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# A Ladder of Community Participation for Underdeveloped Countries<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Much past analysis of *community participation*, in programmes designed to produce either housing or infrastructure, is incomplete as a guide to governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in terms of the approach required to achieve success in this area. There are two main problems to consider when analysing this issue: one is whether community participation is practised at all, the other is how. This paper focuses on the former, aiming at providing some basis of understanding on the latter. Here, community participation is not seen as being just a means to enable the people to get, through *mutual-help* initiatives and possibly with outside help, the basic needs which, otherwise, would not be available to them, but also as a means to influence decisions in the political arena about issues that affect them.

Existing models of community participation, such as Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, although adequate for analysis in developed countries, provide misleading results within a development context. A tentative classification for the evaluation of participation within underdeveloped countries is suggested, based on the degree of the external institutional involvement in terms of facilitating/carrying out community mutual-help projects. These levels of involvement are arranged in the form of a ladder composed of the following rungs: empowerment, partnership, conciliation, dissimulation, diplomacy, informing, conspiracy and self-management. Examples are used to illustrate these concepts. Cases of empowerment and self-management, at the opposite extremes of the ladder, demonstrate that basic needs can be achieved with or without governmental support. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd

## INTRODUCTION

In underdeveloped countries, for many complex and inter-related reasons, cities have experienced unprecedented growth, while there has been an inability of the public and private sectors to respond satisfactorily in providing adequate housing and infrastructure to the population. In these countries, the situation of the urban poor is particularly acute, since the centrally-driven model of provision has excluded those who are unable to pay for such a service. One solution to this problem would seem to be based on the progressive improvement of housing and infrastructure, which implies community participation. A fundamental component of community participation is *self-help*, that is, community mutual-help.

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According to Paul Samuel, who has identified several objectives of the community participation process,

in the broadest sense, community participation may be thought of as an instrument of empowerment. According to this view, development should lead to an equitable sharing of power and to a higher level of people's, in particular the weaker groups', political awareness and strengths.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, it is believed that this requires a redefinition of the role of government which must, if development processes are to be established, include low-income communities in their policy definitional processes. One part of this redefinition would seem to involve the need for support of people's initiatives. Moreover, other opportunities must be opened for them to ensure that their incomes will rise to levels that at least allow them, through their own effort, to attain socially acceptable living standards.<sup>3</sup>

Based on this rationale, it is suggested that the main objective of a community organisation should be not just to build for themselves the improvements to their community that they need to lead healthy and productive lives, but also to claim their rights in the political arena. In other words, there are two main objectives of a community organisation: one is to build or up-grade, by mutual-help, physical or social infrastructure or houses in their neighbourhood, the other is to influence decisions in the political arena. This will, eventually, result in more essential and permanent changes to the *status quo*. A study of effective community participation implies also an identification of the required external support, be it from government or NGOs, which can facilitate the outcome of the community effort.

Many attempts of community mutual-help have occurred, not all of them successful. For this reason, it is important to identify the extent of community participation that appears, at least on the surface, to be most likely to result in provision processes that are successful so that they can be replicated in other situations.

Terms such as *community involvement* and *participation* are used interchangeably in this paper, referring to the involvement or participation of the community of households in both the mutual-help effort in, and the formal decision-making process on, the formulation and implementation of projects and programmes that affect them.

It should be noted at the outset that the current research is based on a larger study which involved the review of a wide range of literature on self-help in the provision of housing and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Not only did that study make it possible to test certain relevant hypotheses, but it has allowed speculation beyond the original bounds of the study, an area which includes the present paper. In the original study nearly 700 sources were reviewed, ranging from case studies to theoretical proposals.

The ladder of community participation for underdeveloped countries proposed is illustrated by a very small subsample of these studies. For this purpose, the most useful were those examining the characteristics of the projects or programmes which facilitated the practice of community participation. The overall objective of the examination of these studies was to suggest a way of assessing the scale of community participation, to be considered by governments, NGOs and communities, which indicates the several levels of participation that can be achieved by a community organisation depending upon the type of support it receives from outside sources, whether they be from government or beyond government.

Much research has already been carried out on the general self-help process, usually taking the form of case studies of specific local communities and actions they have taken.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, a fundamental problem with the case-study approach and that involves the ability to generalise from the results obtained from a single location and a single set of events. The case-study approach has great strengths in its ability to probe in depth into underlying causes of success and failure, as well as assessing the environment within which a set of decisions and actions concerning self-help were taken. Once completed, however, it is exceedingly difficult to compare a study carried out in, say, the Philippines, with one from Colombia. Although the results of a single

case study may have applicability within its immediate geographical region, it always remains somewhat of a mystery as to whether the conclusions reached are universal or whether they are merely limited observations at a specific location in time. Attempts at illuminating this mystery have been examined by many authors and these belong to a different set of problems to be considered in analysing community participation, that is, *how* it is exercised.<sup>6</sup> Although this paper also examines to a much lesser extent the *means* used to carry out participation, the emphasis is on the relationships between government and NGOs, on the one hand, and the community, on the other, to achieve it.

