for better transparency, accountability and responsiveness to various stakeholders. Although it is too much to state that private sector should become like the public one, there are still valuable lessons that corporate governance can learn from its public counterpart. Among these benchmarks and good practices might be, for example as follows: wider discussions with the stakeholder groups about the governance structures, raising the awareness among private companies' stockholders not only about the problems that occur, but also the possible solutions as well, opening up the decision making processes that are not absolutely necessary to keep secret, and involve stakeholders more in formulating their basic documents such as their operations strategy. Boards could be in an increasingly amount formulated through democratic appointments, and more distinct line between the board and the CEO could benefit overall responsiveness to stakeholder groups. (Bryane & Gross 2004: 32–33, 41–42.)

2.4. The great variety of participation

Openness and allowing wide participatory methods to develop are among the key elements of today's public administration and political action. Operating openly is to say that both the made policy decisions and various motivations behind them should be made visible. However, the wider concept of being open emphasizes explicitness beyond the right to receive information, towards rather actively incorporating the citizenry and stakeholder groups into planning and delivering policy processes. The methods, through which citizen- and stakeholder groups can influence on public policy making, are manifold. Of course the most visible form in participation are electoral processes where citizens can choose their representatives into local and national governments, but there is yet more. Consequently, emergences of numerous surveys, opinion polls and activation throughout organisations and the civil society have broadened the perspective on participation. In addition, this aspiration to incorporate stakeholder groups into decision-making processes does not stem just from those who wish to make an influence, but from the upper levels of governance, as well. For example, the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health takes into account in its civic organization strategy the aspect of social capital. Not only is the well-functioning civic society a goal to strive for as such, but it can also produce tangible economic benefits by reducing illnesses and social problems. Moreover, active citizenship is an important factor in the whole country's national and political economy. (Möttönen & Niemelä 2005: 23; Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 61–62.)

The nature of participation can be further outlined. First, participation can be informative. This is to say that the public administrators can disseminate information about upcoming policy plans, organize hearings or conduct surveys among citizenry. Second, participation can be carried into effect through planning, which in practice means reciprocal dialogue between the members of the community and the governing bodies. The mutual exchange of thoughts and opinions is carried on throughout the planning process, all the way from preliminary policy plans to the final version of the reports. Third, participation is bound to the actual policy decisions. In this form, decision-making power is actually decentralized and granted to citizens. And fourth, via functional par-

ticipation the members of the community are planning and organizing uncompelled their own projects to develop for example their living environments. (Kohonen & Tiala 2002: 6–8.)

2.4.1. Consultation as a means of participation

Consultation is seen as *"a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government"*. In consultative hearings and conferences it is the organising level – i.e. the administrators – who define the subject, agenda for proceeding and whom they seek information from. Before any consultations, governmental actors should provide sufficient information to all the stakeholder groups, so people can make their contribution to the policymaking process as balanced as possible. (OECD 2001: 23.) In the Arnstein's (1969) model of participation, consultations are characterized as events where the information runs both ways and the citizens can give some feedback and react to the information that has been given to them. However, even though stakeholders are being invited to express their insights on dealt matters, there is no guarantee that these opinions are *really* being heard.

There can be distinguished nine basic functions of viable democratic consultations. First, wide discussions and debates are used in order to express one's set of interest, to bargain and exchange thoughts and goods through interaction. Second, in collaborative settings each party is pursuing to persuade their counterparts and convince them about certain policy choice's excellence. Third, democratic talk is maintained to explain and create the agendas of each actor in a way that defines the "dos and don'ts" of any named group of constituents. Fourth, closely related to bargaining process, democratic deliberation can be exploited to find out the possible exchange points of each group, determining the differences for mutual benefit. Fifth, besides learning about the differences, these processes can foster a kind of belonging, where similar-minded can create new communities within societies to promote their agendas with wider latitude. Sixth, even though each member of the community is a part of bigger entity, the autonomy of each individual still remains as a cornerstone of any democracy. Seventh, taking part in democratic discussions is also to make a statement, to speak for some ideology (or against

something else). Eighth, as each of these functions listed above are continuously evolving and re-shaping according to given alterations in society, the democratic discussions offer the citizenry to re-think and re-formulate their set ideas and aspirations. And finally, all the other functions of democratic deliberation and reciprocal collaboration aim for one objective: to *build a community* where public interest and public good have been defined and the citizenry operates in an active, constructive way. (Barber 2003: 178–198.) The various elements of consultation are being further presented in the chapter 4.1.

2.4.2. E-governance in enhancing wider participation

The concepts of e-governance and e-democracy have really no explicit definitions, but they consist of many explanatory perceptions on the nature of these new democratic mechanisms. The term e-democracy has been widely used with regards to all community action on the Internet, discussion forums and citizens' panels as well as plain information dissemination through the web. The biggest advantage of these electronic tools of attendance is, that they are usually not bound time wise (if compared to, e.g. strict office hours), but citizens can utilize them where- and whenever possible. Furthermore, the Internet is perceived as a free forum where all active and "free" people can write and change thoughts with similar-minded people. As anyone can write their opinions on the web-based forums, the use of these can be said to promote the freedom of speech and free association. However, even though the possibilities for citizens to become more active have increased, so have the demands of technical and other know-how. In this sense, e-democracy may pose some citizen groups in disadvantageous positions, and that is why the more traditional participatory methods could be used as complementary simultaneous means of fostering wider consultations. (Hague & Loader 1999: 4–7; Moore 1999: 55; Anttiroiko 2002: 33; Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 66.)

The number of workable e-governing tools increases all the time. For instance, providing frequently updated websites, creating specific portals for defined policy areas, piling up extensive e-mail lists of stakeholder groups and officials as well as maintaining

online web-based discussion forums and chats are potential tools for new type of consultation and participation, to name but a few. However, as in every participatory tools or methods, the usage of Information and Communications Technology or ICTs has its own limitations, too. The protection of participants' privacy is not watertight in all cases, not everyone are able to use these new tools effectively, and people simply are not still very aware of these kinds of web-based solutions. (OECD 2001: 56–58, 60–61.)

E-democracy is thought to possess the important element of learning from one another via accessible discussion forum, and this "educative flow" is assumed to run both ways. Furthermore, the people are becoming important *formulators of policies* since they can easily produce and add information onto the web-based applications. This enormous flow of information, however, makes the whole entity difficult to manage and exploit. Even though the information exists and if public administrators (or the citizens, for that matter) cannot distinguish the essential elements from the less relevant side notes, the outputs of e-democracy may remain small-scale. And in many cases, the discussion forums operate more or less on their own, without anyone from the administrative side to give comments or function as a moderator to the colourful discussion. So, if public debates and consultative web-based forums are organised, they need to be easy to access and welcoming stakeholders from various societal spheres –and not only the elite groups or those who already have the power to influence on made policy decisions. These elements of inclusion are by nature always the descendents of the already-existing culture of democracy and inclusion. (Coleman 1999: 206–208; Richard 1999: 73–79.)

Since the general opinion about e-democracy as such is a highly positive one, there are risks that sometimes scarce resources are not used effectively, and e-governance is been invested large sums of money and time with too light considerations and calculations of "real benefits". Thus, tools of evaluation should be developed to find out what can be realistically achieved with how much input. In this sense, the web-based electronic solutions are still in their infancy. (Milner 1999: 63–64.) Furthermore, Moore (1999: 56–59) argues that there can even be some negative traits inside e-democracy's basic notions of openness and accessibility. In addition, he states that if anyone (be it a citizen or a pub-

lic servant) can write and have a discussion quite freely, the responsibility issues become blurred. In theses cases, thorough implementation plans with clearly stated responsibilities are in order.

As technologies are advancing, more attention should be paid on, who actually are those groups or individuals who have access to them (and can thus participate and influence on dealt issues). The reality is, that those who already are more fortuned than others, are likely to be those in the forefront using the tools of e-democracy, and this is why the basic problem of democratic deficit continues to exist. And even though developing the ICTs in democratic participation is a positive thing as such, if there is not enough attention paid to, who can and should have access to them and knowledge to use them, the potential goes slightly waste. No matter how well the people were informed about the ICTs and the various applications, it is a totally different thing to get people actually use them and exploit the full potential of e-democracy. (Hague & Loader 1999: 9–11.)

2.5. Problems in societal participation

In Finland as well as the other Nordic countries and the whole of Europe, people are less and less eager to vote in municipal or other public elections. Direct forms of representative democracy do not appeal to citizens, which weakens the overall functionality of democratic systems. Low voting rates can possibly pose several problems for the legitimacy, responsiveness and effectiveness of public administration. If people do not vote for their candidates, i.e. they do not grant the according mandate to the elected officials, then the public administrators are forced to ponder, where does the justification, or legitimacy, for all the policy directions come from. On the other hand, how can public servants react to citizens' needs if they choose not to state them clearly? As a result, the public service providers cannot be sure if they are doing the right things or not. This is one of the reasons why public administration has been obliged to consider also other mechanisms of participation in their decision-making structures. For instance, different types of opinion polls, discussion forums, city committees, direct feedback from the clientele and citizens' representatives in official city boards have been some of the ways

that the participatory approach has been strengthened. (Niemi-Iilahti & Niemelä 2001: 12–16; Oikeusministeriö 2005: 83–85.)

The challenge of taking part in societal decision-making is then directed both towards the system itself and the people's attitudes. Moreover, the citizenry does not always recognize their potential of having an effect on policy processes, nor are they generally speaking interested in the matters dealt in governing bodies. This means that the public administration of the future needs to develop new, direct and supplementary ways to participate. These new participatory methods could then be in function alongside with the traditional, representative system. (Kohonen & Tiala 2002: 5.)

While the administrative actors recognize the need to involve stakeholder groups into policymaking, the underlying nature of most societal problems makes this difficult. Some theorists speak of "wicked problems" where there is no single solution or alternative but many incomplete ones to each issue. Moreover, some believe that involving the citizens and interest groups into decision-making only complicates the process and makes the problems even more complex to solve, thus delaying and adding costs to the administrative procedures. (King, Feltey & Susel 1998: 319.)

Niemi-Iilahti and Niemelä (2001: 65–66) list some of the biggest problems that are in the way of genuine citizen participation in public systems. First of all, the attitudes of civil servants and public officers might be those of diminishing or neglecting any aspirations of citizens to make a contribution in issues under discussion. However, the negative attitudes may run both ways, since the public opinion does not always see the theme of attendance of great value for them. The system itself might also pose some challenges for citizens to comprehend all the elements that lie beneath the surface. While the administrative perspective might be that of processing smaller, more manageable elements of the whole, the common people might see the scattered system as a too complex to understand. One closely related problem to this is the fact, that administrative jargon differs greatly form the common-day language of the majority of the people. The public servants should then pay more attention to their clarity in expressing and executing their decisions, realizing that they are, in fact, *servants* and prioritize their

working tasks so that time is still left for a meaningful dialogue between the administration and stakeholder groups to be born.

Moreover, even though citizens were included in the policy-formulation process, the actual democratic and socially equal outcomes of policies will remain quite narrow (even non-existent) if these important stakeholders are not being included also *in the implementation phase*. There are, however ways to tackle the barriers to participation: for example, planning participatory procedures where the people *know* that they have a genuine possibility to make a contribution and where there are results and outcomes easy to discover. Taking people along is not enough, but they need to be educated and prepared for active collaboration, created opportunities to interact with one another, and clarifying, how to operate inside the existing systems. Not only the citizenry, but also the administrators need to be educated to function in collaborative surroundings. The public servants are to be taught interpersonal and discourse skills, so that the rigid structures of public administration could change, as well and foster something that democracies have strived for long: authentic participation. (King et al. 1998: 322–325; Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 103–104.)

It is difficult to point out any single elements why some participatory processes are successful while others fail. However, it helps if the invited constituency groups are carefully selected, the whole policymaking process is as open and interactive as possible, everyone knows who is in charge of the final decision making, meetings are being organised regularly, and the length and level of demand are taken into account in resourcing the process. (Irvin & Stansbury 2004: 61.) In theory, enabling the citizenry to make choices about, which services they use and prefer, is to empower them. In real life, however, the choices are few and people might not even be aware of the alternatives or their costs. The ideal case for citizen participation does not equal just consulting the public without any real significance on the policy outcomes, but rather to shift powers and, above all, responsibilities to the people as well. Citizens need to feel that them being active really has an influence on final policy plans (Farrell 2000: 32–36.)

3. RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

To be responsive is one of the major aspirations of any government and administrator – or at least it should be. There are varying definitions on responsiveness in governance that depend always on, who the questions of responsiveness are being posed to. Hadley and Young (1990: 8–10) define the responsive model of organizing public administration as more innovative and flexible than traditional perceptions on public administration have assumed. In responsive governance dialogue and maintaining close relationships both inside and outside the organization are valued. Responsive model emphasizes overall clarity in goal-setting, planning and assessment processes. Governance should strive for providing services that well from the needs of their clientele -the citizens. Decisions are thus made in a much wider frontier than in traditional, bureaucratic models. Moreover, as a developmental potential, the contribution of service users is being taken into account and valued. By enabling the "target audience" to speak up, organizations raise their potential in becoming the best they can be in terms of service delivery. As Hadley and Young (ibid.) describe it: "*Positive adaptation to change is the key feature*".

Etzioni (1968: 430–431) defines the essence of a responsive society as the ability to possess some kind of mechanisms that can transform the *"aggregate demands of its members into collective directives"*. This is then to say, that the society must be receptive to these terms of reference and formulate a kind of overall consensus of its archetypical values and functions. Weber (1975: 193) points out that when the publicly elected individuals or the existing administrative institutions exercise their power in a way that reflects the wants and needs of the citizenry, then the decision- and policy-making process is politically responsive. Weber continues this definition by stating that responsiveness is always in the eye of the beholder. Moreover, political responsiveness is a result of some type of *action* that is in line with the demands for action by stakeholders. This leads to a conclusion, where simple listening without any further consequences is not being responsive, although it is a starting point for responsiveness to be created.

More business-like definition of the term responsiveness is based on a simple supply chain structure where the customers state their wishes and expectations, and then the organisation (or company – or public administration system for that matter) strives for meeting these needs. Moreover, *"responsiveness is the ability to react purposefully and within an appropriate time-scale to customer demand or changes in the marketplace, to bring about or maintain competitive advantage"*. (Holweg 2005: 605.)

Richard Claude (1975: 131) defines responsiveness as the *"taking of non-arbitrary, pertinent, and timely action by a decisional body in reply to expressed preferences by clients, constituents, or some segment of the public"*. This definition then poses further preconditions that have to be met in order to satisfy the explication. First, there have to be certain public needs that are recognized and further stated. Second, those people that are expressing these needs have to be able to get their message heard all the way to the decision-making instances. Third, and perhaps most importantly, these aspirations need to be reacted to and taken into account. Fourth, the administrative actors must obtain a mechanism that can separate various aspirations from one another, and select the ones with the most clout. Fifth, the policy formulators are to be prepared to give an answer to the addressed stakeholder groups. Sixth, this reply needs to be based on some kind of well-established set of principles that guide the public processes. Seventh, the response that is being given from the administration should be relevant and clearly formulated. And finally, the final decision should be accurately timed so as to respond to the people's aspirations without unnecessary delays.

The essential features that constitute responsiveness in public services can be summarized as follows. The principles of *transparency* and *openness* can never be stressed too much. Moreover, the clientele should know what kinds of services are available, what are the basis and constraints of receiving certain services, and perhaps most importantly, who is responsible for the actual service delivery. The citizens need to be included from the very early phases of planning the content of service systems. Moreover, the governmental actors should recognize that not all service options fit for all the people who are entitled to receive them; variety and flexibility is then to be introduced into public services. (OECD 1995: 23.)

