Urban Affairs Review

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Bas Denters and Pieter-Jan Klok *Urban Affairs Review* 2010 45: 583 originally published online 7 January 2010

DOI: 10.1177/1078087409356756

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Urban Affairs Review
45(5) 583–607
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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1078087409356756
http://uar.sagepub.com



Bas Denters¹ and Pieter-Jan Klok¹

Abstract

In 2000, a deprived inner-city district of Enschede (the Netherlands) known as Roombeek was largely devastated by an explosion of a fireworks storage depot. This article evaluates the efforts made by the municipality of Enschede to actively involve the former residents in the reconstruction planning. The results indicate that through a well-ordered process and a considered mobilization campaign, the initiators of the participatory planning process have been successful in stimulating broad and representative public participation.

Keywords

citizen governance, representative bias of political participation, urban reconstruction, institutional embedding of public participation

On May 13, 2000, a major explosion in a fireworks storage depot destroyed the entire urban district of Roombeek in the city of Enschede, the Netherlands. A total of 22 residents were killed, more than 900 people were injured, well over 1,500 citizens were displaced because their homes were destroyed, and more than 200 companies were forced to relocate. Within weeks after the disaster, a clear consensus emerged in Enschede on the principle that in the redevelopment of the disaster area, the victims should be allowed "maximum"

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feasible participation" in the planning process and that the residents' views on the future of their neighborhood, as expressed during this process, should guide the planning decisions. To enable all those residents who would want to participate to engage in the redevelopment process, a wide range of accessible opportunities were created for (former) residents to voice their opinions on the future of the district.

Before the fireworks disaster, Roombeek had about 1,500 residents living in 650 homes. More than half of these homes were built between 1910 and 1920, and 54% qualified as social housing, the remainder being privately owned (mostly owner occupied). In general terms, Roombeek might be characterized as a deprived inner-city district, with high unemployment rates and many low-income households. Some of the neighborhoods in the district, however, were relatively prosperous. About 69% of the district's residents were of Dutch origin, about 8% were of Turkish origin, 5% came from the former Dutch colonies (Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, and Indonesia), and 2% had a Moroccan background. The remaining 17% had origins in a wide range of other countries all over the world (Wigboldus 2005, 11).²

In this article, we analyze the efforts of the municipality of Enschede to involve this mixed and partly deprived population in decisions concerning the redevelopment of this area. The article focuses on three questions: (1) How was citizen participation organized in the Roombeek case? (2) How many people were involved in this process, and what factors explain citizens' decisions to participate? and (3) Did the participation of some and the non-participation of others affect the representativeness of the results of the participation process?

Relevance of the Roombeek Case

Because of the dramatic circumstances, Roombeek is one of those exceptional cases where public authorities faced daunting reconstruction tasks in the aftermath of a major catastrophe. Typically decision makers seeking reconstruction not only aspire to rapidly rebuild what was destroyed but also have an agenda for betterment. Such agendas tend to include ambitions for building a safer, better, and more equitable place alongside lofty intentions to plan the reconstruction with citizens (see Kates et al. 2006). Enschede is no exception. Likewise, in the aftermath of the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans, it was argued that "informed, participatory planning" should provide the basis for developing a "new sense of purpose and civic pride following the disaster" (Olshansky 2006, 151). Similarly, Hajer (2005) points to efforts to win public confidence by allowing for an open, participatory approach to the process of

rebuilding Ground Zero in the aftermath of 9/11. In practice, however, it proves difficult to follow up on such good intensions. One of the lessons learned from previous disasters has been that "every post-disaster recovery manifests tension between speed and deliberation" (Olshansky 2006, 148). Hajer's study of the Ground Zero case confirms that it may indeed be difficult to successfully live up to initial promises of staging such an open planning process. The Enschede case is interesting because it shows how the authorities there have dealt with public participation in the aftermath of a catastrophe.

But the Enschede case is also interesting from a broader perspective. A recent comparative analysis comprising developments in local government in 15 advanced industrial democracies showed a trend of allowing citizens a degree of direct influence over public decisions—citizen governance (Box 1998; John 2009)—in addition to their indirect influence via elections (Denters and Rose 2005).³ The rise of citizen governance tends to be regarded as a promising development. It is not only thought to have positive effects on participants' civic competence, civic virtues, and sense of community (Pateman 1970, 42; Mansbridge 1999; Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993, 5–6; Fung 2004, 14–15) but also seen as a necessary condition for a political system's responsiveness to citizen concerns (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 1) and thought to have "decisive advantages" over bureaucratic and market solutions to urban problems in education and public safety (Fung 2004, 18–23). But of course it remains to be seen whether these promises are actually fulfilled.

