

# I participate, who profits?

How the impact of citizen participation evolved over the past 30 years in Rotterdam



Note: Sterrenburg, W. (2021). *Een geschiedenisstudent houdt haar protestbordje omhoog tijdens de mars na Woonopstand.*

<https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/2021/10/18/waarom-deze-studenten-meededen-aan-de-woonopstand/>

## Abstract

This graduate thesis examines the implications of participation in urban development of Rotterdam today and how this is different from the early '90s. Literature research about the nuances in participation in urban planning forms the framework for this thesis. Using this base, I compare the cases of Rijnhaven redevelopment, going on right now, and development of Kop van Zuid 30 years ago. I research these cases through publicly available citizen participation reports, direct contact with the municipality and my own experience living in Rotterdam Zuid. This research shows that participation in Rotterdam has become a buzz word. Terminology and documentation surrounding the participation process has become a more public and outspoken part of the design process, but this has not led to a significant change in the base principles and power of citizen participation in urban planning.

## AR1A066

Enzo Ree Boeter – 4723376 – 20-04-2023



# I participate, who profits?

How the impact of citizen participation evolved over the past 30 years in Rotterdam

By

**Enzo Ree Boeter**

**Master of Science**

in Architecture and the Built Environment

at the Delft University of Technology

Supervisor:

Dr. S. Tanović, ir.

## Contents

Contents.....	4
Introduction .....	5
1. Analytical Framework and Methodology .....	6
1.1 Directness of participation .....	6
1.2 Participation and power framework .....	7
1.3 Operating principles and limitations .....	9
1.4 Evaluation methodology.....	10
2. Kop van Zuid (1987-ongoing).....	11
2.1 Context.....	11
2.2 Participation process .....	13
2.3 Conclusion.....	14
3. Rijnhaven (2020-ongoing).....	16
3.1 Context.....	16
3.2 Participation process .....	18
3.3 Conclusion.....	19
Conclusion.....	21
Bibliography .....	22

## Introduction

May 2022, Rotterdam – The mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb, rented his city's biggest convention center Ahoy and personally invited 10.000 citizens living in Rotterdam Zuid to talk about the future of their city district. Only 100 people signed up and the event got canceled. This is a prime example of the growing separation between government and its citizens says Marco Pastors, director of the 'National Program for Rotterdam Zuid' (In Dutch: 'Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid, NPRZ') (Van de Velde, 2022).

The event was in line with current regional, national and international efforts to include more citizens into the process of urban development (Custers, 2022). Since around the 2000s the notion of participation has become a real buzz word in urban policy and development (Miessen, 2001). However, it is debatable whether this increase of the usage of the word in literature, politics and policy has made the actual impact of citizen participation on public space plans bigger, or the opposite has happened, and the term has become hollow and meaningless. After moving to Rotterdam and having read '*Rotterdam, een ode aan inefficiëntie*' by Arjan van Veelen (2022) and *The Nightmare of Participation* by Markus Miessen (2001) I decided to research how the process and results of citizen participation evolved over the past three decades and whether this evolution impacted urban planning in Rotterdam.

Existing literature focusses on participation in Rotterdam in certain projects or at certain moments in time, for example in works by Arthur Edwards and Linze Schaap (2006) or Mahiroen Kasiemkhan (2010). These inspired me to look deeper into both practical applications of the notion of participation as well as the general use of the word 'participation' in urban development projects in Rotterdam, examining the following research question:

*'What does participation imply in urban development of Rotterdam today and how is this different from the early '90s?'*

To understand this, I investigated two urban development projects that included citizen participation: Rijnhaven redevelopment, going on right now, and development of Kop van Zuid 30 years ago. I researched these cases through publicly available citizen participation reports (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018b) as well as direct contact with the municipality and my own experience. I start with a hypothesis that the word 'participation' has become ambiguous and vague, making the participation of citizens in Rotterdam an expedient method of placation rather than a real process of transformation. This hypothesis is the base of the literature by Van Veelen (2022) and Miessen (2001), that inspired me to research this topic.

In the first chapter I will discuss the definition of citizen participation and the range of its possibilities in urban planning. Using this analytical framework, in chapter 2 I will examine the redevelopment of Kop van Zuid in the '90s, when participation was not yet used as a buzz word. In chapter 3 I discuss the current development of Rijnhaven, showing the state of the notion of participation today. Finally, I will conclude that participation has become a buzz word. Terminology and documentation of the participation process has become a more public and outspoken part of the design process, but this has not led to a significant change in the base principles and power of citizen participation in urban planning.

# 1. Analytical Framework and Methodology

Urban politics, including citizen participation, are shaped by the nature of urban governance structures, the cultural norms and values of the local community, and the economic and social context. To understand the changes in the way citizen participation is used and implemented in Rotterdam over the past three decades, the term 'participation' and the range of its possibilities in urban planning must be defined clearly, taking these different contexts and structures into account.

## 1.1 Directness of participation

One of the first distinctions to make when categorizing participation is the difference between representative democracy and participative democracy (Lowndes, 1995). Representative democracy is the more classic and common way participation is organized. It assumes that governing cannot be done by the citizens because there are too many of them and they do not feel like participating. In Rotterdam some of the possibilities of representative participation are (Edwards & Schaap, 2006):

- **Citizens' initiative** - with a threshold of 250 signatures for urban subjects, and of 50 and 25 signatures for subjects at district and neighborhood level, respectively, citizens can put an issue on the agenda of the city council;
- **Participation procedure** – where citizens can comment on already prepared municipal policy plans. In development plans participation is usually legally prescribed;
- **Panels and councils** – can consult and advise on behalf of a certain category of the population or certain businesses through (internet) polls and interviews.

