Disentangling processes of neighbourhood change: Towards a better understanding of upgrading and downgrading of neighbourhoods in the highly-regulated context of the Netherlands

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Participation in neighbourhood upgrading: achievements of residents in a Dutch disadvantaged neighbourhood

This chapter is co-authored by Fenne M. Pinkster and under review at an international peer-reviewed journal.

Abstract
This paper addresses the way in which the opening up of governance spaces has created new opportunities for residents to contribute to neighbourhood upgrading through participation in decision-making processes in policy plans for neighbourhood upgrading. The paper focuses on the disadvantaged neighbourhood of Transvaal (Amsterdam), which has gone through successive stages of regeneration from 1999 onwards and therefore allows for a comprehensive analysis of participation mechanisms established over the last fifteen years. Findings demonstrate that creating opportunities for resident participation in neighbourhood governance may form the new ideal, but turns out to be a process of trial and error. Participation mechanisms that contribute to improving everyday concerns of residents in particular domains (e.g. safety, nuisance and strengthening the local community) are quite successful. However, the mechanisms did not result in more open planning processes at the scale of the neighbourhood as a whole. Especially strategic and long-term decisions about tenure conversion remained out of reach for residents. Despite urban professionals’ high ambitions about resident participation, residents’ achievements in shaping policy plans for neighbourhood upgrading still remain limited.

5.1 Introduction

Until a few decades ago, decision-making processes about neighbourhood change did not open up very far. Decisions about the need for and nature of neighbourhood
interventions were made by governmental organizations and resident engagement with these processes was limited to resistance against top-down interventions. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of this is the story of Jane Jacobs, who played a key role in saving the West Greenwich Village in New York from urban renewal in the 1950s/1960s, through mobilizing residents into resistance against these plans (Flint, 2009). There are many similar examples from the early days of gentrification of resistance against neighbourhood change and displacement (e.g. Beauregard, 1990; Smith, 1996; Newman and Wyly, 2006).

Such forms of resident activism and protest have diminished (Lees et al., 2008). At the same time, planning processes have opened up to include residents in decision-making processes in policies and interventions for neighbourhood upgrading (Bailey, 2010; Parés et al., 2011). This is related to the shift from government to governance, which created opportunities for varying actors, such as private developers and housing associations, to participate in institutional arrangements in neighbourhood regeneration. These local partnerships usually also include some form of resident representation (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003; Blanco et al., 2011). Resident participation in decision-making processes in neighbourhood regeneration is thought to create opportunities and benefits for both residents and other stakeholders (Robinson et al., 2005; Taylor, 2007).

Nevertheless, the value of resident participation in neighbourhood governance is much debated (Bailey, 2010). On the one hand, participation is seen as ‘a good thing’, because it represents the democratization of bureaucratic decision-making and resident empowerment (e.g. Chaskin and Garg, 1997; Lawson and Kearns, 2010) and provides local knowledge which is otherwise unavailable to state actors (Robinson et al., 2005). On the other hand, Fainstein (2010) has criticized studies on resident participation for being pre-occupied with the process of planning and not focusing enough on the city or neighbourhood as objects of planning. Too often, studies address how participation is organized and who participates, rather than on the way in which residents influence interventions and thereby contribute to place-making. The actual achievements of residents in planning processes may in fact be limited (e.g. Jones, 2003; Chaskin et al., 2012). Resident involvement may serve as ‘showcase participation’ in the sense that it legitimizes state interventions, while the contribution of residents often remains limited in scope. Whether residents are able to influence neighbourhood interventions seems

25 These processes inspired her to write her famous book The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961).
to depend largely on how resident participation is organized (Jones, 2003; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011). In practice, the formulation of regeneration plans is a highly-complex, bureaucratic and ‘sticky’ process, which requires specific resources and competencies which residents may not have (Taylor, 2007; Chaskin et al., 2012).

This paper focuses on the way in which the opening up of governance spaces increased the possibilities of residents to contribute to neighbourhood change through participating in the shaping of regeneration plans. The aim is to explore to what degree and how the organization of participation influences residents’ opportunities to shape policies and interventions for neighbourhood upgrading, and how residents thereby actively contribute to neighbourhood change. A case study was performed in the disadvantaged neighbourhood of Transvaal (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), which has been subjected to regeneration and state-led gentrification initiatives by the local government and housing associations from 1999 onwards. Since then, varying forms of residents participation were introduced, ranging from top-down organized participation to bottom-up initiatives. Transvaal therefore forms an interesting case to study the changing organization of resident participation and to explore what this has meant for residents’ possibilities to influence neighbourhood upgrading. Instead of focusing on individual participation projects, the paper provides a comprehensive view of all participation mechanisms which were established over the past fifteen years. Although several community-led projects in Transvaal have been celebrated in the media and by urban professionals as a best practice case (Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008), these success stories have focused largely on the process of participation itself, rather than on the outcomes of participation. It is less clear what residents have achieved at the neighbourhood level.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 5.2 examines the literature on the ways in which residents can be engaged in local decision-making processes and what the limitations are. Section 5.3 describes the research design, methodology and research neighbourhood, followed by a discussion of the Dutch context (section 5.4). Sections 5.5 and 5.6 examine the ways in which residents have been involved in policy plans for neighbourhood regeneration in Transvaal. Finally, section 5.7 reflects on the results and places the findings in the wider context of the literature on resident participation.
5.2 Resident involvement in neighbourhood interventions

Until a few decades ago, residents were generally excluded from decision-making processes about neighbourhood change. Resident engagement was generally limited to protest, outside formal government spaces. Specifically during the second wave of gentrification in the 1970s/1980s, residents mobilized through anti-gentrification movements (Smith, 1996; Hackworth and Smith, 2001) and more localized forms of protest against displacement (Newman and Wyly, 2006). For example, Robinson (1995) describes how residents fought against the high-rise restructuring of central San Francisco and gentrification pressures in the Tenderloin neighbourhood. Similarly, Beauregard (1990) demonstrates how residents of Spring Garden (Philadelphia) resisted displacement by government-assisted gentrification and advocated the development of affordable housing. Although residents were often unsuccessful at fully resisting gentrification, in some cases they reached agreements with private and state actors to make the process less harmful to sitting residents (Hackworth, 2002).

