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Level of participation in land development: The case of Almere, Netherlands

Ayşe Burcu Kısacık*

Abstract

The actors and processes change in the stages of the land development process, and the involvement of the changing actors and processes in the process is at different levels. This involvement and the dimensions of the participation of the actors may differ according to the planning approaches and practices of the country where the project is developed. Participation discussions, especially after the 2000s, have led to an increase in the practices aimed at including citizens and other actors in the planning processes. In residential land development processes, examining the balance of power between actors and participation has gained importance over the years. The dimensions of participation at each stage in land development processes are the subject of the research. This research examines the city of Homeruskwartier, Almere, Netherlands, in order to explore the dimension of participation in the land development stages. It accepts Arstein's Citizen Participation Ladder and institutional land development theory as the theoretical basis. The level of participation in the institutional land development stages of the examined example was evaluated. The findings of the study determined that the stage with the highest participation in Homeruskwartier is the construction focused on self-organization. The study also found that participation was not concentrated in a single stage in the design of the project carried out to meet the need for social housing, and that it had an effect in other stages as well. Homeruskwartier is a successful participatory and self-organization-focused housing project. It is expected that the findings of this study will form a basis for policy developers and decision-makers to create participatory land development models.

Keywords: Homeruskwartier-Almere, housing, land development process, participation

1. Introduction

The production of developed or transformed housing plots to meet the housing needs is realized at the end of the land development process. Many processes and actors are involved in this process, from raw land as input to zoned land as output. Raw land, which is initially inactive, turns into mature land with a completed infrastructure ready for construction along with many factors such as the balance of power, financing, land owners, the interaction between actors, and development of infrastructure during the development process. In this process, many elements such as the location of the land, being in or out of the city, distribution of power among the actors involved, methods followed in land development processes, regulations, planning approaches of the country or region, etc. affect the shaping of the process. Although there are different approaches to the land development process, the institutional land development process stands out. The mentioned land development process is defined with different stages. These stages are grouped under six headings: land acquisition, financing, land preparation, land disposal, construction, and property transfer (Turk & Korthals Altes, 2010). In traditional land development processes, the acquisition of land is provided by the use of the state's public land acquisition powers, such as purchase and expropriation, or by the powers of special administrations within the framework of market dynamics. In the land development process, financing plays an important role in shaping the process. This stage includes the provision of resources such as banks, insurance, cooperation, etc., or public loans to finance the project.

*(Corresponding author), Res. Assist., Istanbul University, Türkiye abkisacik@istanbul.edu.tr
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The preparation of the infrastructure outside the designated area and on-site for the development of a plot of land without zoning is carried out during the land preparation process. This process includes planning land use, providing infrastructure and public service areas, and obtaining the necessary construction permits for the project (Turk & Korthals Altes, 2010). This process is the stage that may differ the most in the land development process depending on the country where the project is realized and/or the project proposal. In the traditional land development process, in addition to local governments as actors in the creation and execution of zoning plans, private sector actors such as developers and contractors with neo-liberal policies are also involved in this stage. The process of constructing a structure on a plot ready for construction is called the construction stage. This stage has a complicated structure such as design, project preparation, financing, and implementation. After the completion of construction, the transfer of the property rights of the developed real estate to the buyer actor, such as sale and rental, is the property transfer stage. As mentioned above, land development processes have a dynamic structure with different actors. Apart from the public and private sectors, there are also different actors involved in the process such as the landowner where the project will be carried out, the user of the developed residential real estate, and the residents of the surrounding area. However, in the traditional land development model, the balance of power is concentrated in the public and private sectors, the level of involvement of the local people in the process remains at a minimum level and they follow a passive role without having a say throughout the process.

On the other hand, especially after the 1960s, the involvement of different segments of society in political decisions has been rising as an important issue. The involvement of society in decision-making processes is called “participation”. However, the level of participation may vary depending on the project, country, region, subject, etc. Determining the level of participation is also one of the main issues in participation studies in the literature. Many different approaches have been developed to measure participation, but all of these approaches have shown that as the balance of power increases, the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes increases (Arnstein, 1969; Burns et al., 1994; IAP2, n.d.; Wilcox, 1994; Wulz, 1986). On the other hand, increasing participation in discussions brings up the involvement of different actors in the land development process, the production of responses to different housing needs, and the local people having a say in housing production projects. This situation makes it a research topic to try different models in the housing-based land development process and to evaluate the extent of participation within these models.

This study examines the dimensions of participation in the process of residential land development. The extent of participation is examined at which stages in the land development process. In this context, the Homeruskwartier region in Almere, Netherlands, is considered a case study as a “participatory land development” project. To evaluate the dimensions of participation, the study first examines Arnstein’s (1969) “Ladder of Citizen Participation”. Then, a case study is conducted. In the field study, academic resources on the subject and plans published by public institutions and organizations are used. First of all, the planning process of the area is historically addressed in order to understand the culture of participation. This study aims to determine the distribution of the balance of power in the process by evaluating the extent of participation at which stages in the process of residential land development. The outputs of the study are expected to form a basis for policymakers and decision-makers in the production of participation-supported land development models.

1.1. Participation

Arnstein (1969) defines participation as 'the people having a say in decisions about the future of the city.' The focus of participation, which includes terms like public or citizen participation, is on the distribution of power among actors. Wulz (1986) sees participation as a broad concept involving various stakeholders in decision-making. While its roots trace back to Ancient Greece, active participation in decision-making has gained importance in modern democratic societies. Since the 1960s, citizen participation has increasingly influenced urban planning, evolving beyond voting to

include broader involvement in shaping decisions. As participation increases, citizens gain more influence in the decision-making process. Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (1969) remains the most influential model, classifying levels of participation and power distribution.

Arnstein (1969) classified participation into eight levels, illustrating the extent of citizen power in decision-making through the 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Figure 1) These levels are organized into three categories: 'Nonparticipation,' 'Degrees of Tokenism,' and 'Citizen Power.' At the lowest levels of nonparticipation—Manipulation (1) and Therapy (2)—citizens are excluded from meaningful engagement in the planning process. Rather than contributing to decisions, they are subjected to efforts aimed at persuading or educating them to accept pre-made decisions. In these steps, the focus is on convincing citizens to adopt a plan, without soliciting their input or feedback. Examples of this include surveys that do not influence the outcome or tokenistic actions that give the appearance of participation without genuine involvement. Especially in the manipulation step, citizens are in a passive and spectator role in the decision-making process. In the therapy step, an attempt is made to create an impression of unreal participation. Public campaigns can be organized in these steps.

