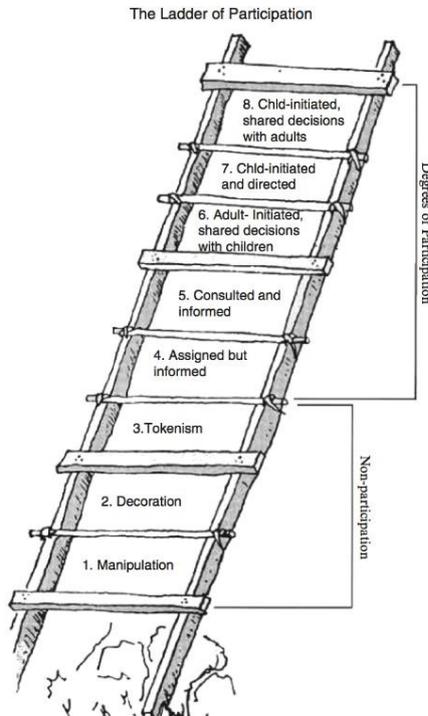


## Ladder of Participation

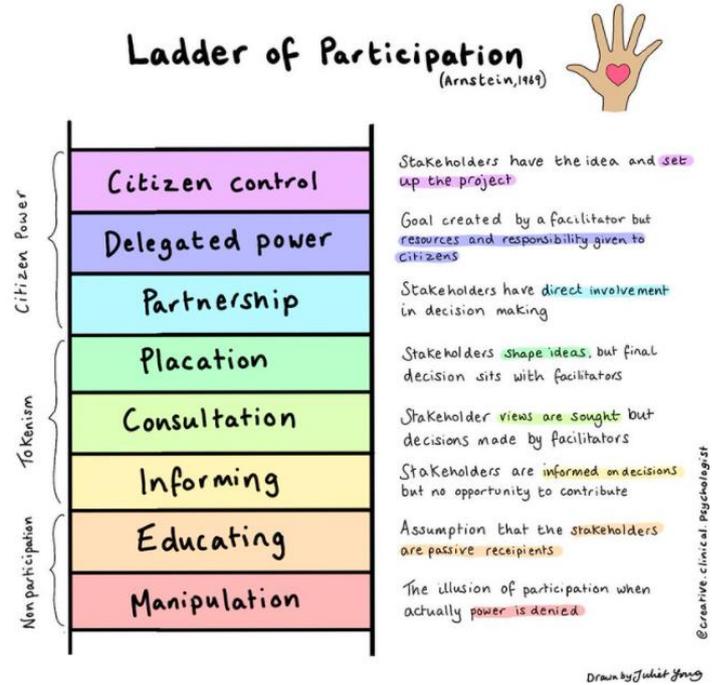
Children’s Ladder of Participation

*Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship* (Hart, 1992)



Ladder of Participation

(Arnstein, 1969)



## Children’s Ladder of Participation

Examples of the eight rungs of Hart’s Ladder of Children’s Participation are below (with quotes from Hart):

### Manipulation

When children and young people do not understand the issues motivating a participatory process or their role in that process e.g. “children carrying political placards concerning the impact of social policies on children when those children do not understand the issues or their role in the political process”.

### Decoration

When children and young people are put on public display during an event, performance, or other activity organized for a specific purpose, but they do not understand the meaning or intent of their involvement e.g. “when children perform at an event but have little idea of what it is all about and no say in the organizing of the occasion”.

### Tokenism

When children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions. Eg “how children are sometimes used on conference panels. Articulate, charming children are selected by adults to sit on a

panel with little or no substantive preparation on the subject and no consultation with their peers who, it is implied, they represent”.

### **Assigned by Informed**

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When the children and young people understand the intentions of the project, know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why, have a meaningful role, and volunteer for the project after the project was made clear to them e.g. “a World Summit for Children held at the UN Headquarters - an extremely large event with great logistical complexity and it would have been difficult to involve young people genuinely in the planning of such an event. However, a child was assigned to each of the 71 world leaders. As ‘pages,’ these children became experts on the UN building and the event, and were able to play the important role of ushering the Presidents and Prime Ministers to the right places at the right times”.

### **Consulted and Informed**

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When children act as consultants for adults in a manner which has great integrity. The project is designed and run by adults, but children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously. Eg “an adult-led survey of youth perceptions in which the youth are informed about the purpose of the survey, consulted about appropriate questions before it’s developed, and given an opportunity to provide feedback on the final survey before it is administered”.

### **Adult-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Children**

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When adults initiate participatory projects, but they share decision-making authority or management with children e.g. “a youth newspaper may be an adult-initiated project, but children can manage every aspect of the operation—from reporting, writing, and editing to advertising, printing, and distribution—with only guidance and technical assistance from adults”.

### **Child-Initiated and Director**

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When children and young people conceptualize and carry out complex projects by working cooperatively in small or large groups. While adults may observe and assist the children, they do not interfere with the process or play a directive or managerial role. “It’s difficult to find examples of child-initiated community projects. A primary reason for this is that adults are usually not good at responding to young people’s own initiatives. Even in those instances where adults leave children alone to design and paint a wall mural or their own recreation room, it seems hard for them not to play a directing role.”

### **Child-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults**

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When children and young people share decision-making authority, management, or power with adult partners and allies e.g. “students partnering with adults to raise funding, develop and run a school program, or lead a community campaign. A major advantage of this form of youth participation is that it can empower young people to have a significant impact on policies, decisions, or outcomes that were traditionally under the exclusive control and direction of adults, such as legislative or political processes”.