These forms of resistance against policies and interventions for neighbourhood upgrading seem to have diminished since the 1990s (Fainstein, 2010), even though displacement of low-income residents is still a real concern in gentrification (Lees et al., 2008). One explanation is that residents who resisted gentrification in the past have been displaced (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Newman and Wyly, 2006). Yet, another explanation is that resident contestations have been ‘channeled’ into formal participation arrangements in local decision-making (Taylor, 2007; Parés et al., 2011).

New opportunities for resident participation in policy arenas have been linked to processes of rescaling and fragmentation of the state, as a result of neo-liberalization since the 1980s. These processes are well-documented in the literature and have also been observed in the Netherlands (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003; Van Gent, 2013). Important for this study is the devolution of responsibilities from central to local governments through decentralization and deconcentration (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003). Reduced funding by national governments resulted in increased dependency of local governments on cooperation of other actors in neighbourhood regeneration. Consequently, neighbourhood regeneration is increasingly organized through partnerships, including central and local governments, housing associations and private developers. Thereby, neighbourhood governance has become a form of governance-beyond-the-state (Swyngedouw, 2005), which “… moves away from fixed ideas about power as a commodity rooted in particular institutions to more fluid ideas
of power developed and negotiated between partners” (Taylor, 2007, p. 299). These partnerships were also thought to better reflect the complexity of urban societies (Chaskin and Garg, 1997).

The resulting governance spaces have increasingly opened up to include residents in the formulation and implementation of regeneration strategies (Bailey, 2010; Chaskin et al., 2012). Different reasons can be identified for including residents in local decision-making processes. First, urban professionals value residents as sources of local knowledge, which is otherwise unavailable to them (Chaskin and Garg, 1997; Robinson et al., 2005). Second, participation is stimulated based on the assumption that ‘good governance’ and democratic policy-making result in better decisions (Lawson and Kearns, 2010; Chaskin et al., 2012). Third, resident participation is attractive to governments because it provides legitimacy in the public sphere (Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008). Fourth, it smoothens the implementation of policies for neighbourhood upgrading (Jones, 2003; Lawson and Kearns, 2010). Finally, resident participation is nowadays often required by national governments as condition for local funding (Sullivan et al., 2004). In all of these arguments, resident engagement in neighbourhood governance can be seen as a means to achieve neighbourhood change effectively and efficiently.

In addition, resident participation is often seen as end in itself: urban professionals may stimulate participation in order to strengthen local communities. For instance, it is assumed that resident engagement in decision-making processes enhances social cohesion and increases solidarity between residents (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2009), avoids conflicts (Jones, 2003; Lawson and Kearns, 2010) and closes the gap between disadvantaged communities and society (Taylor, 2007). It is also argued that participation provides residents opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge – also referred to as ‘community capacity building’ (Chaskin and Barg, 1997; Lawson and Kearns, 2010).

5.2.1 Planning the participation process
Resident engagement in decision-making processes may take different forms, ranging from top-down organized involvement to bottom-up initiatives. Jones (2003; derived from Pretty, 1995) presented a typology of participation, which distinguishes a range of seven ‘ladders’: (1) Manipulative participation, in which participation is only a pretence and residents don’t have actual power; (2) Passive participation, which mainly consists of information sharing by professionals; (3) Participation by consultation, whereby
Disentangling Processes of Neighbourhood Change

residents are consulted by and answer questions of urban professionals; (4) Participation for material incentives, in which residents participate through supplying resources (e.g. labour or volunteering time) in return for incentives; (5) Functional participation, in which professionals see participation as a means to achieve goals; residents can be involved in decision-making but major decisions already have been made by urban professionals; (6) Interactive participation, whereby participation is seen as a right; residents actively participate in analysis and development of plans; and (7) Self-mobilisation, in which residents take initiatives and address problems; they retain control over used resources.

These forms and types of participation illustrate that the organization of participation largely determines residents’ influence in decision-making processes. In the case of resident involvement in interventions for neighbourhood upgrading, research has shown that the organization of participation varies greatly and thereby affects residents’ actual influence in shaping policies (Jones, 2003; Taylor, 2007). However, one of the limitations of participation is that its exact form is often left undefined, which leads to different expectations and perceptions of urban professionals and residents about the form and amount of participation (Atkinson, 1999; Robinson et al., 2005). In this respect, Chaskin et al. (2012) observed that resident participation in three mixed-income neighbourhoods in Chicago was mostly symbolic, as participation mainly took place in the form of information sharing. This is in line with Taylor (2007), who demonstrates that residents were mostly involved at the end of the policy-cycle. Residents’ impact on decision-making processes was thereby marginal, as residents “…had much greater voice, but not much more power.” (p. 304). Huisman (2014) reports similar findings in a study on resident participation in state-led gentrification in Amsterdam. She demonstrates that resident participation mechanisms provided urban professionals a platform to impose regeneration plans, which were presented as facts, while residents’ power was marginal. Through discrepancies between expectations and perceptions of urban professionals and residents about the form and amount of participation, resident participation can turn out to be a frustrating experience (Kokx and Van Kempen, 2009).

5.2.2 The practice of participation
A second limitation of resident participation is related to discrepancies between resident participation in theory – as it has been planned – and the actual practice of and everyday experiences with participation. For instance, participation is often deployed
by urban professionals who determine the rules of the game, which requires specific knowledge and skills (Martin, 2007; Denters and Klok, 2009; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Parés et al., 2011; Chaskin et al., 2012). Taylor (2007, p. 307) argues that “…the ‘rules of the game’ tend to limit the number of people who can take up this role by demanding certain skills and knowledge and by placing practical limitations on who can participate”. Also in the Netherlands, participation mechanisms have been found to be formal, bureaucratic and technical, providing advantages to higher-educated residents (Huisman, 2014). In addition, it is demonstrated that while urban professionals may believe in the ideal of participation, they tend to have little trust in capabilities of residents and neighbourhood problems and solutions are defined differently by professionals and residents (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2009; Kokx and Van Kempen, 2010). Moreover, the implementation of participation is often ‘mainstreamed’ into mechanisms defined by urban professionals. For instance, Martin (2007) demonstrates that neighbourhood organizations with transparent decision-making structures, engaged in traditional community-building activities, were more likely to obtain support from professionals. In addition, Taylor (2007) observed cases where urban professionals only involved residents into their partnerships who were like themselves, which meant that only few voices were heard.