The second group includes the ostensible level. This group includes Informing (3), Consultation (4) and Persuasion (5). At these levels, citizens again do not have a say. However, they are informed about the plan or are given the opportunity to make suggestions. Although the level of participation increases as the steps go up in this group, the suggestions of the citizens are not actually evaluated by the powerful, but the citizens are persuaded. Here, the process of the demands, ideas and decisions of the citizens is completely under the initiative of the powerful. However, the powerful can revise the project in line with the demands and requests of the citizens at these stages. While there is a one-way flow at the informing stage, a flow also occurs from the citizen side as you go up. In other words, there is a one-way communication. There is limited and controlled participation at the consulting stage. This situation mentioned provides partial citizen participation. However, the main purpose here is still to have the project adopted by the citizens. Citizens do not have the power to control whether their demands create a change within the scope of the project and provide an input. This indicates that citizens have only a nominal, rather than real, participation in decision-making processes.

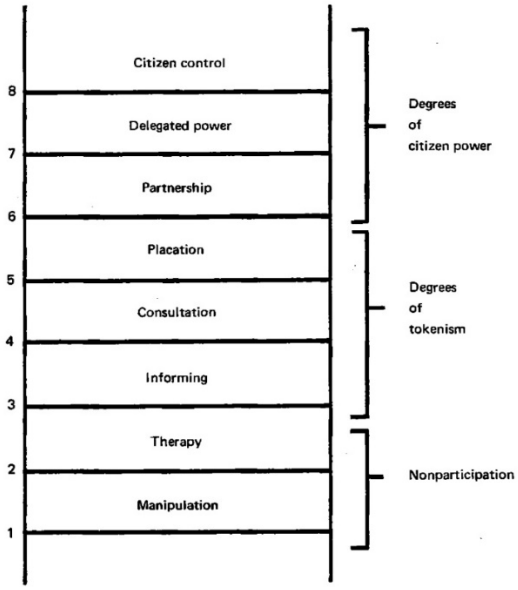

Figure 1 Ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Participation (6), Delegated Power (7) and Citizen Control (8) levels are included in the Citizen Power levels. In the cooperation level, citizens are given the opportunity to negotiate. Citizens play an active role and are given the right to negotiate. In this process, the public's opinions are considered through negotiations. Cooperation is the level where the public and decision-makers

exchange ideas and different stakeholders come together. In the delegation and citizen control levels, citizens gain the majority of the power in decision-making. In delegation, the public has more authority than the planner, especially in practice. In citizen control, power is completely left to the public. At this level, the participation of citizens in the decision-making process is the highest. Decisions are made collectively without relying on the power of the authorities, and responsibility is left to the citizens through an organization or committee. Arnstein says that this level means citizen participation.

1.2. Self-Building

Self-building is the practice in which households, individually or in groups, undertake the responsibility of producing housing for their use in disciplines such as planning, architecture and construction. Participation in this process can show different dimensions (Bossuyt et al., 2018). The scope of household participation can vary from building their own homes completely on their own to sharing design and construction responsibilities with other parties. The self-building method generally encourages the production of more sustainable and environmentally friendly housing (Davies, 2021). In this housing construction practice, households have more control over the design, construction and personalization of the houses they will live in. Thus, instead of uniformity in the houses produced with this method, personalized and diversified living spaces that meet the needs of the household emerge. This provides more autonomy and flexibility compared to traditional housing production, such as purchasing or renting properties built by developers, etc. (Bossuyt et al., 2018). In this practice, residents actively participate in different stages of the housing and land development process. The self-building method, where participation is high, is defined as a "simple" and "collective" method (Barlow et al., 2021). This situation shows that the self-building method is one of the upper stages of participation in housing production.

Unlike traditional housing and land development processes, this method has very low or no profit margin and marketing costs. According to Bossuyt et al. (2018), instead of freedom of choice and profit maximization in housing provision, "maximization of life satisfaction" are the two fundamental bases of the self-building method. In this context, self-building serves democratic rights with freedom of choice as well as ensuring the right to housing and aims to develop housing environments that meet the needs of households instead of profit-oriented projects in market conditions. The fact that it acts differently from market dynamics has made the self-building method more resilient in housing provision during financial crisis periods (Davies, 2021). For the reasons mentioned, many countries resort to the self-building method. However, it should not be forgotten here that this method is implemented in developed countries under a legal regulation. Although the gecekondu approach, which is the illegal production of housing by households to meet housing needs in our country (Korkmaz & Balaban, 2020), is a kind of self-building, this study discusses projects that are legally realized as self-building.

The self-build method is frequently used in European countries such as the Netherlands, England, France, and Germany (Davies, 2021; Portschy, 2016; Savini, 2017). For example, in Amsterdam, the largest city in the Netherlands, it is planned to use the self-build method in approximately one-quarter of newly built houses (Savini, 2017). Similarly, the United Kingdom has been implementing many policies and initiatives to support the self-build industry, especially since 2016 (Davies, 2021). In addition, Davies (2021) states that according to Morton (2013), the self-build method accounts for almost half of the current housing production in Europe. On the other hand, there are also aspects of self-build that require concern such as finding and providing suitable land, managing the planning process, creating knowledge and competence, managing the construction process, and creating an integrated environment.

2. Method

This study examines the extent of public participation in the process of residential land development. In this context, the Homeruskwartier neighborhood in Almere, Netherlands, is taken

as a case study. The first reason for choosing this example is that the flexible planning approach exists in the Netherlands, where the province of Almere is located. The second is that the country sees the city of Almere as a laboratory to try out new planning theories and approaches within itself. Another reason is that the participation approach in city planning has been included in the planning process and culture for a long time. Finally, in the literature, participation-oriented land development processes are mainly examined in urban areas and areas where there is already construction, and the participation of stakeholders (property/land owners) in these areas is examined. However, the examination of participation approaches in housing-oriented projects carried out in the periphery of the city or in development areas outside the city is limited. For these reasons, the city of Almere was chosen as an example for the study.