However, since the late 1900's the call for more direct influence on policy has increased (Kasiemkhan, 2010). This resulted in the second type, participative democracy. Here, instead of a representative, citizens themselves help to shape and execute their policies. Participative models focus on the citizens producing policy themselves: the citizen is a co-producer. Even though the core of the political system as a whole remains representative, the co-producing citizens can contribute to formulating problem definitions, finding solution directions, and to the manner of implementation. Forms of participative democracy in Rotterdam are (Edwards & Schaap, 2006):

- **Debates and dialogues** – where citizens advise on the agenda-setting and discuss urban problems and possible solutions through arguments and an interactive conversation;
- **Financed citizen activities and initiatives** – on street level citizens undertake activities that are supported by the municipality, welfare institutions, housing corporations and other institutions. Examples are 'People Make the City' or 'Growth Drivers' (in Dutch: 'Mensen Maken de Stad' and 'Groeibriljanten').

Although the participative model gives the citizens more direct influence on policy, it is not to be confused with direct participation. In contrast to the co-producer, that plays a creative role in policy preparation, in direct participation the citizen has primarily a reactive task. Direct participation is in the form of referendums or similar initiatives where the citizen gets to vote directly for a political decision. Here, the primacy in policy preparation and decision-making lies primarily with those elected instead of the citizens themselves. In Rotterdam, direct participation can be done through (Edwards & Schaap, 2006):

- **Referendum** - citizens can petition the council to hold a referendum on a proposed council decision. In that case the council decides whether this proposed decision can be the subject of a referendum.

## 1.2 Participation and power framework

Now that we defined the different grades of directness in citizen participation, I will discuss another frequently used organization tool called the ‘Ladder of citizen participation’ (Arnstein, 1969), which ranks different levels of participation based on the amount of power that the citizens have. It describes the differences between empty rituals versus benefit. Arnstein states that a lot of the time participation does not come with redistribution of power; this way citizens participate without benefiting from it (Figure 1). He offers a range of citizen power and influence in the form of a ladder with categories from ‘manipulation’ at the bottom to ‘citizen control’ at the top (Figure 2). The categories on the bottom of the ladder are grouped into ‘nonparticipation’, with the citizens merely being subject to commercial or government power. The middle groups are described as ‘tokenism’, where citizen participation is merely a symbolic effort without real power. The top of the ladder is where there is actual ‘citizen power’ on decision making.



Figure 1: French student poster about citizen power. In English: “I participate; you participate; he participates; we participate; you participate; **they profit**”. (Arnstein, 1969, p.216).

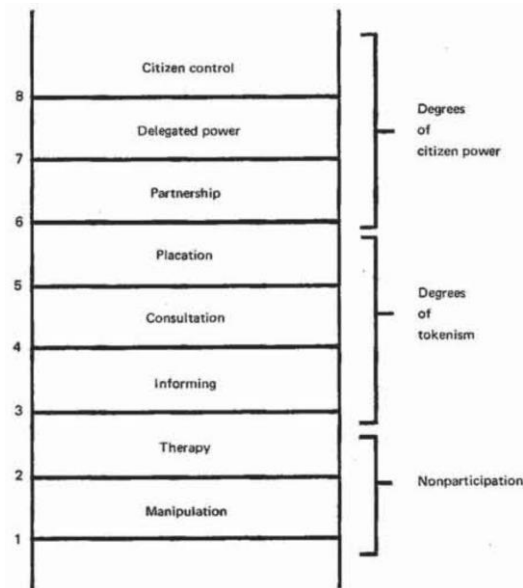


Figure 2: The ladder of participation. (Arnstein, 1969, p.217).

Next to Arnstein's model, the power cube framework developed by Gaventa in 2005 (Figure 3) is useful to examine the relationship between political participation and power dynamics. This framework is

derived from the ladder of participation but, within the power dynamics, distinguishes the specific levels and contexts in which participatory action takes place. This will provide greater conceptual and analytical precision in the analysis of the case studies. The three dimensions of participatory action it distinguishes are:

- **Levels** on which participatory action is focused or where it occurs:
  - Global (e.g., global alliances, governments)
  - National (e.g., national programs, parliament)
  - Local (e.g., municipality, households)
- **Spaces**, including processes and mechanisms, within which people communicate interact and have influence on decisions which affect their lives:
  - Closed (e.g., where only certain people/groups are invited and other excluded)
  - Invited (e.g., where people/groups are invited to inform others about their views)
  - Claimed/created (e.g., where less powerful people/groups organize themselves against existing powers outside of the institutionalized policy arenas)
- **Forms** in which power dynamics influence the inclusiveness of participation in a space:
  - Visible (e.g., formal regulations, institutions, and procedures of decision-making)
  - Hidden (e.g., controlling the political agenda from behind the scenes by excluding groups and mobilization of biases)
  - Invisible (e.g., influences on viewpoints, cultural norms and ideologies of the bigger issue at hand)

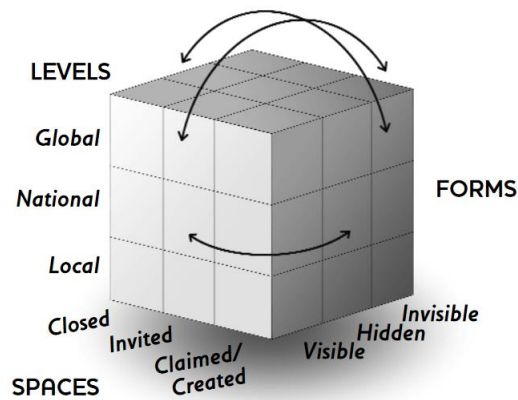


Figure 3: The 'power cube': the levels, spaces and forms of power. (Gaventa, 2005, p.23).