This is a pertinent question because many of these advantages will emerge only to the extent that there is widespread public participation. If relatively few citizens participate, direct citizen participation may be problematic. Even if, according to Fiorina (1999), participation by (virtually) all is desirable, intermediate levels of direct participation may be worse than the absence of direct participation typical of a purely representative democracy (also see Verba and Nie 1987, 310–15). When "small and unrepresentative slices of the population disproportionally avail themselves of [participatory] opportunities," he argues, the consequence may very well be "a politics that seems distant from the views of ordinary people" (Fiorina 1999, 418). On theoretical grounds, there are several plausible reasons why Fiorina's concerns may be relevant. Fung (2004, 99–131) actually lists no fewer than five different theoretical perspectives that provide arguments implying that broad participation, especially in deprived areas such as Roombeek, is rather unlikely.⁴ These theoretical considerations include the following:

- 1. The lack of incentives for people to participate (Fung 2004, 101–7)
- 2. The lack of necessary personal resources (Fung 2004, 108–19)

- 3. The lack of sufficient social capital in deprived neighborhoods (Fung 2004, 119–22)
- 4. A dominant political culture that discourages minority groups (women and ethnic minorities) (Fung 2004, 122–28)
- 5. The lack of the necessary knowledge and skills among potential participants (Fung 2004, 128–31)

For these reasons, not only is participation likely to be relatively low in districts such as Roombeek but also it seems plausible that the select group of people who do participate will be unrepresentative of the population at large. For example, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), on the basis of U.S. evidence, argue that the lower the level of participation, the higher the degree of political inequality and the more serious the problems of representativeness.

Against this backdrop, the Enschede case is also interesting because its experiences may be important for the many other cities in advanced democracies that are experimenting with new forms of citizen involvement, especially in the context of deprived inner-city areas where it may be most difficult to actively engage citizens.⁵

In this contribution, we try to answer the three questions formulated in the first section of the article. Although answering these questions for the Enschede case does not of course tell the entire story about the impact of the introduction of citizen governance, we discuss the implications of our results for an evaluation of the pros and cons of direct citizen participation, both in the context of policy making in the aftermath of urban catastrophes and in the broader context of the rise of citizen governance in urban politics.

The Organization of Citizen Governance in Roombeek

It was the ambition of the rebuilders to actively involve a wide and representative segment of the population of the district in the planning process. The aim was to enable every former resident who would want to participate to do so. Moreover, the planners intended to use the citizens' views as inputs in subsequent planning decisions. To achieve these aims, a new set of arenas allowing for citizen participation was developed. In this section, we describe how citizen governance was organized in the Roombeek case. This will provide an answer to our first research question (for a more extensive description of the institutional structure of the process, see Denters and Klok 2003).

On the basis of prior research, it is evident that many previous experiments with citizen governance suffered from *underinstitutionalization*: "Important rules . . . that would guarantee a well-ordered decision making process are

either completely absent or vague" (Denters et al. 2003a, 9). For the rebuilders of Roombeek, adequate institutionalization would be important because a set of clearly specified participatory rights and procedural rules might convince potential participants that their active involvement would make a difference and that the results of their participation would be taken seriously. Thus adequate institutionalization might be seen as an important mobilizing factor for participation in citizen governance (Denters et al. 2003a, 9; also see Edelenbos 2005). It is appropriate, therefore, to discuss the institutional structure of the Roombeek case before turning to the patterns of participation.

A Variety of Arenas

An extensive participation process was designed to allow the heterogeneous group of former residents of Roombeek "maximum feasible participation." The "process architecture" was developed by the municipality of Enschede, based on the recommendations of an independent committee under the chairmanship of a former Dutch cabinet minister. A main characteristic of this "architecture" was the inclusion of multiple participatory arenas. On one hand, this variety was created to accommodate the diversity of Roombeek's residents. In addition to a series of general sessions, there were special participatory opportunities for specific groups such as male Turkish residents, female Turkish residents, Moroccan men, Moroccan women, elderly people, local shop owners and entrepreneurs, artists (the area hosted many studios), and young people.

On the other hand, the "process architecture" also provided for three panels of experts that were formed to discuss the social, economic, and physical dimensions of the redevelopment process. These expert panels were seen as one way of infusing the required professional expertise in the process and, at the same time, of avoiding the danger of professional domination of the democratic process. ⁶ The aim of a first round of meetings (February–March 2001) was to take stock of the views of former residents and experts regarding the future redevelopment of the area. The outcomes of the citizen meetings and the expert panels provided the input for the planners. The results of the planners' work were subsequently presented to the municipal executive board. After this board's approval, the first draft of the redevelopment program was presented to the citizens, who could react in a second round of meetings (July 2001). At the end of these meetings, the participants were asked whether they endorsed the plan so that it could be submitted to the municipal council for final approval. For all the parties involved, it was entirely clear that the final decision would still be taken by the directly elected municipal council. Thus the direct democratic arenas remained firmly embedded in the existing democratic institutions. The sessions produced almost unanimous consent: Only four of the participants disapproved. A slightly amended proposal was then introduced to the municipal council, and on November 19, 2001, the council unanimously approved the redevelopment plan.

Rules for Participation and Mobilization

An important element of the process architecture was the institutional rules that determined who was entitled to participate in the various arenas and what the rights of participants and other parties involved in the process were. Typically interactive arenas suffer from underinstitutionalization (Denters et al. 2003a, 9). In many respects the Roombeek case is no exception. Most of the "rules of the game" were informal rather than formally agreed on and laid down in writing (Denters and Klok 2003, 109).

In the participatory arenas, *position rules* distinguished among three formal positions: those of a "participant," of a "process facilitator," and of a "town planner." *Boundary rules* specified the criteria on the basis of which people were selected to these positions (Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994, 41), and *authority rules* indicated the set of actions assigned to various position holders (Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994, 42).