In sum, although the opening up of governance spaces has increased residents’ opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes, there are a number of limitations related to participation, which challenge residents’ actual contribution to the shaping of neighbourhood regeneration plans. Consequently, the reality of resident participation can be far removed from the ideal (Fainstein, 2010).

5.3 Research design

To explore how and to what degree the organization of resident participation influenced residents’ opportunities to shape neighbourhood interventions, a case study was performed in the disadvantaged neighbourhood of Transvaal (Amsterdam). Transvaal has been subjected to regeneration since the end of the 1990s, whereby varying participation mechanisms were introduced – ranging from top-down organized involvement to self-mobilization. Thereby, Transvaal provides an interesting case to study the changing organization of resident participation over a long period of time.
Disentangling Processes of Neighbourhood Change

Transvaal is located in Urban District East of the Municipality of Amsterdam\textsuperscript{26}. Amsterdam has a substantial social housing stock; the share of social housing in Transvaal is even above the city’s average (Table 5.1). This is related to the fact that Transvaal was among the first neighbourhoods constructed by housing associations after the 1901 Housing Act. In addition, the smaller share of privately rented housing was converted into social housing during urban renewal in the 1970s/1980s. Transvaal is characterized by a large share of low-income families with children, who are attracted to the relatively large socially rented dwellings. The majority of the population is of non-Dutch origin, which replaced native-Dutch families who left Transvaal from the 1970s onwards for suburban new towns.

Although many other centrally-located neighbourhoods in Amsterdam experienced socio-economic and/or real estate upgrading in the 1990s, Transvaal went through a process of downgrading. The neighbourhood became increasingly characterized by high unemployment levels, a weak economy, social and physical disorder and crime. The housing stock and public space were in poor condition. It was assumed that this exacerbated selective out-migration of higher-income households. To address these problems, Urban District East developed a regeneration strategy in 1999. In 2007, the regeneration plans were expanded, after Transvaal was selected by the national government for the \textit{Forty Neighbourhood Program}.

5.3.1 Data and methodology
To study how residents have been involved in decision-making processes about neighbourhood regeneration in Transvaal, a combination of research methods was used. These include semi-structured interviews with governing actors and actively participating residents, participant observation in the neighbourhood and analysis of secondary (policy) documentation.

Interviews with urban professionals working with the municipality (4), housing associations (8) and a welfare institution focused on neighbourhood interventions in the period 1999-2013 and addressed the following topics: (1) Transvaal’s development over the past decades; (2) goals and motivations for policies and interventions of actors involved; (3) the way in which residents have been involved in the initiation, formulation and implementation of policies and interventions. Interviews with six

\textsuperscript{26} The municipality of Amsterdam is characterized by a particular administrative structure: it is subdivided into seven districts with – until recently (2014) – some autonomy, which each have their own budget and responsibility for tasks such as land-use planning, building permits and public space.
residents provided insight into (1) resident participation in the neighbourhood; (2) participation activities of the respondents in particular; (3) residents’ evaluation of the way in which residents were involved in policy plans for regeneration; and (4) to what extent their achievements contributed to neighbourhood change.

In addition, the paper draws on informal conversations with neighbourhood residents, attendance of neighbourhood activities and analysis of written resources, such as local websites and newspapers, and policy documents of the national and local government and housing associations concerning Transvaal’s regeneration and resident participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1 Characteristics of Transvaal compared to Amsterdam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transvaal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing stock (2013, in %)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socially rented</td>
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<td>Privately rented</td>
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<td>Owner-occupied</td>
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<td>Construction period (%)</td>
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<td>&lt;1945</td>
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<td>Real estate value (euro)</td>
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<td>Income¹ (euro)</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change 1999-2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household structure (2013, in %)</td>
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<td>One-person</td>
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<td>Family, no children</td>
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<td>Family, with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic background (2011, in %)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Western</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western</td>
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</tbody>
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¹ Standardized net household income from work, benefit and pensions.

Source: Statistics Netherlands and Kadaster
5.4 The Dutch policy context

Before going into the findings, it is useful to provide additional information on the Dutch policy context. Despite the shift from government to governance, the national government plays a key role in regeneration policies (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003), as these policies form a strong regulatory framework for neighbourhood governance and regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods like Transvaal.

Until the 1990s, national urban and housing policies focused on providing affordable housing. In the 1990s, however, the national government saw social housing increasingly as problematic: social housing was associated with accumulation of social problems, such as poverty concentrations and social and physical disorder (Musterd and Ostendorf, 2008). To address these problems, the government launched the so-called Big Cities Policy (BCP). The BCP prescribed area-based interventions that integrated three ‘pillars’: a social pillar, focusing on education, social mobility and safety; an economic pillar, focusing on lower unemployment levels and stimulating the local economy; and a physical pillar, focusing on restructuring and differentiating the housing stock. In neighbourhoods with ‘one-sided’ (social) housing, the aim was to construct owner-occupied and upscale privately rented housing, to prevent further decline and halt selective out-migration of affluent households (Musterd and Ostendorf, 2008). This program, set out in the Urban Renewal Memorandum, marked the first steps towards state-led gentrification (Van Gent, 2013).

The BCP also marked a shift in terms of governance arrangements, which the national government prescribed for area-based interventions. Local governments were expected to fulfil an initiating and directing role in neighbourhood regeneration, but had to cooperate with ‘stakeholders’ such as housing associations and residents to formulate plans for area-based interventions (Andersen and Van Kempen, 2003). As owners of the social housing stock, housing associations carried a lot of weight in these arrangements. Although their primary task is to provide housing for low-income households, they were much privatized in the mid-1990s and public financial support disappeared for management of the social housing stock and the construction of new social housing (Priemus, 2003). Consequently, housing associations depend on market activities to generate income, such as selling off social housing, converting social housing into privately rented housing and developing owner-occupied housing, in

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27 In the Netherlands, private actors have a more limited role in the regeneration of neighbourhoods.
order to be able to finance unprofitable investments in social housing. Housing associations can therefore best be described as *hybrid* organizations: they have their own objectives and priorities in terms of neighbourhood interventions (Teernstra, 2012). In this already highly-complex arrangement of negotiation between different stakeholders, the national government put resident participation on the agenda as criterion for funding.