Both the ladder of participation and the power cube offer a framework to define the relationship between participation and power dynamics. However, these are completely theoretical and do not value certain participation practices over other ones or tackle problems that occur during the practical application of participation. Thus, before exploring the case studies, we need to define how successful participation is generally understood: what are its scope and limitations?



### 1.3 Operating principles and limitations

The framework by André et al. (2006) was used to identify how the basic principles of participation should be applied to the main steps and activities. André's research shows that successful participation should be:

- **Initiated early and sustained** - before major decisions are made, building up trust as well as opening up to more opportunities;
- **Well planned and focused on negotiable issues** - clear aims, rules and organization to prevent incredibility;
- **Supportive to participants** - in the form of funding as well as facilitation;
- **Ordered and optimized** - reducing time and space consumption;
- **Open and transparent** - participants should not be affected by a lack of information;
- **Context-oriented** - when dealing with existing communities, their social, cultural and economic dimensions should be considered to respect and connect with this group;
- **Credible and rigorous** - with a clear code of ethics and moral standpoints the confidence will be higher, and participants will be freer in their communication.

These principles describe the success factors of the participation process in theoretical terms. To examine the effectiveness of participation in the case studies, it is important to also carefully consider the practical obstacles in citizen participation. The main concern seems to be this disconnect between terminology, placation and intensions on the one hand and practical implementation with the lack of actual transformation and power shift on the other. Miessen (2001) in his book describes the 'Nightmare of Participation', showing limitations in various parts of the participation process. The main shortcomings of the practice of participation he warns about are:

- **Meaningless participation subjects** - the participants are often faced with a predefined dilemma of two bad or meaningless options, instead of having the freedom to choose whether to agree to the terms of the question and choose any at all. When looking at the types of participation, the representative model is especially sensitive to this shortcoming. Because the citizens do not formulate the problem definitions themselves but are brought into the position of voter. This leads to the following shortcoming;
- **Lack of producing** - the participants are often brought into the role of observer instead of producer. In the forms of nonparticipation and tokenism from Arnstein's ladder (1969) the participant is merely an observer, which results in a lack of decision-making power. In contrast, with participative democracy the citizen becomes a co-producer that defines both problem statements and solutions;
- **Overuse and unclear terminology** – there is a great variety in ways in which citizens are involved and how participation results are utilized. When these nuances and specificity of the word 'participation is ignored or if it is overused, the term becomes hollow and meaningless;
- **Hiding behind others** - participation can be a way to hide a difficult choice behind others and then influence/lobby for it in a way that in the end the desired choice still gets made. Big parties hide behind the majority instead of having a vision themselves. Referendums are particularly favored by political parties when they do not want to burn their fingers on sensitive decisions and potentially lose part of their electorate;

- **Stating that participation is 'good'** - this excludes the option that the participants disagree, projects must be cancelled, people will get upset and business plans must change. According to Miessen (2001, p.53) "Participation is proclaimed to be good, but participation is war!".

Focusing on the Netherlands, shortcomings of participation have also become clear. Government efforts to involve more citizens have been disappointing because of a lack of clear participation projects and structured workflow (Custers, 2022). When visiting a studio about the urban development of Feyenoord City (FC) in Rotterdam Zuid at School for the City in Rotterdam (2023), I noticed the same tone. The professionals from the municipality as well as students and historians agreed that the original FC participation process was meaningless and the superdiversity of the city region was greatly underrepresented in the final design. When asked about the reasons, they mentioned some of Miessens limitations (overuse and unclear terminology, meaningless subjects) as well as:

- **Set business plan** - in the planning of the project, the business plan was made far ahead of the participation rounds. There was no financial space to deviate from this and thus no space for impact for participants;
- **Trouble defining the participant group** - Since the location was supposed to be redeveloped from industrial, commercial and sports facilities to mixed use including a large amount of housing, it was not clear who would participate in the decision-making process: the inhabitants of neighboring neighborhoods or the future residents.

However, other projects, like The Bronx Wide Plan, were brought up to be more exemplary. The participation processes in these projects were more attuned to the guidelines defined by André et al. (2006), which, in turn, led to less shortcomings.

## 1.4 Evaluation methodology

In the following chapters I will evaluate the projects Kop van Zuid and Rijnhaven. How can the participation processes be epitomized? Can they be seen as exemplary or problematic examples? And how did the participation process change during these years? I researched The Kop van Zuid redevelopment through direct contact with the municipality as well as archives about masterplans and participation rounds. For the Rijnhaven redevelopment online articles, documents on the website of the municipality and publicly available online meetings helped in mapping the participation process. Both final plans, the resulting current urban areas and citizens' reactions to them are also considered to see how the participation influenced the outcome.

To accurately compare the projects, I discuss them within an equal structure:

1. **Introduction** to the context of the project, looking at the timeframe, neighborhood and its inhabitants;
2. **Analysis** of the participation process;
3. **Conclusion** about the project and its process.

## 2. Kop van Zuid (1987-ongoing)

Kop van Zuid and Rijnhaven are both located on the south bank of the Maas river of Rotterdam (Figure 4). They are both part of governmental and municipal efforts to link this region more with the development of the center (Kop van Zuid, 2016). The projects are focused on a higher quality of life in south Rotterdam for a variety of groups. To understand the design and participation process, first the context of the project will be described, not only focusing on the current spatial boundaries and involved parties, but also on political, social and historical context and trends.



Figure 4: Kop van Zuid region. (Boeter; based on Google, 2023).

### 2.1 Context

The rapidly changing nature of the city is clearly visible in Kop van Zuid. Bordering the Maas on the north and west sides, between 1870-1910 the region was transformed from meadows into an industrial harbor area (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987). From this point on, the harbor determined the layout of the region with its industrial buildings, ships and train tracks on the shores of the Maas and behind those the isolated housing neighborhoods for harbor workers in Katendrecht and Feyenoord.

