

Citizen participation in the Netherlands

Motives to involve citizens in planning processes



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Abstract

Many post-war areas in Europe are suffering from diverse physical, economic and social problems, such as bad housing quality, high numbers of joblessness and declining levels of social cohesion. This holds especially for large housing estates. To counteract this development, policymakers and stakeholders have joined hands. Most of these actors subscribe to the idea that not only physical, but also social and economic solutions are needed. Involving citizens in local policymaking is believed to be of major importance here, not only because citizen participation can enhance social cohesion, but also because residents are regarded as 'experts' of the neighbourhood who can provide valuable information to the policymakers. Although most policymakers and stakeholders agree on the importance of citizen participation, there is no general agreement on the question how to shape the structure of citizen participation, nor is there a general answer to the question to what extent citizens should be involved. In this paper, the influence of governance structures on levels of citizen participation will be investigated. This will be done by linking different stages in a planning process to the observed levels of citizen participation. Central in this paper are the motives of policymakers and stakeholders. These motives are derived from interviews with professionals who are related to planning processes in three post-war areas in the Netherlands: Bouwlust in The Hague, Nieuw-Hoograven in Utrecht and Liendert in Amersfoort. The so-called Big Cities Policy targets all these neighbourhoods; an integrative policy that aims to improve deteriorated urban neighbourhoods in the country's 30 largest cities.

Keywords: citizen participation, planning processes, post-war areas

1. Citizen participation as a policy instrument

Since the 1990s, post-war areas throughout most of the larger Western European cities have been suffering from various problems, such as joblessness, deterioration of housing quality, neglect of public spaces, declining social cohesion, increasing crime rates, vandalism and so on. Policymakers and stakeholders have increasingly become aware of the idea that physical measures alone are insufficient to solve problems in distressed areas (see e.g. Aalbers et al. 2003; Aalbers et al. 2004; Murie et al. 2003). Professionals have been looking for alternative and more efficient ways to counteract the negative developments in distressed urban neighbourhoods. The rise of the concept of *urban governance* can be regarded as the fulfilment of this ambition. According to Andersen & Van Kempen (2003) there are a five changes that mark the 'shift from government to governance', including a different organisation of policy by involving "*partners other than public authorities, often including (parts of) the population of the areas in question*" (p.77). The changes they mention indicate a growing interest for local solutions to local problems by using local knowledge. The residents themselves are thus

expected to have a say in the whole restructuring process. Involvement of residents in local policymaking can be a direct goal, because it is believed to enhance social cohesion in a neighbourhood (Van Marissing et al. 2005), but it can also be an indirect goal because residents are regarded as 'experts' of their own neighbourhood (Buys & Van Grinsven 1999) and thus contribute to a better quality of the plan (Atkinson 1999). These and other benefits will be discussed in section 2.

First, it should be clear what is meant with 'involvement of residents in local policymaking', which is often described as *citizen participation*. Within the context of this paper, citizen participation can best be described as:

"Involvement of residents in urban restructuring processes or in other processes of cooperation that affect the neighbourhood"

Examples of citizen participation are attending a meeting about the plans to demolish deteriorated buildings, taking part in social activities or presiding a tenant organisation. In principle, all these activities have the intention to improve the neighbourhood, but of course his neighbour may regard what one citizen may see as an improvement as a negative development. The building of a mosque, for example, can cause NIMBY-effects in the neighbourhood, just like the introduction of parking places that have to be paid for.

Arnstein (1969, p.216) states that there is little doubt on the benefits of involving citizens in planning and decision-making: *"the idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you"*. In practice, however, there may exist clear objectives against (too much) involvement of citizens, as will be shown in the empirical section of this paper.

Second, it should be remarked that citizen participation could be interpreted from many perspectives. Professionals may have a different opinion towards participation structures than residents of a deprived area. In section 2, these different perspectives will be investigated.

What influences participation structures?

Whether residents participate or not is strongly determined by the opportunities and restrictions they have to participate. This 'opportunity structure' is influenced by two key determinants:

1. The organisational capability of residents; and
2. The motives of policymakers and stakeholders¹.

¹ There are a lot of words to describe the institutional and non-institutional actors that are involved in participation structures. In general there are three types of actors: policymakers, private partners (often referred to as 'stakeholders') and citizens, in this paper regarded as residents or inhabitants of distressed urban neighbourhoods. Arnstein (1969) does, however make no distinction between policymakers and stakeholders. She prefers to speak of

The organisational capacity refers to the ability of residents to participate in cooperation processes. It is especially the literature on *empowerment* that has been investigating this determinant. The motives have already been mentioned as the benefits for those involved. These motives may be different for the different stages that can be distinguished in a process of cooperation (varying from *'initiation'* to *'continuation'*), which results in a high diversity of participation structures (Wilcox 1994). In general, residents seem to have more to say at the end of a process, but of course there are some clear exceptions that confirm the rule.

From a top-down perspective, e.g. through the eyes of the powerholders, there are a lot of motives to involve residents in local policymaking (Beck 1974) and in the execution of regeneration programmes in general (Atkinson 1999). At the same time, there are also reasons not to involve residents or to inform them about the final plan at the most. In more detail: the extent to which citizens are involved in the process is heavily dependent on the goals that policymakers and stakeholders intend to achieve (Wilcox 1994). For example, knowing residents' opinions about a certain plan can sometimes suffice, while residents can also be asked to take part actively in a partnership or even make important decisions on their own.

This paper will investigate the relation between the different stages in a cooperation process and the level of participation as indicated by Arnstein (1969). This leads to the following central question:

How are levels of participation influenced by different stages in urban restructuring processes and by motives of powerholders?

This question will be answered by looking at case studies in three Dutch urban neighbourhoods, which will be introduced in section 5. The analysis comprises more than urban restructuring policies alone, since there are also other developments that might affect citizen participation structures in those areas.