### ANALYSING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROVISION OF HOUSING AND LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

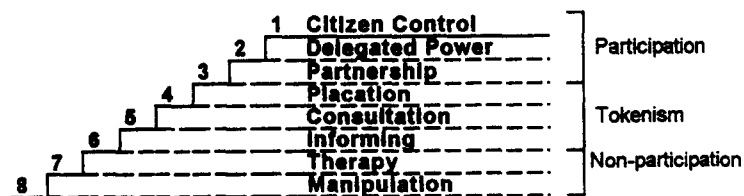
Perhaps the best known attempt to determine the scale of participation by the public is that of Arnstein. She views citizen participation as a term for citizen power. Thus, Arnstein defines the concept as “the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future”.<sup>7</sup> In her ladder of citizen participation, an effort was made to encapsulate the gradations of participation in various programmes of the United States Federal Government, such as urban renewal, anti-poverty and Model Cities, although she argued that it had obvious extensions to other areas. The Arnstein ladder had eight rungs as outlined in Fig. 1.

The transfer of Arnstein’s rungs of the ladder of participation to the underdeveloped world is, however, far from perfect. Within the developed world, Arnstein identifies processes by which “they (the have-not citizens) can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society”.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the criterion by which the rungs of the Arnstein ladder are defined is “the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product [of public policy]”.<sup>9</sup>

Within the development context, however, residents of low-income communities want more than power alone. They have dual objectives. They need empowerment to influence decisions which affect them. In addition, they want urban services and housing from a government which may not have the resources to provide them, or the will. For this second category of benefits, they may be willing to contribute their labour, time and money to get them, particularly in instances where they can see the benefit in doing so for themselves. Thus, if an underdeveloped country participation ladder were to be constructed, the terminology and descriptions used would have to be amended.

In terms of infrastructure, this is the approach used by Choguill, who has presented a model based on the progressive improvement of infrastructure.<sup>10</sup> A key element of this model concerns a strategic input of outside assistance, whether it comes from government or non-governmental sources.

A lesson from the evaluation of community participation in development projects is that there appear to be far more constraints in the underdeveloped as against the developed world. These are not just political and financial, but also technical and motivational,



(Source: See note 7)

Fig. 1. The Arnstein ladder of citizen participation.

considering the nature of the services required and the time involved in the community mutual-help effort. It is possible to conclude, however, that, where there is no political restraint to community organisation, the other constraints can, in most cases, be overcome.

In terms of the case studies selected to illustrate the present analysis, the degree of community involvement was found to vary widely from project to project. Training elements appear frequently, particularly in the case of programmes that are initiated by a central government and which involve technical inputs, such as those to improve water supply and sanitation facilities. Most communities are expected to provide funds and labour for the projects that they undertake (and even for projects that are undertaken for them!) There are some very interesting examples of operation and maintenance being assigned to the community as well, which suggests that such projects would rank fairly highly on the Arnstein scale. These appeared most frequently in water programmes, such as in that carried out in Tegucigalpa (Honduras). It also appears to be the basis of the sanitation improvements that have been made in the Orangi district of Karachi (Pakistan) The abbreviated contents of these case studies are included in the paragraphs which describe the 8 levels of the proposed hierarchy.

Communities can, particularly with outside help, solve their own housing and infrastructure problems. Many projects and programmes have some element of outside assistance associated with them. There are instances where communities have acted totally independently, but these appear to be the exception. In these cases, where the communities have generally formed neighbourhood organisations, many projects have been carried out strictly by the community with no outside help at all. In certain cases, the neighbourhood organisation has been designed to put pressure on public authorities and such authorities frequently have responded by providing the help requested. An interesting model is the one followed in the Philippines, in which the central government establishes an incentive programme, acting as a facilitator to link communities with NGOs. In this case, the NGOs may be in a position to offer financial and moral assistance while central government agencies offer technical support to the community for the construction works.

Analysis reveals that just because a project or programme reflects *community control* does not guarantee success. Compare, for example, the project Comuneros II in Cali (Colombia), where dwellers attempted to solve their own water needs, which would almost certainly have to be classified as failure, with that in Pinar in Istanbul (Turkey) where it seems that residents actually succeeded in developing safe water, schools and road connections to their community. Examples that represent the most successful of projects are those that fuse collaboration within the community to the backing and resources of government or NGO.

One could ask, then: does a bottom-up initiative, a project that is only partially successful but involves entire community control, do more to develop the "morale" and "psychology" of the local community than a totally successful top-down initiative, a project under government control? How would this classify in a ladder of participation, for underdeveloped countries? At the top or at the bottom? Which term would be appropriate in this case? Self-management? If genuine *empowerment* is achieved, could it substitute for Arnstein's *citizen control*? Are there actually two distinct aims within the development context, one concerned with development of community awareness through participation, that is, *empowerment*, while the second is oriented toward self-building community facilities, that is, *self-management*? Are the two compatible, or in conflict? At this point, what seems to really matter is the outside support provided to the community.