However, when in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the harbor expanded towards the North Sea in the west, the function of the region became unclear, forming a decayed barrier between the north and south of the city. Late 1980s, when it was clear that the harbor would not return to this part of the city and thus Kop van Zuid was open to new functions, the municipality decided to act and transform the area. The diplomatic notes 'Vernieuwing van Rotterdam' and 'Nieuw Rotterdam' claimed that the Rotterdam harbor should make the switch towards a high-tech logistics hub, with a center both north and south of the Maas focusing on economic growth (Stadsarchief Rotterdam, 2023). Next to that, there was a call for

a more centralized approach to the city's problems and densification and development of the city center. Riet Bakker, who was the head of the 'City Development' (In Dutch: 'Stadsontwikkeling') team, gave architect Teun Koolhaas the assignment of developing and visualizing her plans for the new Kop van Zuid.

The final Masterplan by Koolhaas (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1991) proposed to build a new skyline with high rise at Wilhelminapier, other dense living forms in the other parts of Kop van Zuid and finally a new bridge over the Maas and new public transport facilities to connect the new neighborhoods to both north and south (Figure 5). The final program included (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2010):

- **Housing** - approximately 5100 residences;
- **Offices** - 350.000 m<sup>2</sup> offices;
- **Other facilities** - 80.000 m<sup>2</sup> retail and 70.000 m<sup>2</sup> non-profit facilities.



*Figure 5: Kop van Zuid vision model. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2010, p.34).*

Although the program was supposed to include expensive housing, touristic attractions and offices of high quality, the 'trickle down' effect would also result in neighboring regions profiting from the development. This was organized in an initiative called 'Mutual Benefit' (In Dutch: 'Wederzijds Profijt'), a collaboration between the municipality and citizen groups of close by neighborhoods. Besides the municipality, the businesses they focused on and the citizen groups, the national government also got involved. The project got marked as a 'National Key Project' (In Dutch: 'Landelijk Sleutelproject') and thus the Ministry of Traffic and Water contributed hundreds of millions for a new bridge, roads and public transport. The Ministry of Wellbeing, Spatial Planning and Environment contributed hundreds of millions for the much needed national 'Big Building Locations' for housing (Kop van Zuid, 2016).

## 2.2 Participation process

To make sure the interests and aspirations of this wide range of stakeholders were met, intensive consultation took place between Koolhaas and the various services, companies and the municipality Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987). In the following paragraphs, the relation between citizens and these parties is further examined. What were the types of participation and how did they affect the process and final design?

In 1989 the potential of involving citizens on regional and neighborhood planning was discussed in the magazine INFO, a monthly publication of the PvdA Rotterdam, the socio-democratic party that earned 48% of the municipal election votes a year before that (Vermeulen & Hallensleben, 1989). This article argues that there is great potential in the tackling of social problems through smaller scale intervention. On this scale, policy could be tweaked to fit the local needs. As a potential application of this kind of intervention they named the neighborhoods bordering Kop van Zuid, that were showing great interest in the development of the region as a whole and were supposed to contribute to the dialogue and the further development of the design.

In the period in between the vision of Riet Bakker and Teun Koolhaas in 1987 and the final development plan in 1991 various efforts were made to involve citizens in the decision-making process. First, Cornelissen & Van Schilfgaarde (1989) were asked to inform the design team in what way the citizens and citizen groups could be involved in, and contribute to-, plan development and decision making for Kop van Zuid. The advice was that, in order to succeed, the start of the participation process had to be focused on residents of social housing. The interests of this group (good cheap housing, good housing environment and good public facilities), they argued, are determined in the early phase of planning. Thus, the social housing residents should participate in this early phase to make sure their input could still have an impact instead of participation taking place when the business plan and program of requirements was already set. The municipality and design team also made sure that the project group Binnenhaven Spoorweghaven (BiSpo) was closely involved (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987). This group represented the interestst of residents of neighboring regions Feyenoord/Noordereiland, Afrikaanderwijk, Hillesluis and Katendrecht.

Thus, there was a clear base to involve citizens. There was socio-political awareness about the importance of participation (Vermeulen & Hallensleben, 1989), Cornelissen & Van Schilfgaarde (1989) informed the municipality about effective strategies of participation and good contact was maintained between the municipality and citizen groups. This resulted in the citizen groups and residents themselves reacting and reflecting on the design through: (1) an internal pre-consultation, (2) statutory participation procedure and (3) the internal municipal reactions (Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling, 1991). The main takeaways were:

- **Environmental impact** – concerns about the air and noise pollution that industry on Katendrecht has on the new neighborhoods;
- **Involvement of railway company NS** - NS wants to be involved to make sure the region will be accessible;
- **Connection to the surroundings, ‘social return’** - concerns about the impact and feasibility of the trickle-down effect and amount of connection to existing neighborhoods.

Following this input, the environmental impact was researched, concluding that housing in this area was feasible, and an agreement was made between the municipality and the NS to make sure the area was accessible. However, for the third point, the municipality's reaction was that the consequences of the plan for the surrounding neighborhoods were already considered (Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling, 1991), suggesting either that the participants did not look at them well enough or that the plans on this front would not be open to discussion. A clear solution to these questions about social return was not provided. This is especially remarkable because this point was most prominent in the statutory and internal reactions. Not only citizens, but also governmental entities had their concerns about the feasibility of the trickle-down effect.