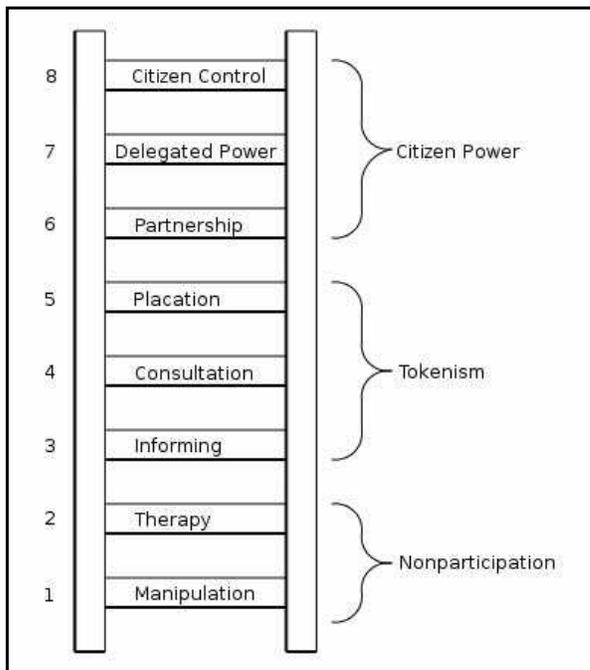
The structure of this paper is as follows. First, the concept of citizen participation will very briefly be examined, followed by a description of the different levels at which citizen participation can be implemented. The 'ladder of citizen participation' developed by Sherry Arnstein (1969) will be used to analyse the degree to which citizens are involved in the different processes that were investigated. Third, the various stages in participation structures will be discussed in order to make a distinction in the levels of participation over time. The fourth section provides the framework in which these various levels and stages will be linked to each other. This framework is adapted from the work of David Wilcox (1994). Before the selected cooperation processes can be analysed, it is necessary to briefly describe the Dutch context of urban restructuring processes and the investigated neighbourhoods. The sixth section will present the empirical results from four case studies. Finally the conclusions will be presented in section 7.

'powerholders' when mentioning institutional actors. Therefore, from now on, this will be the term to describe institutional actors, unless a clear distinction is required to mention both other terms.

2. Levels of citizen participation

"Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy" (Arnstein 1969, p.216) and comprises many levels of involvement in processes of planning and decision-making, such as *consultation*, *partnerships* and *full citizen control* (see figure 1). The work of Arnstein has been very influential in the literature about participation. Her classic article 'a ladder of citizen participation' is well known for its very useful overview on different levels of participation and the ideas that lie behind it. Arnstein's work has therefore not only been applied to understand participation in policymaking (see e.g. Maier 2001; Nelissen 1980; Wilcox 1994; Wondollock et al. 1996), but for example also in environmental issues (Nelissen 1999). In this paper, the ladder will be used as a point of reference to analyse different levels of participation in the investigated areas.

Figure 1: Levels of citizen participation



Source: Arnstein (1969)

Figure 1 shows the eight levels of participation that are introduced by Arnstein (1969). The lowest two rungs represent degrees of non-participation. At both levels, the influence of citizens is not much more than becoming aware of what changes have been implemented in their neighbourhood (Nelissen 1999). The third and fourth rung allow some kind of influence for citizens, although the voice of residents may still be disregarded (Maier 2001). According to Arnstein (1969) participation at this level is still a one-way flow and citizens have "little opportunity to influence the program designed for their benefit" (p.219). At the fifth rung citizens still have an advisory position. This rung is called 'placation'. Arnstein (1969) describes this level

of participation as a strategy to have citizens "*outvoted and outfoxed*" but powerholders retain the right to "*judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice*" (p.220). Further up the ladder, the sixth rung is partnership. According to Maier (2001, p.709), "*trade-offs are made between powerful and 'ordinary' citizens*". 'Delegated power' is the seventh rung, whereas the highest rung comprises 'full citizen control'. Only at this level, citizens have a major role in decision-making processes (Maier 2001).

Arnstein's classification, "*which is designed to be provocative (...) does not include an analysis of the most significant roadblocks to achieving genuine levels of participation*", which, as she continues, "*lie on both sides of the simplistic fence*" (Arnstein 1969, pp.216-217). This paper addresses these 'roadblocks' by analysing the motives of powerholders to restrict the influence of residents. Of course there might also be situations where there are no roadblocks at all. On the other side of the fence, citizens themselves also determine levels of participation. In the introduction, the two key determinants that result from Arnstein's subdivision for participation have already been presented:

1. The organising capability of residents; and
2. The motives of powerholders and the actual action towards participation structures.

Both determinants will be discussed below, followed by a short overview on different stages that can be distinguished in a policymaking process.

Organisational capability of residents

The organisational aspects in distressed neighbourhoods have already been subject to a lot of research. Putnam (2000) for example, has studied the importance of *social capital* in his both celebrated and criticised book "Bowling Alone" and others, (such as Atkinson 1999; Friedmann 1992), are known for their investigations on *empowerment* of citizens. Putnam (2000) argues that the organising capability of residents or resident organisations is strongly dependent on the presence and degree of social capital, which can be defined as "*connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them*" (p.19). Recently Dekker (mimeo) has investigated the influence of these components of social capital on citizen participation². Her findings illustrate that social networks, for example, affect participation both via neighbouring behaviour (contact with neighbours) and via strong ties (having friends in the neighbourhood). The importance of social networks is also shown by Lelieveldt (2004). Moreover, people who trust other residents participate more than those who distrust others. The same can be said for those who reject deviant behaviour and for those that feel strongly attached to their neighbourhood (Dekker mimeo). However, these findings do not explicitly mention at what level on Arnstein's classification the investigated types of participation do occur. Furthermore, the situations that have been researched are more or less 'static': little is said

² Although Dekker's definition of citizen participation relates more to forms of civic participation, her findings give a good overview of the factors that affect the behaviour of residents in their neighbourhood. The same holds for Lelieveldt (2004).

about the different stages in the participation process. The various stages will be introduced later in this paper.

Although the American sociologists Wondolleck et al. (1996) state that "*citizens can now find themselves an equal partner with business and government, setting policies, establishing programs and making other decisions that affect the communities in which they live*" (p.249), this postulation has no universal applicability: the level of participation is still 'context-sensitive' and dependent on decisions 'from above'. Powerholders determine the opportunity structures for citizen participation, although their ideas may be in contrast to the demands and wishes of the residents. The same holds for the benefits both groups have in mind. Policymakers may for example intend to increase social cohesion in a neighbourhood, while residents only want to have their parks cleaned or their houses refurbished.