Understanding the political context of the country where development programmes or projects are to be implemented is essential in identifying opportunities for community participation. It need hardly be said that, even where no participation is required or requested in the political arena, some governments are extremely reluctant to allow it to happen. The organisation of the people, so necessary to make participation a

reality, and even more basic in the case of housing and infrastructure development projects or programmes with community involvement, is also an opportunity to develop people's consciousness about other aspects of their living conditions. Thus, success in providing water supplies may well lead to demands for help in sanitation and even in employment generation. In short, the organisation of the people could give way to demands that, to be met, would require the established relations with those in power to change. Not all governments are willing to negotiate this kind of innovation. If they did, however, true empowerment would be achieved.

### A LADDER OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOR UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Given the problems involved in attempting to transfer Arnstein's concepts to the underdeveloped world, a *new set of criteria* is suggested in this paper, involving certain changes in the terminology, which seems to adapt better to the context of development. It is suggested that community participation is not seen as being just a means to enable the people to influence decisions in the political arena about issues that affect them, but also as a means to obtain, through mutual-help initiatives and possibly with outside help, the basic needs which would not, otherwise, be available to them.

It is understood that individual citizen participation in decision-making would bring little benefit for the community as a whole. Thus, the term *community participation* is suggested instead of *citizen participation*, considering individuals as members and representatives of a fully organised community.

As in Arnstein's case, the proposed ladder could have an almost infinite number of rungs if one wished to finely distinguish among the various levels of participation. Obviously this would complicate the identification process even further and therefore, for this study, as in Arnstein's, an eight-rung ladder was used.

The suggested scale of participation for underdeveloped countries, based on the degree of governmental willingness in carrying out community mutual-help projects, is as follows, beginning with the highest level of participation.

#### *Hierarchy level 1: Empowerment*

Empowerment is the highest rung on the ladder of community participation proposed for underdeveloped countries. It may take the form of community members having a majority of seats or genuine specified powers on formal decision-making bodies over a particular project or programme involving community participation, when municipal authorities are unable or unwilling to undertake improvements themselves. Community members are expected to initiate their own improvements, possibly with the assistance of outside organisations, such as NGOs or other allies, demonstrating actual control of the situation and "*influence[ing] the processes and outcomes of development*".<sup>11</sup> These possibilities of actually controlling the situation and making allies, with governmental support, constitute the main characteristics of empowerment.

#### *Examples of empowerment*

- Jardim Celeste, São Paulo, Brazil,<sup>12</sup> is a case of a low-income neighbourhood association, connected to the Popular Movement and the Catholic Church, that undertook a self-help housing project financed by a governmental agency, FUNACON. It was assisted by an independent Technical Assistance Team (TAT) contracted by the local government. A supportive municipal government in São Paulo gave rise to several projects which were based on existing, locally organised neighbourhood associations which were able to start projects as soon as municipal support arrived after the results of the 1989 elections. These communities had a significant say on issues about their projects.

The Jardim Celeste project provided around 1,400 housing units and community facilities by mutual-help. The regularisation of land tenure, land subdivision and infrastructure projects were carried out by the municipality and the housing projects by the TAT. A pre-fabrication centre was set up to produce some simple building components such as stairs, concrete slabs, blocks, soakpits and beams, which, besides providing income-generation activities, led to reductions in the costs of construction and in the number of working hours. Additionally, a co-operative was contacted by the community to provide construction services, which eventually stimulated the organisation of a neighbourhood co-operative. Community training activities on subjects such as "purchasing and negotiation" as well as "construction", using simple technical language, were initiated by the community association.

This case illustrates what can be achieved by a community when the community initiatives are supported by a willing local government. Unfortunately, because governmental support to community works stopped after a new mayor was elected in 1993, this case also illustrates the fact that governmental support can be of a temporary nature.

- The Community Mortgage Program (CMP), Philippines,<sup>13</sup> is a broadly-based government programme designed to provide security of tenure through land ownership on low-cost terms to facilitate upgrading of housing and infrastructure.

At the time of the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986, it was estimated that about 40% of the Philippine urban population did not own, or have clear titles to, the land they occupied. In this circumstance, it would be impossible to encourage low-income residents to undertake self-help to improve housing or infrastructure. As a result, in 1988, the new government initiated the Community Mortgage Program as a means of providing solutions. The CMP consisted of three stages of loans: an initial loan for purchase of community land, thus giving immediate security of tenure; a second loan to the community for upgrading of water supply, drainage, sanitation and other infrastructural services, and third loans to the individual beneficiaries for house improvement and reconstruction. To be eligible for such loans, it was necessary for the community to organise into an association. Once recognised by the government, the association, with government assistance, was to negotiate with land owners to secure tenure. In addition, community associations were required to work with a more experienced partner organisation, known as an "originator", who played a key role in assisting with planning, monitoring progress on projects, assisting with loan applications, and inviting general assistance to the communities. In fact, the CMP established the necessary prerequisites for actual *community control* of the situation, particularly the clarification and regularisation of land tenure issues.

### *Hierarchy level 2: Partnership*

This is the second highest rung on the ladder. At this level, members of the community and outside decision-makers and planners agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities about development projects involving community participation through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and eventually other informal mechanisms for resolving problems and conflicts. Involvement of government in projects is more intense than in the case of empowerment.

