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# A Ladder of Citizen Participation

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## Abstract

The heated controversy over “citizen participation,” “citizen control,” and “maximum feasible involvement of the poor,” has been waged largely in terms of exacerbated rhetoric and misleading euphemisms. To encourage a more enlightened dialogue, a typology of citizen participation is offered using examples from three federal social programs: urban renewal, anti-poverty, and Model Cities. The typology, which is designed to be provocative, is arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the plan and/or program.

## Notes

1 The literature on poverty and discrimination and their effects on people is extensive. As an introduction, the following will be helpful: B. H. Bagdikian, *In the Midst of Plenty: The Poor in America* (New York: Beacon, 1964); Paul Jacobs, "The Brutalizing of America," *Dissent*, XI (Autumn 1964), p. 423-8; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967); Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); L. J. Duhl, *The Urban Condition; People and Policy in the Metropolis* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); William H. Grier and P. M. Cobbs, *Black Rage* (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962); Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States* (New York: Atherton Press, 1967); Mollie Orshansky, "Who's Who Among the Poor: A Demographic View of Poverty," *Social Security Bulletin*, XXVII (July 1965), 3-32; and Richard T. Titmuss, *Essays on the Welfare State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

2 The poster is one of about 350 produced in May or June 1968 at Atelier Populaire, a graphics center launched by students from the Sorbonne's École des Beaux Art and École des Arts Decoratifs.

3 This typology is an outgrowth of a more crude typology I circulated in March 1967 in a HUD staff discussion paper titled "Rhetoric and Reality." The earlier typology consisted of eight levels that were less discrete types and did not necessarily suggest a chronological progression: Inform, Consult, Joint Planning, Negotiate, Decide, Delegate, Advocate Planning, and Neighborhood Control.

4 For an article of some possible employment strategies, see Edmund M. Burke, "Citizen Participation Strategies," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXXIV, No. 5 (September 1968), 290-1.

5 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Workable Program for Community Improvement, Answers on Citizen Participation, Program Guide 7*, February, 1966, pp. 1 and 6.

6 David Austin, "Study of Resident Participants in Twenty Community Action Agencies," CAP Grant 9499.

7 Robert Coles, "Social Struggle and Weariness," *Psychiatry*, XXVII (November 1964), 305-15. I am also indebted to Daniel M. Fox of Harvard University for some of his

general insights into therapy being used as a diversion from genuine citizen participation.

8 See, Gordon Fellman, "Neighborhood Protest of an Urban Highway," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXXV, No. 2 (March 1969), 118-22.

9 James V. Cunningham, "Resident Participation, Unpublished Report prepared for the Ford Foundation, August 1967, p. 54.

10 Interview with Maxine Kurtz, Technical Director, Denver CDA.

11 U.S., Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Citizen Participation in Model Cities," *Technical Assistance Bulletin*, No. 3 (December 1968).

12 Organization for Social and Technical Innovation, *Six-Month Progress Report to Office of Economic Opportunity, Region 1*, February 1, 1969, pp. 27, 28, and 35.

13 In Cambridge, Massachusetts, city hall offered to share power with residents and anticipated the need for a period in which a representative citizens group could be engaged, and the ambiguities of authority, structure, and process would be resolved. At the request of the mayor, HUD allowed the city to spend several months of Model Cities planning funds for community organization activities. During these months, staff from the city manager's office also helped the residents draft a city ordinance that created a CDA composed of sixteen elected residents and eight appointed public and private agency representatives. This resident-dominated body has the power to hire and fire CDA staff, approve all plans, review all model city budgets and contracts, set policy, and so forth. The ordinance, which was unanimously passed by the city council also includes a requirement that all Model City plans must be approved by a majority of residents in the neighborhood through a referendum. Final approval power rests with the city council by federal statute.

14 U.S., Office of Economic Opportunity, *OEO Instruction, Participation of the Poor in the Planning, Conduct and Evaluation of Community Action Programs* (Washington, D.C.: December 1, 1968), pp. 1-2.

15 Adam Walinsky, "Review of Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding" by Daniel P. Moynihan, *New York Times Book Review*, February 2, 1969.

16 For thoughtful academic analyses of some of the potentials and pitfalls of emerging neighborhood control models, see, Alan Altshuler, "The Demand For Participation in

large American Cities," An Unpublished Paper prepared for the Urban Institute, December 1968; and Hans B. C. Spiegel and Stephen D. Mittenthal, "Neighborhood Power and Control, Implications for Urban Planning," A Report prepared for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 1968.

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## Additional information

### Notes on contributors

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