The criteria for the selection of "participants" (i.e., the boundary rules) were based on location. Two groups of citizens were explicitly invited: (1) people who lived in the Roombeek district itself, as these inhabitants of the so-called inner ring were the most affected by the disaster, and (2) people living in adjoining streets and neighborhoods who were also more or less seriously affected by the explosion (the people in the outer ring of the disaster area). All these people, insofar as their addresses could be retrieved, received a personal invitation. Because of the dislocation of residents, however, indirect methods were also used for announcing the meetings and inviting former residents. All people directly invited were asked to inform and bring along as many of their former neighbors and neighborhood acquaintances as possible. This strategy was supplemented by using the networks of professional organizations in the neighborhood (e.g., the health center, community workers). It was a deliberate choice not to rely on the self-organizations of target groups (e.g., immigrants) for fear that the mobilization through these might be highly selective. By using a more personal approach, it was hoped that the mobilization of bias (Schattschneider 1975) that might result from reliance on self-organizations could be avoided. Moreover, in the first stages of the process the municipality together with the primary schools in the area started the "Builders of the Future" project, in which Roombeek's schoolchildren

developed their own visions of a new Roombeek, under the guidance of volunteers and local artists. The results were presented and exhibited in the National Gallery of Twente, located on the edge of Roombeek. Parents were invited for this widely publicized event. Both during the weeks that the children worked on the project and at the presentation, the importance of the parents' participation in the "official" meetings was emphasized. In view of this extensive mobilization campaign, it seems certain that virtually all residents must have heard about the opportunity to participate in decision making concerning the redevelopment. "Participants" had the right to express their opinions (authority rule).

The "process facilitator" was an independent and experienced community worker hired by the municipality (boundary rule) to organize and chair the meetings and whose task was to ensure that the outcomes would truly represent the opinions of the participants (authority rule). Another key player in some of the arenas was the "town planner," an external expert, also hired by the municipality. Residents' representatives were included in the town planner selection committee to ensure that this key actor would enjoy the confidence of the people from Roombeek (boundary rule). The town planner's main responsibility was to take the lead in drafting the provisional redevelopment plan. The town planner attended all the meetings with residents from the area to discuss participants' opinions and to state some general points of departure for his work (authority rule).

Scope rules defined the set of outcomes that might be affected in a particular arena (Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994, 42). With regard to the scope of the arenas, the meetings with the citizens were "prestructured" to some extent. The organizers provided cues (in the form of series of photographs and accompanying short texts) for reflection and subsequent discussion on a predetermined list of topics about the future of the neighborhood. The number of these topics (about 80), however, was so large and the range of issues so wide that the participants were able to address almost any topic they might have deemed relevant. Moreover, the participants were given the opportunity to prepare short notes in response to the cues without any constraints (also to enable them to raise topics different from those initially provided). In terms of the required "openness" of the arena, this may be considered an asset. An important aspect of the scope rules was the firm promise of the municipality to respect and heed the results of the participation process. On one hand, this pledge was formally codified in an agreement between the municipality and the victims' organization established in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. On the other hand, this commitment was also consistently and publicly confirmed by both the municipality and other parties, including the two main housing corporations in the area, the town planner and the process facilitator.

Information rules ensured that the process was basically very open: Residents were generously informed about the participatory opportunities and about the general structure of the participation process. Those who attended the meetings were promised written reports of the various sessions. These reports would also be published on the Internet.

Drafting these reports (which would form the main input from the participation process in the further planning process) was the responsibility of the "process facilitator." This implicitly indicates that the main aggregation rule (i.e., the rule used in determining intermediate outcomes and results in an arena; Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994, 42) was that the process facilitator would write a report about the various sessions, compile these session reports, and draft a general report. He compiled the various session reports into a summary document. This was an absolutely crucial stage in the process since the accuracy of these reports would determine the degree to which the participants' views could be "heard" in the subsequent stages of the planning process. His professional skills and the fact that he was trusted by both citizens and the professional parties involved (local politicians, local administrators, the housing corporations, etc.) were major factors that helped the process facilitator perform this important task.

The institutional structure of the participation process rested on three main pillars. First, it was based on a set of largely informal rules grounded in a widely supported consensus about the principle that the victims should play a key role in the planning process. Second, there was a serious and enduring commitment by the major partners (both in the public and in the private domain) to respect these largely informal rules of the game to live by their promise to allow Roombeek's residents "maximum feasible participation." Third, the participatory process gave the participants the right to vote on the acceptability of the draft plan before it was to be submitted to the municipal council for final approval. Giving the participants and the directly elected councilors—who themselves were firmly committed to the participatory cause—the last say provided an important incentive to the planners and the municipal executive to take the citizens' inputs seriously. Below we discuss the extent to which the citizens used these opportunities.

Participation and Nonparticipation

In this section, we discuss our second question: How many people were involved in this process, and what factors explain citizens' decisions to

participate? A survey conducted in the spring of 2001, after the first round of citizen meetings, provides the evidence base for answering these questions. The survey was conducted among 709 former residents of the Roombeek district. First, we provide a descriptive analysis of the degree of participation in the meetings. Next, we also try to provide an explanation of participation and nonparticipation. This analysis will enable us to determine which factors cause activism and apathy. Fiorina (1999) and many others (e.g., Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Verba and Nie 1987; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006) have shown that socioeconomic resources are important determinants of civic engagement. Likewise, as was stated before, Fung (2004, 101–22) argues that a lack of personal resources and social capital may be a major barrier preventing citizens from actively engaging in community action. Moreover, he pointed out (Fung 2004, 122–28) that the predominant political culture may put off members of certain groups (women and ethnic minorities). Because of these factors, political participation is likely to be limited and highly selective. As indicated above, Roombeek was one of the most deprived urban neighborhoods in the country. On the basis of this social profile and previous research on the negative effects of socioeconomic deprivation on political activism, there was no reason to be overly optimistic regarding the rate of public participation in Roombeek.