### *Examples of partnership*

- Tegucigalpa, Honduras,<sup>14</sup> constitutes a case of devising means of extending water services to peripheral low-income communities. The approach involved training, community contributions for construction, administration and maintenance, and financial responsibility.

The water shortage in Tegucigalpa is particularly acute. As in many Latin American cities, virtually no urban services are provided to peripheral areas. It was noted that, originally, many inhabitants of the *barrios marginales* received their water from private vending operations at prices estimated to be 34 times higher than the official government rate to better-off families who were connected to the town system. In order to meet the growing water needs of the *barrios marginales*, the Honduras National Water and Sanitation Agency explored alternative methods of water supply in a project funded by the governments of Canada and Sweden and the UNICEF Committee of Canada.

A crucial element in the water-supply project is community participation. The community must request help for the construction and building of a system. Once the request is received, a study is done by the water authority to determine which approach best serves the community and whether or not the community is sufficiently organised and enthusiastic enough to construct and administer such a system. The water source belongs to the municipal authority but the community is responsible for operating and maintaining the system and the community must provide all necessary repairs. The central authority designs the system, covers many of the initial costs and provides technical assistance. The community forms a water association, then supplies the work-force to construct the facilities, purchases some of the materials, is responsible for the administration and maintenance of the system upon completion and collects the fees from users who pay for the water supplied.

- Kampung Banyu Urip, Surabaya, Indonesia,<sup>15</sup> is a Kampung Improvement Project that has led to improved footpaths, drains, vehicular roads, water standpipes and public toilets.

In 1979, the community was incorporated in to the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP). Citizens were involved in drafting and discussing their improvement plan as well as in its implementation.

Between 1979 and 1982, vehicular roads, footpaths, drainage, water standpipes and public toilets were provided by the KIP at a per capita cost of about US\$22 for the 28,000 inhabitants served. On completion of the work, the community assumed responsibility for the use and further development of the improvement. Trees, shrubs and flowers were planted. Street lighting was installed. A security guard house and meeting halls were built. Houses were improved. In 1983, the community's request for legal tenure was granted.

The Banyu Urip experience suggests that there was genuine interest in having the people involved in the planning and decision-making process.

### *Hierarchy level 3: Conciliation*

Conciliation is the third highest rung of the suggested ladder of community participation. It occurs when the government devises solutions that are eventually ratified by the people. It may take the form of appointing a few representatives of the community to advisory groups, or even decision-making bodies, where they can be heard but also where they are frequently forced to accept the decisions of a powerful and persuasive elite. It is frequently a top-down, paternalistic approach.

### *Example of conciliation*

- Curitiba, Brazil,<sup>16</sup> illustrates a city's efforts to make environmental improvements. Curitiba, like many other cities, developed a master plan in the 1960s. Unlike other cities, central guidance given in the plan was adhered to over a period of more than 20 years. One important element of the Curitiba road network included in the plan was the concept and use of "road hierarchies". Land-use legislation in the city has

been linked to the road system to encourage high density occupation, together with services and commerce, adjacent to main roads. The linear shape of the central business district further encourages the use of public transport.

An interesting aspect of the city's management concerns solid waste. Seventy per cent of households participate in one of the municipal solid-waste recycling programmes. These are integrated with a series of social initiatives, such as exchanging rubbish bags collected by residents for bus tokens and parcels of surplus food.

Curitiba's is very much a top-down approach to urban development. In its citizens' board, the professional elite is very persuasive. However, it is apparent that the motives are the correct ones and, as a result of real imagination, Curitiba has gained an international reputation within the area of urban management.

#### *Hierarchy level 4: Dissimulation*

This is the fourth rung down in the ladder. In order to achieve a semblance of participation, people are placed on rubber-stamp advisory committees or boards. The express purpose is educating them or, more frequently, engineering their support. From this level down, the government increasingly leaves the communities to themselves.

#### *Example of dissimulation*

- The Urban Planning Unit of Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil,<sup>17</sup> consisting of a technical cabinet and an advisory board, was created as an answer to the demands and petitions of dwellers' associations and other organised segments of the local society to participate in the local decision-making process. These groups were concerned about the provision of physical infrastructure — roads, drainage and solid-waste disposal — as well as social infrastructure — schools and health clinics — in low-income neighbourhoods.

This case illustrates a strategy to engineer the support of discontented groups without giving them what they really needed. The advisory board was proposed initially, as something fulfilling a democratic purpose. It was to determine the main objectives to be pursued by the technical cabinet. However, only one representative of the poor peripheral areas of the city was nominated to this board of 21, the rest being representatives of professional associations and groups involved with speculative development. This latter group was, in fact, the main agent of the so-called intra-urban differentials in terms of access to services in the city. As a result, no important projects or programmes for the poor neighbourhoods have been contemplated by the advisory board. Despite the fact that dwellers' associations continued sending a representative to the board, the symbolic role of this council was rapidly acknowledged by many. Among uninformed citizens, however, the Urban Planning Unit of Campo Grande is still seen as an example of democratic exercise.