First, the commission of City Renewal and Housing agreed to the main elements of the plan, but only on the condition that the high-rise plans would be revised (Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling, 1991). The commission had concerns that otherwise a too exclusive district would be created, without cheap owner-occupied housing. The same was the result of the participation round of bordering neighborhood's citizen groups. The region of Feyenoord claimed that the complex project should not be simplified and sold with visionary impressions, focused on tourists and companies that are provided by Teun Koolhaas. The only way to make this project a success for everyone would be an open process without a fixed outcome. The severity of their comments was obvious with comments like *"it is now or never for Kop van Zuid, a decision has to be made: plan or process; high or low effort; short- or long-term success."*<sup>1</sup> (Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling, 1991, p.40). They also opted for more involvement of the existing neighborhoods of Rotterdam Zuid and a distribution of 60% social housing/40% private housing.

## 2.3 Conclusion

The sketch design and final masterplan by Teun Koolhaas (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987; Gemeente Rotterdam, 1991) mainly focused on the visual aspects and international appeal of the design of Kop van Zuid and not so much on the process behind the design. However, both the advisory research by Cornelissen & Van Schilfgaarde (1989) and the participation and discussion report (Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling, 1991) show that there were in fact clear intentions to involve citizens into the design process. Using the theoretical framework from chapter 1, I will examine the participation process and how it has influenced the decision making.

The participation process occurred on a **local level**, with the municipality focusing on residents and entrepreneurs from the bordering neighborhoods. The interactions between decision makers and stakeholders took place in **closed and invited spaces**. The design team let citizen groups and government instantiations react to predefined ambitions of the sketch design, without having direct interactions with inhabitants in public spaces. Through these **invisible forms** the thought processes of the citizens were influenced and steered towards the predetermined vision of the sketch design. The participants did have some degree of power, leaning more towards tokenism because their consultation did not result in direct decision-making influence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated by author, original quote in Dutch: *"het is nu of nooit voor de Kop van Zuid, er moet gekozen worden voor plan of proces, voor hoge of lage inzet, voor korte of lange termijn succes"*

Although citizen groups were invited to talk about certain subjects, it was unclear whether the business plan from the sketch design was set or if it was still open to disagreement and results of the participation process. To see the impact of the participants, we will try to compare the masterplan to the sketch design, focusing on the main takeaway of the participation process: the connection to the surroundings and 'social return'.

In the sketch design (Gemeente Rotterdam, 1987) did not have a clear distribution of housing types. The focus would be on higher-income groups to realize an attractive new part of the city center with a high international appeal for tourists. The outcome of the participation was clear in that their point of concern was the impact and feasibility of the trickle-down effect and amount of connection to existing neighborhoods. In the final Masterplan and current neighborhood no solution or significant efforts were made to solve this issue. The succes of the international appeal and skyline of Rotterdam is widely accepted, but at the same time it has become an icon of the extremely hard border between poor and rich (Figure 6) (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2010). Thus, there seems to be a disconnect between the intentions of the participation process and the actual influence of it on the final design.

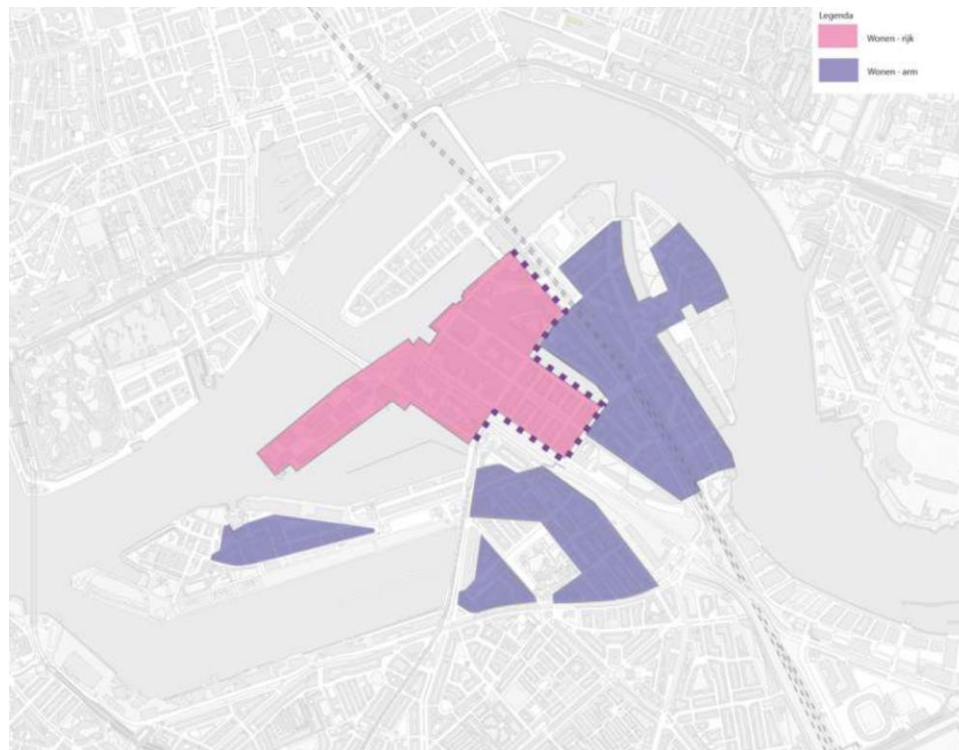


Figure 6: The hard border between poor and rich. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2010, p.35).

### 3. Rijnhaven (2020-ongoing)

Rijnhaven used to be a part of the Kop van Zuid masterplan. In recent years the further demand for densification within the city center has led to new visions and plans for this harbor. Being located in between Wilhelminapier and Katendrecht (Figure 7), it is supposed to be an addition to the growing center on the south part of the Maas.



Figure 7: Rijnhaven region. (Boeter; based on Google, 2023).

#### 3.1 Context

As was explained in the previous chapter, the region is constantly changing and in the thirty years in between the initial Kop van Zuid plans and the current Rijnhaven design, this was no different. What changed in these years is a crucial part of understanding the participation process and its impact.