3.1. Responsive to whom?

As the Oxford English Dictionary defines responsive as *"answering, responding; making answer or reply"*, the nature of the word is then reactive (Oxford English Dictionary 2009). While it is recognized that public administration should develop into a more responsive entity, it remains unclear, *to whom* it should be responsive, i.e. whose needs are being reacted to. Since public administrators work in the context of democratically elected policy formulators, there are often more than one center of power. It is challenging to be responsive to "the majority" and to the less-fortuned minority (who usually are the service users) at the same time. At the national level this means avoiding too general policy directions without any real indicative power, but also avoiding becoming too specific or particularized. (Frederickson 1980:53–54.)

There are insights that governments are responsive and receptive to people's needs because they have been appointed to and granted power by these very same people through democratic elections. Moreover, by executing responsiveness in multi-party systems, the elected officials are in a way always competing and trying to convince their constituents. This type of democratic responsiveness can therefore be conditional on the level of competitiveness among different political parties in a society. In terms of government's responsiveness to its citizenry, there can be distinguished two types: *rhetorical* responsiveness and *effective* responsiveness. The former indicates the correlation between government's choices to highlight and stress certain policy outlines and the preferences of the general public. These are then the policy promises that are argued before elections so that popular vote would favour those who promise to promote specific issues. The latter denotes the linkage with these aforementioned public preferences and the actual budgetary framework. Although most governments and political parties execute the rhetoric form of responsiveness (almost telling people what they want to hear), the realization of all the promises made (i.e. the money reserved in the budget) is not as straightforward. (Barber 2003: 143–144; Hobolt & Klemmemsen 2008: 309–310.)

Although the global claim of involving "the people" more extensively into public decision-making processes has been triumphed for some decades now, the clear definition of these "people" is hard to constitute. Moreover, if this particular group were identified, could public administrators really conduct decisions that reflect the will of this heterogeneous group? And, even if receptive policy processes were available, would the people really know what they wanted? These rhetorical questions lead into conclusion that no clear-cut public will can never be imposed, let alone formulated. This is one of the reasons why making services and processes more responsive could ultimately mean dismantling the heavy structures and cutting governmental agencies into smaller-scale policy implementing units. In this case, closer equals more responsive. Attention should first be paid on institutions being more responsive, since it is challenging for any institution to produce responsive policy decisions and services, if the institution itself is perceived as unresponsive. (Rieselbach 1975: 4, 12–13.)

Since public administrators do not exercise their power in a void, it must be recognized that there are always some influential groups or underlying value structures and codifications behind any single policy decision. Salamon and Wamsley (1975: 158–160) analyze the characteristics of the constituency, or as they call the important stakeholder groups affecting public decision making, the "relevant others". Although public administration as such has all the people in the society as their potential customers, some of the smaller and more powerful groups might still affect on the decisions much more than "plain" citizens. The societal and economic strength of any single stakeholder group is then one of the crucial factors that channels the responsiveness of the administration. Another important element of the relevant others is their position in proportion to other similar groups, especially in terms of the resources these groups are willing to invest on public administration. This means that in order to receive, the constituency has to be inclined to give, as well.

The evidence shows that those who push participation agenda forward the most actively are not necessarily the ones that get their opinions through. The importance of any single constituent group depends largely on the power and legitimacy that group possesses. Power, in this case, stands for the means available to force the counterpart to obey one's

will, while legitimacy means the appropriateness of the demands according to legislature or political situation. For example, democratically elected officials may obtain quite an importance in the eyes of administrators simply because they have been elected by the people. In a similar vein, non-profit organizations that have an important role in providing certain services, are seen as an important referral group. However, since common people often lack of both substantial power and legitimacy (unless they channel these via organizational activities), many public servants may fear that listening "too much" of the people actually could make administration's operations less effective. (Yang & Callahan 2007: 251–252.)

3.1.1. Responsive to "common good"

Since the administrators need to be responsive to the citizenry and seek after the common good, it is useful to ponder some of the elements of this so called "common good". Whether or not this kind of overall agreement on desired state of things even exists in a contemporary society, is an interesting question. Rather, it is to be strived for and sought after but never to be fully attained. In its essence, the idea of common good boils down to the societal value structures, i.e. those things that the majority of the people see as important. Moreover, it can be assumed that all human beings have an inbuilt concern of other people's well-being. Although this kind of sense of community is perhaps a utopian perception of modern-day society, it is nevertheless one of the explaining reasons, why people still live in close communities and participate in the civil society. As the value structures change, it is up to the policy-makers to listen out for the needs to redefine policy settings and incorporate new ideas into the formulation processes. Accordingly, the actors of public administration should forcefully create possibilities and prepare the way for forums in which people can express their opinions and gradually come up with shared understanding of the prospective state of affairs. (Farrell 2000: 31; March & Olsen 2002: 66–67; Vigoda 2002: 528–530; Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 65–66.)

One of the key subject in defining, how democratic any governmental system is, can be found in its responsiveness to the great majority. Although it is sometimes difficult to

point out, which aspiration from the people has led to which consequence and action taken by the government, it is nevertheless been shown that the general opinion shows a tendency to guide public policymaking. Furthermore, this tendency is particularly strong in multi-party proportional systems where elected officials are prone to listening to the citizenry in the fear of future electoral defeats. (Hobolt & Klemmemsen 2005: 379–380.)

The relationship between the state and its citizenry in defining the "*public interest*" has been traditionally characterized as that of obligations and rights. According to this view, the official governing system only exists to create a forum for various constituencies and individual active people to debate and negotiate about their personal preferences. Furthermore, the governing structures need to act as arbitrators and see that everyone's legal and human rights make good. Hence, the role of the citizenry becomes that of quite selfishly promoting one's own agenda and point of views whilst respecting the right of others to do so, as well. However, in a more novel perception of, how to define the public good is the insight where members of the citizenry are in an important position, but their perspective is much wider and community-based. This (somewhat ideal) conception of formulating public good assumes that by taking part in political and societal decision- and policymaking, the individual members of the society learn to see bigger policy outlines and promote the good of the majority. (deLeon & Denhardt 2000: 93.)

A responsive community is a complex entity, where social cohesion and continuity as well as individual autonomy can exist at the same time. This so-called "authentic community" is responsive to the needs of its members whilst recognizing the necessity of widely agreed societal values and formal structures. However, the needs of the citizens and those of the whole community do not always match perfectly, and there usually exists some kind of incongruity between these two. Moreover, even if the society's responsiveness can be bettered, the dissonance of preferences can never be totally eliminated, and thus a full, complete responsiveness can never be achieved. (Etzioni 1996: 1–3.)

3.1.2. The idea of perceived responsiveness

The definition of administration being responsive or unresponsive varies according to who's opinion is being asked. Different stakeholder groups appreciate different things and thus, see the governmental actions either responsive or not, depending on how well the constituents' preferences are being met. Value judgements then make up for a considerable part of something seen as responsive. Moreover, there cannot be a definition of responsiveness (or unresponsiveness for that matter) that is not affected by some political ideology. (Eckart & Ries 1975: 52–54.) It is somewhat easier to point out, which elements of public service delivery are perceived as unresponsive, than it is to pinpoint the responsive ones. Any governmental actor striving for democratic responsiveness then has to acknowledge that being loyal to only those who have the power or the means available to articulate one's needs or to those who usually are in the right place at the right time, is not being democratically responsive. Moreover, although many administrative agencies see the limitations of being receptive only to the strong stakeholder groups, they are struggling to even deliver this token responsiveness. (Salamon & Wamsley 1975: 153.)

With regards to public sector organisations, there can be distinguished various elements that affect their perceived responsiveness. First, the concept of organisational culture from the point of view of both the citizenry and the administrators matter. This means that the traditional notions of "rigid, hierarchical public administration" may prevent the people from contacting the public officials, and on the other hand, may hinder the initials taken by the administrators to better this sensitive relationship. Furthermore, sometimes public administrators avoid direct contacts with the citizenry since they might feel that this kind of interaction could even prohibit them from fulfilling the posed demands of enhanced effectiveness and efficiency. Consequently, the perceived culture of bureaucracy and public administration is inevitably a result of both citizens' and administrators' definitions about it, but just as much a result of public officials' actual reactions to the notion of active citizenship. Another interconnected element that affects the bureaucratic responsiveness (or at least the common view of it) can be found from, how the public sector is being led. Strong leadership where top officials and public managers

are committed into "getting closer" with the people and encouraging their peers and subordinates to do so as well, has without a doubt a significant impact on the overall perceived bureaucratic responsiveness. (Bryer & Cooper 2006b: 6–8.)

Yang and Callahan (2007: 259–260) state that talking about mechanisms of fostering citizen participation in administration is not the same thing as talking about the actual impact this attendance has on decisions. Although methods of constituent involvement can mechanically put into action, genuine allowance of citizens to participate in strategic decisions is perceived as a risky-business and loss of administrative control. The importance then lies in the culture in which public servants operate, and more accurately stated, in the changes that the administrators are willing to make for a more responsive system. A thorough training and a mutually agreed set of perceived values of pro-involvement could be one step towards more responsive communities. As the saying goes, it is one thing to hear and another to listen.

In the quest for improved responsiveness in public administration, several assessment and data gathering tools can be exploited. This vital feedback from the citizenry and the service users can be gotten through organising wide surveys. In addition to written surveys, public administrators can exploit also their everyday contacts with the people, organise specific public consultations as well as analyze the possible complaints received from the service users. There are, however, disadvantages to conducting surveys: some societal issues are difficult to pinpoint statistically, people do not usually remember their reactions or feelings about researched encounters for more than a year, extensive surveys produce costs, usually those who answer to these surveys are already active members of the society (and perhaps do not represent the "general view"), and public officials may feel that surveys bring about negative publicity or harsh criticism. (Chi 1999: 278–279.)

Bryer and Cooper (2006a: 10) argue that bureaucratic responsiveness can be measured in three ways. First, one can try to find out the *potential responsiveness* of administrative organisations through scanning, how alike the citizens' and public officials' value and issue preferences are –i.e. what should be developed and promoted in a society.

These preferences can be framed by using interviews or surveys. Second, the researchers can pursue measuring the perceived *actual responsiveness*, asking the stakeholders how their needs are being met by the administration, and then asking the public officials, how they are currently working to answer the aspirations of their clientele. Third, the responsiveness of any administrative department can be scanned through finding out, how much resources, time and personal commitment is being "sacrificed" into collaborative efforts. Bryer and Cooper (2006b: 3–5) state further that during the collaborative processes, the responsive elements can appear during two periods of time: that of *planning* the policy contents in co-operation and that of *putting made decisions into action*. Responsiveness during the design period denotes, who participates in the process and with what intensity do the administrators invest their time and personnel in carrying the hearings and other participatory planning through. Implementation responsiveness, on the other hand indicates the extent which public officials and departments have maintained the relationships with various stakeholder groups created at the planning phase, and how deep the co-operation actually is in placing all the made plans into everyday action. However, since public actors are accountable to various stakeholder groups, the ultimate responsiveness of them is often measured with, how well theses public servants have succeeded in balancing all the needs.

3.2. Responsiveness and responsibility

Two important concepts that in an ideal society would go hand in hand are responsiveness and responsibility. However, a government might well be responsible as regards to the whole of the citizenry, but its actions could still be seen as unresponsive by certain constituency. But then again, if public agencies went along with all publicly declared needs, they would probably be considered as responsive but not particularly responsible. (Caldwell 1975: 314.) Governmental actors, while promoting the responsiveness and collaboration with various stakeholder groups, must maintain their accountability on made decisions. Being responsible thus means that the members of the society can easily see, how the political and administrative officials respond to the posed questions and needs, and what kinds of services are being produced to them. Responsibility and ac-

countability then produce more trust for the public administration and that the various state and local level actors are delivering what is expected of them. However, the important question arises: to whom should administration be accountable and responsive? Namely, there is so much co-operation going on at various policy levels, that one single object of total accountability is impossible to distinguish. Rather, the accountability and responsiveness are complicated structures of trust that go beyond the traditional administrative hierarchies. (Shah 1997: 23; Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009: 50–51.)

The position of any administrator is not by any means a simple one: while striving for providing better targeted public services to citizens, he/she should bear in mind the economic and political constraints and outlines that set the ultimate limits to all activities. Not only are (or at least they should be) these differing aspirations considered of high importance, they are often overlapping and quite controversial. The important questions thus are: what are public servants accountable for, of what and to whom are they responsible and by what means should accountability and responsibility be achieved. Although the undeniable target of civil servants' accountability is always legislation with legal as well as ethical codifications of the public sphere, this is not enough. Since the emergence of new public management, elements of meeting performance standards to deliver efficient services were also brought to the mosaic of administrative accountability. From the new public service point of view, however, providing services that are targeted to the common people with respect to the public interest is yet another aspect of civil servants' accountability theme. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 119–120, 124–132.)

In multi-party systems, the acknowledgement of citizens' opinions is the best taken into account during elections. However, in between electoral processes not many tools are used in order to get the people's voice heard, although through representative democracy people have delegated their power to the elected officials who, in fact, should take care of their electors' best interest. This shift of power has caused direct citizen involvement to decrease as the trustees operate to administrate the complex structures. However, in exceptional and volatile societal situations, the governing actors sometimes need to put responsible action before responsive ones. This is the case, e.g. during economic crisis. Conversely however, in business being responsive is the only responsible

way to proceed, since if the customers are not satisfied, the business suffers. (Bolongaita 2001: 7–11.)

3.3. Perspectives on responsive governance

As an idea, governance means an interactive network where public, private and non-profit organisations have a dialogue on policy linings, instead of administrative systems just telling the others how to operate. Moreover, the key idea in good governance is to incorporate the citizenry into decision making processes, for example through exploitation of e-democracy, public hearings, citizen juries and collective policy making. These new incorporative elements of public administration pose some challenges to the administrators as well, since there is a whole group of new skills to be learned: how to effectively bring people together, evaluate potential points of conflict, act as a mediator and negotiator between various interest groups, listen carefully what the citizenry communicates and reshaping policy lines according to extensive discussions. Moreover, the public administrators should operate to enhance better citizen involvement in the functions and processes of state- and local governments. In seeking for better governance, the essential element is to re-think the existing processes and divisions of power in planning policies, making decisions and implementing chosen policy outlines. (Bingham, Nabatchi & Leary 2005: 547–548.)

Roger Hadley and Ken Young (1990: 59–61) have sketched out a model on responsive public governance. The model is stated to be consisting of several larger themes, under which we can list many sub-components of responsiveness. It all starts with common values and objectives, towards which to direct functions. In order for any organization to reach its goals, a controlling group needs to be established to make sure that the decisions and actions taken are consistent. After the aspirations for future policy-making have been defined, they need to be translated into practical norms of action. At all stages, information has to be able to flow freely in all possible directions keeping both the staff and the citizens informed about, what is going on at that moment. The personnel providing responsive services are at the core; thus, they need to be consulted and

trained accordingly. The ideal in ameliorated responsiveness would be an increased role of the service user, the citizen – a goal which can be achieved through active participation and offering opportunities to become heard. Since public sphere is also the playing field of politics, the relationship-building with those who obtain political power cannot be forgotten. In responsive governance and service delivery the organization and its members must be ready to alter their old habits and routines and give more room to concepts of change and flexibility.