In the study, information about the case within the scope of the project was obtained from secondary sources through literature review. The literature review about the case was conducted through “ScienceDirect” using “Almere” and “land development”, but since sufficient resources could not be reached, only the keyword “Almere” was used and journals related to the planning discipline were selected. The study first started the review through the articles obtained from here and then continued with secondary source review through search engines. In order to have a command of the planning process of the case, the plan reports on the official website of the local municipality were included in the review. The information obtained as a result of the research was evaluated in six steps of the land development process. Although many theories have been developed for participation (Arnstein, 1969; Burns et al., 1994; IAP2, n.d.; Wilcox, 1994; Wulz, 1986), the theory of Citizen Participation Ladder gains importance with its deep-rooted and detailed participation in different dimensions. In evaluating the participation dimension of the case, this study uses Arnstein's (1969) Citizen Participation Theory, which is available in the literature. In line with the information obtained from secondary sources, the study examined at which stage of the Citizen Participation Ladder the Homeruskwartier project was located in the land development process and a participation matrix was created.

3. A Look at the City of Almere

The city of Almere is located across the IJmeer River from Amsterdam, the largest city in the Netherlands. The city is administratively affiliated with the province of Flevoland. However, due to spatial proximity and economic relations, it is part of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA) (Figure 2). This situation causes the pressure and housing needs in the city of Amsterdam to be reflected in the Almere region. The city is also one of the newest cities in the Netherlands. This situation enables Almere to serve as a laboratory for the country's planning approaches. The first construction in the city began in 1976 (Zhou & Commandeur, 2009). However, with the increasing density of construction in the region, the city has become the most populous city in the Flevoland region to which it is affiliated. The city's population exceeded 200,000 people in 2017.

When the development of the city of Almere is examined, it is seen that the city is a typical example of the spatial planning of the Netherlands after the Second World War (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). Although it has a hierarchy within itself, the city acts as an extension of Amsterdam and includes the garden city concept. The development of the city was planned as an agricultural hinterland to meet the agricultural needs of the region, and in the projects developed, efforts were made to preserve this feature in part.

Figure 2 Location of Almere, Almere Poort is highlighted in red by the author (Zhou et al., 2015)

The city of Almere consists of five official districts: Almere Stad, Almere Buiten, Almere Haven, Almere Hout and Almere Poort. The Almere Stad district is the city's center with a population of 108,605. It is a commercial, social and transportation focal point. The Almere Buiten district is the second most populous district with a population of 56,120. The Almere Haven district is defined by the municipality of Almere as the smallest district and Almere Hout as the most rural district. Almere Poort, one of the official districts, is the part of the city closest to Amsterdam (Figure 2). It is also defined as the youngest district in terms of development of the city. Development in this district started in 2005 (This is Almere, n.d.). The fact that this district has young and strong economic connections provides an advantage in the application of different models in the process of developing land for residential purposes.

3.1. Planning Process

Jansma and Wertheim-Heck (2021) examine Almere's planning process in four periods: 1958-1971, 1972-1983, 1984-2003, and 2004-2013. Almere's planning began in 1958 with the first national spatial planning document, responding to the Netherlands' need for new development and housing areas. Influenced by modernization, the garden city concept gained popularity in suburban planning. By 1971, legal procedures were finalized, aiming to accommodate 125,000 to 250,000 residents within 25 years. Flexibility was prioritized to account for the nation's agricultural policies and future uncertainties (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). The plan emphasized rural-urban integration, allocating one-third of the area to green spaces, with key zones identified for urban concentration, industry, and recreation (Figure 3-A). Almere Poort was designated as agricultural land, with development focused along the coast.

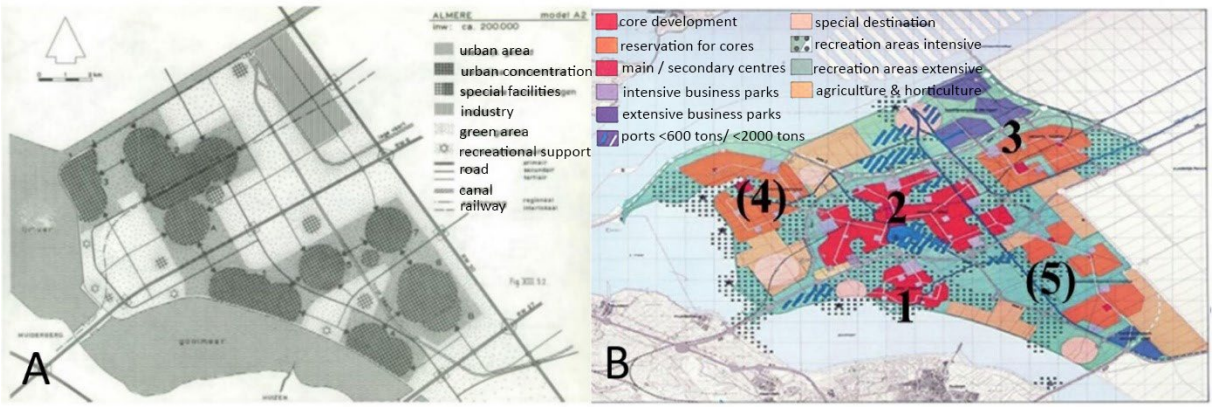

Figure 3 Development Plan of Almere in the 1970s (A) and Almere 1978 Concept Plan (B) (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021) (Translated by the author)

The planning period from 1972 to 1983 marked a shift in Almere's development, with growing support for it to become an independent city rather than a suburb of Amsterdam or Utrecht. In 1972, the Flevo Polders Development Authority (FPDA) was tasked with developing a city for 125,000 to 250,000 residents by 2000. The goal was for Almere to function independently, reflecting the national trend of "controlled and concentrated urbanization" outlined in the Third National Spatial Plan of 1977 (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). This situation made Almere one of the first examples of the reflections of the national planning of the Netherlands in the 70s. The 1978 concept plan (Figure 3-B) outlined a hierarchical development strategy, with Almere Haven (1), Almere Stad (2), and Almere Buiten (3) prioritized for development until 2000. The regions Almere Pampus (4) and Almere Poort (5) were designated for later development, with rural character preserved in Almere Poort (Almere, 1983). The Homeruskwartier neighborhood, analyzed in this study, began to emerge in this period, although its development was not fully realized until later.

Following the 1978 concept plan, the official land use plan for Almere was approved in 1983 (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). This plan introduced six social goals, reflecting a people-oriented approach: promoting regional population flow, anticipating future needs, ensuring inclusivity ("room for everyone"), supporting individual development, protecting the natural environment, and fostering urban culture and identity (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003). The goal of inclusivity highlights a commitment to accommodating diverse social groups. The 1983 Construction Plan directed city expansion northward, toward the sea, along the Amsterdam-Leystad route (Figure 4). Although the plan maintained elements of a distinct city, it remained influenced by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept (Cabannes & Ross, 2018).