In 2007, the national government expanded the BCP with the launch of the *Forty Neighbourhood Program*. The forty ‘worst’ neighbourhoods of the Netherlands were selected. As before, the government dictated cooperation between local actors and implementation of an integral approach of social, physical and economic interventions. State-led gentrification through differentiation of the housing stock was further emphasized. However, there was much more attention for sitting residents: there was more emphasis put on improving their economic opportunities and resident participation in the planning process became a central theme. Residents were designated as important partners in regeneration, because “through the involvement of residents, a better picture of what goes on in the neighbourhood is achieved, and the strategy better meets the demands and needs of the resident. Moreover, resident participation can be a means to increase social cohesion and stimulate interethnic relationships.” (Ministerie van VROM, 2007, p. 15). The fragment demonstrates that resident engagement in neighbourhood regeneration is not only seen as a *means* to achieve neighbourhood change effectively, whereby residents are sources of local knowledge and resident involvement leads to better decisions. Participation has also become an *end* in itself: participation is stimulated in order to strengthen local communities.

### 5.5 Resident involvement in the early years

The regeneration strategy of 1999 in Transvaal clearly reflects the integral approach prescribed by the BCP. It was initiated by Urban District East of the Municipality of Amsterdam, which aimed to establish a coalition with four housing associations active in the neighbourhood. The strategy marked the first (but marginal) steps towards state-led gentrification, as the key objective was to differentiate Transvaal’s housing stock in order to attract/retain higher-income households and families with children and increase the neighbourhood’s competitiveness. In addition, the district aimed to
improve safety levels, strengthen the local economy and create economic opportunities for sitting residents.

5.5.1 Organizing participation

According to formal guidelines, the district had to discuss regeneration plans with Transvaal’s residents. Therefore, the district approached the Buurtbeheergroep (‘Neighbourhood management group’), a voluntary community association. In 1990, the Buurtbeheergroep was formally designated as discussion partner for the district concerning policies and interventions in Transvaal. Although the group was neither elected, nor really representative for the neighbourhood, it was invited to advocate resident interests by critically following governmental decisions.

The Buurtbeheergroep received professional support of a community worker, employed by a welfare institution. So, while it is argued that one of the difficulties with resident participation is that it requires specific knowledge and skills and that the rules of the game are determined by urban professionals (Chaskin et al., 2012; Jones, 2003; Martin, 2007), in Transvaal these difficulties were to some degree mitigated. The community worker formed a bridge between residents and district, because she was familiar with the rules of the game of the district and informed by urban professionals about policy plans and developments. She also organized and chaired meetings and guided residents in the interpretation of policy documents. The respondents underline the importance of this professional support to understand the technicalities of developing regeneration plans.

Yet, despite professional support, the Buurtbeheergroep was only invited at the end of the policy-cycle. The respondents of the district explain this by arguing that the development of the regeneration strategy was complex and time-consuming. The complexity partially lay in the fact that the district had to negotiate with four housing associations, who own the majority of the housing stock, but each had their own agendas and priorities. Moreover, the district was confronted with time constraints related to application deadlines for national funding, which was needed to implement the proposed plans. Consequently, the Buurtbeheergroep received the plans after negotiations with the housing associations were over and with a hard deadline ahead. In meetings between the district and group, the plans were discussed and residents were asked to respond to the pre-formulated plans. A former district manager of Urban District East explains:
“We had very short sessions with the Buurtbeheergroep. [...] We literally threw it [the regeneration plan] into the neighbourhood and said: what do you guys want to have in the plan? [...] But at the same time we told them that we had time constraints.”

So, although an effort was made to hear the voice of the Buurtbeheergroep, major decisions already had been made.

Nevertheless, the former district manager argues that the district was informed on residents’ interests concerning the neighbourhood through the community worker, who he calls his “eyes and ears” of the neighbourhood. So, urban professionals saw the community worker as an indirect form of resident participation:

“They [Urban District East] assumed that I represented the neighbourhood. I always said: that is not true. I pass on information. And vice versa: I bring back information. [...] There are so many people and of course I only talk to a few of them.” [Community worker, Welfare institution]

In other words, although professional support was meant to create a bridge between residents and district, it in fact replaced direct participation and led to the exclusion of residents in decision-making processes itself. Indeed, residents felt that although they were provided an opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas, these were not really heard:

“We were not involved in the first stages. [...] They don’t open it up completely with public hearings and information meetings and so on. [...] It [participation] is mainly writing down your reaction and making a number of suggestions.” [Resident, female, 18 years in neighbourhood]

Consequently, for some members of the Buurtbeheergroep participation turned out to be disappointing. A number of residents quit participating, as they did not feel taken seriously.

In sum, the contribution of residents to the regeneration plans, and consequently to Transvaal’s improvement, was negligible. Although the national government prescribed the discussion of regeneration plans with residents as criterion for funding, in reality participation was not high on the district’s agenda. From this perspective, the
organization of participation in Transvaal in the early years can be identified as ‘functional participation’ (Jones, 2003): although residents were formally involved in formulating regeneration plans, major decisions already had been made and participation was mostly a means to achieve goals.

5.5.2 Resident activism

Between 1999 and 2006, the actual implementation of the regeneration plans stagnated. The cooperation with housing associations proved problematic, because three of the four associations prioritized interventions in other neighbourhoods. Only a part of Transvaal’s housing stock was renovated and the district’s long-term objective to stimulate gentrification through diversification of the housing stock was not realized. Moreover, everyday problems with crime and nuisance associated with drug dealing were not addressed. The community worker recalls:

“Especially with regard to nuisance… there was a lot of drug dealing here, nuisance of kids that hang around, we also had gamblers here… I found the attention of the urban district and housing associations very limited. In that respect, it was a dilapidated neighbourhood.”

In response to problems of neighbourhood disorder, a number of residents mobilized themselves in order to counteract disorder, outside of the formal policy arena. One example is the establishment of the panel Wij van de Wijk (‘We, the Neighbourhood’) in 2003. In contrast to the Buurtbeheergroep, which aimed to improve Transvaal by critically following governmental decisions, the panel’s strategy was to organize activities amongst themselves to provide residents a sense of social control over their environment and reduce anonymity (Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008). The panel argued that the district undertook insufficient measures to counteract nuisance and presented an ‘action plan’ to the district. In addition, there were other forms of resident activism against neighbourhood disorder, specifically in particular ‘hot-spots’ of nuisance and crime. Here, small groups of residents mobilized to address these issues. Some sought collaboration with the Buurtbeheergroep, who brought the problems under the district’s attention.

