New act, New gains

Public participation is frequently viewed as a hindrance to development projects, but it can prove advantageous for project developers and other initiators involved. This research investigates the transition from information participation to consultation participation. This is done through interviews and case studies. The study begins by describing the methods and costs involved in this transition. Subsequently, it examines the extent to which developers benefit from this shift. Ultimately, the findings indicate that developers experience moderate improvements, including a better plan, increased support, and reduced objections.

Wessel Pipers

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis is now relevant, due to the upcoming "Environment and Planning Act". Now, it is scheduled for implementation on January 1, 2024. The Act introduces flexibility at the project level, simplifies regulations, and allows for faster spatial development. It should result in reduced burdens, lower costs, and quicker decision-making for citizens and companies (Rijkswaterstaat, n.d.). The municipal council is given the opportunity to designate mandatory participation at cases with a changed plan activity in which participation is mandatory (The Environment and Planning Act of the Netherlands). If the applicant has not participated sufficiently, the Board may not process the application.

Societally, public participation has benefits as the enhancement of democracy and empowerment of citizens. Development projects become more transparent and inclusive. This can ultimately lead to better decision-making and greater public support for development projects. Although public participation is known to bring numerous benefits to development projects, most developers in the Dutch context do not appear to incorporate it into their development process. Instead, this responsibility is typically assumed for the municipality (Verheul et al. 2021).

1.2 Research problem

The design of public participation is widely discussed: who participates, when and how (Uittenbroek et al, 2019). Participation needs to include complete representation of interests which considers existing power relationships, not on full inclusion (Mees, Driessen and Runhaar, 2013). Participants should be included from the beginning of the planning process to have meaningful participation (Newig et al., 2017)) Participation later in the planning process will only include as information provision and consultation. There is a variety of participation practices that aim to inform, to extract knowledge or to gain feedback. The selection of participation practices determines the degree of deliberation and influences the results of the process. (Mees, Driessen and Runhaar, 2013).

The benefits of public participation in the development process are less clear but no less important. Participation is increasing in importance for application for permits or zoning changes. The participation process could help smoothen the permit application process by identifying potential elements of discussion early on, and possibly to prevent legal procedures and delay during the permit application phase. (Verheul et al., 2021;)

In complex projects there are a wide range of stakeholders involved in the development of local plans. Whom to involve and in what matter, and who not? Defining interest and concerns early in the process and prioritizing them accordingly leads to an inclusive systematic process of public participation (Martinez & Olander, 2015; Martinez-Avila, 2018). These projects may have high start-up costs, they will be less expensive in the long run. It will provide valuable input on project design and implementation. The projects are better at addressing local needs and more equitable outcomes. They are generally more relevant to local populations than traditional development projects (Mubita et al., 2017; Jennings, 2000)

The participation process may require more time and resources, but it prevents misunderstandings from the participants towards a project, especially in later stages of a project. Participation can help build trust and support for the project among those who will

be affected by it. Participation can help ensure that the project is sustainable over the long term by ensuring that stakeholders remain engaged and committed to the project. (Mubita et al., 2017; Martinez & Olander, 2015; Martinez-Avila, 2018).

The literature discusses the benefits of participation but does not provide much information on the actual costs and value of participation. This is not illustrated with practical case studies. The extent of the benefits remains unclear (Anggraeni et al., 2019). This research contributes to fill these gaps in knowledge by providing insight into the impact of participation on development projects.

1.3 Research questions

The research analyses the differences for project developers between informing and consulting public participation in development projects. The aim is to show to what extent developers can benefit from public participation, and if so, how that works and why public participation has an impact on the result. The research questions are the following:

- *To what extent benefits development projects if the developer engages in consulting participation instead of informing participation?*

To answer this main question, several secondary questions are required. The secondary questions are the following:

- *How do developers engage in consulting participation instead of informing participation?*
- *To what extent improves the plan of development projects when the developer engages in consulting participation instead of informing participation?*
- *To what extent improves the support for development projects when the developer engages in consulting participation instead of informing participation?*
- *To what extent decreases the objections against development projects when the developer engages in consulting participation instead of informing participation?*

1.4 Structure

This section provides an overview of what is to come, and what is discussed in each chapter. The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter includes background, research problem and research questions. This chapter is the basis of what is to come, as here the goals and means to do so are defined.