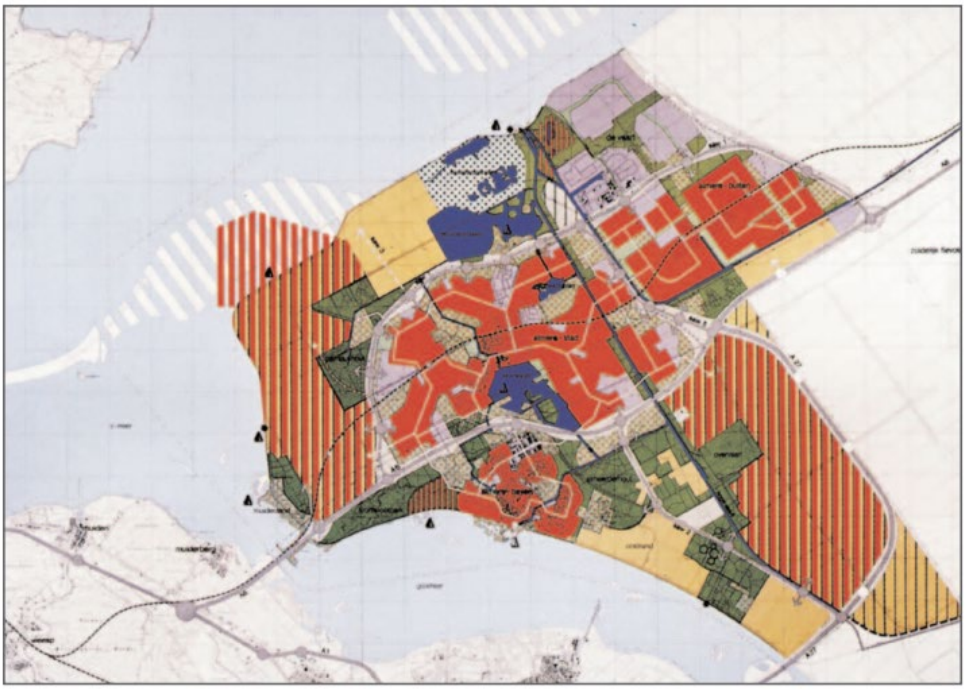

Figure 4 1983 Construction Plan (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003)

The approval of the 1983 Construction Plan marked the beginning of Almere's third planning period (1984–2003), coinciding with the establishment of the local municipality in 1984. This transfer of planning authority from regional to local government allowed the municipality to acquire land from the central government at a low cost, enabling real estate development and revenue generation from housing projects (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). To accelerate housing, the municipality invested in public infrastructure such as hospitals, parks, and schools. The city's rapid growth, influenced by the Amsterdam metropolitan area, led to an annual construction of 2,000–3,000 homes, increasing the population to over 150,000. While Almere had traditionally housed middle-income groups, this period saw a shift, with expectations that higher-income

residents would move from Amsterdam to Almere (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003). The city also aimed to attract both young and older populations during this phase.

After the 1980s, influenced by neoliberal policies, real estate projects in Almere were developed through public-private partnerships, following the traditional Dutch land development model. A new planning phase began in 2010, focusing on intensive urbanization on the city's western side (towards Amsterdam), while the eastern side retained a rural character. The 2010 Almere Construction Plan (Figure 5), approved in 2003, set development goals for 2030, outlining land use and project timelines. In Almere Poort, the plan designated areas for a city center (red), central axis (orange), suburban neighborhoods (cream), mixed-use spaces (grey), and office areas (light pink). Unlike earlier plans, northern coastal development was postponed, with initial growth focused on office areas near the Amsterdam route. The plan provided clearer development directives than in previous periods, particularly prioritizing Almere Poort between 2003 and 2010.