Eventually, the district responded by implementing new interventions to improve safety levels. For instance, a registration point was established, where residents could report nuisance and crime, police surveillance was intensified and public consumption
of alcohol was prohibited. These interventions strengthened residents’ confidence in the district:

“I think that what is especially of importance, is that residents finally felt taken seriously. Because there was attention for their neighbourhood. Because it was really terrible sometimes, you know.” [Community Worker, Welfare Institution]

These examples of collective action demonstrate that, although residents had little voice in formal decision-making processes about long-term neighbourhood plans, they were able to mobilize themselves and develop alternative ways to influence interventions concerning nuisance and crime. Thereby, residents were able to improve the quality of everyday life. This demonstrates that residents could strengthen their position better from outside formal partnerships, rather than from within. This form of participation can be classified as ‘self-mobilisation’ – the highest ladder of Jones’ (2003) participation typology.

5.6 Calling the active citizen

The selection of Transvaal in 2007 as one of the forty neighbourhoods in the national regeneration program brought Transvaal back in the limelight. Moreover, it signified a turning point in the organization of participation. The national government dictated a coalition between the urban district and housing associations and designated a substantial part of funding to resident participation.

A ‘Participation Pyramid’ was even designed, to communicate different participation mechanisms in Transvaal’s regeneration (Figure 5.1). Interestingly, the pyramid is very similar to Jones’ (2003) participation typology, as the pyramid ranges from low to high levels of impact. Moreover, table 5.2 demonstrates how the pyramid reflects the changing focus on resident participation as a means to participation as goal in itself. The coalitions’ high ambitions about participation were translated in the establishment of different mechanisms: new forms of formal resident representation were introduced, involving residents in specific projects and a ‘Neighbourhood Initiatives Program’, in which residents were able to develop their own plan for the

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28 The national government provided funding for regeneration, although local governments and housing associations were expected to contribute financially too.
neighbourhood (Table 5.2). The coalition put a lot of money, time and effort in the organization of resident participation. In order to manage the participation mechanisms, the district even appointed a participation manager. However, the realization of the proposed forms of participation turned out to be more difficult than envisioned.

5.6.1 Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee

Based on general resident meetings, the coalition established five themes of intervention: 1) safety and nuisance; 2) neighbourhood economy; 3) housing; 4) public space; and 5) socio-economic improvement of (deprived) residents. The Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee was invited to join the formulation of these plans. This ‘newly created’ committee was a sub-committee of the Buurtbeheergroep and was formally designated as the coalition’s ‘advisory board’. Their aim was to critically follow Transvaal’s regeneration and actively join decision-making processes. So, this form of participation represents level 3 of the participation pyramid (Figure 5.1) and can be identified as ‘interactive participation’ according to Jones’ (2003) typology.

The role of the committee in decision-making processes of the coalition consisted of discussing draft versions of plans and advising the coalition. Furthermore, the committee brought concerns in the neighbourhood under attention. On behalf of the coalition, the district manager regularly attended committee meetings in order to exchange information. The coalition experienced this collaboration as positive:

“Of course, I find the Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee fantastic. For me, it is a very good way to just discuss draft versions of regeneration plans.” [District Manager, Urban District East]

In order to form a bridge between residents and professionals, the committee received professional support of the community worker: she organized and chaired meetings and guided residents in interpretation of policy documents and contact with the coalition. So, again the difficulty related to knowledge and skills, which are assumed to be required in order to be able to participate (Chaskin et al., 2012; Martin, 2007), were to some degree mitigated.
**Figure 5.1 Participation Pyramid**

![Participation Pyramid Diagram]

*(source: Danielle Driessen, Nieuwe Maan)*

**Table 5.2 Clarification of Participation Pyramid**

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<tr>
<th>Level in pyramid</th>
<th>Role of residents</th>
<th>Role government/other actors</th>
<th>Participation mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Information sharing</td>
<td>Resident is seen as consumer and has a passive role</td>
<td>Informing; influencing; convincing</td>
<td>Information meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Interaction and dialogue</td>
<td>Resident is seen as expert and co-owner of regeneration and actively shares information; focus on collective (instead of personal) interests.</td>
<td>Organizing; listening; connecting</td>
<td>Information meetings; Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee; Resident Platform Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee; Open planning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Partnerships</td>
<td>Resident is seen as active partner and actively participates and shares information; focus is on building capacity and shared responsibility</td>
<td>Connecting; stimulating; facilitating</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Initiatives Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Neighbourhood initiatives</td>
<td>Resident actively participates and takes initiatives; focus is on creating solutions; resident is responsible for implementation.</td>
<td>Facilitating; financing; participating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Urban District East, 2009*
But to what extent was the committee able to shape regeneration plans and contribute to Transvaal’s improvement? The committee’s members, which were mainly of native-Dutch origin, agree that their engagement in the formulation of policy plans significantly improved in relation to previous years; in general, they were involved in earlier stages of decision-making processes. However, the committee members also experienced various difficulties.

Firstly, it was unclear to the committee if and to what extent the coalition took their advices and adjustments into account. As one member argues:

“We often said: this is not such a good idea or we do not agree with that. But it was very difficult to find out to what extent it was a factor in the decision-making. […] For me, that was the difficulty of being a member of the committee. It takes a lot of time, but you don’t know the effects.” [Resident, male, 5 years in neighbourhood]

In some cases, draft plans were adjusted on the committee’s advice, but in many cases the committee felt that the coalition did not actually take their advice on board and it was unclear whether their considerations were even taken into account in final decisions about the plans.