#### *Hierarchy level 5: Diplomacy*

Diplomacy is the fifth rung down in the ladder of community participation suggested and, as in the case of dissimulation, it is a type of manipulation. In this case, the government, for lack of interest, lack of financial resources or for incompetence, is likely to expect the community itself to make the necessary improvements, usually with the near-heroic assistance of an outside organisation. When there is a possibility that the community by itself accomplishes real improvements or when NGOs are involved, the government may change its attitude, frequently for tactical reasons, providing limited amounts of aid. Diplomacy may take the form of consultation, attitude surveys, public hearings, visits to the neighbourhood or meetings with dwellers. In this event, government officials pretend that they are seeking opinions on a potential project or that they are going to promote/support some kind of improvement to the neighbourhood. However,



there is no assurance that new projects will be implemented, that concerns and ideas from the community will be taken into account in these projects, or that support to the community effort will be provided.

#### *Example of diplomacy*

- Baldia, a low-income community in Karachi, Pakistan,<sup>18</sup> with a population of about 200,000, is a case of a major community sanitation project in a low-income community in partnership with a foreign NGO. Because of the high infant mortality rate, the community wished to improve its sanitation. The project consisted of the construction of soakpits. In all, 200 pit latrines and 3,060 soakpits were built. Help and education projects followed, spreading the importance of this project to the entire community. Training for masons was initiated. As a result of the success of the project, eventually the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation was persuaded to surface roads, streets and pavements and to provide a better water supply and street lighting and power.

#### *Hierarchy level 6: Informing*

This consists of a one-way flow of information from officials to the community, of their rights, responsibilities and options, without allowance for feedback or negotiation, in projects that have already been developed. It is a top-down initiative, frequently with controversial results. It is a level of manipulation, and constitutes the sixth rung down of the participation ladder.

#### *Example of informing*

- At a location in Mirpur, to the north of Dhaka, Bangladesh,<sup>19</sup> a scheme was proposed for a new community for urban squatters forcibly removed from Dhaka in 1975. The project, however, encountered serious implementation problems, in part because of a lack of community participation.

At Mirpur, a scheme was proposed to build an embankment around land that was subject to monsoon flooding and to create a new community for the former squatters within it. Costs were to be shared between the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Capital Development Fund. The technology adopted for the project was probably not appropriate for the Bangladesh environment and there was no vested interest of future inhabitants as there had been no consultation with them about what they wanted. Instead, the project was designed and implemented by expatriate consultants and government officials alone. This project, in its originated form, was virtually written off as a failure in 1979.

In 1984, a revised project was proposed, largely due to a visit to the site by the Head of State which, although based on earlier proposals, incorporated certain new features. The area of the dike was to be filled in. Beneficiaries were to be provided with secure tenure to a plot, a water-sealed pit latrine and a core house. Community facilities were planned, including two schools, a health clinic and vocational centres.

The revised project also encountered problems. The subsidy required to successfully complete the scheme after 13 years was about 100%. Had this not been an exceptional, one-off project, its high cost would never have been accepted. The residents themselves were scarcely concerned about this. The scheme itself arrived in a very top-down manner, designed by expatriates and implemented by international NGOs and by central government. At the time of moving in, no plans had been made either to recover costs or to organise maintenance of the facilities.

#### *Hierarchy level 7: Conspiracy*

Conspiracy is the seventh rung down the ladder. Here, no participation in the formal decision-making process is allowed or even considered, as the government seems to

reject any idea of helping the poor. To the government, the poor communities are little more than an embarrassment. It includes cases where the reasons given by authorities for action disguise ulterior motives or may benefit other groups.

#### *Example of conspiracy*

- Pursuing a policy that was commonly adopted by governments at the time, in Dhaka, Bangladesh,<sup>20</sup> in 1975, the government decided to clear all the city of squatters and move them to locations peripheral to the city.

This was executed under the guise of a “clean up the city” drive, using government controlled newspapers to inform the literate minority about the 500,000 urban squatters who attended to their “morning call of nature in the open” and the “innumerable bustee girls who were prey to venereal disease”. A state of emergency was declared, citing an imaginary external threat from Pakistan, which in effect suspended constitutional safeguards and ensured that the dispossessed squatters could not use the courts to defend their houses. Throughout the entire removal process, the nation’s president went to the press to reassure the squatters of his “sympathetic” attitude towards them. In the meantime, the Bangladesh army was bulldozing their houses. One result was the project reported as an example of ‘informing’.

It should be noted that, over the last 15 years, the government of Bangladesh has adopted a much more enlightened view toward the urban poor.