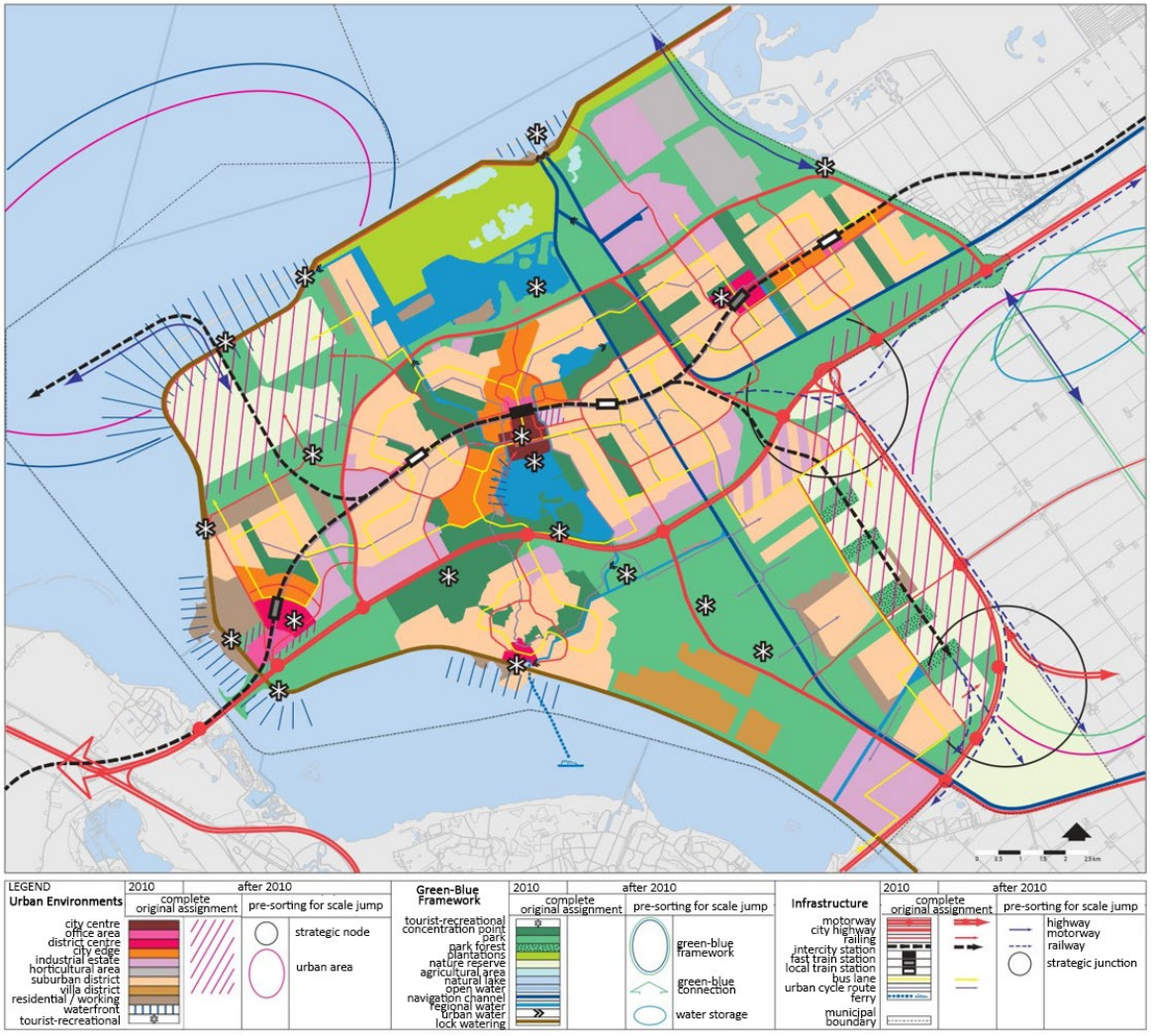

Figure 5 2010 Almere Construction Plan, 2003 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003) (Translated by the author)

Between 2004 and 2013, during the implementation of the 2010 Almere Development Plan, significant developments occurred. In 2006, the central government approved a national program aimed at enhancing the international competitiveness of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region, which increased development pressure on Almere (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021). This led to the approval of the Almere 2.0 Program in 2009, planning the construction of 60,000 homes over 30 years. The Almere Urbanization Fund (FVA) was established to support these goals. However, due to the economic crisis, housing production dropped from 2,000 to 500 units annually, falling short of targets.

The Almere 2.0 Program outlined seven principles for regional development, including fostering diversity, connecting the city with its surroundings, strengthening ties with nature, anticipating change, promoting innovation, designing healthy systems, and encouraging residents to actively participate in city-building (McDonough & Partners, 2018). The principle of "encouraging people to create the city" highlights the inclusive nature of Almere's planning approach. In this process, planners focused on enhancing local self-organization capacity (Jansma & Wertheim-Heck, 2021), reflecting a shift towards participatory planning. The program targeted new development in Pampus, Centrum Weerwater, and Oosterwold (Figure 6), with the goal of reaching a population of 350,000 by 2030. The Oosterwold Master Plan was approved in 2013, while Almere Poort was identified as a key area for implementing self-organization strategies.

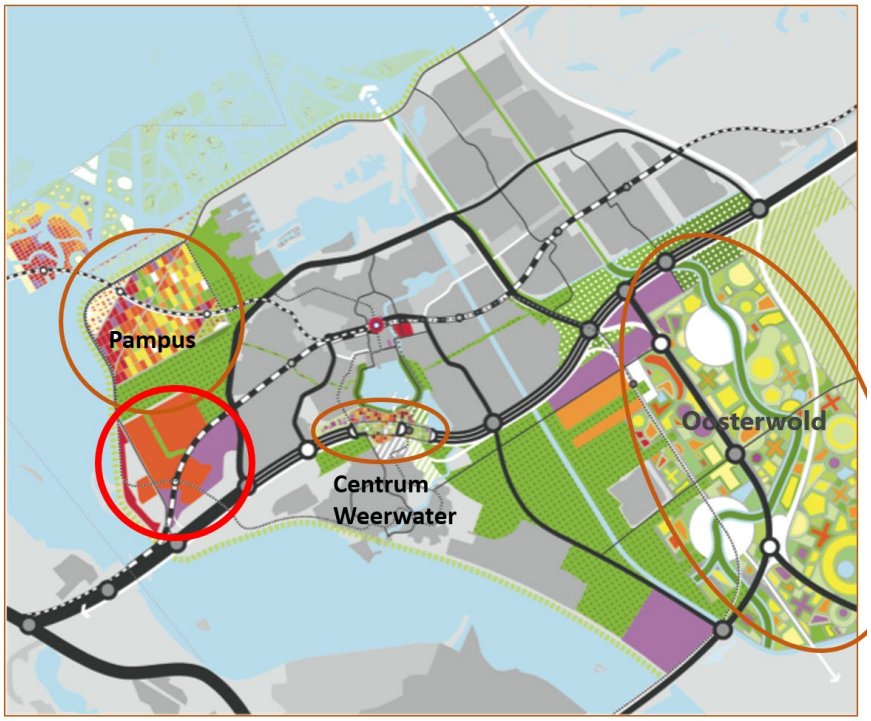

Figure 6 Almere 2.0 Concept Plan (Duivesteijn, n.d.)

3.2. Homeruskwartier

The Homeruskwartier neighborhood is the largest self-built and self-constructed settlement in the Netherlands, located in the Almere Poort district. The neighborhood has become a brand with self-building. In the 1980s, self-building and property ownership were seen as a choice and control method by the central government (Bossuyt, 2021). This method has been used quite frequently in the housing production of the Netherlands. After 2006, conceptual planning in the eighties began to support residents in building their own homes. Almere Poort was chosen as the first new core created within the framework of the new expansion program. The aim here is to meet the needs of households in particular in need of social housing. Self-building is generally done by high-income households in the Netherlands. Middle and low-income households tend to meet their needs with the existing housing stock (Bossuyt, 2021). Most households thought about building their own homes after coming across the Homeruskwartier project. Meeting the need for social housing through self-building is a model supported by local governments responsible for social housing production.

Homeruskwartier is a 106-hectare neighborhood. A total of 3000 housing units with different model types are envisaged for the entire neighborhood. Of these 3000 housing units, 1200 are planned to be developed in the self-building model. The remaining 600 housing units are planned to be built with collective methods and 1200 with other models (co-commissioning) (Bossuyt et al., 2018). A conceptual / abstract land use plan was prepared for the neighborhood. When looking at the plan, there are public areas and common use functions in the center of the neighborhood with

a circular form. The center facilities (centrum voorzieningen) shown in purple serve as the heart of the neighborhood. Then there are private and collective parcels marked with different colors. On the periphery of the area, there are areas defined as institutional (institutioneel) (Figure 7-B).