Secondly, although the committee was formally engaged in the formulation of plans, the coalition determined the rules of the game. For instance, for the committee it was difficult to keep up the speed of decision-making processes. Once the committee had discussed draft plans and formulated their response, the coalition was often already further in decision-making. In a number of cases, the coalition already adjusted or cancelled plans. For the members, this was frustrating as the committee took a lot of time and effort:

“That bothered me, the pace of a professional is much faster than that of residents. […] It is a lot of work […] and residents who have their own serious jobs can hardly keep up with full-time working urban professionals.” [Resident, male, 22 years in neighbourhood]

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29 The committee actively attempted to attract residents of non-Dutch origin, but to no avail.
Thirdly, the committee was not allowed to comment on all implementation plans: they were excluded from interventions focusing on the physical ‘pillar’ of regeneration, aiming at stimulating gentrification through differentiation of the housing stock. Differentiation mainly takes place by housing associations, through selling off social housing and conversion of social housing into privately rented dwellings\(^{30}\) (see Teernstra, 2012). There are agreements between housing associations and local government which determine the share of tenure change. As long as housing associations comply with these agreements, they do not have to engage residents in decisions of the conversion process. This meant that the committee was effectively excluded from strategic decisions about tenure diversification in order to attract and retain higher-income households, which is also referred to as ‘state-led gentrification’ (e.g. Lees, 2008; Van Gent, 2013; Doucet, 2014). Although the housing stock is differentiated gradually and direct displacement remains limited, because dwellings can only change tenure when they become vacant, the members express their concern about the decreasing share of social housing\(^{31}\).

In summary, although residents were involved in earlier stages of decision-making processes compared to previous years, their actual contribution to the regeneration plans and consequently neighbourhood change still remained limited. One explanation for this is that the committee and coalition interpreted the committee’s role differently: the residents aimed to be a serious partner in decision-making processes (level 3 of the pyramid), while in practice the coalition used the committee solely as advisory board (level 2).

5.6.2 Resident platform

After establishing the Regeneration Committee, the Buurtbeheergroep repositioned themselves as a platform for a wider group of residents, to meet each other in order to

\(^{30}\) Social housing units can be converted into privately rented housing or sold off when they become vacant. There are thresholds for the number of dwellings which can be sold off (in Amsterdam, the threshold is 33 percent social housing in the central district and 25 percent in other districts). Social housing can only be converted into privately rented housing when the rent price is above the ‘social housing boundary’ (681.02 euros in 2013). When a socially rented dwelling becomes vacant, the rent price is recalculated on the basis of dwelling characteristics such as surface, quality and location. When the dwelling is transformed into privately rented housing, it is still owned by the housing association, but there are no allocation rules in terms of income level.

\(^{31}\) Between 2007 and 2013, the share of social housing decreased from 70.4 to 64.5 percent.
stimulate social cohesion amongst residents. Although the platform did not aim to be engaged in shaping policy plans, their goal was to discuss concerns in the neighbourhood and bring these under the coalition’s attention.

The urban professionals describe the platform as an important mechanism as it contributed to community building and was an important source of local knowledge. This is in line with observations of Chaskin et al. (2012) and Robinson et al. (2005). The participation manager explains:

“Because it is good for the attachment to the neighbourhood. That people come into contact with each other and people exchange information. And that we have a network which we can use to know what is going on [in the neighbourhood].”

Thereby, this participation mechanism represents level 2 of the pyramid (Figure 5.1) and can be classified as ‘functional participation’ according to Jones’ (2003) typology.

At the start, the platform was supported by both the participation manager and community worker: they provided information about policy plans and developments and guided residents in contact with the district and housing associations. However, as a result of budget cuts in the late 2000s, professional support of resident participation diminished significantly – both for the Resident Platform and Regeneration Committee. Now, residents had to organize and chair meetings themselves as well as collect information about policy plans and developments. The members argue that especially the last point was difficult for them to obtain. This had negative impact on the motivation for residents to participate and consequently, a number of residents quit participating. As the community worker argues:

“Residents were furious, they really felt abandoned, when the district withdrew professional support of the Resident Platform. […] I don’t think you can expect residents to be informed that well about the whole neighbourhood.”

So, while one of the aims of the regeneration program was to stimulate resident participation, simultaneously participation was impeded as a result of budget cuts.

5.6.3 Open Planning Process
Besides these two forms of structural resident representation at the neighbourhood level, the coalition sought ways to involve residents in temporary and small-scale
regeneration projects. One example is the regeneration of five social housing blocks, consisting of 452 dwellings owned by one of the housing associations. The housing association argued that there were technical deficits and liveability problems as a result of nuisance and concentrations of low-income households. Therefore, the association aimed to formulate a regeneration strategy and established an ‘Open Planning Process’. The aim was to create a partnership between the housing association, urban district and residents:

“…in which there is space for residents to develop plans for their dwellings and neighbourhood in an open dialogue. In an open planning process, it is important that nothing is defined yet. Possibilities such as demolition or renovation can all be discussed.” [Ymere, 2012, p. 14]

Residents were designated as co-partners in the formulation of the strategy. Thereby, this form of participation represents level 3 of the participation pyramid and can be identified as ‘Interactive participation’ according to Jones’ (2003) typology.

The housing association argued that the direct reason for creating a partnership was the Forty Neighbourhood Program, in which resident participation became a central theme. So, resident participation was in fact dictated by the national government. The aim of the partnership was twofold:

“[W]e formulate a plan through an open planning process, in order to create support for transformation and to empower residents by engaging them actively, so to say.” [Housing Professional, Housing Association]

The assumption was that participation provided benefits for the community, as it stimulated social cohesion and empowerment, as well as for the housing association, as it created support for regeneration. In other words, for the association participation was both a means and an end in itself.

In order to include as many residents as possible – irrespective of their knowledge, skills – the housing association established different forms of participation: there were information meetings to inform residents and obtain their opinion about their dwelling and neighbourhood and for the same reason a door-to-door survey was conducted. In addition, there were working groups in which residents together formulated ideas about regeneration. As most residents were of Turkish and Moroccan origin, there
were translators to overcome language difficulties. Moreover, the housing association appointed ‘resident advisors’: a number of residents were trained in reaching out to other residents, in order to stimulate them to participate in the process. As the resident advisors had a significant network and different ethnic backgrounds, they were able to activate a wide and diverse group of residents. A resident of Moroccan origin explains:

“There were forty residents which I had to approach and tell: […] [Housing association] is going to organize a meeting and it is important for you. It is about your neighbourhood, your block and your dwelling. So it is important to pass by and to listen what [Housing association] is going to do.” [Resident, male, 15 years in neighbourhood]

In sum, it seems that residents were seen as serious co-partners in formulating the regeneration strategy and there were many opportunities for residents to participate. 77 percent of the residents agreed with the final plans, which implied the demolition of two social housing blocks, which would be replaced by newly-constructed housing, and renovation of three blocks (Ymere, 2012). A part of the socially rented dwellings would be transformed into privately rented and owner-occupied dwellings.