The second chapter describes theoretical framework and includes the conceptual model. It clarifies the implicit theory in a manner that is more clearly defined. The third chapter "methodology" entails the research approach, data collection, data analysis and ethics. This is the foundation of the practical empirical part of this thesis.

The main findings are discussed in chapter four. In this chapter, the results of the interviews are shown per theme. In chapter five, conclusions are drawn, and implications are formulated. Both the implications for theory and practice are discussed. Afterwards the references and appendixes are shown.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Development projects

Project development can be divided into four phases: planning, build-up, implementation, and closeout. Planning is the phase where project managers define the objectives, scope, stakeholders, and timelines of their projects. Build-up is the phase where project managers prepare for the execution of their projects. This entails choosing project team members, securing resources, and communicating with the stakeholders. Implementation is the phase where project managers execute their projects according to their plan. They monitor and control the progress, quality, and performance. Closeout is the phase where project managers wrap up and deliver the final product to the client (Pinto, 2016).
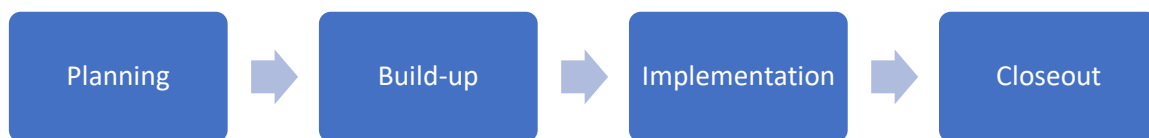
Planning	→	Build-up	→	Implementation	→	Closeout

Figure 1: Project development phases

The plan of development projects can be enriched by local knowledge. Local knowledge refers to the knowledge and insights that residents of a particular neighborhood or community possess based on their personal experiences, interactions, and understanding of the local context. The knowledge is generated from living in a specific place and is shaped by the historical, social, and cultural factors of that locality (Fraser and Lepofsky, 2004). For example, which shops are new, which place is busy, which roads to avoid.

In contrast, experts do not always know these things, because they are often not from the localities that they work on (Smith, 2011). Expert knowledge refers to the knowledge and insights provided by professionals, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who have expertise in urban planning or community development. Expert knowledge can contribute with technical expertise and evidence-based recommendations (Fraser and Lepofsky, 2004).

Development projects experience much opposition. NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) is commonly used to explain public opposition against developments projects near homes and communities (Devine-Wright, 2009). The phenomenon characterizes the social response to unwanted facilities or land uses. Consequently, planners are faced with the challenges of responding to public opposition. The manner in which planners deal with NIMBY responses influences the success of development decision-making (Schively, 2007).

NIMBYism complaints are often a decline in property values, decline of life quality or aesthetics (Schively, 2007). Traffic or parking, change in neighborhood character, and strain on local services are also reasons to opposite. Anti-developer sentiment fueled by high profits is the most powerful source of opposition. The opposition can be mitigated by a community benefits (Monkkonen and Manville, 2020).

Participants make objections to address NIMBYism complaints. Objection numbers increase significantly with local socio-economic status due to access to more resources and more able to object. As development project receive more objections, elected representatives more often likely to intervene (Jean Taylor, Cook and Hurley, 2016).

2.2 Participation

The level of participation can be understood by Arnstein's ladder. Arnstein's ladder is a model for understanding how the degree of citizen participation in government can affect public perceptions of legitimacy, authority, and good governance (Arnstein, 1969). The eight-step ladder of public participation links the level of participation and the public's power in determining the end-product. Two steps are relevant for the research:

- Informing: Decision-makers provide the public with information about the decision-making process, but the public has no real opportunity to influence the decision.
- Consultation: Decision-makers seek the public's input and consider their opinions, but the public has no real decision-making power.
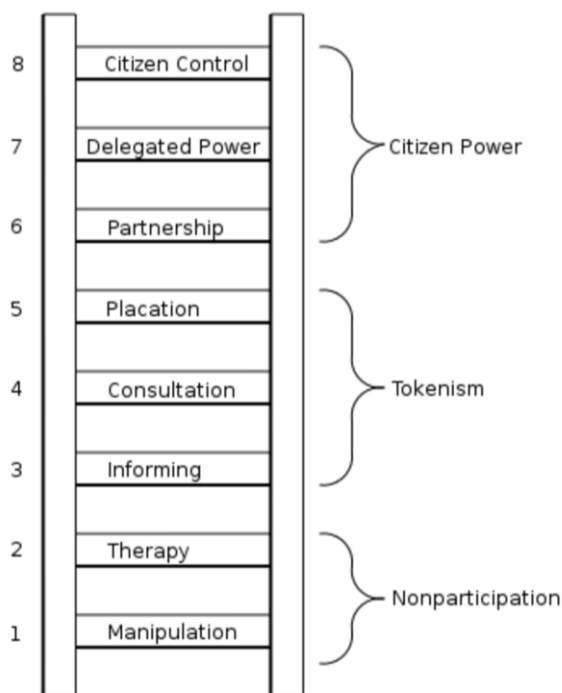

Figure 2: Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Each participant is a stakeholder in the process, however not every stakeholder will be a participant. In general sense, stakeholder refers to persons, groups or organizations that must somehow be considered. The term "stakeholder" is the broader term used which entails all types of participants such as citizens, communities, representatives or public in a participation process (Marzouki, Mellouli and Daniel, 2022).

Level of participation is not the only choice for the organization of participation processes. Participation organizers stands for five other strategic planning choices. Firstly, the scope of the plan, about which issues will be addressed. Secondly, the timing of participation, about at what stage of the process citizens will be invited to participate. Thirdly, about the techniques used for participation, which determines which techniques will be used to gather input from citizens. Fourthly, the role of the planner, about how much decision-making power planners will have. Lastly, the role of the public, about how much input they will receive from and give to planners (Bryson, 2004)

2.3 Conceptual model

The independent variable is participation level, and the dependent variable is development projects. Informing participation is compared to consulting participation. The increased participation is connected to development projects in terms of plan, support and objections.
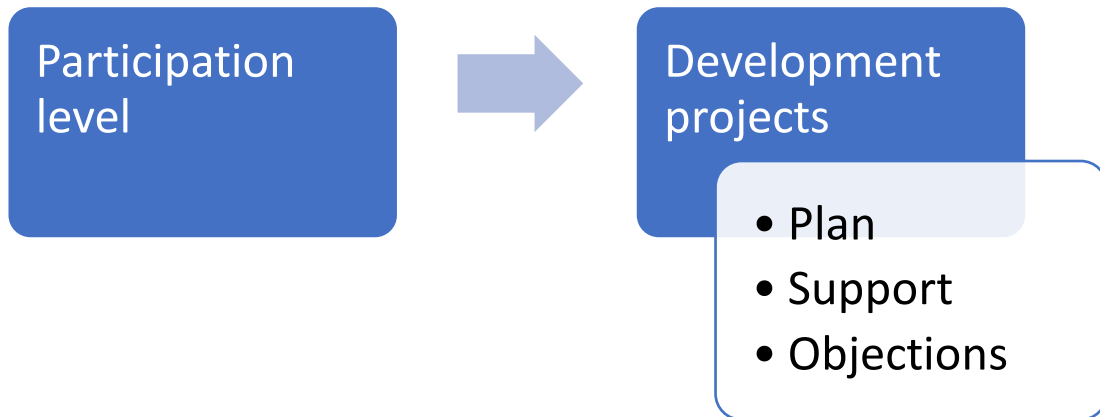

Figure 3: conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

To investigate the sub questions there have been done qualitative research. Interviews were conducted with case studies as examples. Interviews have been conducted with project developers, as well as participation advisors and project managers. That has provided a deeper understanding of the factors that contributed to project success or failure. The interviews have been held in-person. The interviews were semi-structured, so questions have been prepared beforehand within a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing. The questions have been tailor-made to the interviewee. There was flexibility to receive relevant additional information. That is compatible to the explanatory aspect of the research.