#### *Hierarchy level 8: Self-Management*

Self-management is at the bottom of the suggested ladder of community participation. It takes place when the government does nothing to solve local problems and the members of the community, by themselves, plan improvements to their neighbourhood and actually control the projects, not always successfully. Usually, although not always, communities work with outside assistance of NGOs or the support of independent financial institutions, which seem to affect positively the outcome of the community effort. In fact, the NGOs themselves, through their extensive involvement, may well totally replace the need for government, with the exceptions of meeting the objective of changing the *status quo* in the political sphere. In certain political contexts, however, the alliance of influential outside supporters to people’s initiatives may be necessary if the community activity is to exist at all. In this case, the alliance guarantees that the hostile government exercises a diplomatic non-interference. Eventually, people’s initiatives may influence temporarily the processes and outcomes of development, in the case of just a diplomatic political change, or may establish genuine empowerment, in case of change of leadership and the establishment of mechanisms of support to the communities. Thus, in the ladder of community participation suggested, in contrast to empowerment, self-management implies situations that result from lack of governmental interest in or even opposition to the poor people’s demands. As this seems to have been a popular approach among communities, four cases illustrate this point.

#### *Examples of self-management*

- Orangi District, Karachi, Pakistan,<sup>21</sup> provides a case in which a low-income community, with the assistance of a local NGO, the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), has installed a self-help sanitation system that has been very successful. The cost of having local government put in a sewage system would have been too high.

Meetings were held between the staff of the NGO and residents to explain the benefits of such a system and to offer technical assistance. Technicians from the OPP drew up plans for the local scheme, the sewers were then installed with maintenance organised by local groups. As the project was seen to work, others in Orangi wished to undertake it as well. An important aspect of the project has been its low cost.

An interesting sidelight on the Orangi project concerns the solid-waste management system that is evolving in the community. The community has found that a project for producing composting from organic waste is economically and commercially feasible. Such compost is used to fertilise Pakistan's own fields, but some is exported to the Gulf States for cash.

- Barrio Rafael Nunez, Cartagena, Colombia,<sup>22</sup> constitutes a case where a community's efforts to improve infrastructure eventually attracted international donor financial support. The first project undertaken by the residents was to build up roads to above flood levels. In order to finance this project, they raised money through raffles and dances. They then proceeded to construct a potable water system covering a five block area. Successful projects have bred additional projects. A revolving fund was established to finance them. A concrete block factory was one of their first major investments which was used to facilitate self-help building. They have also built a day-care centre for 300 children, established a health post for children and pregnant women and sponsored a programme to promote family gardens.

These projects have attracted international attention. With an Inter-American Foundation grant, the group has gone into the sanitation business. They have bought a truck to start a septic tank cleaning service and expect to receive business not just locally but from other *barrios* in the neighbourhood. The sludge will be turned into fertiliser. From the profits they intend to build more houses, septic tanks, buy medicine for the health post and provide scholarships to the pre-school programme.

- Pinar, Istanbul, Turkey,<sup>23</sup> is a case of squatters taking spontaneous action to provide themselves with school facilities, a piped water system (in co-operation with Government engineers on a voluntary basis) and a paved road, primarily through organised community pressure on public authorities. As a result of the paved road, the bus service was extended to the community. Social infrastructure, a co-operative food shop and a small factory were soon added. A neighbourhood sports association was created to provide recreational opportunities. Electricity was extended to each house in the community.

The Pinar study illustrates the power of a community organisation. In this case, it was fear of expulsion from the location, or tenure problems, that originally resulted in the creation of an effective community organisation. In upgrading their neighbourhood, dwellers achieved the necessary legitimacy, in the public and authorities' eyes, and were allowed to remain at the location. Moreover, with such attitudes, Pinar dwellers influenced the processes and outcomes of development.

- Comuneros II, Cali, Colombia,<sup>24</sup> constitutes a case where a low-income pirate settlement has attempted to solve its water and sanitation problems through a variety of self-help approaches, not always successfully. The initial settlers of the community obtained water by tanker from other communities, or by digging wells. Piped supplies followed. In one instance, eight households joined together to run a hose from a water main to their neighbourhood. An employee of the public utility made the illegal tap into a water main. The households made individual house connections.

However, the efforts made by small groups which excluded the other members of the community brought problems. Among these was sabotage to their pipes. There were numerous disagreements about what would constitute appropriate contributions by new subscribers, since the labour and capital expenditure had already been contributed by earlier settlers. In one case, failure to resolve the conflict led to the installation of a separate water hose adjacent to the first.

To summarise, the suggested ladder of community participation in the decision-making process for the implementation of development projects or programmes in underdeveloped countries could be represented as shown in Fig. 2.

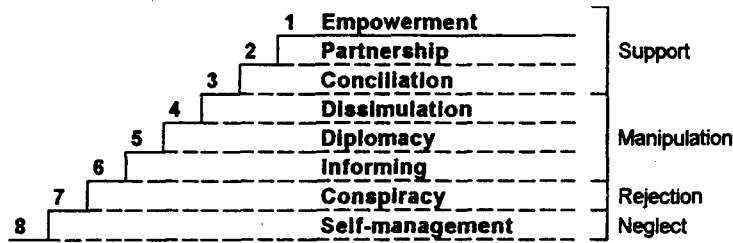


Fig. 2. A ladder of community participation for underdeveloped countries.

## CONCLUSIONS

Certain important conclusions emerge from this study.