Rijnhaven was one of the harbors that caused the transformation of the city into the huge international harbor it is today (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020). Digging the harbor created the Wilhelminapier on the north, a promontory first known for iconic industrial buildings. On the south, Katendrecht was known for its bars, brothels and Chinese quarter (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018a). However, since the relocation of the harbor area and redevelopment of these two areas, functions as well as inhabitants and image have changed massively. In 2009 Rijnhaven was handed over from the 'Harbor Company' (In Dutch: 'Havenbedrijf') to the municipality and since then it has been waiting for new liveliness and dynamics (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020).

The ambitions for the region are to contribute to solving the biggest issues of the city with 'Good Growth' (In Dutch: 'Goeie Groei'): building more housing, strengthening the economy, adding green, improving inclusivity, transition to new mobility and energy systems, and finally a climate resilient city (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020). To realize this vision, the municipality made an Ambition Document



(Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018a) and a Masterplan (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020) with Barcode Architects, BGSV and Robert de Koning landscape architects. In 2019 neighboring inhabitants could share their opinions on the Masterplan and after that the municipality made the design in collaboration with MVVA, an American landscape architect office that previously designed similar harbor areas in New York and Toronto (Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc, n.d). In 2022 the new zoning plan was finalized, and preparation of the site could start. The start of construction is expected to start in 2024 and be finished around 2028 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020).

The final design, based on the Masterplan, proposed to fill one third of the water surface to build high rise buildings up to 250 meters height, a park and a beach on top of it (Figure 8). The final program can be summarized as follows (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2022):

- **25% of m2 for social facilities** - commercial facilities (leisure, hospitality, retail) and office and business space;
- **75% of m2 for housing** - approximately 2000 houses;
- **Housing type** - 20% social housing/30% middle range/35% higher range/15% top range;
- **Housing size** - 50% is 50-65 m2/25% is 65-85 m2/25% is bigger than 85 m2;



Figure 8: Rijnhaven vision. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020, p.48).

Rijnhaven is one of the '7 City Projects' (In Dutch: '7 Stadsprojecten'); a municipality initiative to solve the current climate and social challenges (Stadmakerscongres, 2022). From this programme, the municipality assigned 69,5 million euros to the development of Rijnhaven. With that money the municipality, who is also the owner of the site, prepares the ground to be built on and develops the park

and the beach. Private developers and social housing corporations buy the ground from the municipality and realize the buildings on it.

### 3.2 Participation process

During this interaction between private developers and the municipality, how were the residents', users', entrepreneur's and organization's wishes and demands incorporated? In the following paragraphs, the relation between these groups and the decision makers is further examined. How could these groups participate and how did they affect the process and final design?

In the period in between the publication of the Ambition Document (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018a) and the final Masterplan (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020), the municipality followed a carefully planned participation and market consultation process (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018b). According to project manager Peter Spekman the municipality never asked for such a large amount of input in such an early stage before (Verloop, 2019). In the 'Housing Vision' (In Dutch: Woonvisie) the first the list of ambitions is a balanced city, where people live together and participate (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2016). In both the Ambition Document as well as the Masterplan participation and its importance get emphasized. This fits the general trend where the word 'participation' is used more and more often in the last decades (Miessen, 2001).

In the case of Rijnhaven, the municipality organized up to eighteen gatherings between november and december 2018 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018b). The meetings had various characteristics and locations, depending on the target group. In some formal cases the residents of Katendrecht, Afrikaanderbuurt and Wilhelminapier could sit around the table with the stakeholders and discuss the project, while in other more informal ways they could play around with blocks of a physical model or have a quick talk on the streets.

According to the report (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020) the participation generated many positive responses. The acknowledgement of the historic harbor, the addition of housing, the park and the walkway around the harbor were praised. The main criticisms were summarized as follows:

- **Housing types** – there should be more focus on social and student housing;
- **The park** – are appreciated, but concerns about maintenance and noise disturbance;
- **The beach** – could make Rijnhaven lose its open and rough qualities.

Where the second and third points were more suggestions and warnings, the housing was a real concern to most residents. Comments like *'I will never be able to live there. But looks fun.'*<sup>2</sup> (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018b, p.45) showed the cynicism and frustration of the less wealthy neighbors who feel left out. Project manager Spekman himself acknowledged this problem by saying the plans could be bolder when it came to the amount of housing and the prices of the new homes (Verloop, 2019). He said after the citizen input, there was more focus on building affordable housing.

---

<sup>2</sup> Translated by author, original quote in Dutch: *'Ik zal er nooit kunnen wonen. Wel leuk.'*

### 3.3 Conclusion

Throughout the planning process there has been frequent communication between the municipality and citizens of Rotterdam, with the process even being described as the most interactive ever by the project manager. The many procedures for resident participation were clearly planned out and documented. Using the theoretical framework from chapter 1, the relationship between political participation and power dynamics will be examined.

The participation process occurred on a **local level**, with the municipality focusing on residents and entrepreneurs from the bordering neighborhoods. Because of the various characteristics and locations of the participation moments, the interactions between decision makers and stakeholders took place in **both closed and invited spaces, but also public space**. Here the design team confronted the residents with their predefined ambitions and let them react to it. Through these **invisible forms** the thought processes were influenced and steered towards a predetermined vision. The participants did have some degree of power, leaning more towards tokenism because their placation and consultation did not result in direct decision-making influence.

Although participants were invited to talk about meaningful subjects, it was unclear whether the business plan from the Ambition Document was set or if it was still open to the disagreement and suggestions of the participants. Comparing the final proposal to the initial municipal plans can help to see the power and impact that the participants had.