In this plan, plot-based rules that will guide the commissioning process are included in special land registry records (plot passports) for each plot. In addition to national construction regulations, there are additional, special-legal requirements for each plot (Bossuyt et al., 2018). These documents, which can be translated as plot passports, show that all scales and binding legal regulations regarding the plot are collected in a single document. The area is divided into 720 separate plots of different sizes, as well as a higher density, mixed-use central area where future tenants can come together to build multi-family apartment blocks, offices or retail space (Portschy, 2016).

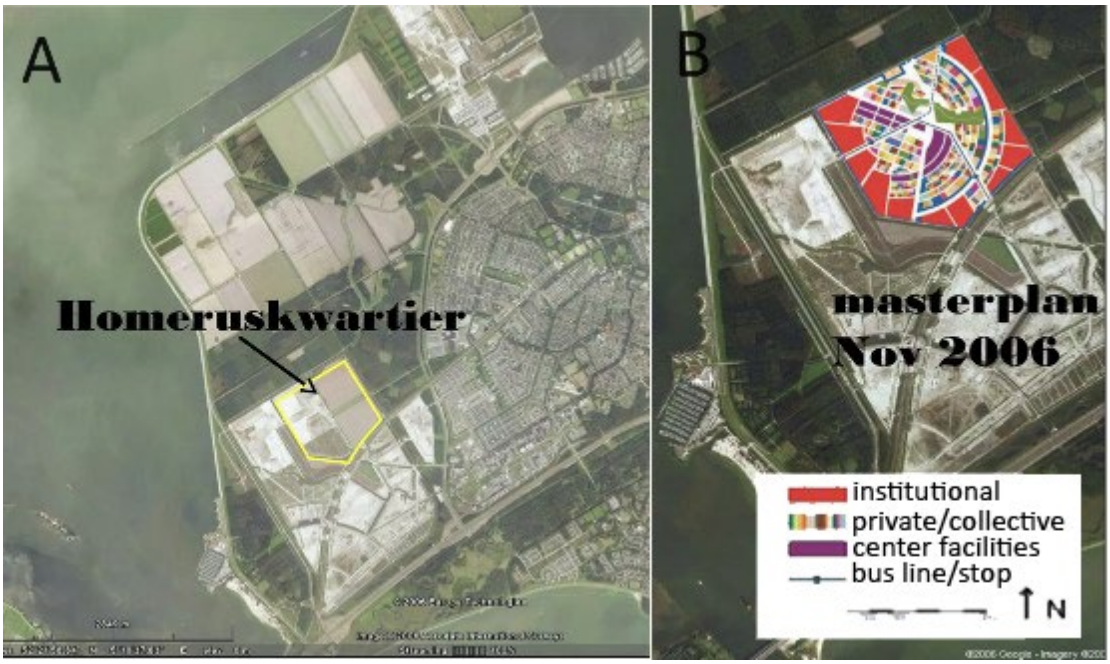

Figure 7 Almere 2.0 Concept Plan (Duivesteijn, n.d.)

3.2.1. Land Acquisition

In Homeruskwartier, as in the rest of the Netherlands, the municipality plays an active role in the land development process. With the establishment of the municipality in 1984, the land became municipal property. Thus, the municipality is the owner of all land in Homeruskwartier (Bossuyt, 2021). According to the 2006 plan, 40% of the housing stock in the neighborhood was planned to be self-built, 20% collectively built, and the remaining 40% with other models (co-commissioning) (Figure 8). In the self-built model, households provide the land themselves, while in the collective built model, households are required to form an association before purchasing land and housing. In collective models, the acquisition and responsibility for land through joint operations are carried out by a developer or housing community. However, the design process largely belongs to households.

A physical office and municipal body were established to facilitate land acquisition and provide construction guidance (Bossuyt et al., 2018). After the development of the municipal plan, approximately half of the land was put up for sale (Tellinga, 2013). The lands put up for sale and the project were introduced to the purchasing public in the office established by the municipality. The stores and facilities built by the households that would collectively build themselves were initially envisaged for the center of Homeruskwartier. In other words, the areas that are central in the plan are based on collective construction. In these collective construction areas, the density of construction is higher and commercial functions are allowed. On the other hand, who will be together in the plots to be built collectively is again approved by the municipality. For example, the

municipality, which allows different households to build together, does not allow construction with relatives. It can be said that the municipality tries to preserve diversity here.

The densely built areas that were to be built collectively and included commercial functions did not attract as much attention as expected, could not be sold and attracted the attention of commercial entrepreneurs. In 2012, the municipality allowed the unsold vacant lands to be purchased and developed by private developers or architects. Thus, the residence requirement that was previously present in all parcels was abolished (Bossuyt et al., 2018). As of 2014, more than 90% of the lands were sold (Portschy, 2016).

Figure 8 Homeruskwartier Construction Plan (Bossuyt et al., 2018)

3.2.2. Financing

The land prices for the households in the project are quite reasonable compared to the market. Since the project is a social housing need, it includes low mortgage interest and low construction costs. In the city of Almere, land is relatively more affordable compared to its surroundings. In 2018, housing prices in Homeruskwartier increased by 6.3% compared to 2012, when the real estate value for the neighborhood was first estimated. These affordable plots account for 30% of the total number of detached plots sold annually in Almere (Bossuyt et al., 2018). The low-cost housing offer has attracted the attention of those in need of social housing. While the construction of a household depends on the household income, developers needed at least 70% pre-sale and bank loans (Davies, 2021). Since the project predates the 2008 financial crisis, developers who stopped construction during the crisis as well as self-builders continued the process. In other words, since self-building is tied to household income, it is less vulnerable to economic downturns than large-scale projects.

The project particularly encouraged home ownership for former social housing tenants and affordable housing tenants. However, this also limited the extent to which they could own their own homes, depending on the amount of money they had mortgaged or put up (Bossuyt, 2021). Homeruskwartier targeted affordable housing for low-income households at €20,000 (£14,500) per year, due to the cost savings of self-build compared to conventional housing. Thus, in 2007, the cost of the smallest 86 m2 plot was around £25,000 (British Pounds Sterling), while a 1000 m2 plot cost £290,000 (Davies, 2021). Small plots were preferred by middle and low-income households, while large plots were preferred by developers. Individual construction accounted for more than half of Almere's land revenue (Bossuyt et al., 2018).