3.2 Data collection

The interviews were the basis of the research. The interview duration was approximately 45 minutes. The list of questions asked during the interviews can be found in appendix 1. In total, 9 experts from 9 organisations were interviewed, and are specified in the following scheme.

VanWijnen	Project developer / sales manager
Procap	Project manager
Plegt-Vos	Project developer
Proparte Advies	Consultant participation
Nijhuis	Project developer
DuraVermeer	Project developer
DBG	Consultant stakeholder management
BAM	Manager plan development
Friso	Manager customer and market

Figure 4: list of participants interviews

Case studies of development projects have been used as examples in the interviews. It illustrates the benefits. Interviewees brought case studies forward during the interviews. Case selection was limited. Only case studies without clear level of participation were excluded. The case studies are described below.

Project 1 featuring 35 contemporary homes with a diverse character. The development includes 35 spacious townhouses and 6 apartments. The development is in major Dutch city, next to the new neighbourhood. The sale started in the spring of 2023, while construction has already started. The development of the next phase started in the spring of 2023.

Project 2 is a new residential neighborhood focused on sustainability and community. The project consists of 35 luxurious homes that blend in the countryside of Friesland. It is located on the outskirts of a major Dutch city. There are three types of homes available: spacious semi-detached houses, single-story homes with the potential to be "age-friendly" and detached homes. The sales started in the spring of 2023.

Project 3 is a redevelopment project in the center of a big village for a care organization who developed a building for the mentally handicapped elderly. Previously, the site was used as a sports hall and school building. Originally, there would be 44 housing units

for mentally disabled elderly or seniors. At this point, 3 living groups for in total 15 people have been built.

Project 4 is a redevelopment project of approximately 90 houses close to the center of a big village. It will have a garden village character with historical architecture. The diverse range of housing options such as townhouses, semi-detached houses, senior-friendly homes, detached houses, and free plots, will cater to people of all ages. There are currently no definitive numbers in terms of homes, because the plan is still in the design phase.

Project 5 lies in the living park of bigger neighbourhood, which is integrated in the surrounding dune and water landscape. The original development plan comprehends the construction 122 homes and 32 apartments in phases. The project entails different types of homes include reed, semi-detached and detached houses. The neighbourhood is a shared area, meaning it is collectively owned and maintained by all residents. 56 new homes will go on sale in the autumn of 2023.

Project 6 is municipal project to create a safe bicycle crossing as part of bike path between two Dutch cities. The design considers factors such as traffic safety, other bike routes, and the surrounding environment. However, the project has encountered a setback as the existing zoning plan needs to be modified. The evolving nitrogen regulations lead to a temporary halt in the project.

3.3 Data analysis

The data collected from interviews and case studies have been analyzed using a thematical approach. The interviews were transcribed and coded. The thematical approach was useful to identify patterns or differences across different interviews and provided valuable insights. First, the case studies were investigated. The focus was on the level and the differences in participation. The resulting costs were described. Afterwards, the focus shifted towards the plan changes, permit, support, legal procedures, and finance of development projects. The interviews were analyzed to find common points. Five common points were founded: local knowledge, future residents, image, ambassadors and objections. These five points were the basis of the explanation about the benefits in development projects

3.4 Ethics

Ethical considerations were kept in mind. The interviewee had access to the notes and transcriptions of the interview. These notes and transcriptions have not shared publicly, including the company mentors. This was done to encourage the interviewee to speak freely and honestly during the interview.

Privacy is also a key consideration, which entails keeping the personal information and data safe and confidential. Participants had the right to control the information that is collected about them, and how that information is used and shared. Multiple steps were taken throughout the research process: obtaining informed consent before conducting interviews; explaining how the data will be used and stored; providing the opportunity to withdraw at any time; anonymizing any personal identifying information.

The potential impact of the research on the participants and developers was considered. Sensitive information about stakeholders was not disclosed, such as the costs, delays, or methods of a project developer, especially in ongoing development projects. Results were only shown in rough numbers.