Yet, a number of residents expressed their doubts about the ‘openness’ of the planning process. Although the housing association argued that “nothing was defined yet” (Ymere, 2012, p. 14), in reality the association determined a number of preconditions for regeneration. One of these preconditions was that the plan should be ‘financially achievable’. In order to create a financially achievable plan, housing associations have to generate income from commercial activities such as conversion of social into privately rented housing and construction of owner-occupied housing (see Teernstra, 2012). This implied that the association had to create a mix of owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing. Although residents get a return-guarantee after regeneration\(^{(32)}\), a number of residents worried about the decline in the total share of social housing. Moreover, the regeneration process implied an increase in

\(^{(32)}\) Through renovation and demolition, residents have to move out from their dwelling to a social housing unit elsewhere in the city. Yet, residents are guaranteed that they can return to a (renovated or newly-constructed) social housing unit in one of the five housing blocks after regeneration. As experiences from the past demonstrate that a significant share of residents decides not to return, the housing association is able to provide all residents a return guarantee.
the rent of social housing. Consequently, a number of residents argue that the planning process was not as open as assumed. As one of the respondents explains:

“An open planning process, if it is implemented the way it is meant to be, good idea. But! If they hide behind the open planning process, and carry out their own projects and opinions, then I think: it is just a pretext.” [Resident, male, 31 years in neighbourhood]

The aim of the Open Planning Process was to create a partnership between the housing association, district and residents, but in reality residents were excluded from predetermined decisions which were related to pursuing gentrification.

5.6.4 Neighbourhood Initiatives
A final way in which the coalition stimulated resident participation in Transvaal was the introduction of a Neighbourhood Initiatives Program\textsuperscript{33}. Rather than being invited into formal participation mechanisms designed by the coalition, residents were stimulated to develop their own (small-scale) plan for the neighbourhood. Residents were fully responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan – the coalition only provided funding and facilitated the process. The coalition assumed that:

“This form of participation contributes to the improvement of the neighbourhood in two ways. The initiative has to be a positive contribution for the neighbourhood, and it contributes to the empowerment of the initiator.” [Urban District East, 2009, p. 8]

So, participation was both a means to improve the neighbourhood and an end in itself: it was assumed that it stimulated social cohesion and empowerment through development of knowledge and skills. Thereby, the program represents the highest level of the participation pyramid and can be classified as ‘self-mobilisation’ following Jones’ (2003) typology.

\textsuperscript{33} To be clear, the Neighbourhood Initiative program is not unique for Transvaal; it was implemented by the national government as part of the Forty Neighbourhood Program.
Submitted initiatives were reviewed by a committee of residents and the participation manager\(^{34}\). The coalition and committee together established criteria which had to be met: the initiative had to contribute to the social, physical and/or economic neighbourhood quality, reach a substantial number of residents and could not be commercial. A substantial amount of funding was designated to the program (Table 5.3). Between 2008 and 2013, 135 initiatives were approved; the average amount assigned per initiative ranged from 7862 euro in 2008 to 4687 euro in 2011. The selected initiatives were mostly small-scale and focused on specific target groups, such as projects for children education, youth activities to reduce nuisance and integration projects for non-native Dutch women. Other projects included festivals and theatre shows organized by residents to foster community-building. In addition, there were community garden projects aiming to improve the physical environment and stimulate social cohesion.

In the interviews, urban professionals state that the Neighbourhood Initiatives Program improved the sense of community in the neighbourhood:

“If you see to what extend [people] mix and get into contact with each other, that is very valuable. And also the contacts at the community garden. Conversations are firstly maybe about a carrot, but later about how your child is doing. I do not have the illusion that it is the solution for everything, you know. But it is a step you take.” [Participation Manager, Urban District East]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total amount available for initiatives (in euro)</th>
<th>Average amount assigned per initiative (in euro)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>98,538</td>
<td>7862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>136,120</td>
<td>7862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>136,120</td>
<td>5858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>121,324</td>
<td>4687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Urban District East*

\(^{34}\) The committee was non-elected, as residents were invited to participate in the committee through advertisements and information meetings. The committee was not really representative for the neighbourhood; most of the members were highly-educated and of native-Dutch origin.
The urban professionals also indicate that a diverse group of residents participated, which were generally other residents than those participating in more formalized mechanisms such as the Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee and Resident Platform. This is in line with Tonkens and Verhoeven (2011), who studied Neighbourhood Initiatives in 24 Amsterdam neighbourhoods. They observed that compared to ‘traditional’ participants, participants in the Neighbourhood Initiatives Program were more often female, young, of non-Dutch origin and had lower educational backgrounds. Moreover, they found that residents who implemented an initiative activated and stimulated social cohesion among other residents.

Moreover, the interviewed residents have positive attitudes towards the program. A resident of native-Dutch origin explains:

“... I think that the neighbourhood initiatives are very positive things for a neighbourhood. Everybody was enthusiastic about it. [...] It is visible to the neighbourhood. People see something [happening] at the square and notice: a lot of positive things happen.” [Resident, male, 5 years in neighbourhood]

Nevertheless, the program’s success should be nuanced to some degree. First, a number of residents as well as the community worker do not think that the initiatives contributed substantively to Transvaal’s improvement. They question the sustainability of the initiatives, as many initiatives were small-scale and short-term, whereby only a few residents were involved, while large amounts of funding were spend. The community worker recalls:

“... There were great things, which I really find fantastic. But there were also things of which I thought: what does it actually leave behind? [...] For instance, HEIM, the yearly theatre spectacle and community art. Then I think: now, after three times, what kind of communities have been left behind? What are the effects?”

They argue that the coalition’s aim of the program was ‘window dressing’: creating a feel-good atmosphere and showing the outside world that the neighbourhood was being improved.