3.2.3. Land Preparation

With the establishment of the municipality in 1984, the ownership of the land was transferred to the municipality, and the fact that the land was completely owned by the municipality accelerated the service and infrastructure processes. Within the scope of the project, the municipality determined the construction conditions for certain parcel groups. These construction conditions include building lines, building height, minimum and maximum building area. In addition, in some cases, construction rules such as material details were specified. Land passports, which define the construction rules and rights on the land, include guidelines, limitations and regulations for construction. These documents do not only determine the conditions and design rules; they also define what can be done and is possible on a land. In other words, it is necessary to comply with the national and local restrictions for the land. The infrastructure located outside the land was previously carried out by the local municipality to increase the housing demand in the city. The creation of the parcels within the scope of the project was also prepared by the municipality.

3.2.4. Land Disposal

The land passport application in the Netherlands includes binding conditions in the transfer deeds of individual plots. With this model, everything from legal regulations to morphological limitations is collected in a single document (Bossuyt et al., 2018). With the purchase of the plots, the land passports prepared for the plots are transferred to the self-constructing households. During this process, households generally follow two approaches. The first of these is to determine their needs first, create a design draft and buy a plot accordingly, or to buy a plot according to their economic conditions and build accordingly. The application of creating land passports in self-building has been interpreted by researchers not as restrictive, but as a guide for what can be done on the plot (Bossuyt, 2021).

The process of land disposal, in this example, differs from the traditional model in the land development process. While in the traditional model, the land disposal is between developers, here there is a direct transfer from the municipality to the property owner. Therefore, the land disposal stage can also be seen as a property transfer.

On the other hand, the municipality organized a competition for areas other than self-building (co-commissioning) in the neighborhood. Developers made offers within the scope of this competition. However, local people were not included in the negotiation processes in the competition results. For this reason, households did not approach the projects and there was no demand. Thus, it was decided to develop large areas of land in a traditional way (Bossuyt et al., 2018). In other words, parcels in the neighborhood that could not be sold or were not foreseen for self-building were transferred to developers in the traditional model and capital flow was provided. Although there was an effort for participation by organizing a competition here, the participation of local people in the competition was tried to be ensured by the companies that would submit offers, not by public forces, but by the companies that would submit offers, but this was unsuccessful.

3.2.5. Construction and Property Transfer

Within the scope of the project, the basic construction rules of the neighborhood were determined by the municipality. However, people building their own houses has enabled the emergence of structures that meet their own needs and increased diversity. Households that built themselves generally used the maximum indoor construction permit granted to them. For example, since there is no statement about the basement in areas with a single-story construction permit, households also built a basement (Bossuyt, 2021). The tendency for maximum construction has led to a tendency to build row houses with front and back gardens instead of detached houses with a draw distance. A catalog was created for households to guide construction, and some households benefited from it. This construction catalog includes details such as exemplary design models, plot arrangement, and building materials. Again, some households purchased architectural and

contracting services during the process. During this process, facilitating catalogs such as the list of architects were published by the municipality. It is not mandatory for architects to work in the project. Approximately one-fourth of those who built themselves worked with an architect (Bossuyt et al., 2018). The design of the buildings was generally based on the catalogue or the contractor. On the other hand, the municipality did not actively participate in the construction process, but rather remained in the role of a guide and facilitator for the self-builders.

There was no property transfer phase for self-building in the project, this process was realized in the land acquisition. However, in places where self-building is carried out and traditional models are followed, property transfer is realized through sales. In the distribution of 186 million Euros of income in 2012, self-builders had 62%, developers 34% and the center 4% (Tellinga, 2013). Today, the construction process of the neighborhood is finished and completed.

4. Exploring the Participation Aspect

In the previous section, the land development processes of Almere Homeruskwartier were examined. As a result of the examination, data regarding participation in the six stages of land development were determined. In this section, the participation levels of each stage were evaluated (Table 1).he project was not carried out with the participation of local people and recipient stakeholders in the land acquisition stage, and the municipality was the dominant power. For this reason, an active participation cannot be mentioned. However, since the project was developed to meet the need for social housing, it respects the rights of different segments of the society. In addition, encouraging households to self-organize by becoming an institutional organization such as an association in areas where it will be realized collectively is also among the participation efforts. However, these efforts do not have sanctions such as affecting the process within the balance of power or revision. It was determined that the participation of citizens was at the level of informing (3) by presenting the land supply for social housing and establishing a physical office for the purpose of introducing and informing the public about the project. At this stage, encouraging self-organization, especially for the collective, strengthens participation in the future stages rather than ensuring participation in the land acquisition stage of the land development process.

In another stage of the land development process, financing, low and medium economic level households were tried to be directed with low land prices and low mortgage interest. Although disadvantaged groups in the society were taken into consideration at this stage, the financing model was in the form of making decisions on their behalf instead of consulting them. In other words, there is no balance of power between the actors in the creation of the project's financial model, instead, there is decision-making and acting as if they were them. This situation is at the level of therapy (2) since participation involves role-playing and the decision-maker putting himself in the citizen's shoes. In other words, there is no active participation at this stage, and the citizen is presented with attractive offers.

The stage of land preparation is the stage with the lowest level of participation in the whole process. This stage was carried out entirely by the local municipality. Local people and citizens were not consulted in the preparation of the neighborhood plans and parcels. In addition, many of the data in the preparation of the land are based on plans from years ago and the Almere 2.0 Program. This situation shows that the central powers are behind the local government, which seems to be preparing the land. The fact that the local people were not included in the process at this stage shows that the level of participation in the preparation of the land, in the case of Homeruskwartier, remained at the level of manipulation (1).

The stage of disposal of the land that comes after the preparation of the land is not included in this project for self-building plots. However, a competition was organized for the area on the outer perimeter of Homeruskwartier, which was developed with traditional methods. Although the organization of the competition was a positive development for participation, local people were not included in the competition; the companies that participated in the competition as candidates

tried to communicate with the public themselves. This situation shows that participation in areas where the traditional land development model is applied with the competition is limited to the companies' own efforts. On the other hand, there is no sanction for companies to get the opinions of the citizens. The use of these ideas in the development and revision of the project is at the initiative of the company. This situation mentioned means that participation in the disposal process of the land is at the level of consultation (4).

The construction phase stands out as the most important phase in the land development process of Homeruskwartier. This phase allows the project to differentiate itself from other housing development projects and gain a characteristic feature. The construction phase is completely left to the public. However, the municipality has determined the most basic construction conditions. In addition, instead of playing an active role in the construction phase, the municipality has a supervisory role. The municipality has taken a supportive position in the construction process, such as creating a catalogue and sharing lists of professionals who can receive assistance with the public. This situation has ensured that the public has a high level of say and implementation in the physical environment. The active participation of the public in the process and decision-making process shows that there is a participation dimension of delegation of authority (7) during the construction phase. This phase is the most participatory phase of Homeruskwartier. Again, the participation dimension followed in this phase makes the project stand out.