By being responsive, the government can both reduce the coercive elements of the societal structures and alleviate the feelings of being left out from the decision-making processes. Furthermore, the reciprocity between ruling bodies and the citizenry can increase knowledge and awareness of current development aspirations, fortify the participatory approach on policy-making procedures and identify a new type of effectiveness – being responsive. (Etzioni 1968: 6–9.) Denhardt and Denhardt (2003: 86–87) define governance as the exercise of public authority. The manner, in which governance is organized, reflects also the way power is used in a society and how different processes and functions of institutions are understood. The essential elements that constitute the concept of governance can be found in, how public decisions and choices are made, in what way the scarce resources are distributed and what are the overarching values that sustain in public sphere.

Goodsell (2006: 628–630) talks about new direction for public administration: *integrated public governance.* This view is illustrated in figure 1. His view is to challenge the traditional idea of governance being *"the exercise of collective authority whereby a society steers itself"*. Moreover, today's public administration has been labelled as a kind of self-organising network where public, private and 3rd sector actors share policy interests and have an ongoing dialogue about desirable outcomes. However, no matter how well-functioning this policy network is, someone needs to coordinate its activities and bear the ultimate responsibility: this will be the primary task for public administration, since without this anchoring role, no real concept of public good or equal opportunities for all is maintained. Consequently, Goodsell (ibid.) continues, that inside the public governance the two most important elements are *rule* and *response*. The rule

means government exercising its legislative power and solidifying the society. More-over, without the ruling ability, no real responsive democracy could be maintained, since there would not exist any binding procedures that ensured a reaction from the officials. Rather, response can be considered as the balancing analogue to the rule.
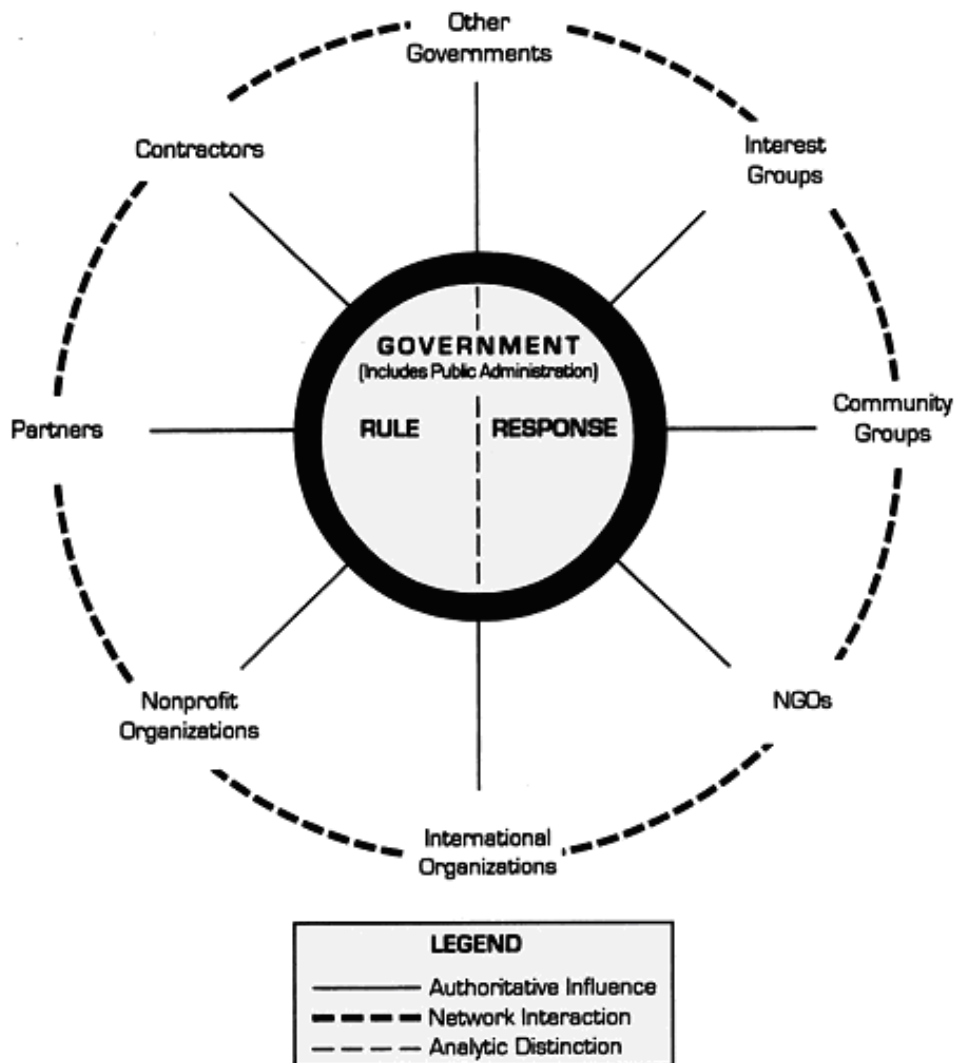

Figure 1. Integrated Public Governance (Goodsell: 2006: 629).

It is argued that bureaucrats give same responses to their constituents, regardless of the nature of stated needs or wishes. This kind of static responsiveness is prevailing in most bureaucracies, albeit some chances need to be introduced. However, the task of changing the traditional ways to operate is challenging due to the nature of public sector organisations bound by ethical and legislative codifications alone. Moreover, the perceived static nature of public sector might be also a creation of the bureaucrats themselves, since in volatile political (and economical) conditions, the public officials may exaggerate the rigidness of administrative operations for their own survival. (Bryer & Cooper 2006a: 5–6.)

There is no way of knowing, whether or not the level of responsiveness in governance has increased, unless there exists some manners according to which to evaluate this. Public services can thus be exposed to questions such as "is the target group being reached?, are legislative aspirations taken into account?, are the services being produced inside the budget constraints? do the services respond to the existing needs?". However, it needs to be pointed out that there rarely is any one common agreement on ideal situation, nor are the priorities unambiguous. Although some kind of standards can be found in the pubic administration, the most important standard according to which to determine success, is that of client satisfaction and the attainment of citizens. (Hadley & Young 1990:118–132.)

Responsiveness in modern-day public administration

As stated before, a need to alter bureaucratic responsiveness into more flexible and adaptable direction exists. In addition, this change should stem above all from the changed behaviour of public officials themselves as well as the surrounding organisational culture of state administration. The changed bureaucratic responsiveness can furthermore be a result of stakeholder and interest group activation, where close interaction with the civil servants lead to learned new, adapting flows of responsiveness. (Bryer & Cooper 2006a: 6–7.) If a realistic, genuine people's democracy is sought after, then the institutions and governments need to acknowledge some simple factors and pre-determinations. Governments should maintain only institutions that have, according to

knowledge and previous experience, realistic chances of *serving* the citizenry. These institutions should work in co-operation with representative bodies and, most importantly, with the representatives of the people. These governmental actors ought to strive for equal rights and stable conditions, where deliberation and mutual discussions were held on concrete issues (not just ideal policy declarations). Even though these institutions should be in place to serve the majority of the society, some flexibility towards special groups' needs ought to nevertheless be sustained. Since providing public services means also working in the political field, it is challenging for civil servants and public managers to re-think their roles in responsive governance. Responsive governance needs then also good management. This means that emphasis needs to be put on leadership and commitment in embracing the ideas of accountability and responsiveness. Managers ought to seek alternatives in exploiting the full range of available resources as efficiently as possible, while at the same time encouraging the staff to be active and venturous. (Hadley & Young 1990: 134–149, 181–183; Barber 2003: 262; Slack 2004: 136–139.)

Responsive units of governance should foster working environments where the employees are more than just parts of a bigger machine. Since the staff are under a lot of pressure stemming from both the management level as well as from the citizenry, the well-being of these public servants is also an issue of great importance. The position of civil servants working for responsive governance can be bettered via giving them more power and responsibilities, emphasizing active participation and teamwork and defining the desired outcomes clearly (so that they are attainable). Emphasis needs to be placed on staff training and self-development as well as on local leadership in creating responsive service culture. (Hadley & Young 1990: 153–165.)

3.4. From responsiveness towards collaboration

Although responsiveness has been highlighted as one of new public governance's key element, it needs to be recognized that this is necessarily not enough. Furthermore, being responsive to clientele means simultaneously that administrative actors function in

one-way manner, responding to the public demands and aspirations. However, exercising good administrative powers would be to have a two-way dialogue with the people, making them collaborative and equal partners. In this sense, being responsive is a good start for public administration but being collaborative partner with the various stakeholder groups would be the best case. In the co-operative system, both the citizens and the government are perceived as *"social players"* that seek common morals and values to promote genuine public good. (Vigoda 2002: 527–528; Vigoda-Gadot 2004.) There is then a need for re-structuring the roles of the citizenry and the administrators towards more open and equal dialogue, not just reactive one-way relation. Furthermore, the insight is now more on policy networks rather than government-client relations. (King et al. 1998: 317, see also Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 86.)

Perhaps the public servants are becoming kind of "brokers" and enablers in the sphere of public decision-making. What is more, the emphasis has shifted from "just implementing politicians' views" via "responding to customers' preferences" all the way to new public service's idea of involving citizens in the administrative processes. (Denhardt & Denhardt 2003: 87–93.) Increasing people's possibilities for participation can be seen as one of the core purposes of civil society's organizational activities. These third sector actors' other salient tasks are increasing their members' social capital and well-being, providing channels for caring and sharing, offering building blocks for identity-formatting, making sure that also the less-fortuned are being heard, providing a sense of hope and acting as innovators. By providing ways to create better opportunities for people to participate in societal policy formulation, civil society has potential of making a big difference. This social inclusion should happen simultaneously at various levels in the society, thus including the governing bodies, municipal actors, companies and private sector as well as the basis, the citizens. (Möttönen & Niemelä 2005: 67–78.)

If a viable system of public management where citizens and the governing bodies operate in unison is to be created, then there must exist several preconditions. At the very bottom lies the precondition of mutual trust in one another. In other words, no real collaboration can take place if the citizens feel that the government only exists to promote its own agenda and widen its power, or if the administrative actors see the public aspira-

tions only in a negative manner. Moreover, the citizenry ought to be able to trust that them taking action has ultimately effects on the decision making. In addition, by enhancing citizen competence (i.e. the ability to seek information and understand the elements of the discussed matter), bettering government responsiveness and legitimacy, a genuine framework for collaborative public management can be built. (Cooper, Bryer & Meek 2006: 79–80.)

Citizens' role should then be expanded from being just subjects to administrative action, voters who elect their representatives, clients to publicly provided services to becoming increasingly equal partners who plan and (to some extent) implement public policies. Not only the citizens' representatives and administrative officials alone, but also media and the academic world have a part to play in fostering greater collaboration. Through media, the interest of the people can be awakened and administrative transparency bettered. Academic research can support and point out the benefits of active participation and bring more legitimacy into incorporating the wide public. (Vigoda 2002: 531–537.)

According to Arnstein (1969), the three forms of *actual participation* are those of partnership, delegated power and, in the ideal case, citizen control. Partnership equals redistributed power between the constituency and the ruling actors. Co-operation through negotiation leads to shared responsibilities in planning and carrying through policy plans, so that the previously have-nots now obtain actual bargaining power. These negotiations might even lead to citizen dominance on certain policy making and implementation processes. This delegated power might come to fruition either through majority of representatives in policy-formulation organs or a clear veto-power granted to the citizens' procurators while the decisions made are still under revision. The ultimate form of citizen power, the citizen control, leads to citizen-led procedures in planning and organizing activities within the community. Although allowing the people to have the final say on things is a positive thing as such, it could nevertheless lead to some less welcomed outcomes (for instance increasing the decision-making costs, fostering separatism and opportunism). However, the idea of citizen control on matters that affect their everyday life still continues to be something to strive for -no matter how risky the administrators see it to be.

From the point of view of public administrators, the traditional definitions of responsiveness and collaboration have slightly contradicting basic notions. Consequently, talking about responsiveness is often seen as talking about the relations between the administrative system and its customers posing questions and putting forward demands. On the contrast, acting in collaborative settings denotes operating with citizen groups as equal negotiative partners. The undertone of these two concepts defining the relationship between administration and the surrounding society is thus very different. (Bryer & Cooper 2006b: 2.)

Although there are many unanswered questions about the numerous tools for participatory governance, the alternative of not taking advantage of them is not preferable. Even though it is sometimes uncertain, which particular process ought to be used at which themes, at what point of the process should e.g. hearings be organised, what constitutes to true dialogue, how equal the stakeholder groups are, what real impacts do the attendance have on policy contents and how are the final outcomes best put into practice, public administrators should not give up in trying to learn more about the various participating tools. (Bingham et al. 2005: 554–555.)

4. POLICY MAKING THROUGH CONSULTATION

Differing from business world models where someone quite plainly tells the organisation how to develop their functions, consultation in this study is perceived as close cooperation between governments and stakeholders. Furthermore, consultation in this respect refers to collaborative consultative policy-making where the administrative policy makers, together with the stakeholder groups, seek ways to formulate public policies. However, Kane and Bishop (2002: 89) state that consultation should not be confused with direct democracy. Furthermore, the more personal agendas the participants possess, the more they possibly assume that *their* own opinions are the ones that really matter in the final policy outcomes. Some, more moderate participants might assume that the policy will be a consensus decision made by equal partners: themselves and the government. These assumptions indicate that sometimes consultative policy making is being paralleled to direct democracy, whereas a closer definition of consultative processes would perhaps be a tool, a method, through which it is possible to have an influence on the bigger policy linings drawn at administrative levels.

The term "policy" can be defined as a comparatively abiding operational principle or line, towards which all other actions are mirrored. The consistency in chosen administrative (and other) functions is thus in the central role in formulating a policy. Consequently, policy-making is often referred as a process that moves from defining the purposes towards implementing the coherent policy outcomes. This kind of traditional thinking emphasizes the rationality and orderliness of administrators, although the political nature of policy-making needs not to become forgotten. Since the actions that can be taken under any particular policy direction are numerous, the policy itself (i.e. the agreed guideline) needs to be thoroughly defined and agreed upon. (Gordon, Lewis & Young 2002: 14–16.)

Policymaking is no longer being perceived as a top-down process where public administrators dictate the proceedings, but rather a multi-tier networking where policy outcomes are results of negotiations and mutual adjustments. Users and various stakeholder

groups are gaining a bigger role in planning and eventually implementing the policy lines. (Bovaird 2007: 846.) Furthermore, in the modern society, the administrative branch should strive for the kind of policy-making that fosters the participation of numerous actors (including the civil society) and manages to take into account as much as the different shades of opinions there exist. The implementation lines that have the potential of succeeding in delivering these two conditions, could be called as either "organizational development" or "conflict and bargaining", as opposed to the traditional models of implementing policies through rigid systems management or according to bureaucratic principles. Policy implementation through organizational development means in practice, that individuals are given more power and autonomy to make decisions concerning them, and enhancing all kinds of participatory settings. Convergence and mutual ground are sought after, although it needs to be admitted that no matter how inclusive the bargaining processes are, there are always some unhappy actors. However, all groups that intend to take part in policy-formatting need to be prepared to adjusting at least somewhat of their demands and aspirations. (Elmore 2002: 27–48.)

4.1. Consultation in administrative terms

Being responsive means also being consultative. Be it a manger consulting his/her staff when making decisions or more widely, a state representative consulting a group of people or stakeholders, the key is to hear and more importantly *to listen*, what the consulted party has to say. Before any consultations take place, the policy-formulators need to set up the framework and the limits in which dialogue can evolve. Those who are consulting must then articulate clearly, what can be negotiated about and what not and what sort of limitations do time and resources pose on the consulting procedure. (Hadley & Young 1990: 208–210.)