Motivational aspects for citizen participation

The second key-determinant for the level of citizen participation is the motives of powerholders to establish structures of citizen participation. Usually, policymakers determine the level of influence that is allowed to citizens or other people involved. The 'rung' on the ladder of participation that is chosen, depends on what the powerholders want to achieve with the involvement of citizens. When putting up and participating in a cooperative process, each actor has its own motives because he tends to protect his own interests and aims to avoid conflicts (Nelissen 1980). Atkinson (1999), for example, argues that from a governmental point of view, involving 'the community' has a range of benefits, such as better decision-making and cost effectiveness. It can therefore be "*a means to ensure that regeneration programmes are more effective in achieving their objectives*" (pp.64-65). Sprinkhuizen (2001) talks about a better quality of the plans in this respect. Another motive can be to reassure the legitimacy of proposed policies (Elander & Blanc 2001; Sprinkhuizen 2001), but participation may also be desired to use the specific knowledge of residents and gain valuable information about a certain area (Fokkema & Krebber 1999). Participation is also believed to enhance social cohesion (Van Marissing et al. 2005). Finally, Healey (1998), regards participation, in the sense of building up neighbourhood organising capacity, as "*a way of drawing people who seem to be suffering from exclusion back into the mainstream*" (p.58), for example through the empowerment of citizens (Friedmann 1992).

Of course, participation may not always be desired. Not only because of reluctance to power redistribution (Arnstein 1969), but also because it may be too costly in terms of money, time or knowledge. In addition, the earlier mentioned differences in benefits between residents and powerholders may sometimes result in a process in which residents are more pleased by quick results without having much influence than when having participated without getting much benefit out of it. Local municipalities and social housing corporations often state that residents lack the knowledge to discuss problems that occur on higher spatial scales or long-term programmes that go beyond their daily experiences (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting Ruimtelijke

Ordering en Milieubeheer 2004). This idea is heavily casted doubt on by the Dutch professor Duyvendak, who states that residents are very much aware of what is wrong in their neighbourhood and know how to improve that (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 2004). Participation can thus also be restricted under the pretext of a lack of knowledge from residents, while there may be other motives to do so.

Moreover, those who decide about involvement of citizens, such as public administrators or managers of housing associations, do not always reveal their actual ideas about the selected type of citizen participation. Arnstein already pointed out that participation structures are subject to 'resistance to power redistribution'. Managers of housing organisations may for example claim to have consulted a tenant organisation because this organisation represents the opinion of most residents (of which the majority agrees with the proposed plans), but their actual reason might have been to avoid conflicts with the possible opponents of their proposed plans.

Following the ideas of Wilcox (1994), the attitudes of powerholders reflect their willingness towards participation. This attitude towards residents is two-fold. According to (e.g. Buys & Van Grinsven 1999; Van der Werff 1999) residents (or tenants) can be regarded as:

1. Knowledge-owners / producers; and
2. The interested party / consumers.

In reality, the attitude towards citizens may be a mix of both. It is very plausible that powerholders who regard citizens mainly as producers will be more likely to allow participation on higher levels than those who think that citizens are only consumers of their product. So far there is not much evidence on this subject.

In the next section, the motives of powerholders that affect levels of citizen participation will be further analysed by looking at the various stages that can be distinguished in a process of cooperation.

3. Stages in participation

The level of participation differs from stage to stage in a process. In general, a planning process consists of four stages (see e.g. Fokkema & Krebber 1999; Klaren 1999; Vis & Arum 2003; Wilcox 1994). These stages can be applied to urban restructuring processes or other processes of cooperation that affect changes in a neighbourhood, regardless of the duration of that process. The common terms for these stages are:

1. Initiation / formation;
2. Preparation / exploration;
3. Planning / vision; and
4. Execution / continuation

The first stage (*initiation*) consists of a gathering and an inventory of all actors that should be involved and aims at signing a covenant to start from (Fokkema & Krebber 1999). If desired by the stakeholders, residents can be informed and sometimes, the position of the residents in the further process is written down in agreements (Vis & Arum 2003).

The second stage comprises an inventory of the problems and is called *preparation* or *exploration*. Assisted by research reports, all actors develop a shared point of departure which contains their common goals. These research reports provide answers on questions such as "what are the strengths and weaknesses of the neighbourhood?" and "what are the restrictions and opportunities?" (Vis & Arum 2003). The questions can, but do not necessarily have to be asked to the residents as well.

Third, the goals are set and plans are further elaborated upon. In the Netherlands this often leads to a so-called 'Wijkontwikkelingsplan', a development plan in which a vision on the most important changes of the neighbourhood is written down (Fokkema & Krebber 1999). This stage can therefore be characterised as *planning* or *vision stage*. Because citizens are often invited from this moment on, Wilcox (1994) calls this the *participation stage*, but this may be a confusing term, since participation can take place at any stage in a process.

Finally, the plans that have been written in the third stage are executed. This final stage is called *continuation* or *execution*.

The levels of citizen participation may vary from stage to stage. Citizens can for example hardly be involved in the beginning of a process, while their level of involvement increases towards the end. The motives of powerholders to choose for a particular level of participation, which have been mentioned in the theoretical framework, give the impression that it is very improbable that the level of participation will be the same for all stages in a planning process. In the next section, the framework will be introduced, in which the levels of participation and the stages in a process can be linked to each other.

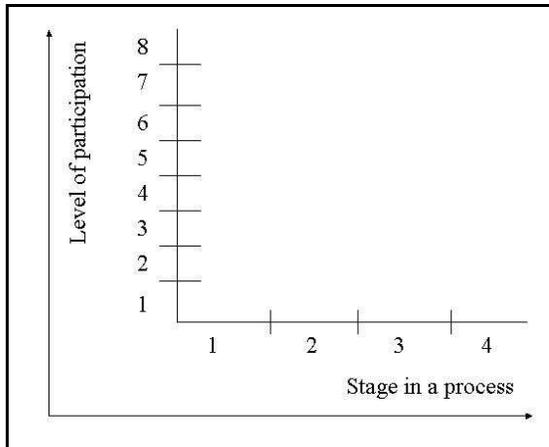
4. A framework to analyse citizen participation structures

So far, most researchers have either focussed on the different levels of participation -following the ideas of Arnstein (1969)- or on the various stages in a planning process. Interestingly, the links between both concepts have not been investigated that much yet. A very useful exception is the work of David Wilcox (1994), who developed a 'framework on citizen participation' by using Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and linking it to different stages in planning processes. The framework of Wilcox is meant to advise powerholders, such as local governments and social housing organisations, about which participation structure they should implement in a certain situation. It can however also be used to analyse processes of cooperation that are currently taking place or have recently taken place and to understand the decisions behind them.