In the Ambition Document (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2018a) distributed the housing as follows: 20-25% social housing/25% middle range/50-55% high and top range. From this social housing, the main target was small student housing and elderly homes. The final master plan distribution became: 20% social housing/30% middle range/50% high and top range (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020); a decrease in comparison to the social housing goals. Thus, there seems to be a disconnect between promises and elaborate processes concerning participation and the actual influence of it on the final design. Another example of this disconnect is seen at the core essence of the development that is defined by the municipality in the final Masterplan (Figure 9) (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020). Although the text says the housing blocks will be all sided and without backsides, the exact realization of this ambition is unclear. In the explanatory image every arrow points towards one direction, that of the water. The existing neighborhoods, that could greatly profit from the all-sidedness, are even cut off from the image.

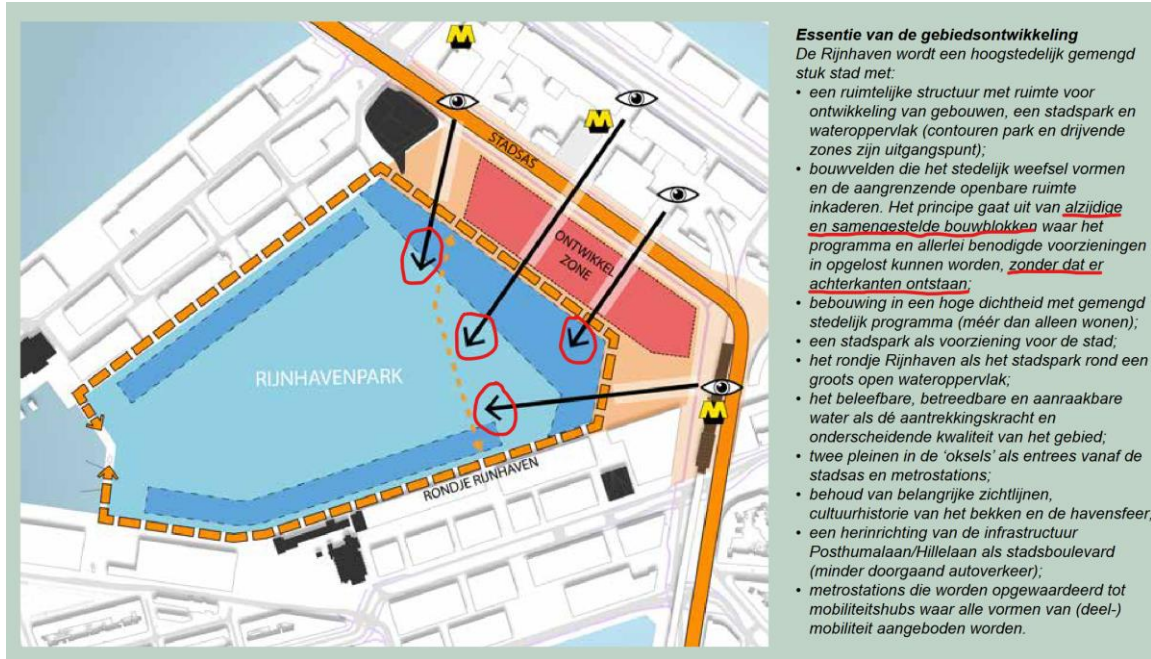


Figure 9: 'The essence of the development'...'all sided housing blocks without backsides'. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2020, p.58).

## Conclusion

By analyzing the two different participation processes, this thesis has shown what participation implies in urban development of Rotterdam today and how this is on some aspects different from participation in the early '90s. It has shown that terminology and documentation of the participation process has become a more public and outspoken part of the design process, but that this has not led to a significant change in the base principles and power of citizen participation in urban planning.

During the Kop van Zuid design process, participation was not in any form part of the sketch design. The municipality did not pretend or promise the citizens to have a lot of influence on the project. However, during the '90s in Rotterdam there was social awareness and discussion about the importance of involving citizens in the decision-making process. Involvement of citizens was not marketed by the municipality as an important part of the process, but a mandatory participation process was followed and there was even additional research requested about the optimalization of involving the citizens. In the end the demands of various citizen groups and government instances were that the project should not be simplified and sold with visionary utopian impressionistic illustrations focused on tourists and companies. Their call to make this project a success for everyone, by creating an open process without a fixed outcome, was not met. The current neighborhood has become exactly the internationally iconic, expensive and exclusive region from the initial business plan that the participants had warned for.

For the Rijnhaven redevelopment, the municipality followed a carefully planned participation and market consultation process, collecting the largest amount of input in such an early stage ever. In the municipal plans, participation and its importance get emphasized and marketed as a crucial part of the design process. During the various participation moments, the housing was a real concern to most residents. The project manager acknowledges the problems and demands of the participants by saying the plans could be bolder when it comes to the amount of housing and the prices of the new homes and there will be more focus on building more affordable housing. However, there seems to be a disconnect between promises and elaborate processes concerning participation and the actual influence of it on the final design, because the number of affordable and social housing went down in the final plans.

In both cases, there seems to be a tokenistic form of participation, where participation is merely symbolic without citizens having actual influence on the final decisions and core business plan of the projects. However, the Rijnhaven case study shows that participation has become a more elaborated part of both the process and the marketing. Where at the Kop van Zuid process the participation was mandatory and more on the policymaking background, the Rijnhaven pretended and promised the citizens to have a lot of influence on the project. In reality they had the same amount of power as in the more modest process of the '90s.

Participation and power are abstract terms, and the execution of these processes are hard to define and quantify. Whether all projects in Rotterdam work in the same way is difficult to say. Nevertheless, 'participation' in urban planning of Rotterdam seems to have become a buzz word. The word itself has become a more public and outspoken part of the design process, but this has not led to significant transformation of power structures or an increase of citizen influence on policy and the built environment.

## Bibliography

André, P., Enserink, B., Connor, D., & Croal, P. (2006). *Public Participation International Best Practice*

*Principles*. Special Publication Series 4. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35

(4): 216–224. doi: 10.1080/01944366908977225.