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development defines consultation as the "*transmission of information between government and citizens*". In the same breath, however, the OECD clarifies that there are several ways on, how to consult and in what particular context each consultation is being carried through. The most straightforward

method of consultation is plain one-way information where the public instances dis-
seminate information among the public about its already-existing procedures. In this
case, if any particular group were to have an impact on the policy-decision, the interven-
tion would have to be made as early as possible, before any binding measures were
taken by the government. When this one-way information is taken one step further, then
the constituency are systematically being invited to comment on draft versions of regu-
lations or policy papers before they are being put into action. Consultations are often
being seen as a part of the global trend of creating regulation and policy lines that stem
from the actual needs and realities of the stakeholder groups. These participatory resolu-
tions then aim at creating practical and more relevant policy decisions, involving the
constituency and paving the way for effective policy implementation. (OECD 1995: 18–
19.)

King, Feltey and Susel (1998: 319–321) argue that there are always four components in
each consultative public participation process:"*1) the issue or the situation, 2) the ad-
ministrative structures, systems and processes within which participation takes place, 3)
the administrators, and 4) the citizens*". In the consultative idea of participation the citi-
zens should be nearest the dealt issue. Furthermore, administrators ought to pay atten-
tion not only to the outcome (the decision), but to the process itself. Although adminis-
trators' role becomes less dominant, they still operate as the important link between the
people and the system. Citizens thus have a genuine possibility and know-how to make
a contribution to both decisions and processes, acting as equal collaborative partners
with the administrators, at a very early phase before anything has been definitely de-
cided. In authentic participation, stakeholders become real policymakers instead of un-
satisfied groups who pose complaints or drive only personal agendas with the few en-
counters with the administrative system.

Although enabling citizens to take part in public consultations and mutual dialogue as
such is worth striving for, it is not necessarily enough. The people need to be well-
informed about all the important facts and background factors on dealt issues, and this
information should be accessible *beforehand* by anyone inclined. In participatory plan-
ning and policy-formulating processes it is essential for each partaker to be aware of the

possible policy linings, their consequences and the evaluation requirements and methods used to review the policy outcome afterwards. Furthermore, consultative hearings become more fruitful if the participants have time and information available to come to these affairs prepared, if the consultation process is open in all its phases, if the stakeholders and citizens are actually listened to, and if follow-up of the final outcomes is being organized. If participatory hearings are to be organised in various locations with a similar structure, some kind of guiding participatory framework is needed. The framework then provides a common ground for all participants to function, without restricting too much the conversation or input of innovative new ideas. Participatory frameworks enable stakeholders to deliberate on given themes but with a flexible insight. (Warner 1997: 420–421; Niemi-Iilahti & Niemelä 2001: 24–26; Cooper et al. 2006: 81–82.)

In public consultations, there exists variation in legislation, policy contents as well as institutions and e-governing tools, that range depending whether consultation and feedback is sought after and specially requested or not. Furthermore, statutory consultations are held in many EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) legislation, whereas consultation is optional in many administrative procedure laws and during comment period. (OECD 2001: 28.)

Organising public consultations offers the policy makers a valuable opportunity to map the peoples' and stakeholder groups' insights on dealt topics. Not only can these consultative events serve as gathering important information to form the basis of policy planning, there are also other potential motivations behind organising them. Accordingly, the other main purposes for governments to organise public consultations are as follows: discovery, education, measurement, persuasion and legitimisation. Discovery means that stakeholders are being consulted to in order to seek for specific information, define the problems or learn about potential solutions to them. Respectively, through public discussions and open consultations it is possible to disseminate information to the wide public about ongoing policy processes. The consultations and various discussions produced by them can indicate public opinion on dealt topics. Furthermore, if there already exists a well-defined plan to formulate a policy towards specified direction, the consultative hearings can act as a method of convincing the constituencies

about the superiority of *this* option. However, the bottom line for administrators is to lower the possible resistance towards decided policy outcome and gain a deeper mandate among the stakeholders for made policy decisions. Communication running both ways is essential in organising public consultations. By sitting on important information, the public administrators only make their own job more complicated, since the more people and stakeholder groups are aware of ongoing consultations, the less the extreme opinions carry weight. However, the most significant group of people still remains the hardest to reach and to get involved –the silent majority. (Forstner & Bales 1992: 34–35; Kane & Bishop 2002: 88–89.)

4.2. Experiences from consultations

Although consultative procedures have took place in many developed countries, the process itself has not always seen as worthy of all the time, money and personnel resources sacrificed for the good cause. As a consequence, the OECD (1995: 19–21) has listed some of the key elements that any effective and potentially successful consultative programs ought to involve. First, the consultation process should bear some flexibility so that it can be used in a variety of situations and among different contexts. Second, the earlier all the relevant information is being disseminated among the public, the better. Third, the information that is made available should be easy to understand even by those who are not experts on that particular field. Fourth, as some stakeholder groups are likely to have their voice heard better than the others, the managers of the consultation process need to recognize this imbalance and take it into account when drafting the policy decisions. Fifth, if a well-structured and genuine dialogue can be created between different interest groups and the government, then the dealt issues are usually being viewed extensively from various points of views and in a manner that builds on trust and co-operation. Sixth, the consultation process itself needs to be as open and transparent as possible so that stakeholders know, where and how to partake. Seventh, consultations usually benefit from a constant meta-analysis and review of other ongoing consultations. Finally, consultation needs to be seen as much more than merely a mechanical

process that occurs every once and a while in the society. This is to say that a whole culture of public consultations were to be built into the field of public administration.

Organising wide public consultations is one of the basic functions of the Commission of the European Communities. The Commission consults not only the other EU-institutions such as the European Parliament and the Council, but it strives for wide stakeholder and interest group participations as well. However, even though extensive consultative hearings are supported before legislative decisions take place, they cannot ever replace the actual, binding legislation produced by the Council and the national parliaments. Or as the Commission has put it, the mission is to give those interested *"a voice but not a vote"*. Based on the Commission's experiences on conducting wide consultative rounds all over Europe, some suggestions have been made on, how to maximise the utilities of these consultations and make them even more responsive to the various stakeholders participating in them. Furthermore, Commission is pursuing in its consultative processes the overarching principles of participation, openness, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. (COM 2002: 4, 15–22.)

As a concrete development measure the Commission makes sure that all the information and disseminated material related to consultations is explicit and compact. Moreover, while consultations are being organised, all the potential stakeholders need to be recognized –i.e. all those who are affected by the compiled policy, who will functions as implementators of the policy or those bodies having stated objectives so they possess a direct interest in the policy. There should exist a well-planned balance between various stakeholders consulted, so that there are representatives from social and economic bodies, large and small organisations, wider constituent groups and groups with special needs. The whole proceeding of the consultative process is to be published and place on the Internet for everyone to scrutinize. The participants are given enough time to leave their written comments on the draft policies, and every stakeholder group that is taking part in formulating the policy contents, is to be given feedback accordingly, so that it is easy to point out, which needs have caused which responses. (Ibid. 4, 15–22.)

In Canada, "The National Forum On Health" was held in 1994. In this co-operative process, various stakeholder groups, civil servants and representatives of the people gathered together to develop the Canadian health care system. The forum consisted of two phases: at the first phase, the participants compiled a framework for policy setting, and at the second phase theses suggestions were scrutinized carefully to make sure that the emphasis was on "right themes", at least according to citizen and stakeholder groups. The forum was considered as welcomed shake-up of public policymaking since it allowed both the citizenry and the constituent groups to make a contribution to the policy linings. The conversational touch of the whole process bettered reciprocal discussion and learning and it brought out a kind of common understanding on the developmental needs in the wide field of health policy. (OECD 2001: 93–96.)

However, according to the experience gained through the Canadian consultation process, several points were made for the development of future consultations. First, no matter how through the quest for incorporating various insights into the policy plan is, there are *always* some groups that would have wished for more clout –this is, however, simply a characteristic of wide national consultation process. Second, the representation of small discussion groups is another point that needs to be paid more attention so that the groups would not be too biased towards medical expertise. Third, for any successful consultation, high level offices and authorities need to grant their support to the consultation –this betters the overall credibility and legitimacy of the final policy plan. Fourth, in complex and wide policy contents, the importance of sufficient time, labour, and economic resources cannot be undermined. Fifth, more attention should be paid on deliberation instead of debate, so a real dialogue with common will can be maintained and the citizen- and stakeholder groups feel like they too have the ownership of the policy implementation. Sixth, for policy outlines to become everyday reality, also local and regional level governments need to become engaged to the policy process via communication and open discussion. And finally, although modern-day citizen involvement is being built on representative systems, those who actually take part in consultative hearings, have to be given space to bring out their view as individuals, as well – this way, their input has more credibility amongst their background groups. (Ibid. 100–101.)

In developing the Danish public policymaking, especially in the field of health care, several citizen-government relations-promoting methods have been in use. For instance, consensus conferences, user surveys, user boards, patients' choice and mailings, written comments as well as public hearings have been exploited to create more thorough, balanced policy outlines. The challenges of making all these efforts come to fruition are similar to those in other methods of public involvement (balance of opinions, time and money resources, defining public will, accountability issues and tackling resistance). However, even though citizens are being offered the possibilities to take part in the discussion, these kinds of extensive consultations still reach a very limited part of the population. Further, a large majority of the people simply do not bring out their insights at first hand but through various representatives. Consequently, the lack of active attendance is not a problem if the people *feel* that they had the opportunity to provide feedback to policymakers –had they chosen to do so. (OECD 2001: 107, 113–119.)

4.3. Policy making

Public policy can be specified as *"the description and explanation of the causes and consequences of government activity"* (Golembiewski 1977: 82). Public policies are results of making choices about values and competing ideas on, how to organise and develop certain domains – since the fact remains that there are always value- and other judgements made by the policymakers. The distinctive character of public sector is then the demand of public explicitness in policy decisions. Policies are constructed set of ideas and definitions that have an impact on the surrounding society. Moreover, policies are formulated to be targeted on specific groups or situations as well as present and future state of things. Piecing together policies aims for better allocation of resources, developing chosen priority issues and bettering the status quo of present policy frameworks. (Golembiewski 1977: 84–87; Lane 2000: 181–182.)

The policy-making process is a multi-dimensional procedure where several, albeit overlapping, phases can be distinguished. Moreover, in modern societies the policy-formatting process is carried forward through segregated and heterogeneous structures.

It is then the primary function of the administrative level to act as a mediator, a kind of prism in the focal point of multiple insights. The formulation starts with a perception, and insight on, how matters should be organised and developed. After this, more specific definition of the possible policy contents is being made. Organising and compiling the information and made choices is the next step, after which the description of the policy draft is presented. After these preparatory phases the actual framing of the policy happens. When policy makers come to the phase where their throughput reaches written form, the policy script needs to obtain legitimacy and then it can be implemented and run into administrative procedures. Policy choices are being responded to and discussed about on the field that this particular policy pertains. If the policy outline is formulated as fixed-term, it shall be assessed, after which the policy is concluded and/or updated. (Etzioni 1968: 474–476; Golembiewski 1977: 92; Salmikangas et al. 1999: 8.)

Policymaking is thus a challenging process where it is not enough that good and balanced decisions are being made, but these policy linings need to become a lively reality to grassroots level actors. In this light, the existence of consultations in policy cycles seems natural, since the policy plan has better chances of becoming reality if it has been thoroughly negotiated and widely disseminated already in the planning phase. Moreover, it is government's ethical obligation to promote the *"public good"*, and if the "public" has not been listened to, then the "good" is even more challenging to perceive. As different stakeholder groups are being consulted, it is important that even though all opinions do not necessarily possess equal weighting, they still should have equal respect from the policymakers. (Kane & Bishop 2002: 87–88.)

Consultative policy-making in the case of joint mental health and substance abuse plan can be also referred as to an adaptation of, what Etzioni (1968: 282–288) calls "mixed-scanning". This approach to decision-making processes derives elements from both rational and incremental theories (see Braybrooke & Lindblom 1963; Lindblom 1965 and Tarter & Hoy 1998) but is in its essence more active and participatory than either of its predecessors. Furthermore, although in mixed-scanning strategies the overarching, wide objective is set beforehand, it is not determined as a rigid entity that cannot be altered or re-directed during the process. Instead, smaller-scale operational decisions are made

constantly during the policy-formulation process, and these details can have an effect on the "ultimate" objective, without totally distorting the groundwork made initially. In this way, more realistic and flexible policy processes can be generated. Since governing bodies need some kind of general line to follow, but are still not able to predict with certainty all the development trends that might occur while objectives are being pursued, the incremental change factor enables public administrators to be more receptive to the surrounding elements. In other words, strategic choices are being made while apt alternatives to fulfil these aspirations are simultaneously being scanned.

One of the alternative definitions of the so called consultative policy-making could be Klijn and Koppenjan's (2002: 108–110) "interactive decision making". In its essence, the basic assumption is the same: to enhance the participation of the citizenry and different stakeholders in the societal decision-making processes. For instance, in Netherlands various kinds of discussion panels, workshops and web-based forums have been in active use when local government was renewed. The idea in interactive decision making is to enhance governance, formulate more relevant (judged by the citizens' needs) policies and to bring the policy-makers closer to ordinary people. The principal reasons for renewing societal decision- and policy-making procedures can be thus found in the changes of the nature and the role of public sector agents and the essence of what is perceived as public service. More and more co-operative forms of providing services are sought after, since governments can no longer sustain the kind of expertise in all new branches that the complex, multi-tiered society needs. Scarce resources and limited amount of knowledge force any actor to seek alternative ways of organizing future operations. Moreover, if the people cannot see the utility in governmental decisions, they are likely not to follow the aspired frameworks in a committed, genuine way. Although the idea of interactive decision making as such is one worth trying for, the crucial role of politicians should not be forgotten. Since the discussion-based policy-formatting challenges the traditional hierarchical models, the key actors (often the politicians) need to become better engaged to implementing the policy outcomes as well, and not only to be apparently active in the initiation phase of "something innovative".

4.4. The outline for consultative policy-making

The Finnish national plan for mental health and substance abuse work in its policy formulation processes can also be interpreted as a processual strategy. Möttönen and Niemelä (2005: 95) list some characteristic features of strategy as a processual entity, rather than being a "rational strategy". The discrepancies start from the very beginning: While in the rational strategy the compilation of the guidelines of the plan is bestowed on the upper levels of the organization, in the processual strategy this work is being done in cooperative way emphasizing multi-level and coordinative interaction. The rational strategy strives for clearly defined objectives, the implementation of which is considered as an essential part that all actors are required to be committed to. However, in the processual strategy it is acknowledged already from the beginning that different actors might have differing set of objectives towards which to aim. Moreover, the rational strategy is being seen as a set of orders and firm guidelines for organizational activities but the processual strategy rather strives for increasing mutual understanding among quarters, while noticing that instead of trying to force an artificial consensus it is better to make good use of various objectives. As a result of the actual strategic plan, in the case of rational model, the lower levels of organizations derive their more specified targets conforming the bigger plan. However, in the processual model each actor derives the practical everyday strategy from according environment, which will eventually lead into a situation where upper levels learn from the lower ones, not just the other way around.

Forstner and Bales (1992: 32) outline five principles of public involvement that can be seen as practical guidelines to everyone organising public participatory processes. The first principle "*Before you decide to do it – decide to do it right*" means that all public consultations should be carefully planned and widely informed, so that both the participants' and the organisers' time does not get wasted. The second principle "*There are no U-turns on the consultative road*" states that today's citizens increasingly know their rights and expect that their opinions are being called upon, and neglecting to do so can be very counterproductive to the policymakers. Third principle "*Forget about consensus*" advices the public administrators to acknowledge the fact, that as there exist as

many opinions as there are participants, all final outcomes are, at best, compromises rather than unitary consensus decisions. Furthermore, the fourth principle "It *ain't over 'til the fat lady sings*" continues that even though some kind of compromise has been reached, an ongoing dialogue with the stakeholder groups goes on, as the policies need to be disseminated and implemented. Finally, the fifth principle "*You remain both responsible and accountable no matter how many publics you have involved*" reminds the administrators that despite the wide and thorough consultations, it is them who are in charge of the actual ignition of the implementing procedure and practical work.