4. Results

The results of the interviews and the case studies will here be discussed. First, the different participation methods with different levels of participation will be discussed. Then, the five common points of benefits for development projects will be discussed.

4.1 Participation methods

Information sessions are a participation method, which is often obliged by the municipality. All interviewees were a few times involved in information sessions during a process. A few employees of the developer participate on the event. Preparations such as an invitation letter are done beforehand. Afterwards, they have to answer unresolved questions. (Plegt-Vos).

Project websites are another participation method and is set up by the developer. All five interviewee from project developers used this method. The website was made for information and interested buyers. It includes a survey for future resident's and their preferences. The interviewees had no insight into the costs of the project website. They were only responsible for the input of the website (DuraVermeer).

Direct consultation sessions with participations are also a participation method. All nine interviewees indicated that they used this method several times in the process. Similar to an information session, it costs several hours to prepare and take part. Afterwards, it takes several hours to include the feedback (VanWijnen).

If the developer takes the consulting role of participants seriously, it means they must make reasonable plan changes when necessary. These plan changes had financial costs for the developer. Complaints from neighbors such as lower or smaller houses hurted the business case of a project. Other frequent complaints such as parking, view or greenery could more easily been adjusted without financial consequences (Procap).

4.2 Local knowledge

Local knowledge improved the plan of development projects due to consulting participation instead of informing participation. Six interviewees agreed to the statement, while two interviewees disagreed. One interviewee was neutral. The architect was asked for the local knowledge. Below, the different experiences and case studies from the agreeing interviewees are illustrated.

Local knowledge from residents enhanced the plan because people naturally know an area where they live, often better than the developers. They have certainly thought about it from their perspective of the area, especially considering the characteristics of such an area. They know what is special, historical or offers beautiful views (Friso). Eventually, the common denominator of communities can be identified, based on the input from local people. Developers tried to incorporate these identified points, where possible (Plegt-Vos).

For instance, there was a nursing home that had an underground parking garage, but the elderly people had to ascend a very steep slope to get out of the garage. These are all old people sitting in the car, and they must accelerate vigorously to make it up. And when they reached the top, there was an immediate sidewalk. If someone walked by on that sidewalk, they had to come to a halt on that steep incline and then accelerate again. In the new plan they made space to stop before the sidewalk.

Another example was the project 3. The neighbours came up with traffic nuisance. There was a lot of parking pressure in the neighbourhood, because it was close to the edge of the centre. Then, a road to the back of the plot was removed from the plan. Extra parking

spaces were also included. In addition, the neighbour added that the location was a lot higher than the surrounding gardens. This significant height difference had to be considered in terms of drainage.

Local knowledge from the neighbourhood helped developers focus on the right things. They sometimes thought they have a very good idea. But when they started talking to people, it turns out that things were experienced very differently. In Groningen, for example, there was a small pond behind a building. The developer thought it would be nice to make it bigger. Then they started talking to people and they say "Please remove that horrible pond. We have terrible frog nuisance here" (Procap).

4.3 Future resident's

Future resident's needs and preferences were better incorporated after consulting participation instead of informing participation. Six interviewees showed clearly that the project was improved based on the needs of future residents. Two interviewees indicated that they indirectly incorporated their needs. One interviewee only informed future residents and did not improved the plan. Below, the different experiences and case studies from the agreeing interviewees are illustrated.

Communication with future residents was treated as a priority, especially when it comes to projects where the residents will be the customers. The use of surveys and questionnaires targeted at future residents led to understanding their specific needs and preferences (VanWijnen)

At project 3, there were challenges in obtaining input directly from the future residents themselves. The team leader from the old building where the future residents were located actively participated in the planning sessions. The team leader provided insights regarding factors such as corridor length, the positioning of common areas in relation to individual spaces, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

The involvement of stakeholders of potential buyers was emphasized by the interviewees. Analyzing data and market preferences helped determine the types of homes in demand. This input guided the development of housing programs and design concepts. Better plans were created that cater to market demands and ensure customer satisfaction. This led to better sellable houses for the developer (Friso).