Fung, however, also pointed out that these pessimistic predictions may overlook the fact that the high levels of deprivation in the district and its residents' personal needs may also provide strong motives to participate. This might at least in part offset the effects of the scarcity of personal resources. In the Roombeek case, people's high stakes in the reconstruction of their residential neighborhood might provide a strong participatory incentive.

How Many Participants?

As stated above, two categories of citizens were invited to take part in the citizen meetings. Our survey has revealed that almost one in every four (24%; n = 328) residents from the inner ring attended one of the participatory meetings. In the outer ring of the area, where most of the buildings remained intact and the reconstruction process generally implied only minor redevelopment, the participation rate was far lower. In this area only 9% (n = 376) of respondents indicated that they took part in these meetings. In regard to the inner ring, we should bear in mind that many of its residents at that time were still displaced because their homes were demolished and that 40% had indicated that although the authorities granted all residents a "right to return" to the

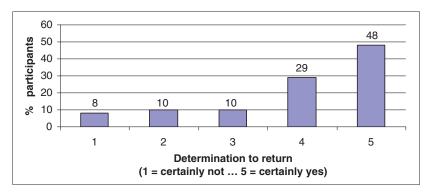


Figure 1. Participation and residents' determination to return to Roombeek

area, they did not intend to come back. The participation rate among those who indicated a more or less firm determination to return to the new Roombeek was about twice as high as the average of 24% mentioned above (see Figure 1).

From this perspective the conclusion seems warranted that the participation rates, especially in the inner circle of the Roombeek district, were quite high. Still, the majority of our respondents did not participate. Why?

Why Some Participate and Others Don't

Answering this question requires knowledge of the factors behind people's decisions to participate or not. As discussed above, there are a variety of factors that may be relevant.

First, people differ in their motivation to participate (see, e.g., Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Fung 2004; Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006). Therefore, we have included people's *subjective interest* in the reconstruction of Roombeek in our analysis. Since it is plausible that people living in the inner circle of the disaster area were more strongly affected by the disaster and are likely to have higher stakes in the reconstruction than people living in the outer circle, we have included *place of residence* as a factor in the analysis. In addition, we have incorporated *homeownership* as an explanatory factor, on the assumption that this increases people's stakes in the planning of the reconstruction effort.

Nonparticipation might, however, also be the result of specific barriers that people experience (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Fung 2004; Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006) and that may vary considerably in nature.

On one hand, nonparticipation might be the result of a lack of relevant personal resources. In the case of this particular participatory arena, we focus on *formal education* and people's personal *civic skills* (speaking in public, writing formal letters, etc.). In addition to actual skills, people's confidence in their personal competencies (*subjective civic skills*) may be important in explaining patterns of participation and nonparticipation. In addition, Fung (2004, 122–28) pointed out that minority groups may feel discouraged by the dominant political culture. In our model, we have therefore included *gender* in the analysis. We have also looked at the participation of residents of non-Dutch and *Dutch parentage*.

Theoretically, nonparticipation could also be the result of inadequate mobilization (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Fung 2004; Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006). For example, if the announcements and invitations for participatory meetings were sent out only to a limited number of potential participants, this would generate a democratically dubious bias in the participatory process. There may be a variety of relevant factors here. For practical reasons, we have concentrated on the informational aspects of *recruitment*: Were people aware that participatory meetings would take place?¹¹

It was the stated goal of the rebuilders to enable every former resident who would want to participate to actually do so. From this perspective, it would be problematic if lack of resources and failing mobilization efforts were major reasons for nonparticipation.¹²

Table 1 shows how the above factors affect the likelihood that citizens have participated in one or more of the meetings organized during the initial stage of the planning process, at the end of which we conducted our survey. First, the major determinants of people's decision to participate in meetings on the reconstruction of Roombeek are associated with *motivational factors*. The two most important factors are people's subjective interest in the reconstruction process and the location of their current or former homes. People who expressed a personal interest in the redevelopment process and who used to live in the inner circle of the disaster area are far more likely to have attended a meeting than people living in the outer ring. This is quite understandable, given that the inner circle was totally destroyed and needed to be completely rebuilt. There is no support, however, for an effect of homeownership.

Second, Table 1 indicates that people's command over *resources* is not a major factor affecting civic participation in the first stage of the decision-making process on the reconstruction of Roombeek. First, and quite surprisingly, formal education does not have an effect on participation. Second, our results also indicate that lack of politically relevant civic skills (writing formal letters, speaking in public, etc.) was no barrier to participation either. Participation,

	Conditional Odds	Probability (One-Tailed)	
	Ratio (Exp B)		
Motivations			
Subjective interest	2.66*	.00*	
Place of residence (outer ring = 0, inner ring = 1)	4.03*	.00*	
Homeownership	1.15	.30	
Resources and minority status			
Formal education	0.96	.41	
Civic skills	0.89	.14	
Confidence in civic skills	1.44*	.03*	
Gender ($female = 0, male = 1$)	1.15	.27	
Nationality (non-Dutch = 0 , Dutch = 1)	1.90	.21	
Recruitment			
Received information about meetings	4.94*	.00*	
Cox and Snell R ²	.18		
Nagelkerke R ²	.30		

Table 1. Logistic Regression of Participation in Citizen Meetings

Note: N = 668.

however, was affected by people's confidence in their personal skills (subjective civic skills). Citizens who thought themselves quite capable of presenting their views in public were somewhat more likely to participate than their less self-confident counterparts. This effect, however, is minor compared with the impact of the motivational and recruitment factors. These findings are remarkable given the important role that resources generally play in explaining patterns of participation and nonparticipation (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, Brady 1995; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Fung 2004, 99–131).