The Finnish Ministry of Finance has published a special handbook for civil servants and officials on, how to best listen to the citizenry in planning and making policy decisions. The objective for bettering participatory processes is to make the legislation function in practice and in everyday administration – i.e. to make the participatory rights provided in legislation visible. The public officials in all administrative levels need to commit to listening to the people. There needs to be enough time and monetary resources available for public hearings to come to fruition. Moreover, the citizenry and stakeholders are to be incorporated in the hearing processes as early as possible, when there still are genuine opportunities to make a difference. The information provided needs to be easy to reach and understand, and in the consultative hearing the participants need to be told, in which issues it is possible to influence on, and who is in charge of the final decision making. The held hearings should be extensive and versatile methods ought to be exploited thoroughly. If there are multiple hearings, then the administrative actors should see that matters are being dealt in large entities. The effectiveness of the hearings is the administrators' responsibility so that citizens' opinions become heard. Moreover, the success and significance of the hearings should be followed through and regularly evaluated. The success of the hearings is ultimately decided in, how sure the citizenry can be in that their opinions really have been listened to. (Valtiovarainministeriö 2005: 9–10.)

Also the organisation for economic co-operation and development (OECD 2001: 15) has listed some guiding principles for governments so they could at best possible way disseminate information, consult stakeholder groups and enable active participation in

their policymaking processes. The first principle is *commitment*, which means that everyone in public offices should pledge themselves in pursuing the noble aspirations of open information, consultation and participation. Moreover, in doing so the administrators should respect citizens' *rights* according to legislation and even find ways to further better these rights. *Clarity* in all information and procedures stemming from upper levels is a key feature, if one is to wise up of, what are the rights and responsibilities of public actors and the citizenry. The various participatory methods are to be given enough *time* while planning, formulating and implementing policies, and all information should sustain its absolute truthfulness and *objectivity*. For informative, consultative and participatory process to come to fruition, economic, technical and personnel *resources* need to be sufficient. No matter how well organised the participatory meetings or consulting processes are, no single public agency or administrative department can cope with all the reacting, communicating and implementing tasks alone, but close *co-ordination* between various public actors is needed. Furthermore, if governance takes the effort to offer possibilities for civil society to participate, it should respect and value the contributions and bear its *accountability* in taking into consideration the various inputs. This target is easier to reach if public administration actively develops *evaluating* methods and indicators to assess its success or failure in incorporating the constituency into its processes. Last but not least, since *active citizenship* can only profit the society, those in power should try their best in enhancing this activity through education, supporting 3rd sector organisations and fostering an atmosphere favourable to vital attendance.

5. CONSULTATIVE POLICY MAKING IN PRACTICE

In this chapter, the consultation process in organising the regional hearings for compiling the national plan national plan for mental health and substance abuse work will be analyzed more thoroughly. The analysis of this consultation process is based on themed interviews conducted in October 2008 as well as participatory observation during the consultative hearings in Helsinki and Tampere in the spring 2008.

The method of analysing the characteristics of this type of consultative policy making as well as responsiveness during the process and inside the policy plan is qualitative in nature. The aim is then to acquire a wider knowledge of the characteristic elements of consultative policy making process and the perceptions of its responsiveness according to both the participants and the policymakers.

5.1. The national plan for mental health and substance abuse work

During the spring of 2005, 106 members of the Finnish parliament signed a proposal for action, where the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was asked to draw up a national plan for mental health and substance abuse work. In its response to this initiative, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health committed into developing this kind of program based on the experiences from already conducted projects in the field of mental health and substance use services. The developed plan is integrated also in the national strategy of social and health policy for the year 2015. In February 2007, the national mental health days were held at Seinäjoki where a wide range of experts gathered together to ponder the future of Finnish mental health care and service development. Many professionals in mental health and substance abuse fields emphasized the need for joint national plan for mental health and substance abuse work. Collaboration between different societal actors and involving the service users and their relatives in the preparatory phase of creating this plan were lifted high in the agenda. Although discussions among

professionals across administrative sectors' boundaries were highlighted, so was the need to include citizens in all phases of preparation to the upcoming national plan. The role of third sector organizations and civil society was also seen essential, since those are the actors that will quite likely be among the service providers in the future. (Stakes 2007: 13–17; Stakes 2008.)

Accordingly, the Mieli 2009 -working group was formulated to draw up the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work. The composition of this policy-making group was comprehensive in a sense, that there were many organisations' representatives, local and national level public officials as well as many developers of mental health and substance abuse work. The five regional hearings, ongoing web-discussion, organisations' hearing and the seminar in the Finnish parliament then gave material for the compilation of this national policy plan. As this research was under final revisions, the policy plan became finalized, and the working groups' propositions for developing mental health and substance abuse work were handed over to Paula Risikko, the Minister of Health and Social Services on 10th of February, 2009.

5.2. How and what to consult –the regional hearings

The policymaking process of the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work is a combination of some of the tools presented in the previous chapters. The regional hearings, a specific hearing for 3rd sector organisations as well as the seminar in the Finnish parliament were originally arranged because the policymakers wanted to gather hands-on experiences and developmental suggestions from the wide field of the professionals who operate in these two fields. In addition to these face-to-face meetings, and ongoing Internet-based discussion was open for everyone interested to attend to.

The regional hearings were constructed around four themes, and in most cases, the hearing was a single point of contact for the participants. However, the participants and various representatives attending these hearings were either personally invited or received the information through their own official organisation structures. In this way,

consultation was not targeted to the citizens but more to experts and practical workers of mental health and substance abuse fields. This then brought on background groups' interests and some personal agendas to the group discussions. Furthermore, small groups were kind of little workshops revolving around themes defined beforehand. Before dividing into small groups, the overall introduction framed day's discussion, and after small groups' discussions the focal results of each group were brought into general discussion. Although the regional hearings were a set of individual events, they were nevertheless organised according to similar structure in all the locations.

Personally, I attended two of the regional hearings –those in Helsinki and Tampere. This participatory observation enabled me to form a general picture of the hearing process, and later on, pose the interviewees' comments and insights on the according context. In general, participatory observation enables the researcher to perceive the research problem and phenomena behind it. Through the reciprocal participatory process, the researcher learns from the observed situation and its functional culture, and simultaneously interprets the operations according to his/her theoretical framework. Although in participatory observation, the researcher can take part in discussions and debates as an individual person, the most important task for the research worker is, however, to connect the perceived with the methodological and theoretical understanding. (Grönfors 2007: 151–153.)

Participation through the Internet?

As the regional hearings were more targeted on bringing stakeholder groups' and experts' representatives together, a direct channel for citizen participation was then ensured via the Internet. In the free web-based forum, "Otakantaa.fi" anyone interested in developing mental health and substance abuse work were invited to comment on pre-set questions and have a discussion with other people. However, as will be noticed later on in this study, the web-discussion did not awake as much interest that was initially hoped for. Furthermore, even though in the regional hearings the existence of this Internet-application was highlighted to the participants, not many of them carried further their discussion through the web.

5.3. Mapping the elements of responsiveness in consultative policy making

The practical application of consultative policy making in fostering greater responsiveness was studied through themed key actor interviews. As a research method, I chose themed interviews for my study for several reasons. First, by using themed interviews to conduct the study, an approach that is flexible enough can be maintained while still respecting the consistent and reliable scientific intake. Second, interviews emphasize that all the interviewed people are subjects in the research situation, and as such should be given a genuine possibility to express their own insights and opinions on dealt issues. Moreover, the arguments made by different interviewees can be put into a wider context to better enlighten the overall view on a given phenomenon. Third, an interview is a well-functioning method when already beforehand can be predicted that the research topic produces several differing opinions and point of views. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 34–35.) Themed interview can also be called a sort of discussion. The researcher initiates and frames this discourse, but the actual conversational element aims for interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee so that the interviewed can adduce his or her personal insights. (Eskola & Vastamäki 2007: 25.)

Although conducting key actor interviews is a functioning way to gather information about the topic in question, there are some problems related to this method, as well. As both the interviewer and interviewees are humans, there is always a risk that the cognitive elements pose some challenges on either of the parties. Moreover, one should be well prepared to conduct the interviews, and not just do the research ill-prepared. The practical issues of conducting interviews can also pose some challenges (whether they are related to time or money issues). There can be seen some mistake sources depending on, how "socially accepted" answers the interviewee is prone to give. As there are no ready-made models on, how to interpret and analyze given answers, the researcher is forced to make his/her own interpretations inside the given theoretical framework. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 35.) As the interviews were conducted before the final policy plan was complete, the interviewees' answers were not guided by the contents of the plan but rather, their personal insights and perceptions.

The methodology used in conducting the themed interviews is qualitative. Since the aim is to untangle the interviewees' subjective insights about the consultation process as well as the potential responsiveness that it embodies, one cannot rely on wide surveys where the answers are formulated on the basis of ready-defined alternatives. (see also Kalliola 1992.) There were in total 15 interviewees who represented both the policy makers in the Mieli2009 -working group and the various stakeholders' representatives participating in the regional consultative hearings (more information on the interviewed persons in the Appendix 2.) Choosing the interviewees is one of the most important phases in conducting an interview. Since qualitative interviews aim for understanding some particular phenomenon deeper or seeking new points of view into the matter, the interviewees cannot be treated as plain "samples". Moreover, by interviewing a few carefully selected representatives of the wished group, it is possible to gather significant information about the researched topic. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 58–59.)

The interviewees received the themes of the interview as well as some preliminary pro-voking questions beforehand through e-mail, which enabled the interviewed to prepare themselves for the actual telephone interview. As the interviews' thematic structure was delivered beforehand, the actual interview questions were posed only at the actual inter-viewing situation, which enhanced the authenticity of given answers. Since all the inter-views were conducted via telephone during October 2008, every interview situation was alike from its basis. Conducting interviews on telephone has its own pros and cons. On the one hand it is a good way to reach the interviewees despite the long geographical distances or busy schedules, it is cost-effective and does not pose much "physical dis-tress" to the interviewees, even with sensitive issues. On the other hand, however, the non-verbal signs are in most part ignored and the social dialogue is weaker than in face-to-face interviews. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 64–65.) All the interviewees gave permis-sion for recording the interviews. It is then based on both the recorded tapings and short notes made during the interviews that the contents of the themed interviews are ana-lyzed.

At this point, some short remarks about the reliability and validity of using themed in-terviews in analyzing the consultative policy making can be made. Since the objective

of this study is to broaden our understanding on both the characteristics of consultative policy making and the responsive elements inside it, a qualitative analysis is justifiable. By taking part in two of the regional hearings, I was able to formulate a general picture of the surroundings of the case study, and ultimately place the findings of the research in the according context. Since analyzing the concept of responsiveness inevitably boils down to, whose opinion is being asked, the underlying subjectivity inside the term "responsive" also licenses personal interviews as the research method. Furthermore, the findings of the conducted interviews reflect the opinions and personal insights of the interviewees, and their individual perceptions of the occurrence of responsiveness in this consultative process. The findings of this research are then not the absolute truth or the only way to characterize responsiveness in consultative policy making, but a synthesis formulated on the basis of *this* particular research setting.

Choosing the interviewed persons took place by picking the representatives from the lists of participants form each regional hearing. The interviewees then represented both policy formulators and stakeholders, there were participants from all the five regional hearings, from various geographical locations, and both men and women were represented. However, picking some other interviewees could have produced different kinds of standpoints to the consultative hearings, and eventually, form a slightly different view on consultative policy making and the responsive elements inside it. Furthermore, had the interviews taken place sooner after the actual hearings, the answers of the interviewed persons might have been different due to stronger remembrance of the occurred hearings, and the frame of mind they had during them. In this sense, the findings of this research strongly reflect the subjective insights of the interviewed representatives of both the policy making group and the constituencies. Although the ultimate objective of compiling the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work should be the citizen- and patient groups receiving better targeted care and services, these groups are not represented among the interviewed persons. However, as these important stakeholders were not present either at the hearings nor did they extensively state their opinions through the Internet, the themed interviews were not directed to them. Had there actually been ordinary people present at the hearing events, they would have been represented among the interviewed, as well.

5.3.1. Responsiveness of the policy contents and the consultation process

The first theme for the interview **"Responsiveness and various stakeholder groups"** consisted of five questions that aimed for finding out, how the policymakers (i.e. the members of the Mieli 2009 -working group) on the one hand, and the representatives of different stakeholder groups on the other, saw the responsiveness of the policy process and the policy contents.

First, the interviewees were asked if they thought the policy plan was revolving around relevant themes – in other words, if the intended policy contents were responding to the needs stemming from the wide fields of mental health and substance abuse. Since the policy plan had not yet been published at the time of the interviews, both the members of the working group and the stakeholders reflected this to the pre-determined themes that the plan would be built on and that were discussed at the hearings. The general insight was that the themes discussed at the hearings were, in fact, quite essential from the point of view of practical work and the problems that are manifested in the fields of mental health and substance abuse. Both the policymakers and the stakeholder groups' representatives thought that the principal objective to bring mental health and substance abuse fields closer together (or even merge them into one comprehensive entity) was crucial and much longed for. The general responsiveness and relevance of the policy plan was then seen as satisfying, at least at this preliminary phase. It was also pointed out that *the plan itself was a response* to 106 members of the Finnish parliament signing a request to draw up this type of comprehensive policy paper. Furthermore, the final policy plan was perceived as a welcomed answer to better coordinate the scattered field of mental health and substance abuse work.

However, especially the organisations' representatives criticized the plan for being directed to mass population, thus somewhat ignoring the importance of special groups' needs. Some of the stakeholder groups' representatives saw that that the policy plan would ultimately be targeted into making administrative processes more efficient, thus adding no value to the grassroots level work. The fear was that if there are no concrete suggestions, as to how the plan will be put into practice, it remains as "dead letter". As

one of the interviewees stated: *"It looks good, but how we get all these issues into practice, is another thing"*.

Moving further into the responsiveness of the policymaking *process*, the interviewees were probed, had the hearing procedure real potential of bringing various insights equally into the plan. The aim was then to define, if all relevant stakeholder groups were being heard, and whether or not the policy makers had taken into account the full potential of selected stakeholder groups. As presumed, the opinions of the policy formulators were less critical towards this aspect of incorporating various opinions into the process than was that of the stakeholder groups. And although the organisations' and municipal level civil servants' outlook on the process was not entirely negative, there can be distinguished differences between the participants of the hearings and the policy makers.

Most of the interviewed members of the Mieli 2009 -working group saw that the variety in hearing methods (regional hearings, web-based discussion forum as well as seminar in the Finnish parliament) was answering the question of bringing multiple point of views into the policy plan, and the genuine intention was to listen with as wide frontier as possible. However, the fact that the identified patient or "ordinary people from the streets" were missing from the hearings, was fully recognized also in the working group. Rather, the regional hearings were characterized from the policymakers' point of view as "*experts meeting experts*" or "*serving for field's internal networking opportunities*".