For instance, the popularity of "age-friendly" homes was indicated by surveys in project 1. That it is a very large target group in the neighbourhood. They were only very few homes for the elderly, which would like to continue living in the neighbourhood. In the next development project included these houses to align the available housing options with market preferences.

At project 2, the pre-sale showed that two houses were not preferred. This was evaluated. These were houses with a garden towards the north. Adjustments were made to the project according to this newly gained information.

4.4 Image

The image of the project and company was improved after consulting participation instead of informing participation. Eight interviewees agreed to that statement. The image was important and could be improved by more participation. One interviewee was neutral. Below, the different experiences and case studies from the agreeing interviewees are illustrated.

The neighbourhood can have prejudices and dispel negative judgments about a developer. By involving residents and giving them the opportunity to share their opinions and ideas, you can demonstrate that you genuinely listen. Striving for a project that is well-received and contributes to the community's needs demonstrated the company's commitment to the residents. Personal contact improved a project developer's negative image. This helped gain the trust of the residents and improved the company's image, according to the interviewees (VanWijnen)

Of course, the success of the image improvement process depends on how well the project goes and how people perceived it (Procap). By being transparent, providing residents with accurate information, and giving them a voice in the process, you can influence the perception of the project (DBG).

For the project 4 the local connection was helpful. The fact that the company's director comes from region and speaks the local language helped establish a connection with the community in the village. It showed engagement and respect for the local culture and language. These personal interactions can indeed have a positive influence on the company's image.

Besides the improved image from the neighbourhood, the image from the municipality can be improved. If you can demonstrate that it is a well participated project, municipalities are more positive about it. The municipality is there for everyone. They find it important that residents are supportive (Nijhuis). Then it will less of a hassle for the municipality. The resulted goodwill from the municipality helps the project forward (DuraVermeer).

4.5 Ambassadors

Consulting participation instead of informing participation committed ambassadors more to development project. Eight interviewees indicated that ambassadors were more committed to the project due more participation. One interviewee was against it. Below, the different experiences and case studies from the agreeing interviewees are illustrated.

Neighbourhood residents can become ambassadors for the project if they are extensively involved. Only a few people involved in the project who truly find it fascinating, convey their enthusiasm to others. They are often people from the neighbourhood who know the residents and know how to engage with them. During resident meetings, they stand up and articulate what developers are trying to convey (Procap). The more you involve them, the more positive they will feel about the project. It helps to maintain a positive perception of the project. The more the developer involved them, the more they spread the word about the project. Someone even created a kind of poster highlighting everything that was heard, and then distributed it (Friso)

Other people who have interests in the project can become ambassadors. Council members who live in the neighbourhood and are really excited about the project, they can do something within the politics of the municipality. That plan needs to be established according to them. The major becomes aware of it. Once a municipality stands behind it and understands the importance of the development for their area, it becomes an advantage for everyone (Plegt-Vos).

An ambassador can also be representing a local association. He can play a mediating role. People often struggle to set aside their individual interests and consider the greater good. An ambassador can hold up a mirror to people and ask them not to think only about their own interests but also about the general welfare. For example, housing is currently

very important due to a huge housing shortage. But people don't want new construction near their homes. If the ambassador asks them to imagine if it were their own child in need of housing, that might help (Proparte Advies).

Even opponents can become ambassadors. That's what you ultimately want. Important is not to create a plan first and then allowing stakeholders to react. Because in that case, you only hear from those who disagree. It becomes very reactive, leading to a lot of resistance. A plan is made, and you're allowed to have an opinion, but even if you do, nothing really happens (Proparte Advies). In contrast, taking along those who already want to object in advance. You can with the use of visual representations show how it could be or how it can be. Then you can bring them along very effectively. Then the residents say, "Yeah, actually, it's not that bad." This does not work if the plan still negatively impacts the opposing interests. Overall, opposition can be prevented (Plegt-Vos).

4.6 Objections

Objections from neighbors, interest groups and other parties can decrease due to consulting participation instead of informing participation. Five interviewees agreed to some extent that objections become less due to more participation, three interviewees were neutral. One interviewee did not have experience with objections. Below, the different experiences and case studies from the agreeing interviewees are illustrated.