Figure 2 shows two axes: on the horizontal axis, the duration of a process has been divided in the four stages (1 to 4) that were mentioned in the previous section and on the vertical axis the levels of participation as indicated by Arnstein (1969) are shown (1 to 8). The framework is very useful to compare different participation structures with each other. By drawing lines it immediately becomes clear which processes have a high degree of participation and which do not. It can be assumed that there are almost no cooperation initiatives or partnerships with a

continuous level of citizen participation. In geometrical terms: it would be very exceptional to find a horizontal line, but any other curve may be possible here.

Figure 2: Wilcox' framework on citizen participation



Source: adapted from (Wilcox 1994, p.8)

Wilcox' framework will be used to analyse levels of participation in a few selected processes of cooperation in three Dutch urban neighbourhoods. In order to understand the possible differences in the political and the spatial context of the neighbourhoods, a closer look at the specific features of those areas is required. In the next section, first a brief overview will be given on the recent developments in urban restructuring policy in the Netherlands, followed by a description of the investigated areas and the local policies. After that, the applied research methods will be explained.

5. Research neighbourhoods and policies

To overcome the various problems in deprived urban neighbourhoods, the so-called Big Cities Policy has been implemented in the 30 largest cities in the Netherlands. The policy initially rested on three pillars: the economic, the social and the physical pillar. Recently, a fourth pillar is added to this policy: social safety. The Big Cities Policy differs from previous policies in many aspects: *"Dutch urban policy is now integrative, area-based, governance-oriented and based on contracts"* (Dekker & Van Kempen 2004, p.109). Considerable emphasis is put on contact and cooperation between residents, government bodies, housing associations, civil organisations and local employers (Dekker & Van Kempen 2004; Priemus 1997). Citizen participation thus has an important position within this policy.

This paper is based on research that has been conducted in three deprived urban neighbourhoods in the Netherlands: Bouwlust in The Hague, Nieuw-Hoograven in Utrecht and Liendert in Amersfoort. All three cities are located in the centre of the country. The Hague has about 470,000 inhabitants, Utrecht has 275,000 inhabitants and Amersfoort has 133,000 inhabitants. The neighbourhoods within these cities are targeted by the Big Cities Policy because

they all suffer from problems that are related to high numbers of low-quality housing (mainly four-storey apartment blocks without elevators or high-rise flats), an overrepresentation of low-income households and ethnic minorities (mainly Turks and Moroccans), a large share of social rented dwellings, neglect of public spaces and so on.

Research neighbourhoods

The three post-war neighbourhoods can be regarded as 'socially mixed' with respect to income and ethnicity. However, low-income households predominate and the number of minority ethnic households is increasing (Van Marissing et al. 2004). Bouwlust (16,000 inhabitants) and Nieuw-Hoograven (6,000 inhabitants) are located on the fringes of the city, while Liendert (7,500 inhabitants) is located a bit closer to the city centre. The major housing stock consists of four-storey apartment blocks without elevators; some blocks are better maintained than others. In general, the dwellings have 3, 4 or 5 rooms. The relatively good blocks are still very attractive to new entrants, because of the low rents. Many social-rented dwellings are being sold on the housing market or demolished to make way for new dwellings. In Nieuw-Hoograven, a few hundred dwellings have recently been knocked down and another few hundred will be demolished in the next few years, whereas in Bouwlust and the other post-war areas in The Hague, some thousands of dwellings will be demolished in the same period (Van Marissing et al. 2004). Liendert has not been subject to large-scale demolition plans. Moreover, some of the high-rise flats have been renovated recently.

Citizen participation as a policy goal

Both the national and the local government have formulated goals with respect to citizen participation, which are very much in accordance with each other. Nevertheless there are some slight differences between the investigated cities. In Utrecht, support to residents who are participating in organisations or to people who are active in their neighbourhood for whatever other reason, is regarded as an important precondition for social cohesion, because it promotes attachment to the neighbourhood. According to its development plan, attachment to the neighbourhood is believed to have a positive influence on social safety and the quality of life (Gemeente Utrecht 2004).

In The Hague, the local government strives to act as a facilitator rather than a initiator: *"The neighbourhood has to offer opportunities to meet each other, for development and for self-fulfilment. For the maintenance, quality of live and social safety, residents also have to take their own responsibility. If necessary, they will be supported by local government or housing corporations. (...). The most important instrument is stimulating and facilitating initiatives of both individual and organised residents"* (Gemeente Den Haag 2004, p.49). The report is very clear what to do if there are no initiatives from the local communities or if the neighbourhood faces problems in modelling their initiatives: in that case, the local government will notify residents

about important instruments and methods. In some cases, the local government or housing organisation will lead the process. The local government or housing organisation will be responsible for the process at all times (Gemeente Den Haag 2004).

The long-term development plan of Amersfoort (Gemeente Amersfoort 2004) does not provide any detailed information on the ideas of major and aldermen with respect to citizen participation. The municipal memorandum on area based policy, however, does mention some actions that should be undertaken: *"innovation on the way citizen participation is implemented is regarded essential for the future of area based policies"* (Gemeente Amersfoort 2003, p.4).

Although the local policies in the three investigated cities seem to be very similar, there are also some slight differences. Whereas The Hague has a decentralised government, Amersfoort still has a centralised government. Utrecht is somewhere in between, because it is too small to have a decentralised structure and too large to work totally centralised.