The quest for deeper understanding of the mental health and substance abuse problems did not, according to both the policy formulators and the stakeholder representatives, awaken as much interest or bring out as much new openings as one could have hoped for. One reason for this could be the volatile social and economic situation we are now entering, as well as all the other reforms taking place in legislature and service structure. One interviewee described this discovery:

> *"I believe that if these hearings had been carried through in a more explicit societal situation and in terms of clearer service structures, people might have come on board better, as they could have been more certain that they participating has a real effect."*

The majority of 3rd sector representatives thought that it is a good start to listen to the practical workers of the field. However, the lack of citizen participants in the hearings was issued widely. One of the municipal level civil servants said:

> *"Even though patient- and other organisations were represented, the things that the experts wish for, are not necessarily the same that the clients and patients do... and even though it is not easy to incorporate the customer groups in mental health and substance abuse fields, it should nevertheless be strived for!"*

It was stated that despite the best of efforts, the deliberation remained at quite a theoretical level, and was perceived as disjointed. Some of the organisations' representatives pointed out that there exists surely some kind of preliminary plans at the bottom, and that the regional, somewhat token, hearings are there only to confirm the already made policy linings. Quite a common concern among the organisations' representatives was that although they had been *"given an illusion of becoming heard"*, the problems raised at the hearings would be either totally disregarded or left in the policy plan at a statement's position, without followed by any suggestions on, how to tackle them.

Since governance being responsive means, that it is directing its responsiveness to some group of actors, this potential object of perceived responsiveness was studied next. In fact, the insights of policymakers, municipal level civil servants and organisations' representatives differed from one another quite a lot. The working group members saw the plan quite explicitly directed to the decision-makers of both national and local level:

> *"I would say there are two instances the plan should be directed to. There are the state-level actors who are responsible for legislation and informative steering. And the other major level is the municipalities who are responsible for the services."*

The perspective was then on making both state and regional level administration more efficient and better targeted to joint mental health and substance abuse problems. The insight of the organisations, however, was very different. Many of the interviewed representatives of 3rd sector organisations were not entirely sure, to whom the plan is meant to be directed. Instead, suggestions were made that it could better the position of practi-

cal workers, coordinate more effectively the work in mental health and substance abuse and enhance the patients' position and promote their rights in planning these services.

Next, the interviewees were inquired whether they thought that different stakeholder groups' feedback and opinions could potentially have a different weighing in terms of the final policy plan or not. The idea was then to find out the potential perceived responsiveness, and differences in valuation due to power- or status factors. Quite surprisingly, both the Mieli 2009 -working group and the stakeholder groups' representatives thought that this was the case – there were seen many differences in valuations and weighing of the opinions depending on, *who* was the presenter of these opinions.

However, the motivations and reasoning for these differences in prestige were quite different among the policymakers and organisations' representatives. Some of the interviewed members of the Mieli 2009 -working group saw, that the composition of the working group itself was already too much mental health-led so that some of the substance abuse or social issues were perhaps not emphasized enough. Furthermore, one representative of the working group saw the valuation of different stakeholder groups only natural and as such, very important as regards to the accuracy and relevancy of the upcoming plan:

> *"This depends very much on the theme. If we are dealing with organisations, then their opinion is the most significant, and if we are dealing with client's position, the opinion of the clientele is the most important...this varies then quite a lot."*

The organisations' representatives thought that respect of different stakeholders were apparent already in the hearings: doctors and other "hard core experts" as well as municipalities as service providers were seen to have much more say than, for example, the patient groups' representatives. This difference in appreciation was then thought to become visible on the final policy plan, as well. A general correlation was perceived between the responsibility in service provision and decision making, and the extent how much different stakeholders got weighing in carrying forward their message. Some municipal level civil servants though that this variation in bringing one's message forth

was a result of an old administrative tradition, and that the "mode" of each participant was already from the beginning tuned to this.

Since interactiveness (two-way flow of information and feedback) and openness are key elements in responsive governance, the next set of questions concentrated on finding out, how the interviewees envisioned these themes in the consultative regional hearings. There were no major dissatisfactions on either interactiveness or openness among the policymakers and constituencies, although some differences between these two groups can be distinguished.

Based on the interviews, the policy making group had no ready-made plan before regional consultative hearings were conducted, but these hearings largely formulated the policy contents, and in this sense the policy formulators' perspective on the hearings was highly open. Furthermore, one member of the working group stated that the whole of European governance is today extremely open, and:

> "There are no possibilities and no point to keep these processes behind close doors. Rather, there has been a desperate search for good ideas."

It was possible for anyone interested to take part in the hearings, and after the draft version was finished, it was sent for comments. As a few members of the Mieli 2009 - working group pointed out, the policy plan was formulated inside the working group in a very open and interactive process. Among the policymakers, there were, however, some critical insights into the openness and transparency of the process, as well as a concern of the plan being left at too an abstract level. It was also acknowledged that perhaps the tight one-year schedule of making this plan would not even have made it possible to incorporate wider groups of people. Or as one of the working group's representative said:

> "So yes, I'd say that the process has been as open as possible, yet I'm sure that any single practical worker has absolutely no idea about the upcoming plan!"

The representatives of various organisations and municipalities thought that the hearing process itself was open, but that the interactiveness worked only through the small group discussions, not so much at the common introductive or conclusive phase. Even though most of the stakeholder participants felt that organising these kinds of hearings is a very positive thing *per se*, nearly all of the interviewed organisations' representatives would have wanted to have a say at the draft phase of the plan – i.e. at the point where it is still possible to make a contribution.

There were also seen to exist quite a lot confusion about, where the plan is currently proceeding, and what could still be done to make a contribution. Some suggested, that additional possibilities to write a short commentary on the draft version could have been offered, since *"in the small groups, there were so many participants that it is unclear how well each person is able to bring out his own insight in that particular situation"*.

The fact that these kinds of wide consultative hearings are being organised in multiple locations, means that there has to exist a very good motivation for this – incorporating large groups of representatives takes time and money. Whether the motivation was seen to be that of adding value to the contents of the policy plan, helping in convincing the people about the legitimacy of this work or enhancing the inner networking of mental health and substance abuse workers, all of the interviewees thought that theses kinds of face-to-face meetings are useful to be organised.

Couple of the interviewed members of the working group saw, that if these hearings had not taken place, the emphasis on bettering customer's position would not be as strong as it now was. However, it was acknowledged that the expectations of these hearings were perhaps unrealistic in terms of, how much any single person could affect the policy plan. Some members of the working group even admitted that the results of these hearings were not as good as one could have hoped for, and nothing really new and innovative came up. Rather, the hearings reinforced the preliminary thoughts of the working group and assured them for not being *"totally lost"*. Actually, the 2-day seminar where the Mieli 2009 -working group members gathered to brainstorm the various ideas was seen to produce much more than the regional consultative hearings.

Some of the interviewed representatives of different organisations shared a common concern of these hearings being only token events, based on what the policy makers can declare that *"stakeholder groups have been incorporated in the planning of the policy outline"*. It was also pointed out that even though the hearings were open, the preparatory phase of the policy plan was not. There was a genuine hope that based on the hearings more resources and adequate training could be directed to those in need at the very grassroots level of mental health and substance abuse work. The hearings had succeeded in awakening a general interest towards this kind of development work, but it was quite often stated that *"this was a good start, but more could be accomplished had these hearings been organised more than once"*. The continuity of the policy planning was then missing.

5.3.2. The process of consultative hearings

The second theme **"Consultation and the hearings in formulating the plan"** concentrated on the hearing process as such, its pros and cons and the potential of influencing through regional hearings. Moreover, the interviewees were inquired the potential inequalities among the participants of different hearing locations or small groups, and also, how well various representatives saw that the information dissemination about the contents and the process of making the final plan had succeeded.

The basic structure of all the regional hearings was as following: opening introduction followed by small group discussion and ending with a conclusive collective deliberation. The advantages and disadvantages of this method was inquired from the interviewees. The positive and negative traits were seen very similar among all the interviewed persons, so no real differences arose between these "two camps". Both the stakeholder groups' and the policy makers' representatives saw no real alternatives to be reckoned with, but the process itself got many acknowledgements. Since these kinds of hearings are quite new in the field of Finnish public policy formulation, the interviewees could not perhaps think of another, better way to conduct these hearing possibilities similarly in all the locations, but were generally very satisfied with the fact that these hearings had been organised in the first place.

The advantages of this kind of consultative hearing structure were mostly related to the effectiveness and focusing of small group discussions. Many of the interviewed pointed out that this type of structuring is inevitable, due to the simple fact that time at hands was limited. It was also stated that as the themed information package had been sent beforehand and was also available in the policy plan's website, one could have easily brought his/her well-thought insights in the small group discussions – if one wished to do so. In addition, dividing into small groups opened up contacts for many actors regionally – some for the first time! One representative of the Mieli 2009 -working group highlighted that in fostering good governance, the ownership of the small groups remained at the hands of the stakeholders, not the policymakers, since the chairperson and secretary of each small group were from various constituent groups, and not from the policy formulators' side.

However, the small groups' assemblage got also some critique from the organisations' representatives. As the small-group division was based on voluntary enrolments, some groups turned out lot bigger than others, some groups had more representatives from mental health-oriented instances and so forth. Since the time was limited, many of the interviewees would have hoped that a complementary post-commentary could have been optional. Furthermore, ideas were thrown that maybe there could have been several small group meetings during a longer period of time. Even though careful theme structure of small groups was perceived as inevitable for the manageability of the deliberation, some of the interviewed organisations' representatives saw that there is a risk that some ideas are left unnoticed or unsaid just because they do not belong in the branch of the discussed theme. One interviewee quite aptly concluded that:

> *"...with this short period of time, the hearings form a kind of compromise between deep analysis and superficial discussion."*

As clear and explicit dissemination of information is a vital part of organising successful consultative hearings, the policy formulators and the stakeholder groups' representatives were asked about, how they saw that the informing task had been brought off.

There were many differences to be found in, how information was sent and received *before and after* the hearings as well as about the *themes or the process*.

Beforehand the policymaking group had compiled a short and intentionally somewhat provocative information package about the discussed themes. This information package was then sent to various stakeholder- and constituent groups to awaken interest towards the hearings and arise some development ideas about the themes-to-be-discussed. Both the interviewed representatives of Mieli 2009 -working group and the stakeholder participants thought that before the hearings, theme-wise information was adequate, but this was not the case either afterwards or related to the proceeding of the policymaking process.

The members of the policy formulating group perceived that the most important post-informing occurs in the form of the final policy plan, and there was no additional, actively disseminated information coming from the policymakers' side. Furthermore, as the policy plan's own web-pages were frequently updated, it was left up to the participants themselves to check, where the policy process was at any given point proceeding, and what had been said in other hearings. The members of the working group acknowledged, that they had not been active informing the participants afterwards, but this "keeping up with the plan" had been left to participants own activity.

Consequently, none of the interviewed representatives of various stakeholder groups had accurate knowledge on, where the planning process was proceeding at the time of the interviews. It was frequently pointed out, that the feedback from the hearings to the participants was missing –an essential element of collaboration between the two parties. By the same token, however, many of the interviewees admitted that they themselves had not actively sought this post-information, either. It was generally perceived that informing about the discussed themes had succeeded, but distributing information about the policy process had not. One of the interviewed organisations' representatives stated, however, that the information even beforehand could have been more explicit:

> *"I think that we did not get to find out which things exactly it is possible to have an impact on! I believe that I'd come much more prepared to the hearing had I known, how and what I can influence on."*

As stated before, the small groups' discussion themes were clearly defined in advance, so that the participants of these regional hearings could sign in to whichever discussion theme interested them the most. This structuring of small group discussion was thought as a positive factor *per se*, since the deliberation remained focused, and those who were really interested in influencing certain themes issued, got an opportunity to do this. The small groups then produced information on precisely those issues the policymakers sought information after. And as couple of the interviewed policy formulators pointed out:

> *"...the fact that there were so many participants in the small group of "Mental health and substance use: co-operation or coalescence", tells us that at least we succeeded in one of the defined themes..."*

One of the advantages of defined small group themes was manifested to be the equality of small group participants in all the hearing locations. The themed small group discussion were perceived to have only very few disadvantages. Among these was a fear that the pre-determined themes could somehow prevent innovative ideas from emerging or "throwing oneself" into new openings. Furthermore, a few representatives of organisations thought that even though the dealt themes were useful and relevant, they were somewhat overlapping, so one could not take part in all the discussion groups but had to prioritize one's time and interests.

Since the regional hearings were conducted according to similar structure in five cities, the next point of interest was to find out, whether the interviewees thought that the location or small group could have mattered in, how well any single participant got his or her voice heard during the process. Although the general perception was that the location did not affect on the potential inequality of the participants, differing insights were to be found, both among the stakeholder groups' representatives and the Mieli 2009 - working group members.

Moreover, a couple of the working group's representatives stated that the location put different participants in differing positions since the information gathered from the previous hearings was always carried further on the following hearings. In this sense, those who participated later during the process had potentially more information and wider perspective on the dealt topics. The geographical distances were mentioned several times as one of the key element producing inequality among participants: from Lapland, it is totally different thing to travel to these hearings than it is from e.g. Helsinki. Furthermore, there are so much more service providers in the Southern Finland, that their emphasis on small group compositions is naturally bigger than in Northern and Eastern parts.

The question of potential small group differences awoke more thoughts on potential inequalities among participants. It was generally agreed on, that the more participants there were in a small group, the harder it was to make any single personal opinion count. Moreover, as the chairpersons and secretaries of the small groups were also representatives of some stakeholder groups, their personal skills and own agendas could have had weighing in guiding the small group discussion. Personality issues and own activity were perceived as factors that could bring variety in different participants' possibilities to speak out. As the assemblages of all the small groups were based on voluntary sign-ups, some groups consisted more of doctors and other experts than others, and usually those organisations that were represented, were the biggest and most influential ones already. As one smaller organisation's representative said:

> *"3rd sector actors are not always taken seriously and usually those who represent some type of organisation, are always the same, the largest and most powerful whose point of views are not those of the entire organisational field!"*

The interviewees were asked to ponder, whether some other method of participation could have brought forth different interest groups' opinions better. Since not many consultative haring processes have taken place in Finland so far, the interviewed people found it difficult to come up with an alternative method. Instead, the face-to-face meetings were praised. However, some additional methods of gathering important information from the field were suggested.

For example, there were suggestions that perhaps smaller, themed seminars could have been organised to support the regional hearings' openings. Surveys that were directed to both patient groups as well as the practical workers of these fields could have been conducted. Some suggested that the compositions of the small groups could have been restricted, so that only one participant per organisation or working place could have taken part in the small group discussion; this could have brought smaller stakeholder groups' voice better heard. As a developmental need for the future, the client and patient groups' representatives should be more comprehensively taken along in planning national policy plan. The problems of incorporating these stakeholder groups were acknowledged as follows:

"If they were really and truly to be taken along in these discussions, they have to be educated and prepared beforehand to, how to work in these kinds of assemblies – otherwise they would be in a very unfair position as regards to the professionals who sit in these types of meetings all the time!"

5.3.3. E-democracy in enhancing the formulation of the policy

The third theme **"The shaping up of the plan and civic discourse"** established the potential of E-democracy in formulating better targeted, responsive policy plans. As the regional hearings were more directed to the professionals both at municipal and organisational levels, the opportunity for "ordinary citizen" to say one's opinion became probably best manifested through the web-based open discussion forum. Although there were lots of initial expectations concerning the utilisation of this e-tool, both the policy makers and the representatives of various constituent groups alike remained quite sceptic about its real usefulness.