Consultation participation allows projects to proceed more efficiently by considering the interests of stakeholders early on. Individuals feel their voices are heard and their input is valued. Then trust is built, and people's concerns are taken seriously, there is less motivation for objections or appeals (DBG). Thus, consultation participation reduces the likelihood and threat of objections and legal procedures.

Developers have more control over the process if they engage in participation. The time beforehand will take longer, so until you have a final design that you can apply for a permit or zoning change. However, the time afterwards will take shorter because you have less objectors (VanWijnen). The participation sessions can be included in the design process and organized by the developers.

Engaging in participation gives a better overview of interests. Developers are already able to identify the kind of objections in the first meetings. Whether they want minor changes, financial compensation or to stop it altogether (VanWijnen).

Engaging in participation reveals unexpected objections (Plegt-Vos). Objectors can litigate for years, and thus delay the project for years. Building material is already bought or hired. Interest on the investments needs to be paid. Staff puts more hours in the project. Costly environmental research expires. This happened at the project 5. Participation can not completely prevent this, but it can reveal these risks beforehand (VanWijnen).

For example, project 6 had an expensive variant with a lot of support and a cheap variant that faced more opposition from residents. The municipality decided to go for the cheap variant. In the end, it cost them dearly. The residents appealed, and the project took much longer as a result. During that time, all the materials became more expensive. Eventually, the cheap variant became just as expensive as the expensive one.

While participation should ideally involve the entire community to minimize objections, it is unrealistic to expect complete satisfaction from everyone. There can always be a few troublemakers who may raise objections despite constructive participation. Some individuals may inherently oppose projects due to personal interests or a desire to change the plan (Friso).

While participation was generally positive, there should be limits to the extent of involvement. Increasing participation leads to more diverse opinions, which can complicate decision-making processes. Providing people with a platform for opinions can also trigger objections. If individuals feel their opinions are disregarded, they may resort to objections (DuraVermeer). Proper expectation management is crucial to manage expectations and address concerns effectively. Boundaries should be clearly defined, of what can be influenced and what cannot (VanWijnen).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This research showed how developers engage in consulting participation instead of informing participation. Information sessions exemplifies an informing participation process. These information sessions costs considerable staff time for the developer. The step towards consulting participation was exemplified by direct consultations sessions with participants,

which also costs considerable staff time. Websites were also part of conducting consultation participation, as it indicated future resident's needs. Noted must be that more participation led to more plan changes, with a negative financial impact on the project.

This research showed that developers were able to make an improved plan for the project due to consulting participation instead of informing participation. Local knowledge from residents contributed significantly to a project. Local knowledge helped to uncover unique aspects of the development, that may otherwise be overlooked. The input of the community made a more suitable plan. When future residents were involved in the planning process, there was an enhanced understanding of the future residents preferences. The houses were more catered towards market demands and became more sellable.

This research showed that developers were able to moderately improve the support for the project due to consulting participation instead of informing participation. Participation was a valuable tool to enhance the image of a project developer. By actively involving the community, developers had built trust and improved their reputation. This applied to both the neighbourhood as well as the municipality. Council members, local associations, and nearby residents had all served as ambassadors and represented the community. They have mediated between stakeholders. promoted understanding and fostered a positive perception of the project.

This research showed that developers were able to significantly decrease the number of objections due to consulting participation instead of informing participation. The objections were resolved beforehand. Engaging in participation gave a better overview of interests and revealed unexpected objections. Not all objections are prevented, some individuals or parties opposed the project anyway. It triggered even objections if the neighbourhood had the wrong expectations of the participation process.

This research showed that development projects moderately benefited from consulting participation instead of informing participation. Direct consultation sessions and websites were methods for the step towards consulting participation. The benefits for developers were moderately improved terms of a better plan, more support, and less objections.

