

An aerial photograph showing a stark contrast in urban development. On the left, a well-developed residential neighborhood features houses with red-tiled roofs, lush green trees, and paved roads. A wide, unpaved dirt road runs diagonally across the center, separating this area from a vast, densely packed shanty town on the right. The shanty town consists of a sea of small, makeshift structures with grey and blue roofs, built on uneven, unpaved ground. The overall scene illustrates the concept of public participation in urban planning and policy-making.

**Public participation
in Parliament and
committees**

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What is public participation

- Open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making.
- A democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives.
- In the case of Parliament this can be from visits/public meetings, the work done by researchers/content advisors, or presentations to committees, and the process by which Parliament carries out its work



Why public participation?

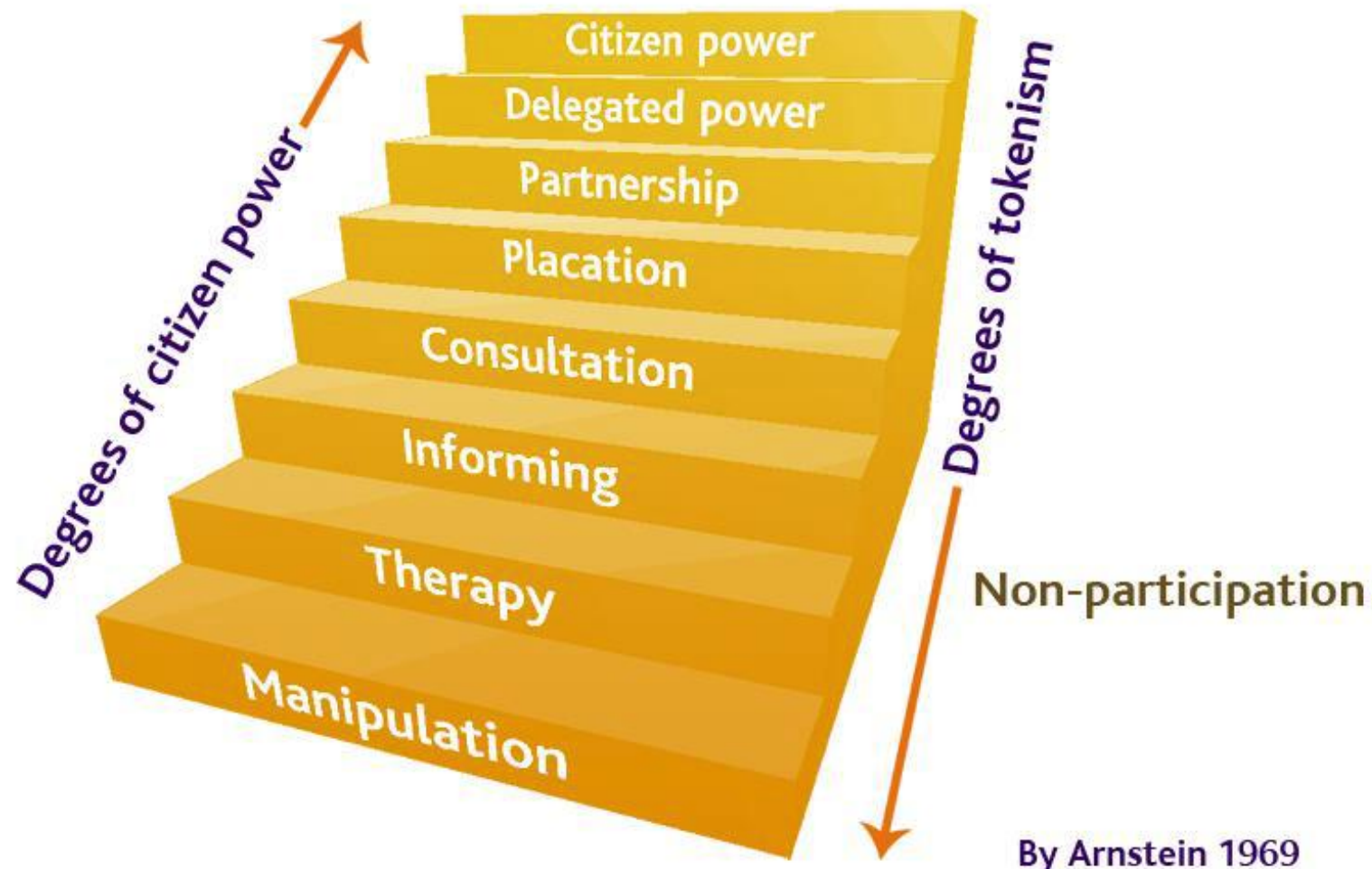
- Encouraged because it is a **legal requirement** to consult (e.g. for Parliament).
- To make **development plans and services more relevant** to local needs and conditions
 - or in Parliament's case to strengthen legislation and oversight, e.g how communities, other affected stakeholders, are experiencing the situation.