The common perception of these web-based discussion forums, according to both the policy makers and the stakeholder groups, was that it is a positive thing that they exist, and the possibility to have one's say is been given to – as long as people are aware of them and are able to use them! On of the biggest advantage that the working group's members saw this "Otakantaa.fi" -forum to possess with regards to the policy plan was

that there could be direct quotations taken from the discussion to enliven the policy text. However, almost all of the interviewed members of the Mieli 2009 -group felt that the open discussion forum on the web had brought no added value to the policy process as such. And as anyone was able to write down anything, without a moderator being present to censor the lively discussion, the scientific value of these deliberations remained questionable. The original thought had been that after the regional hearings, also the experts could have carried the discussions further on the Internet, but apparently this had not happened.

The stakeholder groups' representatives shared the common insight with the policy formulating group with the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet forum.

> *"This is openness, and could be considered parallel with democracy, although the real impact on the final policy plan remains unclear."*

Since public administration has seen the emerge of new electronic and web-based applications directed to bring more value to public policy making, the interviewees were asked to share their outlook on the advantages and disadvantages of e-tools in general. Nearly all the interviewees stated that the positive features of these ICTs include independence from time or space, free flow of information to all interested, potential of reaching vast amounts of people and the free expression of one's thoughts.

However, both the Mieli 2009 -working group members and the stakeholder representatives feared that not everyone is aware of the ICTs existence, and thus their full potential remains unexploited. In addition, as anyone is free to write anything, the real value of these web-based forums is yet to be discovered. For many remote areas, quick Internet-connections are not an everyday reality, and there still are many demographic groups (such as the elderly) who cannot utilize these e-tools sufficiently.

The web-based discussion forum was meant to represent the aspect of citizen participation in the policy making process of the national mental health and substance abuse plan. Since the results of this applications remained quite modest, the interviewees were

further inquired, how the citizens' and patient groups' wishes and demands *could* be taken into account in the final policy plan. The members of the Mieli 2009 -working group responded that through various organisations being a part of the hearing processes as well as the composition of the working group, the point of views of the citizenry is being taken into account. It was further stated, that in the final version of the policy plan there is going to be a strong emphasis on patients' increasing role in service planning:

> *"When these services are being planned at the local level, the client/patient or his/her close ones has to be acknowledged and their opinions need to become heard. I think that municipalities ought to be obliged to incorporate these people in the service planning. At this phase, the fact that this has not happened, is seen as a huge disadvantage, and this is highlighted also in the policy draft."*

Furthermore, it was pointed out that:

> *"We have also organised a specific hearing targeted to organisations, as well as citizens' representatives in the parliament. The bottom line has been to pay attention to citizens."*

Not surprisingly, the insights of the stakeholder groups' representatives were more critical. It was argued that these kinds of national plans are too long away from ordinary citizens (as they are compiled and implemented by experts). Suggestions were made, that although incorporating the service users and patient groups in the fields of mental health and substance abuse is highly challenging, it is not good enough reason for not trying to. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview or written surveys could be potential ways of incorporating the clientele better in future policy formulation.

In addition, the interviewees pointed out that formulating a wide national plan directed to the future actions is very challenging, since one needs to set forth from the economic and societal realities of today. All in all, the interviewees perceived that the voices of much wider and larger groups of stakeholders became heard than without organising these kinds of hearings.

Based on the conducted interviews, some of the essential elements of responsiveness in consultative policy making can be distinguished –both from the policy makers' perspective and that of the attended stakeholder groups' representatives. The following table (Table 2. Central findings on the different elements of responsiveness in consultative policy making) illustrates the key themes risen from the interviews. The responsiveness is then viewed from the perspectives of the policy contents on the one hand, and the processual responsiveness on the other. Furthermore, the possible object (or groups of objects) of the responsiveness in both the policy outcome and the held regional hearings are described. The in-depth analysis of the findings of the perceived similarities and differences between policy makers' and stakeholder group representatives' insights will be presented in the last chapter of this thesis, discussion and conclusions.

Some remarks can, however, be made already at this point to introduce the central points of the following table 2. Consultative policy making as such was perceived beneficial, both according to the Mieli 2009 -working group's representatives and the stakeholders' representatives. Although the "good intentions" were commended, the stakeholders feared that the plan would end up being just one more title-level, even idle paper. Some of the interviewees even stated that the plan was perhaps not intended to better the functions of mental health and substance abuse services at all, but striving more for organising the administrative processes more economically and efficiently.

Responsiveness in the policy plan was seen to exist both in the consultative processes and the contents, but neither the policy formulators nor the constituencies were completely satisfied with the hearings' outcome. The lack of citizen representation was seen to be a major disadvantage, and concerns were expressed about the hearings serving only for token purposes. Although the possibility for each representative group to attend was alike, the differences in, for example, prestige, valuation and power possessed by the participants posed the stakeholder groups in uneven positions. The informing process in terms of clarifying the purpose of the regional hearings, their themes and the outcomes of other hearings could have functioned better. As many of the interviewees pointed out, the reasoning behind participation as well as the actual "end products" of these participatory processes remained unclear. Openness and transparency as respon-

siveness-fostering elements were to be found also in the consultative policy process in the case study. However, this general aspiration to introduce reciprocity into policy making did not include the citizenry. Even though some kind of vague effort in bringing the voice of the people into the plan was carried forth through the web-based discussion forum, it can be concluded that the efforts made were not enough.

Table 2. Central findings on the different elements of responsiveness in consultative policy-making.

The different elements of responsiveness in consultative policy-making	The insights of the Mieli 2009 -working group's representatives	The insights of various stakeholder groups' representatives
Responsiveness of the **contents** of the policy plan	• Relevant themes were being discussed • The need to form a joint policy for mental health and substance abuse work • The plan itself was a response to a request from the Finnish national parliament	• Relevant themes were being discussed • The need to form a joint policy for mental health and substance abuse work • Too much concentrated on mass population, neglecting special groups • Too abstract level, not enough concrete suggestions
Responsiveness of the **consultative hearings (process)**	Structure: • variation in methods brought different opinions forth • effective and manageable structure • equality in all the hearing locations Participation: • experts meeting experts, inner networking • based on voluntary efforts, basically open for everyone interested	Structure: • enabled some kind of stakeholder participation • basically a good structure • fostering administrative effectiveness, perhaps too rigid for innovative openings Participation: • listening to practical workers, however citizens and patients should be also included • "we are given the illusion of becoming heard"

	Location or small group: • geographical distances may affect • small group differences depend on group composition and the chairperson • small group compositions based on voluntary sign-ins	Location or small group: • geographical distances may affect • small group differences depend on group composition and the chairperson • small group composition could have been more equal → maybe restriction beforehand?
Responsiveness to various **stakeholder groups**	• Plan should be directed to national- and local level decision makers • Variations in emphasis depend on dealt themes	• Plan should be directed to practical workers and bettering patients' position • Variations in emphasis depend on power and appreciation of stakeholders
Openness and **interactiveness**	• Interactiveness and openness inside the Mieli 2009 - working group • No ready-made plans at the bottom • The process has been made as open as possible	• The process was open, but interactiveness worked only at small group discussions • The feedback to oneself was missing: would have been an important element of interactiveness
Information about the **process** and the **contents** of the policy plan	• Quite a tight schedule: it is not possible to inform everyone → left to one's own activity • Preliminary information package about dealt themes was good • The policy process has not been informed about	• Information beforehand was good, although the actual possibilities to make a contribution could have been made clearer • No idea, where the policy process is now proceeding
Citizen involvement in the policy formulation	Via representatives: • citizens' voice through stakeholder groups Via the Internet: • the web-forum was open • did not yield as much as was initially hoped for • direct quotations to enliven the policy draft	Via representatives: • only the biggest stakeholder groups were represented → not taking into account special groups Via the Internet: • not available for everyone • the actual benefits are questionable

5.4. Commentary on the basis of the final policy plan

During the final revision of this study, the national policy plan for mental health and substance abuse work has become finalized. It is then possible to briefly reflect the findings of the study on the basis of the final policy plan. The final version of the national plan for mental health and substance use work was published in February 2009. The proposals of the Mieli 2009 -working group to develop mental health and substance abuse work until 2015 consist of four major development linings and 18 proposals for action. The four key themes that the policy plan revolves around are: 1. Strengthening client's position, 2. Promoting mental health and preventing mental ill and substance abuse, 3. Organising mental health and substance abuse services and 4. Developing the guidance system of mental health and substance abuse work. The policy proposals are then placed under these four key themes. (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö 2009: 9–17.)

In the proposals for action, the responsible actors and those who shall eventually implement these policy outlines are defined. Moreover, each of the proposals contains a short description of the possible developmental functions, defines the prerequisites for the policy proposals to become attained ("measures to be taken") and outlines the follow-up of each proposal. Although the potential development functions are presented, the nature of this policy paper is not bound by law. Instead, the policy paper suggests that legislation is to be updated accordingly, so that the made suggestions become binding and will eventually lead to better targeted mental health and substance abuse work – both locally and at the national level. (Ibid. 14–17.)

Although the prerequisites for each policy proposal are being presented and some kind of educative- or other measures are being outlined for each policy proposal to have the possibility to become a living reality, there are not many tangible examples on, *how* all these policy measures are to be implemented. This is then to say, that the organisations representatives' concern in the themed interviews of the final policy plan becoming header-level declarations has not been totally gratuitous. Even though there are some explicit measures that are being proposed – such as raising the alcohol tax and reducing

the number of psychiatric hospital places for patients from the current number of 4600 to 3000 by the year 2015 – many of the prerequisites for action are vaguer in nature.

In terms of building up a responsive policy plan stemming from the needs and aspirations in the fields of mental health and substance abuse work, it can be concluded that those central points of concern and the overarching themes dealt in regional consultative hearings are present in the final policy plan. The need to develop mental health and substance abuse work together was one of the central findings based on themed interviews, and as it now seems, the final policy plan takes this extensively into account. Moreover, the plan emphasizes the need to strengthen clients' position – a common argument made by both the policy formulators and the stakeholder groups' representatives. However, as the plan is non-binding by its nature, complementary measures need to be taken from both the state- and local level decision-makers so that the policy outlines are becoming implemented. Resource allocation and according legislative updates will then ultimately set the framework for the various actors implementing the policy proposals of the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has concentrated on stakeholder and citizen participation inside the consultative policy making process, which in itself is a means to foster responsive governance. Even though incorporating citizen- and stakeholder groups' representatives widely in the policy making process is a basic assumption of good governance in modern day democracies *per se*, this collaboration has shown to have also positive effects in terms of better-targeted and more balanced policy plans, wider legitimacy and mandate to operate as well as deeper mutual trust between governmental actors and the citizenry. There are many methods to enable citizen- and stakeholder participation in public policy making, from which the public administrators can choose. The consultative methods of building up public policy plans are but one option. The main objective for this thesis has been to examine the features of consultative policy making and the potential it offers for constructing responsive governance.

The research questions set in the beginning for this study are: 1. What are the characteristics of consultative policy-making? 2. What is the significance of consultative policy-making in terms of contributing to better responsiveness in the field of public administration? 3. How is responsiveness in the policy-formulation process and in the policy contents perceived among a) the stakeholder groups? b) the policy formulators?

6.1. Untangling the formula for consultative policy making

Consultative policy making is built on the idea of citizens and stakeholder groups' representatives participating in the policy formulation process. Furthermore, consultative policy making procedures occur through organised collectives and stakeholders' representatives negotiating with the policy makers – this denotes that consultation should not be confused with forms of direct democracy. In consultative policy making the nature of participation is quite formal and structured, since the administrative actors need to know, on what issues or themes they are looking for external information. And since

formulating policies through consultative processes takes extra time and money if compared to traditional inner-administrative decision making, the consultation is goal-oriented and pre-structured. Well-organised consultative structure clarifies the themes being consulted and makes the consultation process more effective.

Consultative policy making can consist of several, overlapping methods which the administrators can exploit. The simplest way for administration to exercise consultative forms of policy making are the everyday contacts with citizen- and stakeholder groups' representatives. In addition, governing bodies can consult with extensive surveys, consultative hearings, citizens' panels and community councils, and various e-tools can be exploited, as well. The idea is to define pre-set theme areas that information is sought after. When these key points have been outlined, the potential consulted actors need to become aware of the consultation's process and contents. In consultative policy-making the task for administration is then to listen and react to what the stakeholders are bringing forth.

The functions for consultative policy making and the reasoning behind organising them are myriad. The main objective for administrative actors to organise consultative possibilities can vary from gathering and disseminating information, exchanging thoughts in a reciprocal dialogue and incorporating people in a very early phase to ensure better policy implementation. Furthermore, through consultative processes more balanced and well-informed decisions on policy frameworks can be made. Building up good relationships with the public and strengthening policy networks can also be motivations for administration organising consultative policy processes. In consultative hearings various actors can meet each other, develop new innovative ideas together with the administrators as well as educate one another on important themes and key issues of the dealt policy outline. Based on both wide literature review and the case study, the essential elements of consultative policy making can then be briefly listed as:

- enables citizen- and stakeholder participation through deliberation
- well-defined structure with clear objectives betters the efficiency of the process
- concentrates on few, carefully selected themes

- can serve as a tool for informing, negotiating, persuading, motivating, networking or building up a common set of values and preferences
- information dissemination before consulting: one needs to know, what and who are being consulted and what is the intended policy outline
- enables reciprocal exchange of thoughts between policymakers and participants, although the emphasis is on administration listening to the stakeholders
- can be built on wide surveys, citizens' panels, public hearings and e-governing tools as well as exploiting the everyday contacts with the clientele of administration – the citizenry and stakeholder groups' representatives
- can occur during many phases of the policy process and in various locations

Through consultative policy making it is then possible to build up responsive systems of governance. Consultative hearings are excellent opportunities for the administrative officials to listen, what are the main concerns and developmental needs in the field, and how the various actors would like issues to be. The aspirations stemming from the consulted can help in defining policy outlines, and simultaneously, making the governance systems and policies more receptive to the needs of the people. However, this depends quite a lot of the nature of the organised consultation process. If the motivation of organising consultative hearing is merely to disseminate information of convince the consulted about the supremacy of already made policy outlines, then the consultation itself has little to offer in enhancing responsiveness. However, if the consultative processes are being organised with the thought, that the consultation's outcome defines the contents of the policy plan, then the potential of fostering greater responsiveness in governance is substantial. Moreover, through consultative procedures various actors are able to build up networks and collaborative settings with one another, and in this way these stakeholders' representatives can become better organised and raise their own potential to make the people's voice heard.

In consultative policy making processes it is also possible to make various actors (both from the policy makers' and the participants' side) committed to the policy formulation – and ultimately the policy implementation through collaborative networks. If consultation is carried through at a very early phase of the policy formulation and implementa-

tion responsibilities are also being clarified, then the final policy decision (and bringing it into living reality) is likely to be more responsive to the needs and current concerns existing in the grassroots level than would have been the case without consultation. Organising public consultations requires openness and transparency as well as interaction between the various actors from both the policy makers' and participants' side – all of these are vital elements of responsiveness. The more open the consultation process and the formulation of the policy contents are, the more potential there is to influence on draft policy outlines, and make a contribution to a more balanced policy plan. However, the potential responsiveness of any consultative process depends a lot on, who (or which constituent groups) are being invited to express their thoughts – and to whom the responsiveness is being directed to. Ultimately, the question of appreciation and valuation of certain stakeholder groups may direct the responsiveness of the policy outline into their direction, as well.