5.2 Implications for theory

Participation is a widely researched topic, as well as stakeholder management. This research investigates the relation between level of participation and the impact on development project, in particular the benefits for developers. The costs of participation, the extent of the benefits for developers and the illustration by case studies are relatively new to explore. Therefore, contributes this research to fill gaps in knowledge in the existing literature.

Building upon existing theory, development projects experience much opposition from NIMBYism. This research showed that when a developer increases their participation level, they receive multiple benefits. Relevant to NIMBYism is the increased image, commitment of ambassadors and decreased number of objections. Therefore, it is a way to tackle NIMBYism complaints.

This research adds to the ladder of Arnstein. The step to engage from informing participation to consultation participation is explored. The costs and the extent of the benefits of this step is shown. Therefore, contributes to the existing literature on the level of participation.

5.3 Implications for practice

Although public participation is an element that enhances the democratic process by empowering the public with a more influential voice. This research is primarily focused on the benefits for the developer. This research shows that the developer moderately benefits in terms of using local knowledge, understanding future residents' needs, enhancing the project and company image, cultivating project ambassadors, and reducing objections. The developer understands more comprehensively the benefits of consulting participation.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Preparation:

I estimate that it will take 30 minutes.
The interview will be recorded and transcribed.
I will send you the transcript, so you can make any changes you want.
I will try to capture the intonation because the text may come across as sharper than intended.

All interviews will be collectively analyzed.
The transcript will not be shared publicly.
Data can also be anonymized if you prefer.
Ongoing projects will not be harmed, and you can speak freely.

The research seems to mainly focus on project developers, but different perspectives on participation are valuable.
The questions serve as a guideline, but your views and practical experience with participation can already guide me in the right direction.
The reason for this research is the implementation of the Environmental Act in January 2024, which makes participation mandatory for projects involving a zoning plan change.
Research has already demonstrated the societal benefits of participation.
However, little is known about the economic benefits of participation.
Research objective: analyze the differences for project developers between information and consultation participation in projects.
Information participation -> only providing information.
Consultation participation -> input is taken seriously.
Research question: to what extent can project developers streamline the process by participating in participation?
Specifically, I want to investigate the following aspects: participation process, plan changes, permits, legal aspects, stakeholder support, and financing.
Participation means gathering viewpoints from stakeholders.
It would be preferable to answer the questions based on the same case study (housing construction).
The first question in each section is general, while the subsequent questions are specific to a project.

Questions

What is your profession? And what are your main tasks during the day?

Participation process:
What participation method do you use?
What do you do to organize physical meetings for this method? And how much does it cost? (e.g., room rental, staff time)
What do you do for the online part of this method? And how much does it cost? (surveys, staff time)
What do you do to prepare for the participation process? And how much does it cost? (staff time, timeline)
How do you promote/communicate with stakeholders? And how much does it cost? (website/social media)
How do you handle feedback? And how much does it cost compared to low participation? (staff time)

Plan changes (final project):
What plan changes are often enforced by participants?
To what extent do plan changes disrupt the project budget?
Have you experienced positive results from plan changes based on local knowledge?

Is there good listening to future residents? And do these plan changes result in more marketable homes?

Were these plan changes already necessary according to government regulations?

Permits:

How long does it usually take to obtain the necessary permits?

Will the municipality grant permits faster or more easily due to sufficient participation?

How much cost or delay will this prevent?

How important is the project's image in this? And the image of the project developer?

Stakeholder support (process):

How important is stakeholder support?

Why do stakeholders often not support the project?

Can more participation prevent this delay?

Does more participation provide better insight into the opinions of stakeholders rather than just a few vocal opponents?

Can stakeholders become ambassadors? And speed up the project?

Procedures:

Have you encountered objections/appeals/legal proceedings? Why are they initiated?

Have stakeholders submitted objections?

Have stakeholders initiated further objection procedures to prevent the project?

Have stakeholders filed a lawsuit?

Have these procedures caused delays or incurred costs? (financially, in terms of staff hours)

Can more participation reduce the likelihood or threat of procedures? To what extent?

Financing:

How are projects commonly financed?

Does the certainty of more participation reduce the risk for investors? To what extent?

Does the certainty of more participation result in better financing conditions for the developer? To what extent?