The property transfer phase can be considered together with the land disposal phase. There is no approach towards participation at this stage. Moreover, at this stage the project envisages those in need of social housing to own and reside in the property, but the tenants are not involved in the process. In other words, it is seen that the participation and voice of the social housing tenants is still limited. This situation shows that participation at this level is at the lowest level of manipulation (1).

Table 1 Homeruskwartier's Land Development Stages (Table by author)

		Non-Participation Levels		Degrees of Tokenism			Degrees of Citizen Power		
		1 Manipulation	2 Therapy	3 Informing	4 Consultation	5 Placation	6 Partnership	7 Delegated Power	8 Citizen Control
Land Acquisition	Land owned by the municipality Sale to the public and developers (40% self-build - 20% collective, 40% other) Establishment of associations for collective construction Physical office (promotion) and municipal body			**X**					
Financing	Affordable land sales Low mortgage interest		**X**						
Land Preparation	Made by the municipality (ten sites) The construction decisions were made by the municipality.	**X**							
Land Disposal	This stage is not present in self-building. In co-commissioning (traditional) there is competition but no public participation. Later on the traditional model				**X**				
Construction	People do it themselves Guided by catalogue Municipality is not active Anyone who wants to can buy architecture and contracting services - licensed companies are shared by the municipality							**X**	
Property Transfer	None or sale (no mention of rent)	**X**							

When the theoretical approach of the land development process, specifically for Homeruskwartier, is examined under Arnstein's citizen participation ladder, it is seen that the highest level of participation is at the construction stage with the transfer of authority (7). At this stage, the municipality does not play an active role, the public shapes the process and decisions. However, at this stage, the public is not given full authority for decisions, and the municipality again acts as a supervisor. For this reason, it cannot be said that we are at the "citizen control" stage where citizens have full power in the balance of power. On the other hand, since there is no disposal of the land in the land development model suitable for the construction stage where participation is at the highest, and since partial participatory processes are applied with competition for other models in the project, disposal of the land is the second highest level with consultation (4). However, it should not be overlooked that the participation here is not by the local authority, but by the initiatives of the private sector. In the process, the preparation of the land and property transfer have the lowest participation levels.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The planning process of Almere has evolved significantly, reflecting the common approaches and market dynamics of each period. Initially an agricultural area, it was opened to development in the 70s with a cautious, people-oriented approach. From the 80s to 2000s, influenced by neo-liberal policies and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region, urbanization intensified, and the local municipality gained planning power, focusing on real estate development through traditional Dutch methods. Post-2000s, the financial crisis spurred experimentation with social housing models, emphasizing self-organization, community involvement, and participatory planning. Almere has become a laboratory for innovative housing solutions, supporting Amsterdam's competitiveness.

The land development process of Almere Homeruskwartier reveals varying levels of citizen participation across its stages, assessed through Arnstein's ladder of participation. The initial stages, such as land acquisition, preparation, and property transfer, exhibit minimal participation, often limited to manipulation (1), with decisions dominated by the municipality or central powers and little to no input from local citizens. The financing stage reflects a therapy level (2), where decisions were made on behalf of citizens without consultation, despite efforts to cater to disadvantaged groups. In contrast, the construction phase demonstrates the highest participation, reaching the delegation level (7), as the municipality played a supportive role while citizens shaped the process and made decisions within predefined limits. Land disposal achieved consultation (4) via competitive processes, albeit driven by private sector initiatives rather than local government.

Self-building, which is one of the last points that participatory planning has reached in housing production, is actually frequently used to meet the housing needs of low-income households. Although self-building is aimed at meeting the housing needs of households in an illegal way such as squatter houses in our country (Korkmaz & Balaban, 2020), self-building has been an important public policy in the Netherlands since the 1980s. Self-building reduces costs for public housing production needs. On the other hand, the demand for social housing production and the attempt to solve this demand with current participation approaches have led to the development of the Homeruskwartier project in Almere. The region has developed with the strategies of central and local governments, especially after the 2000s. Self-building stands out as a characteristic feature of Homeruskwartier. The project supports not only households that need social housing to build themselves, but also collective production. However, as a result of the examination, it is seen that there is a shift towards traditional land development processes in the project and participation in this process has decreased.

Although there is intense participation in the Homeruskwartier project, this participation is mostly in the construction phase, and the participation dimensions of other stages of the land development process are ignored. Although the organization of the competition in the disposal of the land seems like an input for participation, the efforts for participation were made by private companies participating in the competition, but it could not be concluded. This situation shows that

the people in the project are actually only interested in their own houses, and that interventions in the environment they live in are not their priorities. In addition, the fact that the people do not participate in the development of the environment outside their own houses can also be interpreted as a weak sense of belonging in the newly started project. However, it should not be forgotten at this point that the stage of the project's introduction, which is the acquisition of the land, is emphasized as being a homeowner and building your own house. The project has been emphasizing this aspect strongly from the very beginning, and the other stages of the land development process always serve the construction process. The fact that participation was low or almost non-existent in other stages of the project may have caused this sense of belonging not to be formed, and citizens not to be interested in the environment outside their own houses. However, Homeruskwartier is a very important example with its high degree of participation in housing production and the implementation of high participation in the construction process rather than in the provision of land, unlike traditional housing production.

As a result of the study, it was determined that participation in the land development process for housing production purposes can be at different levels. On the other hand, stages where participation is low can discourage people from participating at unexpected points. This study sets an example for decision-makers in the development of participation models. The study shows that when participation is provided not only by persuasion but also by taking an active role in the process, not only the needs of the citizens are met; it also helps to relieve the financial burden on local governments that have the obligation to produce social housing. When secondary sources are used in the case analysis in this study, the results obtained remain in the form of interpretation. In order to develop the study and test the accuracy of the results, it is recommended that future studies follow a method that includes the actors involved in the development and implementation of the project. In addition, future studies should be based on the production of a model on the extent and type of participation in the stages of the land development process with different case studies, which will form a basis for implementation.

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Resume

Ayşe Burcu Kısacık is a Research Assistant at Istanbul University Faculty of Architecture, Department of City and Regional Planning and a PhD Student at Istanbul Technical University. Her research interests focus on sustainable urban systems and climate resilience including participation and digitalization.