Second, although the coalition’s job was to facilitate initiatives, in reality it turned out to be difficult to hand over responsibility to residents and there was distrust in their capabilities. In some cases, residents felt impeded and had to ‘fight’ for their initiative.
One example is a group of residents who designed and implemented a community garden. The district disagreed on many aspects of the garden’s design, mainly out of fear for vandalism. After long negotiations between the district and residents, the garden was finally approved. One resident recalls:

“[They] are defining us as this small percentage of criminals. And if you define us like that, that is who we are. And if you define us as healthy people who are going to garden, then that’s what we become. That’s who we are. [...] I’m really proud of that project, but you know we really had to fight for it.” [Resident, female, 6 years in neighbourhood]

Interestingly, now the community garden is celebrated as one of the best practices of the Neighbourhood Initiative Program in the city.

5.7 Discussion and conclusions

This paper addressed the way in which the opening up of governance spaces has created new opportunities for residents to contribute to neighbourhood upgrading through participation in decision-making processes. The paper focused on the neighbourhood of Transvaal, which has gone through successive stages of regeneration in the last fifteen years and allows for a comprehensive analysis of participation mechanisms established since the end of the 1990s. The case study in Transvaal can therefore illustrate the changing nature of resident participation and what this has meant for their possibilities to influence policies for neighbourhood interventions.

From the start of regeneration, Transvaal has been seen as a best practice case for the new focus on resident participation in neighbourhood governance (Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008). Indeed, particularly in the second phase of regeneration (2007-2013), the number of participation mechanisms is almost overwhelming and reflects the strong local presence of the welfare state in Transvaal and the resulting dense formal social infrastructure. From this perspective, resident participation in Transvaal appears to be a resounding success. However, as Fainstein (2010) argued, a focus on participation mechanisms alone is not enough: there is a need to look at how participation contributes to actual place-making. If we look at Transvaal from this point of view on the achievements of resident participation, there are some important
nuances to be made, as discrepancies between resident participation in theory – as it has been planned – and the actual practice of participation were identified.

In the first period of regeneration (1999-2006), resident participation was officially incorporated in formal policy procedures, but in practice it was not systematically developed. First, the *Buurthbeheergroep* was only involved at the end of the policy-cycle, when major decisions already had been made. Residents’ input was limited to reacting to plans, rather than co-producing them. Consequently, few ideas from the *Buurthbeheergroep* found their way into the plans and the residents did not feel that they were heard. Second, the district designed the rules of the game and dominated the process of formulating regeneration plans. Although the *Buurthbeheergroep* received professional support of a community worker, full-time employed urban professionals determined the pace of the participation process, which made it hard for residents to ‘keep up’. Therefore, in line with many previous studies (e.g. Chaskin et al 2012; Jones 2003; Taylor, 2007), resident participation seems to have served mostly to legitimize top-down interventions, rather than leading to more open decision-making processes. Consequently, in line with findings of Kokx and Van Kempen (2009), residents had to turn to traditional forms of activism – outside the governance spaces – to get attention for their concerns. Although they were successful in putting problems of neighbourhood disorder on the district’s agenda, their influence remained limited to contributing to the improvement of a particular domain of everyday nuisances in the neighbourhood.

In the second stage of regeneration (2007-2013), the regeneration coalition stepped up their game and Transvaal became *the* example of ‘how it should be done’. The coalition put a lot of money, time and effort into the organization of participation and developed varying ways to bridge the distance between formal policy arena and knowledge and skills of residents. Participation ranged from formalized and long-term mechanisms (*Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee* and *Resident Platform*) to small-scale, temporary and project-based initiatives (*Neighbourhood Initiative Program* and *Open Planning Process*). In the interviews, both urban professionals and residents state that the interventions from 2007 onwards halted the downward development of Transvaal and stimulated marginal upgrading: Transvaal has become more ‘liveable’, as safety levels, residents’ opinion about the neighbourhood, the quality of the housing stock, public space and the neighbourhood economy have improved – although there are still problems related to youth and nuisance. This process of marginal upgrading is reflected in neighbourhood statistics (see Teernstra, 2012).
However, the actual contribution of resident participation to this process varied. A distinction can be made between contributions to reducing everyday concerns of residents in particular domains, such as safety, nuisance and strengthening the local community on the one hand, and contributions to long-term strategic neighbourhood inventions on the other hand.

Two participation mechanisms, The Resident Platform and Neighbourhood Initiatives Program, can be considered quite successful in terms of strengthening local community: these initiatives managed to activate more, and a more diverse group of residents. So, these mechanisms are fruitful from the perspective whereby participation is seen as an *end* in itself. In addition, the Neighbourhood Initiatives Program enabled residents to improve particular domains in the neighbourhood, such as safety and nuisance, through formulating and implementing their own small-scale projects.

The two other participation mechanisms, the Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee and Open Planning Process, were designed to create opportunities for co-production for residents and the neighbourhood coalition. However, the findings demonstrate that co-production remained largely out of reach. Most importantly, in both mechanisms residents were excluded from fundamental, strategic and long-term decisions about tenure conversion. The Open Planning Process was not that open, as the housing association determined preconditions concerning to the creation of a diversified and more expensive housing stock. The Neighbourhood Regeneration Committee was left standing on the side-lines in complex negotiations between the urban district and housing associations. Neither the involved residents nor urban professionals can therefore confirm how residents *actually* influenced the vision laid out in the long-term regeneration plans. So from the perspective of participation as a *means* to create locally-embedded regeneration strategies, resident involvement is not very successful. This is in line with Chaskin et al. (2012), Jones (2003) and Taylor (2007), who demonstrated that residents’ influence in shaping policies for neighbourhood upgrading often remains limited despite the existence of formal participation arrangements.

In sum, what this case study demonstrated is that creating opportunities for resident engagement in neighbourhood governance may form the new ideal, but often turns out to be a process of trial and error. It seems to be easier to create participation mechanisms that contribute to reducing everyday concerns of residents in particular domains in the neighbourhood, such as safety and nuisance, than it is to create mechanisms that open up long-term, strategic neighbourhood interventions. In
Transvaal, participation can be considered quite successful as a way to strengthen the local community and in its contribution to small-scale projects that improve particular places in the neighbourhood. However, the realized participation mechanisms did not result in more open planning processes at the scale of the neighbourhood as a whole. Despite the coalition’s high ambitions about resident participation, residents’ achievements in shaping policy plans for neighbourhood upgrading still remain limited.