Fung (2004) also argued that members of minority groups, such as women and immigrants, might not become involved because they could be discouraged by the dominant political culture. Here again our results point in a different direction. Gender had no significant impact on the decision to participate in the Roombeek decision-making process, nor did citizens of non-Dutch parentage participate less than their Dutch fellow citizens. This suggests that the experimental strategy to approach citizens of non-Dutch origins personally and not to rely upon traditional self-organizations and to offer these citizens accessible and attractive opportunities for participation was successful.

There is also evidence that efforts at *mobilization* had a considerable impact. Of course, the first condition for participation is that people should take an

^{*}Statistically significant at 5%, one-tailed.

interest in the issues at stake. However, beside that, they should have participatory opportunities and be aware of the options available (Tarrow 1994). The regression results underscore the relevance of the political opportunity structure: People's awareness of the opportunities for participation is the single most important factor in the equation. To an important extent, therefore, the relatively high participation rates found earlier result from successful mobilization. As shown above, Enschede not only offered the residents of the disaster area a wide range of participation options but also made a major effort to publicize the meetings. Our survey indicates that these efforts were relatively successful. In the inner ring of the area, 83% of respondents knew about the participatory meetings; among the residents of the outer ring, this was only slightly less (77%). The combination of a variety of participatory opportunities and the recruitment campaign is likely to have made a major contribution, therefore, to the goal of enabling participation by those residents who wanted to engage in the reconstruction process.

Notwithstanding the success of the mobilization campaign, it was found that a large majority of the people of Roombeek failed to participate. This inevitably and rightly raises the question of the representativeness of the participants. This leads us to our third research question: Did the participation of some and the nonparticipation of others affect the representativeness of the results of the participation process?

Are the Results of Citizen Governance Biased?

Participants in meetings such as those organized in Roombeek might be considered "representatives" of their neighborhoods. Even though participants are likely to have spoken merely on their own behalf, the local policy makers had made (and lived up to) firm promises to take the participants' inputs in the participatory process as a point of departure for further planning. Therefore, the participants' views expressed in the meetings provided an important source of information on the demands and concerns of the people from the reconstruction area. In this sense, these active participants functioned, willingly or unwillingly, as neighborhood representatives. But how representative are those activists for the wider population of the area?

Representativeness may be defined in a number of ways. On one hand, this concept may be conceived of in descriptive terms (see Verba et al. 1993), referring to the physical or demographic similarities in, for example, gender, age, and ethnicity between "representatives" and "those represented." This notion of representation is also referred to as "microcosmic representation" (Birch 1993, 72; Judge 1999, 21–46). On the other hand, the fact "that political activists

are not in demographic terms descriptively representative of the public at large does not necessarily imply . . . that there is a gap in policy preferences between those who take part and those who do not" (Verba et al. 1993, 303). This means it is also important to look into the representativeness of participants in terms of their ideas and ways of thinking.¹³

Whether the activists convey an adequate picture of the neighborhood's overall opinions remains to be seen. Fioring is not alone in expressing concern with regard to the substantive representativeness of the activists. Evaluations of experiments with citizen governance in the Netherlands have confirmed his concerns (Van de Peppel and Prummel 2000; Wille 2001). The results of our regression analyses already demonstrated that in many respects social background characteristics did not affect citizens' likelihood of participating in the Roombeek reconstruction plans. This is reflected in our finding that the personal profiles of participants and of the population they unwittingly represent are rather similar. 14 This is the case for gender (51% of participants were men vs. 47% in the sample), for education (25% of participants had a higher education diploma vs. 26% in the sample), for Dutch origins (20% of participants were of non-Dutch parentage vs. 17% in the sample), for income (28% of participants enjoyed a relatively high income vs. 26% in the whole sample), and for homeownership (45% of participants were owner occupiers vs. 49% in the sample). On the basis of these figures, we can conclude that some of the well-known descriptive biases in political participation were avoided in the Roombeek case.15

Even so, it remains to be seen whether the participants are representative of the population at large in their views on major issues in the reconstruction of Roombeek. To answer this question, we have selected four key issues in the planning process:

- Shops: spread throughout the neighborhood or concentrated in a shopping mall?
- Parking: on streets and squares throughout the area or concentrated in a car park?
- Housing: in addition to adequate and affordable housing for its former residents, should the new neighborhood get more affordable accommodation for people with modest incomes or more accommodation for more prosperous new residents?
- Housing: mainly low-rise buildings or a mix of low- and high-rise buildings?