Not so relevant for Parliament:

- **Hand over responsibility** for services and promote community action
- **Empower local communities** to have control over their own lives and livelihoods.
- In parliament's case, to have a view from stakeholders on proposals for changes



Ladder of participation



By Arnstein 1969

Ladder of participation (empowering levels)

- **Citizen control** – People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. An example of citizen control is self-government – the community makes the decisions.
- **Delegated power e.g. citizens assemblies**
 - government ultimately runs the decision-making process and funds it, communities/stakeholders given some delegated powers to make decisions.
 - People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions.
 - Process seeks multiple perspectives and uses systemic and structured learning processes.
 - As groups take over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
- **Partnership** – an example is joint projects:
 - community/stakeholders have considerable influence on the decision making process but government takes responsibility for the decision.
 - Participation seen as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs.
 - People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project (e.g. home based carers). Such involvement tends to arise only after external agents have already made major decisions.
 - Participation may also be for material incentives where people participate by contributing resources, for example, labour in return for food, cash or other material incentives.

Ladder of participation (disempowering levels)

- **Placation** – stakeholders are asked for advice and token changes are made.
- **Consultation** – stakeholders are given information about the project or issue and asked to comment – e.g. through meetings or survey – but their view may not be reflected in the final decision, or feedback given as to why not. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making.
- **Informing** - Stakeholders told about the project – e.g. through meetings or leaflets; community may be asked, but their opinion is not taken into account.
- **Therapy** – Stakeholders participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses.
- **Manipulation** – Participation is simply a pretence, e.g. with "stakeholder's" representatives on official boards but who are not elected and have no power, or where the community is selectively told about a project according to an existing agenda. The community's input is only used to further this existing agenda.

From anecdote to evidence

- Challenge is to make public participation **meaningful and not token** and a compliance activity
- That the views expressed are **representative** and don't only represent the views of the powerful.
 - For example may need to meet with women alone
 - How do you ensure that powerful vested interests (eg tobacco lobby), don't outweigh the views of communities and support groups working with them – on your visits and in presentations
- That the views you are hearing are **backed up by wider research**, so you know they are widely valid, otherwise you can be unduly influenced by individual cases (stories are always powerful)

Issues to consider

Field visits:

- Who is identified to be there and who isn't (why and how representative)?
- Is the environment one which encourages people to be honest? (consider power)
- Do you have background information to put what you hear in context?

Presentations in committee:

- Who is identified to be there and who isn't (why and how representative) – whose voices?
- Is the way they were invited/dealt with empowering?
- Are they encouraged to be challenging or confirm the status quo?
- Do you demand strong evidence and not just anecdote?

Parliamentary research:

- Do you require strong evidence?
- Does that evidence build on the lived experience of stakeholders?
- Do you look for inconvenient evidence?

Processes overall:

- Do they encourage effective participation by stakeholders, to get the best outcomes, being wary of those who are powerful/with vested interests

Parliament and public participation in Kenya

https://youtu.be/O5Lz_3J5c8A

The case of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013

The role of public participation in policy-making

The role of parliament and a parliamentary committee in policy making



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