Data collection

Information about these neighbourhoods has been gained through interviews with all kinds of powerholders, such as aldermen, members of community groups, civil servants, chairmen of neighbourhood councils and council committees, representatives of housing corporations etcetera. Interviews were based on a semi-structured list of questions and on average lasted between one and two hours. Guiding questions in the interviews were: *"is participation always desired; what happens when not all residents are satisfied with the plan; are residents regarded as consumers or producers; why are residents invited for a process of cooperation; and how many effort is undertaken to involve residents in these processes?"* In a next phase of the research project, citizens themselves will be questioned through, for example, a survey or interviews with focus groups.

6. Empirical results: four case studies

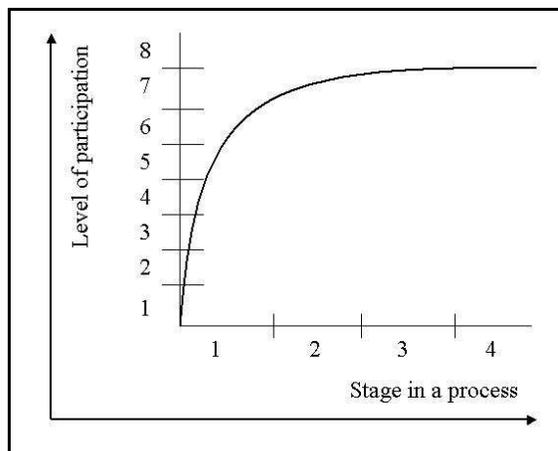
In this section, the results of the interviews will be presented. From the literature, it has become clear that a continuous level of citizen participation is very improbable because powerholders have various motives to implement specific participation structures or because they are reluctant to the participation of residents. Besides, the context of the neighbourhoods is different, both spatial and political. Four cases have been selected to demonstrate the influence of those differences on levels of citizen participation. The first case, the *Our Neighbourhood Moves Project* in Utrecht describes the influence of a social programme that aims to enhance citizen participation, while the second case, *Hoograven's Heart* (also in Utrecht) is a classic example of how cooperation processes can terribly fail. The third case goes into plans for demolition in The Hague and shines a light on the selectivity of powerholders when it comes to citizen participation: tenant organisations are excluded from participation and instead individual tenants are consulted. The last case, the El Fath mosque in Amersfoort, demonstrates that selectivity

can also mean inviting a specific group of persons on purpose, instead of passing by another group.

The 'Our Neighbourhood Moves' project, Utrecht

An example of a project where the participation of citizens was one of the major goals is the so-called 'Our Neighbourhood Moves' Project (OBAZ) in one of Utrecht's most notorious post-war areas: Nieuw-Hoograven in Utrecht. This project, aimed at improving the socio-economic situation and at reinforcing the social cohesion in the neighbourhood on a short-term, can be seen as a *best practice* that can be applied to many problematic urban areas. Examples of the activities are the Moroccan fathers' neighbourhood watch, a project for and by youngsters and a project to stimulate local entrepreneurship. According to the project's description, residents should contribute to this to a high degree, which was indeed the case. The participants have been 'discovered' through a relatively extensive, but easy applicable method: going from door to door and asking people about their own talents and how they could use those talents to improve the neighbourhood. Furthermore, meeting places such as a school or library have been used to reach specific groups of residents, such as youngsters and ethnic minority women (Wonen en Milieu 2003) . Figure 3 shows the levels of participation in the Our Neighbourhood Moves project for the various stages in the process.

Figure 3 Our Neighbourhood Moves project, Utrecht



Source: Interviews 2003/2004

The figure shows that participation clearly started off on a high level. This matches well with the findings of Lelieveldt (2004) and Dekker (mimeo) who both demonstrated a positive correlation between forms of social capital and participation figures. Only in the first stage, citizens were not involved, when policymakers from both the central and the local government signed the covenant. But from that moment on, residents were actively involved. In terms of Arnstein, one can speak of *partnerships*, because residents had a clear say in the process. However, they are

still part of a decisional context in which the institutional partners determine the degrees of participation of residents, so one cannot speak of *full citizen control*.

Hoograven's Heart, Utrecht

Full citizen control was not the aim in the project Hoograven's Heart, but initially the presence of citizens was very much appreciated. In Nieuw-Hoograven, the central area suffered from feelings of insecurity, a deteriorated quality of the housing stock and infrastructural problems. The three major stakeholders (local municipality, a private developer and the social housing organisation) joined hands to fight this cycle of decline by demolishing part of the old housing stock and replacing it by new, more expensive dwellings (*initiation phase*). Furthermore, the shopping centre (see figure 4) would be restructured and the infrastructure was to be improved. This whole project was known as Hoograven's Heart (Van Marissing et al. 2005). The first start of this plan had already been made with the ascertainment of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (Gemeente Utrecht 1996). This development plan can be regarded as a co-production of all different actors in the whole neighbourhood, including policymakers and residents.

Figure 4: Hoograven's Heart from the front (left) and from the back (right)



Pictures taken by Erik van Marissing

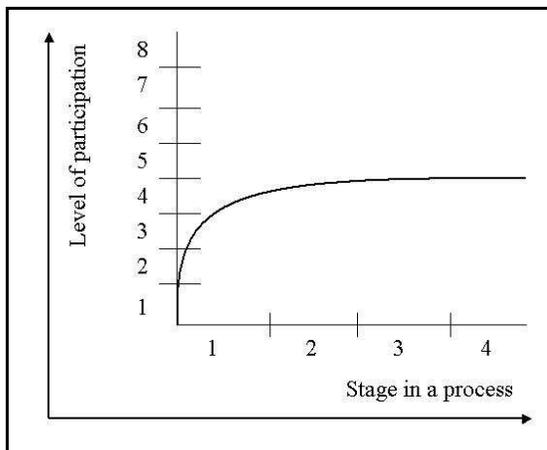
In the *preparation phase* not only these three institutional actors, but also tenant organisations were involved. The powerholders regarded the residents not only as consumers, but also as producers. This was partly due to the relatively small area that was covered by the project, which made it pretty surveyable for the residents. Because the concerned area comprised the main shopping street in Nieuw-Hoograven, shopkeepers were participating in the planning process as well. However, responsibilities were not properly defined and the planned developments did not really get off the ground (Van Marissing et al. 2005).