In our survey, we asked respondents to state their preferences on each of these issues. All these items were presented as forced choices, in which respondents

had to indicate whether they would prefer either one or the other option. Table 2 shows the differences between the participants and all residents. 16 The results indicate that for all four issues the overall opinion among the participants pretty closely matches the views among the residents in general. As the table shows, there were some differences between the participant group and the total residents group, but those differences were not statistically significant (as the χ^2 values indicate). Moreover, for all four issues, the majority of activists held the same opinion as the majority of the district's population. This means that following the preferences of the activists would not have produced decisions that would have run against the spirit of public opinion in the district at large. Also note that this is true among residents both from the inner ring and from the outer ring. Earlier on we concluded that participation in the inner ring was far more widespread than in the outer ring of the disaster area. On the basis of research in the United States, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) concluded that representativeness issues are more likely where participation is low. We therefore would have expected a higher degree of disagreement between participants and all residents in the outer ring, where participation was low. In fact, inspection of this table does reveal that the absolute value of the difference between the scores of the participants and all residents in the outer ring is consistently higher than the difference scores in the inner ring. But the difference between these two groups of outer ring residents (just like the difference between the two groups of inner ring residents) is nowhere statistically significant. Our data do not, therefore, provide firm support for the Rosenstone and Hansen hypothesis.

Discussion

The Roombeek case is interesting from at least two perspectives. First, Roombeek represents an example of a city that, just like New Orleans (Kates et al. 2006; Olshansky 2006) and New York (Hajer 2005), struggled with the issue of how to design a participatory planning process for urban reconstruction in the aftermath of a disaster. In both U.S. cases and in Enschede, the initial reconstruction plans were based on a commitment to enable the victims to participate in the planning of the renovation for their districts (Olshansky 2006; Hajer 2005). In the two U.S. cases, it proved difficult to follow up on such good intentions (Olshansky 2006; Hajer 2005). Hajer observes that it may be difficult to extend the participatory process "beyond the initial outreach." He recommends ensuring that it provides for a structure in which "professionals collaborate *over a period of time* with stakeholders" and "allowing the public to advise, for example, on the various designs, or to assess what qualities the designs had for the site" (Hajer 2005, 462, emphasis

	Inner Circle				Outer Circle			
	Participants (%)	All (%)	χ²	Þ	Participants (%)	All (%)	χ²	Þ
Shopping center	58	64	1.616	.20	62	73	2.618	.11
Parking in streets	70	77	2.765	.10	88	75	3.593	.06
Mainly cheap houses	61	68	1.846	.17	50	64	2.767	.10
Mainly low-rise buildings	74	68	1.730	.19	76	65	2.179	.14

Table 2. Representativeness of Participants' Views on Four Key Issues in the Reconstruction of Roombeek in the Inner and Outer Circle of the Disaster Area

added). In the Enschede case, the U.S. pitfalls were largely avoided. A broad initial consensus on the desirability of citizen participation was translated into a set of (largely informal) rules backed up by a firm and enduring commitment of the various parties to the participatory process and provided the basis for a successful participatory planning process and a reconstruction plan that enjoyed broad public support. A number of features of its institutional design may have contributed to Roombeek's success:

- Providing for multiple opportunities for dialogue between participants and design professionals
- Providing clear instructions for professionals to seriously engage in the dialogue with the participants
- Granting the participants the right of approval of the draft plan in the final stages of the planning process, in combination with the statutory right of the council to have the final say over the reconstruction plan

These features provided a strong incentive for the planners and the local executive branch to take the participation process seriously (Denters and Klok 2003, 109).¹⁷ From this perspective, it might be argued that it was the *combination* of direct citizen participation with elements of representative democracy (the directly elected council having the final say) that was crucial in making the Roombeek case successful (Denters and Klok 2003, 109).

Another striking result from the Roombeek case is that the rebuilders were successful in achieving widespread and representative public participation in

the postdisaster reconstruction process. This is relevant not only for governments that face similar challenges in the aftermath of a disaster. The Roombeek experiences may also be of wider relevance. In recent years, many local governments in the Western world have experimented with new modes of direct citizen involvement in preparing major policy decisions (e.g., Denters and Rose 2005). The term citizen governance is often used as a common denominator for such initiatives. Advocates of such democratic reforms hope that the provision of new channels for active citizen involvement will help revitalize local democracy (e.g., Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Fung 2004). There are also some hopeful signs that new forms of citizen governance may be moderately successful in the political mobilization of previously underrepresented social strata such as young people and ethnic minorities (e.g., John 2009). Others however are more skeptical. Morris Fiorina (1999), for example, argues (1) that few citizens will actually use the direct channels for participation and (2) that the views of the participants will tend to be unrepresentative of the broader population.

In this article, the Roombeek case demonstrates that Fiorina's expectations about limited and selective participation ("biased" participation, in terms of the lack of representativeness of the views expressed by the activists) are not always justified. This is a striking result, especially if we consider the fact that the Roombeek area was a deprived neighborhood where a lack of social capital might have stood in the way of widespread citizen participation (Fung 2004, 119–22).

With regard to patterns of participation and nonparticipation, we found that a relatively large proportion of the citizens most directly concerned did participate. Almost half of the citizens in the inner ring, hit most severely by the explosion, actively contributed to the participation process. Our results indicate that to an important extent nonparticipation is explained by a lack of interest in the reconstruction issue rather than by people's lack of politically relevant resources. In part, the relatively high participation rates (especially in the inner ring) in the Roombeek case reflect the exceptional conditions caused by the disaster that struck the area. The reconstruction of the neighborhood obviously was a salient issue for many of the victims, even though many of them did not want to return to the area. But this is only part of the story. Our results also indicate that there is another factor at play. Tarrow (1994) pointed to the importance of the political opportunity structure in providing citizens and groups with more or less attractive participatory opportunities. As the results with regard to our first research question (How was citizen governance organized in the Roombeek case?) demonstrate, the municipality heavily invested in the participatory infrastructure.