Cornelissen, W. J. M., & Van Schilfgaarde, P. (1989). *De plaats van het bewonersbelang in de organisatie*

*van de Kop van Zuid: advies*. In *Stadsarchief Rotterdam*.

Custers, G. (2022, October 4). *Burgerparticipatie in de ongelijke stad: lessen voor de lokale overheid*.

Gebiedsontwikkeling.nu. <https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/burgerparticipatie-in-de-ongelijke-stad-lessen-voor-de-lokale-overheid/>

Dienst van Stadsontwikkeling. (1991). *Inspraak- en overlegrapportage bestemmingsplan de Kop van*

*Zuid: - wettelijk vooroverleg, - inspraakrapportage, - intern gemeentelijk overleg*. In *Stadsarchief Rotterdam*.

Edwards, A., & Schaap, L. (2006). *Burgerparticipatie in Rotterdam* [Thesis]. Erasmus Universiteit

Rotterdam.

Gaventa, J. (2005). *Reflections on the Uses of the Power Cube, Approach for Analyzing the Spaces, Places*

*and Dynamics of Civil Society Participation and Engagement*. The Netherlands: MFP Breed Netwerk.

Gemeente Rotterdam. (1987). *De Kop van Zuid: een stedenbouwkundig ontwerp*. In *Stadsarchief*

*Rotterdam*.

Gemeente Rotterdam. (1991). *De Kop van Zuid: Masterplan*. In *Stadsarchief Rotterdam*.

Gemeente Rotterdam. (2010). *Kop van Zuid SO*. Retrieved January 25, 2023, from

[https://ocw.tudelft.nl/wp-content/uploads/SO\\_4\\_2010\\_Westrik\\_Kop\\_van\\_Zuid.pdf](https://ocw.tudelft.nl/wp-content/uploads/SO_4_2010_Westrik_Kop_van_Zuid.pdf)

Gemeente Rotterdam. (2016). *Woonvisie Rotterdam*.

<https://rotterdam.notubiz.nl/document/3629537/1/document>

Gemeente Rotterdam. (2018a). *Ambitiedocument Rijnhaven*. Retrieved January 18, 2023, from

<https://rotterdam.raadsinformatie.nl/document/6653224/1#search=%22Ambitiedocument%20Rijnhaven%22>

Gemeente Rotterdam. (2018b). *Eindrapportage Participatie en Marktconsultatie Rijnhaven*. Retrieved

January 18, 2023, from

[https://rotterdam.raadsinformatie.nl/document/8605248/1/s20bb002130\\_1\\_57707\\_tds](https://rotterdam.raadsinformatie.nl/document/8605248/1/s20bb002130_1_57707_tds)

Gemeente Rotterdam. (2020). *Masterplan Rijnhaven*. Retrieved January 18, 2023, from

<https://rotterdam.raadsinformatie.nl/document/8513965/2#search=%22masterplan%20Rijnhaven%22>

Google. (n.d.). [Kop van Zuid/Rijnhaven region]. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from

<https://earth.google.com/web/>

Kasiemkhan, M. (2010). *Burgerparticipatie bij stedelijke vernieuwing in de gemeente Rotterdam; Een onderzoek naar spanningen bij de participatie van bewoners bij stedelijke vernieuwing in de gemeente Rotterdam* [Thesis]. Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

Kop van Zuid. (2016). *Kop van Zuid Historie*. Communicatieteam Kop van Zuid Rotterdam. Retrieved

January 25, 2023, from <https://docplayer.nl/11573943-Kop-van-zuid-rotterdam-historie.html>

Lowndes, N. (1995). *Citizenship and urban politics*, in D. Judge, G. Stoker and H. Wolman (eds).

Theories of Urban Politics, London: Sage, pp. 160-181.

- Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc. (n.d.). *Home*. <https://www.mvvainc.com/>
- Miessen, M. (2011). *Markus Miessen: The Nightmare of Participation (Crossbench Praxis as A Mode of Criticality)* (n). Sternberg Press, pp. 10-55.
- School for the City. (2023, March 4). *Living on the Southside*. In <https://www.schoolforthecity.nl/superdiversity23/>.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam. (2023). *Kop van Zuid*. <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/themas/kop-van-zuid/kop-van-zuid/>
- Stadmakerscongres. (2022). *De 7 stadsprojecten*. [https://stadmakerscongres.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/bijlage-Raadsinformatiebrief-7-stadsprojecten\\_20bb008073.pdf](https://stadmakerscongres.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/bijlage-Raadsinformatiebrief-7-stadsprojecten_20bb008073.pdf)
- Van Veelen, A. (2022). *Rotterdam: Een ode aan inefficiëntie*. De Correspondent.
- Van de Velde, E. (2022, May 6). *Burgertop op Zuid gaat niet door vanwege veel te weinig aanmeldingen: 'Wat is er aan de hand?'*. De Havenloods. <https://www.dehavenloods.nl/nieuws/algemeen/41894/burgertop-op-zuid-gaat-niet-door-vanwege-veel-te-weinig-aanmeld>
- Van Staalduine, J. (2019). *Rotterdam jaagt armen de stad uit*. Trouw, 21 augustus 2019. <https://www.trouw.nl/economie/rotterdam-jaagt-armen-de-stad-uit~baa69256/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>
- Verloop, C. (2019, June). *Iedereen mag meedenken over de nieuwe Rijnhaven*. Stadswerk Magazine, 06/2019.



Vermeulen, P., & Hallensleben, E. (1989). *Zin en onzin van het wijkniveau*. INFO PvdA Rotterdam, april 1989, 58–59. <https://opbouwwerkinrotterdam.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/06-zin-en-onzin-van-het-wijkniveau.pdf>