THE LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A Ladder of Citizen Participation – Sherry R Arnstein

8	**Citizen control**	
7	**Delegated Power**	} **Citizen Power**
6		
	Partnership	
5		
	Placation	
4		}
	Consultation	} **Tokenism**
3		
	Informing	
2		
	Therapy	}
1		} **Non-participation**
	Manipulation	
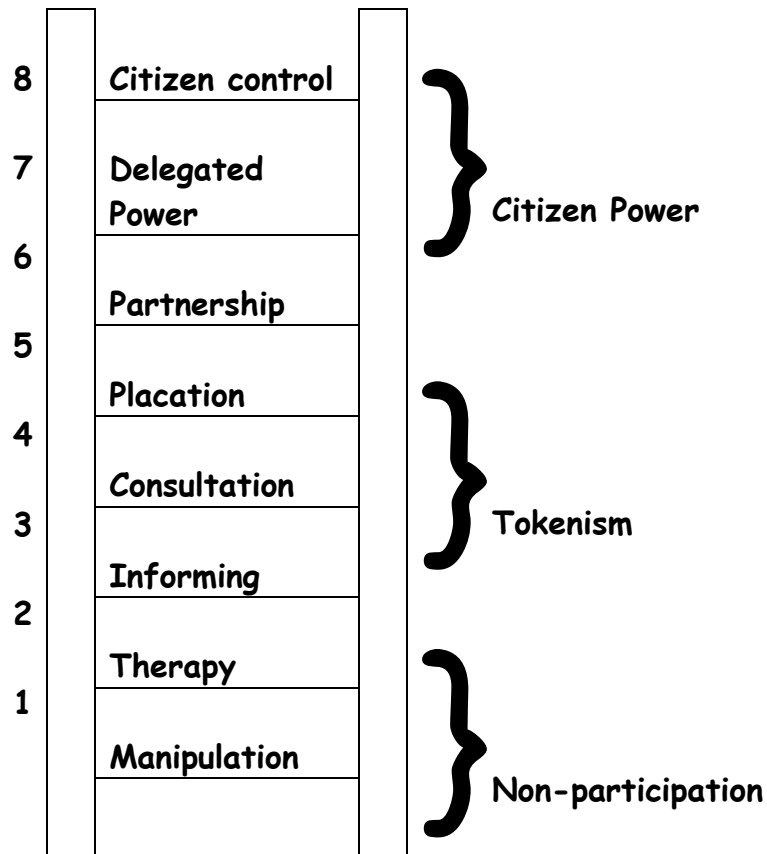
Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation

Types of participation and "nonparticipation"

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) **Manipulation** and (2) **Therapy**. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants.

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Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "**tokenism**" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) **Informing** and (4) **Consultation**. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle", hence no assurance of changing the status quo.

Rung (5) **Placation** is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into (6) **Partnership** that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) **Delegated Power** and (8) **Citizen Control** have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

Obviously the eight-rung ladder is a simplification but it helps to illustrate the point – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. Knowing these gradations makes it possible to cut through the hyperbole to understand the increasingly strident demands for participation from the have-nots as well as the range of confusing responses from the powerholders.

This model uses examples from programmes such as urban renewal, anti-poverty and regeneration but it could just as easily be illustrated in a wide variety of institutions and organisations where ever there is a division between the decision makers and non-decision makers including churches, colleges and universities, schools, workplaces, local government, central government and so on.

The underlying issues are essentially the same – "nobodies" in several arenas are trying to become "somebodies" with enough power to make the target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations, and needs.

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