The restructuring plan did not contain a financial section, which gave the local municipality the opportunity to withdraw part of the money it had previously promised to invest. This provoked

negative reactions from both the other professional partners and the tenants themselves. Together with a lack of communication about progress, and the different (even conflicting) interests of the respective partners, the plan was doomed to fail. During the *vision phase*, tenants started to complain. Finally they were so disillusioned that they abandoned the partnership. Due to the withdrawal of the municipal money, the process had severely been damaged and was even brought to a halt for several years.

Now, almost 10 years later, the plan has finally come to its last stage (*execution phase*). The required money has been made available after all and the partners have presented the plans to the tenants. Ever since the second stage, however, citizen's influence has never been more than being informed about the process and consulting the institutional partners. The social housing organisation, the private developer and the local municipality made the actual decisions.

Figure 5: Hoograven's Heart, Utrecht



Source: Interviews 2003/2004

The figure for Hoograven's Heart is shown in figure 5. Participation is only limited to degrees of tokenism, but in the first stage, there was no participation at all (*non-participation*).

The original motivation of the stakeholders to involve residents to a large extent, in order to achieve the best outcome and have the qualitatively best plan, proved to be subordinate to the goals the three institutional parties aimed to achieve.

Demolition plans in Bouwlust, The Hague

Powerholders can also have clear motives not to involve residents during most stages of the process, which is illustrated by the third case. This case is interesting because the size of the area proved to be an important factor that affected the powerholder's motives not to choose for high levels of participation. In section 5 it has already become clear that Bouwlust (see figure 6), like the other two neighbourhoods, suffers from various problems. This holds for the whole district of Southwest, the city's largest district (62,000 inhabitants). To tackle the problems in the

whole district the local municipality and the three social housing organisations signed a covenant (Agricola 2002).

Figure 6: four-storey apartment buildings in Southwest The Hague



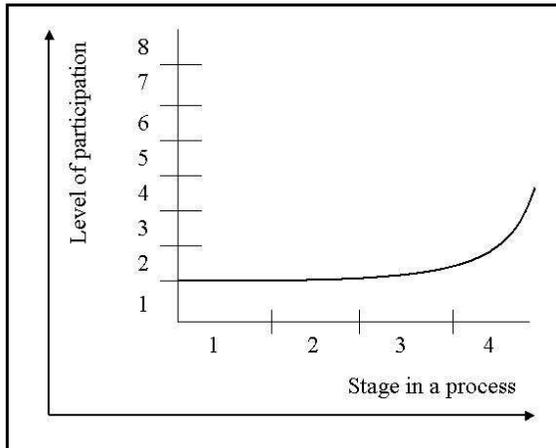
Pictures taken by Staedion (left) and Erik van Marissing

The plan contained the demolition and replacement of thousands of dwellings, but it also contained the restructuring of many other parts of the housing stock. Because this operation was very complicated and not well ordered for residents, the plans were only presented for citizen's formal say. Besides, according to most of the interviewed stakeholders, the majority was only interested in the answer to the question "is my house going to be demolished or not?" Having your house demolished and being forced to move has a lot of impact for the residents. Therefore a lot of attention was given to the service for those tenants involved, including a budget to move house and help with finding a new dwelling. In terms of Wilcox (1994), this means involvement in the last, *continuation stage*. At first, however, only the tenant organisations were invited in the planning process and individual tenants were not involved. A negative experience in another neighbourhood changed this situation. According to a co-worker the social housing organisation had experienced problems with representativeness in Duindorp, a neighbourhood on the Westside of the city. The tenant organisation had agreed with the plans, but the majority of the tenants turned out to disagree. A civil servant addressed this problem of representativeness:

"As local municipality, you intend to have residents participating in planning processes, but than you will find out the enthusiasm is limited to older people who have been living in this area for a long time, white people, that is the kind of residents that are willing to participate. These people are not representative for the population composition of the neighbourhood at all. As local community this is the dilemma you have to solve"

The quote indicates the observation that those older, white people are often more conservative and thus reluctant to changes, even though they might lead to improvements in the housing situation of a person. This experience was confirmed in many interviews. It is, in other words, not always obvious to invite tenant organisations when having a discussion about a proposed plan.

Figure 7: Housing regeneration in Bouwlust, The Hague



Source: Interviews 2003/2004

The negative experience in Duindorp meant a turning point in the housing policy of The Hague (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer 2004), which clearly had a lot of impact on restructuring processes in many neighbourhoods, including Bouwlust in the Southwest district. Since then, not the tenant organisations, but individual tenants were invited to attend meetings about the plans for their dwellings. This method had a big advantage for the housing organisation: unlike the tenants in Duindorp, the majority of the individual residents in Bouwlust did agree with the demolition plans. As one of the interviewed stakeholders explained, this is partly because individual tenants are often easier to manipulate than an organised group of tenants. Had the tenant organisation been asked for their opinion, the plan would have been rejected without a shadow of doubt.

In terms of Arnstein's classification (1969) the powerholders have clearly limited participation to 'degrees of tokenism' (see figure 7) and, on top of that, they have controlled the composition of the participants to maximise support for their plans. In other words: while the powerholders say to have acted on democratic grounds, they have in fact created bearing surface and reassured the legitimacy of their plans (Elander & Blanc 2001; Sprinkhuizen 2001). The line in figure 7 shows that tenant's influence has never been more than *consultation*, because the plans had already been made beforehand. The only influence of the residents was in the last stage and concerned the question how to cope with the fact that one has to move.

El Fath mosque, Amersfoort

The last case is a bit different from the others. The analysed process of cooperation has no direct link with urban restructuring, but it has taken place in an urban restructuring neighbourhood with multiple problems. Like the other two neighbourhoods that were investigated, Liendert in Amersfoort consists of many high-rise buildings and four storey apartment blocks (see figure 8). As a consequence it houses a lot of ethnic minority groups, including a large group of Moroccans. Although there are not any major changes going on, like the large-scale demolition and replacement in Southwest The Hague, there have been some small projects, such as the renovation of a few high-rise buildings and the building of a few new dwellings in the heart of the neighbourhood. The major change in Liendert is the building of a new mosque at the fringe of the neighbourhood. This mosque has to replace the old building in the Soesterkwartier, another neighbourhood in Amersfoort, within a few years.