First, in cases where initiatives exist to improve the living conditions of low-income communities, be they top-down or bottom-up, it is obvious that they may lead to very different results, depending on the governmental attitude towards the community. Thus:

- In the fortunate case of supportive governments, initiatives may lead to one of the three levels of participation, namely empowerment, partnership or conciliation, depending on the degree of governmental willingness and/or confidence in the community's ability to contribute to its own improvement and of the residents to initiate activities by themselves or with the support of external agencies. Thus, one may talk about empowerment or partnership, depending on the community's freedom to initiate activities or make alliances outside the boundaries of the governmental control, while conciliation emerges as a somewhat paternalistic approach. In this case, the level of governmental control is very high and is legitimised by good technical performance.
- Not-so-supportive governments will hide their reluctant attitude in an unskillful and sometimes very destructive approach to the problem, because it demobilises an otherwise more effective organisation of the people for the self-provision of the services they need. In this case, there is no clear/effective opposition to the community organisation/activity, represented by several kinds of manipulation. The objective is frequently to control an otherwise conflicting situation through a subterfuge, varying from dissimulation and diplomacy to mere informing. Through dissimulation, the people are "legitimately" persuaded to accept decisions that are contrary to their interest. Diplomacy certainly reflects a case of no alternative for the government other than to accept the people's initiatives. In certain cases, it happens because of the incapacity of governments to initiate projects together with the people, while, in others, it can be a sordid way to legitimise power and dominion. In informing, governmental control of the situation is taken for granted and top-down initiatives of any kind are imposed on the community. In this case, the people are too busy in defending themselves from "external interference" to have time to initiate by themselves any activity to improve their living conditions.
- When the poor are not yet ignored by the government, but rather they are seen as an inopportune and unwelcome group to be eradicated at any cost, a clear governmental opposition may result in a fearsome conspiracy. This is usually manifested as destructive governmental top-down projects which stimulate community solidarity and violent reaction. Not surprisingly, in this case, people's organisations may be illegal, NGOs are not welcome, and no development projects or programmes with community involvement are conceivable.
- In extreme circumstances, however, when rejection is manifested as governmental disregard, self-management emerges as a reaction of the poor to their situation, frequently allied to NGOs. Initiatives are invariably bottom-up, either originating from the community itself or from the NGO. The results may vary, depending on a

series of factors, such as the community's innate abilities and/or the competence of the external support. However, it seems apparent that projects involving the innate abilities of the community which succeed without external support are rare. However, even when self-management results in successful construction, communities do not succeed in achieving influence within the political arena, thus failing to meet one of the two objectives of community participation.

This analysis demonstrates that governments can support, manipulate, reject or neglect the poor people's demands. And as the ladder of participation suggests, governmental attitude is essential in determining the potential results of the community effort. The degree to which manipulation is used by government determines frustration levels in the community, because government attitude may seem to alternate between support and rejection. This attitude can be very harmful for communities because of its demobilising potential. Illustrations of empowerment and self-management, at the opposite extremes of the ladder, demonstrate that basic needs can be achieved with or without governmental support. In both cases, analyses of how community participation is practised can provide useful results. However, at any level of the ladder, it is clear that people's self-determination plays a significant role in the process of improving their own condition.

Given their objectives, the ladder of participation suggested, if accurate, may help community builders in assessing their performance.

Finally, governmental willingness to support the people may be very temporary. As governmental leadership changes, the governmental approach and philosophy/ideology may change too. The case of São Paulo (Hierarchy level 1) well illustrates this. Similarly, situations that today represent clear opposition to people's demands may eventually change to a more welcome circumstance, when there is support for their cause. An illustration of this is the present government of Bangladesh's changed attitude towards its poor (as opposed to the situation described in the example illustrating Hierarchy level 7). But again, this can be only a temporary change. However, it must be recognised that, if sustainable development is to be achieved, a stable support to the people, be it from governments or NGOs, is necessary, at least to that level from which they can continue managing their projects by themselves. In other words, one-off development projects must evolve consistently into on-going programmes and long-term links/alliances must be established for the provision of lasting support to the communities. Only in this way can genuine and sustainable community development be achieved.

## NOTES

1. The present paper is an extension of a research study sponsored by the UK Overseas Development Administration which is reported in C.L. Choguill, M.B.G. Choguill and A.M. Silva-Roberts, *Developing Self-Sustaining Infrastructure in Third World Urban Areas*, a Research Report to the Overseas Development Administration on Research Project 6079 by the University of Sheffield Centre for Development Planning Studies (1995), 2 Volumes.
2. P. Samuel, "Community Participation in Development Projects: the World Bank Experience", in M. Bamberger (compiler), *Readings in Community Participation*, Vol. 1 (The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, Washington, DC, 1986), p. 46.
3. The question of standards is a controversial one. Standards are at best relative. Yet it is the enormous disparities among standards applicable for different social classes that lead to the present argument that they involve a moral, humanistic aspect which must be addressed. In other words, if a certain standard is considered acceptable for a given social class, then it should also be acceptable for the others. If it is not, then it should not be considered a socially acceptable standard and the whole society should make efforts to improve it. In other words, it is believed that people's participation in the political arena, not just on issues of infrastructure but on other matters as well, mainly economic ones, which affect their income, must be part of the development process.
4. Choguill, *et al.* (1995), see note 1.
5. P.M. Ward (ed.), *Self-help Housing: a Critique* (Mansell, London, 1982); K. Mathey, *Beyond Self-help Housing* (Mansell, London, 1992); B. Turner (ed.), *Building Community: a Third World Case Book* (Building Community Books, London, 1988); and C.L. Choguill, *Self-help Construction in Low Income Countries: An Examination of Factors which Promote Success*, University of Sheffield Centre for Development Planning Studies, Occasional Paper No. 18 (September 1994).
6. See E. Dudley, *The Critical Villager: Beyond Community Participation* (Routledge, London, 1993); also H. Slim and P. Thompson, *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Development* (Panos, London, 1993).