First, as observed above, the rebuilders were firmly committed to the cause of "maximum feasible participation" and translated this into an open and inviting process architecture that provided for, among other things,

- Multiple arenas to provide an accessible, convenient, and motivating setting for the participation of different target groups in the area
- A set of largely informal rules that specified participants' rights and that gave professionals unambiguous instructions about their communication with participants and their obligation of responsiveness toward the participants
- Institutional arrangements, set up in such a way as to convince citizens that their inputs would be taken seriously (e.g., by giving them a say in the draft plan)

This was backed up by a firm and enduring commitment among the major players to actually observe these principles (see above).

Second, the participatory meetings were widely publicized in a variety of media. The publicity that Roombeek attracted from (inter)national and regional media in the days following the disaster helped to attract media attention to the reconstruction process. In addition to this, an extensive direct personal approach supplemented by a number of indirect strategies was used to persuade residents to participate in the planning process. As a result, many people were informed about the meetings and were urged to participate. Our previous analysis shows that these efforts were important in explaining the degree of participation achieved. The regression results indicate that investments in the openness of the participatory arenas for underprivileged and therefore traditionally underrepresented segments of the population (e.g., women and immigrants) paid off: Factors such as gender and non-Western origin did not have a significant effect on participation in the Roombeek meetings. It is also noteworthy that the experimental strategy to approach citizens of non-Dutch origins personally and not to rely on mobilization through traditional self-organizations and to offer these citizens specific, accessible, and attractive opportunities for participation was apparently successful.

This also has important implications for our third research question about the issue of the substantive representativeness of the outcomes of the participation process. In this regard, we found that the active group and the neighborhood population at large were rather similar not only in terms of social backgrounds but also in regard to their views on the future of Roombeek. This contradicts Fiorina's concerns about the fairness of

representation of citizen views in direct democratic participation. We think that this again reflects the relatively widespread participation in Roombeek. As Rosenstone and Hansen have hypothesized, the lower the degree of participation, the larger the differences in personal profile and political views between participants and the general public. In light of this hypothesis, the high degree of concurrence between the views of the participants and those of the general public in Roombeek, especially in the inner circle, may be the result of the relatively high level of participation achieved there.

It is striking that Fiorina, who is critical about the democratic merits of direct participation, has argued that the solution to the problem of selective participation may be to actually encourage people's participation in these new forms of governance:

To paraphrase John Dewey, the answer to the problems created by increased civic engagement is even more civic engagement. In part, I am led to this position because there is no turning back. . . . Thus, the only possibility is to go forward and raise various forms of civic engagement to levels where extreme voices are diluted. . . . Thus we should give a fair hearing to proposals for newer, low cost forms of political participation. (Fiorina 1999, 415–16)

In Enschede, such efforts have been made with some degree of success. In this article, we have outlined a number of factors that contributed to this result. Obviously the extraordinary conditions created by the tragic events of May 13, 2000, have boosted the level of participation. But our analyses also show that the municipal efforts to provide accessible, well-ordered, and attractive channels of participation for a wide variety of residents with different backgrounds and the efforts to inform citizens about the participation process have contributed to the success of this example of citizen governance. Advocates of citizen governance may—quite rightly—regard this as good news. At the same time, however, fervent believers in the merits of citizen governance should note that the Roombeek case also points in a different direction. While it demonstrates that the problems of limited and selective participation are surmountable, it also highlights the fact that the success of citizen governance should not be taken for granted. The Roombeek example clearly suggests that such new forms of citizen governance may be successful only if they are used in the context of highly salient public issues and if the local authorities are prepared to make major mobilization efforts and commit themselves firmly and enduringly to the participation process.

Acknowledgments

We have greatly benefited from the thoughtful comments of the editors and four anonymous referees. We also acknowledge the major effort that Oscar van Heffen and Marleen Visser made in designing and executing this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors received compensation for the costs of data collection (i.e. costs of the citizen survey) from the municipality of Enschede. No further financial support for the research or the authorship of this article was received by the authors.

Financial Disclosure/Funding

The authors declare that (on a non quid-pro-quo basis) they have reported intermediary research findings and provided occasional professional advice during the planning process.

Notes

- Enschede is a city of 150,000 inhabitants in the eastern part of the Netherlands, close to the German border.
- 2. These numbers do not add up to 100% because of rounding errors.
- 3. Also see Lowndes et al. (1998, 15–28, for the United Kingdom), Denters et al. (2003b), Edelenbos (2005), Edelenbos and Klijn (2006), Edelenbos, Klok, and van Tatenhove (2009, for the Netherlands), Ross and Levine (1996, 217–47), Sirianni and Friedland (2001), Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993), and Fung (2004, for the United States).
- 4. To be sure, Fung (2004) points to the possibility that when the stakes in a decision for people are high, they may overcome some of these barriers. Fung's five clusters of explanatory factors can easily be mapped on the threefold distinction used by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995 (motives, resources, and being asked) or the fivefold CLEAR (Can, Like, Enabled, Asked, and Responded to) distinction developed by Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker (2006).
- 5. Since the 1970s, citizen participation has been a standard ingredient in Dutch urban planning and neighborhood revitalization. Initially public participation schemes were designed in such a way as to allow citizens to give their views on draft plans just before the proper authority was to make its final decision on the plan. Typically citizen involvement in those days was relegated to the final stages of the planning process, during which citizens were informed and consulted and where the status of citizen inputs was at best advisory (cf. ladder of citizen participation, Arnstein 1969; also see Edelenbos and Klijn 2006). Around the turn of the millennium, many Dutch municipalities, including Enschede (see, e.g.,