6.2. The essence of responsiveness in consultative policy making

In the case of formulating the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work, the idea of building a joint plan for these two wide fields was, as a starting point, a response to the developing of status quo. The essence of good governance became materialized in the sense that the process enabled stakeholder (albeit too little citizen) participation and openness in policy formulation. Furthermore, the wider base of participants – and as a consequence more extensive knowledge base – enhanced bringing more balance into the policy framework. Based on the conducted interviews, the responsiveness of the intended policy contents was perceived satisfactory. This indicates that among the policy makers and the stakeholder groups, there exists a kind of mutual valuation (set of values and preferences) of bringing these two policy fields together – when building relationship with the members of the society and following the tenets of new public service, this is one of the key factors for administrators to ensure. Yet the problem for some of the stakeholder groups remained that the policy contents would deal too abstract issues and produce homogenous, sometimes ill-targeted, mass services. This is a characteristic for any national level policy process, since the administrators need to

formulate frameworks for the "general public", maintain their objectivity and consistency by not favouring or overstressing any one group, and above all, follow the legislative guidelines and exercise their powers *in a responsible manner*. Sometimes doing the responsible thing is not being responsive to every stakeholder group in a society.

In formulating the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work, the process of building the basis of the plan incorporated large groups of constituencies. Through public hearings the dialogic change of insights enabled the policy makers to map the general spirit on the fields of mental health and substance use work. Although organising regional hearings enabled wide participation, it caused these consultative events to follow quite a rigid structure. As it often has been noted in the academic discussion, clearly defined structures make the processes more manageable with respect to scarce time- and other resources. The lack of time was also highlighted quite often in both policy formulators' and stakeholders representatives' answers, albeit the wish was made that some kind of complementary post-commentary could have be possible. This lack of time compelled the policy makers to prioritize, which issues are taken along, and which stakeholder groups are being invited to the hearings. The final outcome is then inevitably a result of the value- and other judgements made already at quite an early phase of igniting the policy process. However, in following literally the ideas of genuine participation, these choices should be made together with the stakeholder groups, even before any consultative hearings take place.

In general, participation in the consultative policy making process was seen both *as a means* to formulate "better" policy plan and *as an ends* itself in developing the fields' inner networking. Although policy formulators' best intentions were to listen to the field and generate discussion where two-way learning could take place, some of the stakeholder groups' representatives though that the regional consultations served as creating the illusion of becoming heard. The perceived tokenism can be explained on the one hand with the tradition in the public administrative field of formulating policies at the upper levels and basically telling the local actors what to do, and on the one hand the attitudes, according to which the bias interpretation of the consultation has taken place. It has been stated in the wide literature of public administration, that both the adminis-

trators' and the citizens' attitudes and conceptions of one another can actually hinder the full exploitation of collaborative efforts. No matter how good the intentions of both sides in promoting the issue are *per se*, the heritage of hierarchical governance systems still today can toss its shadow on the consultative policy making processes.

The views of the potential objective or a group of the intended responsiveness differed among the policy makers and the constituencies. Since the resources available are limited, the administrative actors need to prioritize, who is invited to participate and in that way, able to influence on the final target group of the policy framework. Some scholars have argued that this selection of stakeholders can bring more accurate knowledge on the dealt matters, but at the same time narrow down the potential of bringing forth new and innovative ideas. The nature of public policy making can then be referred as trying to solve these "wicked problems", where there are no one solution (or important group to listen to) but many. As regards to the question "responsive to whom", both the policy formulators and the stakeholder groups admitted, that there were differences in, who's opinions are being listened to the most. These valuation differences can be tracked down to, where the general appreciation and respect lies, but also who is in charge of making decisions about resource allocation. If the policy plan is aimed at gaining more resources in the mental health and substance abuse fields, then those opinions that come from the actors who are in position allocating monetary resources are likely to be listened to. However, this economic reality sometimes hinders the position of some of the most important actors in these fields –the small scale organisations with few personnel and money.

As a good indication of responsiveness, the consultative policy making process in formulating the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work were seen both open and interactive –although in a restricted manner. Studies have shown that disseminating information in an open manner, defining clearly the intentions and structure of the consultation, and building the development suggestions on the basis of reciprocal dialogue enhances the consultation's potential of adding value to policy making. Openness during the preparatory or the consultative phase was not criticized, but the so called "after-care" was not commended as much. Although providing feedback also to the par-

ticipants would be an important part of enhancing the collaborative viewing in public policy formulation, this aspect was somewhat missing in the case study. If consultations take place, it would be important to ensure, that the affects they have had on the final outcomes, were for everyone to see, even when the process itself is still unfinished.

Even though all the information about upcoming consultative hearings, their themes and locations were available on the Internet, this was seen to not been enough. Accordingly, scholars have stated that the public actors should *actively* inform about the ongoing processes and their various phases. So, although nothing was "kept secret", the mere fact that the hearings' summaries were on the websites, was not necessarily enough. However, it must be stated that if one was genuinely interested in the outcomes of other regional hearings and the web-discussion, one could have fairly easily got all this information from the Internet. One thing that remained quite inexplicit was the proceeding of the policy process after the hearings. In fact, this was acknowledged also by the policy formulators. Maybe the tight schedule that the working group was proceeding with, caused the writing period of the policy plan be more of an inward-looking procedure where interactiveness and openness functioned via the democratic working process of the Mieli 2009 -group itself.

Genuine citizen involvement was lacking in the policy process, and this was mentioned both by the policy makers and the stakeholder groups' representatives. Although the web-forum in theory could have enabled citizen discussion to take place anonymously, it did not rouse as much interest as could have been hoped for. There can be several reasons behind this. In academic literature, it is often noted that prerequisites for genuine participation are first, the personal interest and second, the opportunities and possibilities offered for participation. It can be that neither of these prerequisites fully came to fruition. Furthermore, if the existence of the web-forum was not particularly and widely informed about, it is too a big of assumption to have, that the citizenry themselves would seek these kinds of attending methods. In addition, people are prone to participate in processes, where they feel that they themselves or their nearest have something to gain. However, the fact that it is difficult to incorporate citizens into public policy making should not be a reason for not even trying. It can be further concluded that the

although many responsive elements were present, the consultative process in formulating the national plan for mental health and substance abuse did not perhaps succeed as well as it could have been hoped for in terms of informing the participants, what it actually is possible to affect on, what happens in the policy formulation process after the hearings, and to whom the final policy plan is first and foremost directed. Since these type of consultative hearings are quite novel in the Finnish public policy making, not many of the interviewees saw alternative methods to conduct the consultation. However, some kind of complementary comment round or incorporating citizens' voice better in the policy process was longed for.

There are many levels of responsiveness in the case study of this thesis. The very initiative from members of the Finnish parliament commenced the compilation of the policy plan – this plan itself is then a response to stemming needs from the society. Responsiveness functioned in terms of openness during the hearing phase, and in principle, everyone interested could have made their voice heard either via representative groups or via the Internet-discussion forum. The responsiveness of the policymakers towards the process itself was another element, since as the hearings went along, the information and experiences gathered from previous consultations was taken on further. It can also be argued, that since the important issues of mental health and substance abuse work have been undervalued in public discussion, the fact that these two wide fields are being brought under public examination and wide deliberation, is responsiveness as such, since there has obviously been a need for this for a long time.

These levels of responsiveness appearing in consultative policy making can be further divided into three (somewhat overlapping) categories, according to the width and extensiveness of each level. At the top, there is *the macro level responsiveness*, which denotes the very basis for igniting the policy process. If the initial need of compiling this kind of extensive policy plan had not been made, no response of doing so could have been possible. Furthermore, since mental health and substance use issues have been neglected in the society for quite a long time, the fact that they have now been lifted high on the public agenda can also be seen as macro level responsiveness. *The meso level responsiveness* then indicates both the responsiveness of the contents of the policy plan

as well as the process of formulating the policy. In other words, this is the level of responsiveness that can be distinguished between the people taking part of the consultative process. Consequently, *the micro level responsiveness* denotes the flexible adaptation and changes occurring inside individuals, during the consultative policy making. Since adaptation to previously learned experiences is a form of reacting and responding, this element of inner responsiveness is important, as well. Table 3 below summarizes the central findings of the different levels of responsiveness in consultative policy making.

Table 3. The levels of responsiveness in consultative policy making.

The levels of responsiveness in consultative policy making	Key indications of the responsive elements
Macro level: • the idea of compiling an extensive policy plan for mental health and substance abuse • public discussion on themes that have been neglected before	**Macro level:** • wider discussion in the society and among political actors, these themes are lift high on public agenda → response to these aspirations
Meso level: • the substance of the policy plan • the process of the policy	**Meso level:** • plan deals with relevant themes, answers to the current need in the field • different stakeholder groups and citizens are being listened to, equality of different hearings and small groups, one has the possibility to get one's voice heard • interactiveness and openness, feedback, active information about the process
Micro level: • the responsiveness of the policy makers	**Micro level:** • as process is moving forth → adaptation through learning

In fostering wider citizen- and stakeholder participation, it can be stated that organising wide consultative policy-making opportunities is a good start. However, as the responsiveness should be directed to some groups of actors, the danger is that either the policy plans become too abstract (as to being responsive to everyone) or they are responsive to only some central, influential groups of actors. In plural societies, governments need to bear in mind the responsiveness to the great majority, i.e. the average citizen. However, in the case of mental health and substance abuse work, the ultimate target group (i.e. the identified patient and his/her relations) are not necessarily "the average" citizens in terms of being aware of and defending one's rights. It is then interesting to ponder, whether the fact that these issues are brought forth can be responsiveness as such. However, if bringing these themes under public debate does not yield to any concrete betterment, could the alternative of not promising anything be actually more preferable? In other words, if consultative policy-making does not produce any real impacts, would it not be better to not even organise token possibilities for action – in this way, people would at least know for sure where they stand.

In plural societies, the result of any consultative, even responsive, process is at best, a result of compromise and partial optimization. The need for shift for power and building genuinely collaborative networks could be next in the agenda. Furthermore, if governance is functioning in a responsive manner, it is basically *reacting to something* and the role of administrators is then quite passive. However, being responsive to modern-day needs would be to *build up collaborative relationships*, where various social players could operate together. In other words, the stakeholders' representatives would also receive feedback and continue deliberation with governments. This active flow of information and operations could then be the next goal to strive for. In the future public administration, being responsive is not enough, but the shift should be more of collaborative networking with various citizens' and stakeholder groups' representatives.

If the central discoveries of this thesis are reflected to previous research tradition, some suggestions for interesting additional fields of future research can be pointed out. Mirrored to a recent study conducted at the University of Vaasa (Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka 2009), similar findings can be distinguished in terms of perceived respon-

siveness, good governance and participation. Based on wide citizen surveys, the research meritoriously examines the citizens' perceptions of ethics in the political system, the public authorities and the public services. In their research, Salminen and Ikola-Norrbacka discovered that people see the qualities of "good citizen" as those paying their taxes, following law and order and doing real and honest work. An interesting analogy of this thesis can be found on the lack of citizens' valuation in terms of societal participation. The underlying fact that the citizenry is not that interested in making a contribution through the civil society is one of the crucial points that must be paid more attention in organising future public administration.

Furthermore, Salminen and Ikola-Norrbacka (2009) found the people feeling, that although the surrounding society is, and should be, promoting equality, the differences in stakeholder groups' income level and power possessed by them pose the citizens in unequal positions. Again, according to this thesis the fear is that if a group holds in its possession a certain amount of decision making- and resource based power, the system is more responsive to their aspirations. How then, could public governance incorporate various insights into its regular policy making procedures without losing its general position as offering services in a responsible manner to the wide public? Moreover, since it is very "in" to organise various hearings (whether they serve for genuinely enhancing the quality of made decisions or not) in today's public administration, the most interesting observation could be made through studying, what is said by whom, and how are these statements carried forth in final policy papers. In other words, what are the bases for giving some insights and perceptions lots of weighing, while others remain as side notes. In conclusion, the public administrators should seek to provide equal opportunities for citizens to become a part of societal decision making. At the same token, however, the most important element is to pay attention on, how the received (and much longed for) feedback from the citizenry is taken into account. In other words, as the constituent groups start asking for real measures taken based on the given feedback, the public administrative systems need to enhance their potential of serving better and building up a mechanism of collaboration where justice, honesty, equality and reliability come to fruition.

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APPENDIX 1. Framework for the themed interview

Responsiveness and various stakeholder groups

1. In your opinion, in what ways does the joint mental health and substance abuse plan now under compilation reflect the demands and needs that exist at the moment in the fields of mental health and substance use work? Are relevant themes being discussed?

2. What is your outlook on, how the hearing process itself contributes to bringing different opinions into the plan? Have all relevant actors being heard equally?

3. In your opinion, to whom should the final policy plan be primarily directed? Do you think that the feedback various stakeholder groups give, could have a different importance, depending on where the feedback is coming from? (e.g. 3rd sector organizations, hospital districts or private service producers)

4. How do you perceive interactiveness and openness in the formulating process of the plan? How would you wish for, that they appeared in the final policy plan?

5. In your opinion, what is the significance of these hearings relative to the final policy plan – in the best case and in the worst case?

Consultation and the hearings in formulating the plan

6. What is your opinion on the structure of the hearings: introduction, small group deliberation and collective sum up? What are the pros and cons in this type of procedure?

7. How do you feel about the information that the participants of these hearings have received before and after the hearing event, in terms of both dealt themes as well as the progress of the planning process?

8. What advantages and disadvantages do you think that defining small groups' discussion themes beforehand has, in terms of a) the progress of the process, or a) the content of the final plan?

9. What is your opinion on, are different hearing places and cities in a different position with respect to one another? What about the participants of various small groups in terms of, how well one can bring out his/her own insights?

10. Could some other method of participation have brought forth different interest groups' opinions better? If so, what could it have been?

The shaping up of the plan and civic discourse

11. How do you see, that the civic deliberation on the Internet through forum "Otakantaa.fi" can support the formulation of this joint mental health and substance use policy plan? What are the pros and cons in this type of electronic influencing?

12. In what ways could the citizens' wishes and demands be taken into account in the policy plan as well as possible? What is your opinion on, how this matter has been taken care of so far?

13. Is there anything else that you would like to bring out?

APPENDIX 2. List of interviewed persons

Helminen, Susanna, rehabilitation secretary. The Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD). Vaasa 8.10.2008.

Kangasluoma, Lassi, organisation planner. Nuorten Ystävät ry. Vaasa 6.10.2008.

Lehtelä, Vesa, executive director. Pirkanmaan sininauhaliitto ry. Vaasa 10.10.2008.

Lehtonen, Leena, project planner. Espoon Diakoniasäätiö. Vaasa 6.10.2008.

Mikkola, Sirkku, project coordinator. Education development project in the city of Turku. Vaasa 10.10.2008.

Ollila, Outi, executive director. Mental health association of Turku. Vaasa 20.10.2008.

Paaso, Kari, director. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Member of the Mieli 2009 - working group. Vaasa 13.10.2008.

Palojärvi, Helena, executive director. Naistenkartano ry. Vaasa 20.10.2008.

Partanen, Airi, development executive. Expert secretary for the Mieli 2009-working group. Vaasa 17.10.2008.

Partanen, Marja-Liisa, assistant head of department. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Member of the Mieli 2009 -working group. Vaasa 9.10.2008.

Posio, Jorma, project manager. Developmental project in Lapland for mental health and substance abuse. Member of the Mieli 2009 -working group. Vaasa 21.10.2008.

Qvist, Mikko, substance abuse and family counsellor. Lanki -center. Vaasa 6.10.2008.

Saaristo, Liisa, development manager of Finnish mental health association. Member of the Mieli 2009 -working group. Vaasa 13.10.2008.

Tuori, Timo, MD. Expert secretary for the Mieli 2009 -working group. Vaasa 13.10.2008.

Valkonen, Sanna, rehabilitation planner. Development project in Finnish Central Association for Mental Health. Vaasa 17.10.2008.