Figure 8: dish antenna's in Liendert (left) and high-rise buildings (right)



Pictures taken by Erik van Marissing

For more than 10 years, the Moroccan El Fath mosque in Amersfoort had been willing to move, because it was located in an outdated building in a neighbourhood with almost no Muslim inhabitants. In the *initiation phase*, the management asked the local government to find a location where they could build a new mosque. The local government pointed out Liendert for

two reasons. First of all, the mosque has almost 400 members³ in this post-war neighbourhood. Second, a strip of educational and other public facilities fences off this area on the west side. According to the local municipality a mosque fits well in this strip. In this first stage, there were no citizens involved at all. They were not even informed about the plans, because the municipal representatives believed this would bring about too much commotion, particularly among the Dutch inhabitants. This first stage can thus be considered as *non-participation*.

After the location had been chosen, the local municipality and the management of the mosque joined hands to work on the plans, again without consulting or informing residents. During this *preparation phase* the management of the mosque was replaced by a new group of managers, because, according to the interviewed civil servant and the current manager of the mosque, the old members did not have the knowledge and skills to write a financially viable development plan. This was inspired by a previous experience from the local government with the management of a Turkish mosque. After having gone through the whole planning cycle, this Turkish mosque suddenly did not have the money to realise their plan. This caused a lot of needless commotion in the designated neighbourhood because a lot of residents were opposed to the plans, even though they were not realised after all. It made the local government very much aware to be very careful before working on the plans for any other mosque management that wanted to build a new mosque, including the Moroccan El Fath mosque. Having a financially reliable management therefore became the first condition before further cooperation was promised. This stage can therefore be considered *non-participation* as well.

Two years later, the third stage started off (*planning phase*). A meeting was organised in the neighbourhood to inform the residents about the meaning of the Islam religion and the function of a mosque. The powerholders took a lot of effort to avoid a negative atmosphere by inviting proponents. This was "*to neutralise the meeting*", as a civil servant explained. However, a lot of questions from the audience were not about the Islam, but more related to general problems in the neighbourhood. This caused the powerholders to inaugurate a 'discussion board' of residents. This group, called 'good neighbours', aimed at stimulating the dialogue between different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood and, more in general, a discussion about the quality of life in the area. A second meeting in which the most urgent topics of the first meeting were further examined shortly followed the first meeting. Both meetings, a 'public hearing' in the terminology of Arnstein (1969), can be considered as *consultation*, since it is not only a one-way flow of information. After all residents were asked to give their opinion about the Islam.

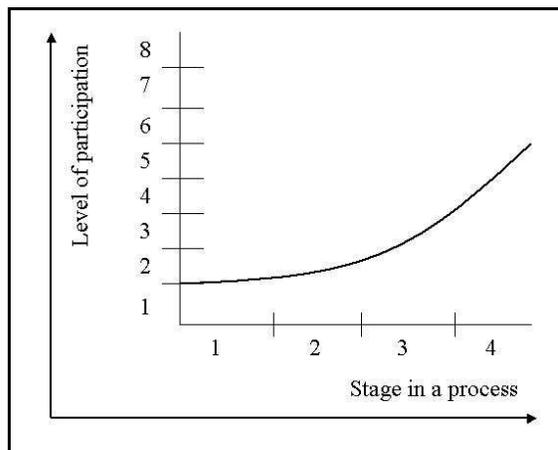
A few months later, the final plan was publicised (*continuation phase*) and residents could have their formal say on the plans. Things that came up during this meeting were for example the height of the minaret, expected parking problems and the location of the main entrance. According to the interviewed policymakers and stakeholders, most of these suggestions were taken into account when adapting the final plan. In this final stage, the highest degree of

³ In the Islam, membership goes by family, which means far more than 400 inhabitants of Liendert visit the El Fath mosque regularly.

tokenism, *placation*, is best suitable to describe the situation. Residents have had their say, but their influence still had an advisory character.

Figure 9 represents the involvement of citizens in the planning process for the El Fath mosque. The figure shows a very limited involvement in the beginning and slightly higher levels of participation towards the end of the process. Although participation has not been on a very high level during the process, residents will predominantly feel satisfied because most of their remarks have been taken into account. This may give them the (obviously wrong) impression of having had much influence during the whole process, since their contribution was limited to the last stages of the process, when most of the plans were already determined.

Figure 9: El Fath Mosque in Liendert, Amersfoort



Source: Interviews 2005

In short, the participation of residents has slightly increased during the process (see figure 9), but still it is not more than *consultation* or *placation*, because the municipality and the management of the mosque made the actual decisions. Below the surface, the powerholders may have reached their goals: there was little resistance to the plans that were discussed and most residents seem to be satisfied. The selection of participants through the stimulation towards proponents to attend the meetings also had a positive aspect for the neighbourhood: since the mosque is going to be built anyway and regarding the fact that it is going to last there for a very long time, it is better to start off with some positive news than with only complaints and remarks from opponents. Inaugurating a new management and having the agreements signed before presenting the plans to the public solved a second goal, preventing the project from failing due to financial problems.

7. Conclusions

These four examples show that citizen participation can occur at different stages in a process of cooperation. The level of participation –the degree to which citizens can influence the process– also differs from one case to another. As could be expected from Wilcox' framework (1994),