Edelenbos and Klijn 2006), began to experiment with new forms of public participation. These new forms of so-called interactive governance allowed citizens to voice their opinions in the early stages of the planning process. Moreover, many of these new procedures also aimed at a higher degree of citizen influence over the results of the planning process (Edelenbos and Klijn 2006, 429). Evaluations of these experiments show that the high expectations regarding this type of policy making were not always met. In the case of Enschede, for example, an early interactive planning process aimed at the renovation of the city center (1997–1998) showed that citizen influence on the planning outcomes was rather limited, that unorganized interests (e.g., individual citizens) in particular had limited opportunities to participate, and that the status of the participants' inputs was merely advisory (see Edelenbos and Klijn 2006, 436–44).

- 6. Of course any democratic mode of decision making has to strike a balance between people's common sense and the expertise of professionals; see Dahl (1989, 52–79) and Fung (2004, 128–31).
- 7. In describing the relevant institutional arrangements, we used the typology of rules developed by Elinor Ostrom and her associates (Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994). Because cost–benefit issues were left out of scope, we have left aside the category of *pay-off rules*, which forms part of the typology.
- 8. For a variety of reasons, we used a combination of personal interviews, telephone interviews, and mail questionnaires for the collection of our data. In all cases we used basically the same questionnaire. The response rate was 68.2% of the net sample of 1,040 people (interviewers were unable to contact 249 people in the gross sample, mainly because address information was inaccurate). This response rate is exceptionally high for a Dutch survey in a (partly) deprived inner-city area.
- 9. Our measurement is based on the survey question, "Did you participate in a meeting about the reconstruction of Roombeek that was organized in the period between December 2000–February 2001?" (0 = no and 1 = yes). As indicated above, the survey on which this article is based was conducted after the first stage of the planning process. There are indications that the participation rates during the second phase of the process were somewhat lower (dropping from 16% to around 12%; Klok et al. 2004, 12). Moreover, in the second stage of the process the participation levels in the inner ring remained substantially higher than in the outer ring. Even so, the overall participation rate in the later stages of the participatory planning process remained rather high by regular standards.
- 10. People may also have refrained from participating because they had little confidence in the responsiveness of the participatory process and in the officials in charge of the reconstruction process (lack of external efficacy). However, in preliminary analyses it became evident that our indicator for external efficacy did not have a major impact, which is why we decided not to include it in the final analyses.

- 11. We have measured the relevant factors in the following way: subjective interest: "How much were you interested in the reconstruction issue?" (not at all, somewhat interested, fairly interested, very interested); place of residence: location based on (former) address of respondent in the area; (outer ring: limited impact of explosion; inner ring: major impact of explosion); homeownership: "In what type of house did you live before May 13th, 2000?" (0 = rented accommodation, 1 = owner occupied); formal education: "What is your highest level of formal education?" (recoded in three categories: low, medium, high); civic skills: "Please indicate for each of these whether as part of your activity in organizations or your occupation you have ever: a. participated in decisions at a meeting; b. planned or chaired a meeting; c. prepared or given a speech before a meeting; d. written a text other than a private letter at least a few pages long" (index based on count of the affirmative answers); subjective civic skills: "How good do you think you are at presenting your views in a public meeting?" (bad, not particularly good, rather good, good); gender (0 = female, 1 = male); Dutch parentage: based on questions about country of birth of both parents ($0 = father \ and/or \ mother \ born \ abroad$, 1 =both father and mother born in the Netherlands). recruitment: "Did you receive any information about the meetings on the reconstruction of Roombeek before these meetings took place?" (0 = no, 1 = yes).
- 12. From a democratic point of view, nonparticipation of a person who does not want to or does not like to participate may also be seen as unproblematic if we start from the democratic presumption of personal autonomy, according to which "everyone should be assumed to be the best judge of his or her own good or interests" (Dahl 1989, 100).
- 13. This interpretation of representativeness is closely related to the concept of discursive representation (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008).
- 14. Since we are interested in the degree to which *activists* represent the *wider community* (or, more precisely, the sample we took from this community), it is appropriate to compare the activists' opinions to the total population rather than to the nonparticipants.
- 15. The age factor is the exception to this general pattern: Younger respondents were underrepresented among the participants, whereas the age group between 40 and 60 was overrepresented. This might very well reflect young people's transient interest in the reconstruction issue. Additional analyses suggest that rather similar patterns of descriptive representation were found in the second phase of the planning process (where the overall participation rate dropped from 16% to 12%; Klok et al. 2004).
- 16. Again we compare the *activists* to the sample of the district's population because we want to know whether the views of the participants adequately reflect the public opinion in their district.

17. The directly elected council was strongly committed to the participatory cause. This commitment was probably also backed up by the imminent council elections in 2002. Many councilors may have felt that not taking the participation process seriously might harm their chances for reelection (Denters and Klok 2003, 109).

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