7. S.R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35 (1969), p. 216.
8. Arnstein (1969), see note 7.
9. Arnstein (1969), see note 7, p. 217.
10. C.L. Choguill, "Ten Steps to Sustainable Infrastructure", *Habitat International*, this issue.
11. P. Samuel (1986), see note 2, p. 46.
12. Source of the Jardim Celeste case study: R. Denaldi, *Viable Self-management: the FUNACON Housing Programme of the São Paulo Municipality*, Institute of Housing and Urban Studies Working Paper Series No. 9 (Rotterdam, 1994).
13. Source of the Community Mortgage Program case study: M. Lee, "The Community Mortgage Program: an Almost Successful Alternative for some Urban Poor", *Habitat International* 19, 4 (1995), pp. 529–546.
14. Sources of the Tegucigalpa case study: P. Friedlander, "Water for the Urban Poor", *Waterlines* 9, 1 (July 1990), pp. 6–8; C.L. Choguill, "Infrastructure for Low-income Communities: a Study from Honduras", in S. Meikle and M. Mumtaz (eds), *Successful Shelter Strategies* (Development Planning Unit for Overseas Development Administration, London, 1991), pp. 63–67.
15. Source of the Kampung Banyu Urip case study: "Kampung Banyu Urip", in Turner (ed.), (1988), see note 5, pp. 67–74.
16. Sources of the Curitiba case study: J. Rabinovitch and J. Leitmann, *Environmental Innovation and Management in Curitiba, Brazil*, Urban Management Program Working Paper No. 1 (The World Bank, Washington, DC, 1993) and K. Herbst, "Brazil's Model City: Is Curitiba Too Good To Be True?", *Planning* 58, 9 (September 1992), pp. 24–27.
17. Sources of the Campo Grande case study: M.B.G.M. Rezende, "Perspectives in Genuine Participation: a Case from Brazil", *Third World Planning Review* 14, 2 (1992), pp. 203–212 and M.B.G.M. Rezende, *Planning and Citizenship: Decision-making in the Planning Process in Campo Grande, MS, Brazil*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield (1992), pp. 219–226.
18. Source of the Baldia case study: "Baldia" in B. Turner (ed.), (1988), see note 5, pp. 53–58.
19. Sources of the Mirpur case study: C.L. Choguill, *New Communities for Urban Squatters: Lessons from the Plan that Failed in Dhaka, Bangladesh* (Plenum, New York, 1987); C.L. Choguill, "Problems in Providing Low-income Urban Housing in Bangladesh", *Habitat International* 12, 3 (1988), pp. 29–39; C.L. Choguill, "Implementing Urban Development Projects: a Search for Criteria for Success", *Third World Planning Review* 16, 1 (1994), pp. 25–39; and C.L. Choguill, "Housing Policy Trends in Bangladesh: Meeting the Needs of a Low-income Population", *Cities* 10, 4 (1993), pp. 326–336.
20. Source of the Dhaka case study: C.L. Choguill (1987). See note 19, pp. 47–101.
21. Sources of the Orangi case study: J.E. Hardoy, D. Mitlin and D. Satterthwaite, *Environmental Problems in Third World Cities* (Earthscan, London, 1992), p. 147; A. Hassan, "Development through Partnership: the Orangi Project in Karachi", in D. Cadman and G. Payne (eds), *The Living City: Towards a Sustainable Future* (Routledge, Andover, Hants, 1990), pp. 221–226; B. Turner (ed.) (1988), See note 5, pp. 81–88; United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, "Cash from Trash: Making Refuse Pay", in *Shelter and Urbanization Information Kit*, World Habitat Day, 1 October 1990 (New York, 1990); and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, "Converting Garbage into Compost Proves Profitable in Pakistan", *Bulletin of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless*, No. 5 (July 1986).
22. Source of the Barrio Rafael Nunez case study: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, "Cartagena: Turning Community Waste to Profit", *UNCHS Shelter Bulletin* 1, 3 (November 1988), pp. 5–7.
23. Source of the Pinar case study: Y. Aksoylu, "Community Organisation, the Pinar Experience in Turkey", *Open House International* 11 (1986), pp. 44–48.
24. Source of the Comuneros II case study: M.A. Ridgley, "Services in a Colombian Shantytown: Speculations on the Limits of Collective Self-help", *Yearbook, Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 15 (1989), pp. 59–69.