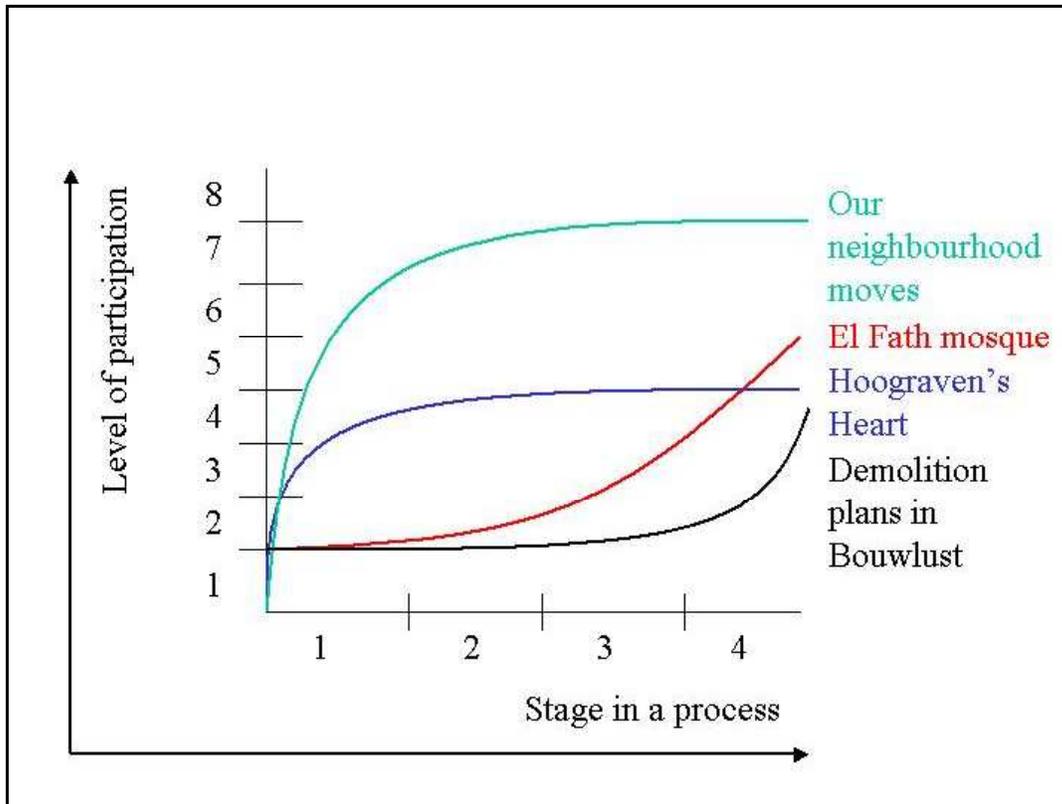
there is no 'general' or 'average' level of participation of which a figure can be drawn. Figure 10 illustrates the influence of the powerholders and their motives for the four cases that were mentioned. Whereas involving residents to a high degree was regarded necessary to improve social contacts in Nieuw-Hoograven (the green line), the consultation of residents in Amersfoort (the red line) was only meant to adjust the almost fully determined plan for a new mosque in a very limited sense. In the case of Hoograven's Heart, consultation of residents was desired because the plans affected public spaces in the neighbourhood. In The Hague, finally, participation was desired, but only at the end of the process. The level of willingness thus differs very much from case to case.

The research question of this paper was:

"How are levels of participation influenced by different stages in urban restructuring processes and by motives of powerholders?"

From the analysis of the four cases, it became very clear that the motives of powerholders are essential in determining the levels of participation, which can be regarded as the outcome of the opportunity structure of residents and the way they have dealt with it. Second, the different stages do matter. Policymakers are still too often afraid to redistribute power. This has not much changed since Arnstein's publication in 1969. This reluctance is partly due to the way residents are being seen: as consumers, rather than as producers.

Figure 10: overview on all four case studies



Source: interviews 2003-2005

The figure does not show who participated, nor do they show the intensity of their involvement. Who participates and who does not is to a large extent dependent on selectivity of powerholders.

Selectivity in invitation methods

From an institutional perspective, selectivity in invitation methods seems to be a beloved instrument to influence the composition of the participants. Representativeness can cause some problems with respect to participation, as was illustrated by the case of Bouwlust. It clarifies the fact that stakeholders can not always discuss issues with a board of representatives. Often a broader group of residents is required to get a good impression of what is going on in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, representativeness is also used as an excuse not having to invite 'the whole neighbourhood'. Selectivity can thus be regarded as one of the clearest motivational aspects, whether it means selecting a group of participants or trying to involve as many people as possible.

In this context, one can question the effort that is taken by powerholders to involve residents in decision-making. It is not seldom that civil servants or co-workers say they have done everything possible to have citizens participating, but still without much result. The problem of representativeness is undoubtedly apparent in all post-war areas in the Netherlands. The way local governments and other powerholders are tackling this problem, however, is very different.

Selectivity in the moment of invitation

Powerholders do not only ask the question "*who do I invite?*", they also ask themselves: "*when do I invite citizens?*" The most common moment in urban restructuring processes is when the plans are already in progress and only the formal say of the residents is left over (the *participation phase*). The Our Neighbourhood Moves project in Utrecht illustrates that there are some exceptions to this rule. Here involvement of residents played an important role from the beginning because participation itself was one of the major goals of the project. The same holds for most of the activities of the welfare organisations in Utrecht, The Hague and Amersfoort. In general, however, social housing organisations and local authorities are more reluctant to power redistribution, especially when it comes to participation higher up Arnstein's ladder. It is interesting to find that, although powerholders seem to be willing to pay much attention to participation of residents, their actual goal is often different and based on reducing resistance, especially when it comes to complicated or sensible restructuring plans, such as large-scale demolition or the establishment of a mosque. What is left to the public are the small-scale issues, like the location of playgrounds, the colours of the flowers in the park or the height of a minaret. Powerholders who stick to the assumption that residents should only be regarded as consumers will allow participation to a lesser degree than those who realise that residents are also producers and know very well to point out problems and possible solutions as well.

Motivational aspects versus residents' perspectives

So far, this paper has focussed on the motivational aspects of citizen participation: "*why do we want citizens to participate? When do we want them to be involved? To what degree should we allow citizens to participate?*" The organisational aspects have only slightly been mentioned, because many other researchers have already conducted research on this topic. In the next phase of the research project, citizens themselves will also be heard. This will give the opportunity to reflect the above found conclusions upon the ideas of residents. Questions that have to be answered are for example: "*do residents experience the motivational behaviour of powerholders as limiting their involvement or are they satisfied with the level of participation that is allowed to them?*" In Arnstein's terminology: "*do residents perceive the degrees of tokenism as degrees of citizen power or do they realise there is more to achieve?*" Finally, it is interesting to know whether unsatisfied residents try to 'climb the ladder' by organising themselves or by putting the pressure on policymakers and stakeholders.

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