Workshop 12 - Poverty Neighbourhoods

Comparing resident participation in post-WWII neighbourhoods in Northwest, Central and Southern Europe

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Abstract
Participation of residents in neighbourhood regeneration, and especially variations in participation between places, has been the topic of research in various articles in the last few years. From empirical research it has become clear that part of this variation is related to individual characteristics such as socio-economic and demographic variables of the people involved. Comparative studies suggest, however, that not just individual characteristics but also neighbourhood differences within one country account for part of the variation. What is still missing in these studies is an internationally comparative perspective. National differences might however be expected to account for at least part of the variation in participation. National policies aimed at participation may be different, as well as democratic histories. This paper will therefore include an analysis of national differences. We will try to find out how much relevance these national differences are, compared to the influence of individual and neighbourhood characteristics. Using multivariate modeling procedures we will ascertain the extent to which differences in participation can be ascribed to neighbourhood level variations (share of unemployed, share of ethnic minorities, share of owner-occupied housing, average experience of problems, share of residents active in a social organisation), and the extent to which national context variables (democratic history, empowerment policy) account for these differences. The analysis is based on the 2004 RESTATE survey that was held in 27 post WWII neighbourhoods in nine European countries.

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Introduction

Ever since Putnam (1995) wrote that Americans are less and less engaged in society, social scientists have been concerned with the negative consequences of civic disengagement for the democratic functioning of policymaking bodies. The concern is that those people that are civicly engaged do no longer represent 'the' resident, and that civil society is declining. Americans are said to be "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000, p. 1195) rather than being engaged in collective action. Also in Europe there is much attention for the issue of participation of residents in civil society. Also here the issue of representation is a concern: the fear is that the active residents represent only part of the population. Especially in certain areas of the city where the population is increasingly diversified, both in terms of age and ethnicity, the representation issue is prominent.

Many studies have focused on the predictors of resident participation. From empirical research it has become clear that part of the variation in participation is related to individual characteristics such as socio-economic and demographic variables. In addition, social capital theory tends to focus on the effects of social networks and shared norms on civic action. Verba and Nie already showed in 1972 how taking part in communal activities plays an important role in motivating, preparing and steering political participation. Comparative studies suggest that not just individual characteristics but also neighbourhood differences account for part of the variation.

It is feasible that not only individual and neighbourhood characteristics may explain the participation of residents, but also national differences. As previous comparative studies have shown (Uslaner and Badescu, 2003; Bruquetas et al., forthcoming), it is the national political culture that defines the national variants of citizenship: to what extent are residents given a role in the democratic process? Historical developments, like for instance the change from a centralistic, socialist government to a more democratic government might be influential.

This paper begins to draw together these separate bodies of knowledge for a broader understanding of the factors influencing participation. In particular, it focuses on the characteristics of places as potential determinants of participation. The main question can be formulated as follows: how can neighbourhood participation be explained by individual, neighbourhood and national characteristics? While we do know from other studies that individual (and neighbourhood) characteristics matter, our specific focus is to find out if the effects of these sets of characteristics change when the national level is taken into account. When the national level turns out not to be important, serious questions might be asked about the usefulness of national policies that stimulate participation.

In line with what Pickvance (2001) calls a differentiating comparative analysis with plural causation we will focus on the differences between contexts (neighbourhoods, cities), rather than on the similarities. We will focus on the impact of individual and household characteristics, neighbourhood level variations (share of unemployed, share of ethnic minorities, share of owner-occupied housing, average experience of problems, share of people active in social organisations), and national context variables (democratic history, empowerment policy). It contrasts with existing approaches to participation, which generally focus on individuals within the context of their neighbourhood, and thus neglect the multiple ways in which individual decision making is influenced by and embedded in the national context.

The paper starts by outlining the conceptual framework that guided the research. Next, the case study is described, starting with the research design and followed by the results of the analyses. The paper concludes with a discussion of the possible implications this work has for the future studies of neighbourhood participation.

Participation in the neighbourhood: competing explanations

Several kinds of explanations for the participation of residents in neighbourhood organisations have been put forward in the literature. Explanations focus on different levels
of analysis: the individual level, the level of the neighbourhood and the level of the national context. Below we will indicate how a number of individual characteristics influence the impact of neighbourhood context c.q. national opportunity structures on participation (figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

**Individual level explanations**
At the individual level, theorists have devoted attention to *individual resources* such as income and education on participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Staeheli and Clarke, 2003). The general idea is that the more resources one has, the more likely one is to become active in (political) activities. This is so because these resources generate better skills, larger networks and easier access to institutions. Next to that, demographic characteristics, like age, gender, and household composition are important for the explanation of participatory behaviour (Gerson et al., 1977; Fischer, 1982; Campbell and Lee, 1992; Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999). In addition, residential status (home ownership, length of residence) can affect residents’ perceptions of their community and their place in it (Gerson et al., 1977). According to these theories, it basically comes down to the amount of time one has to spend and the stake one has in the neighbourhood which influences participation in the neighbourhood: the more time one has in general and the larger the importance of life within the neighbourhood, the higher the chances that one will participate.

Also ethnicity is an important explanatory variable for participation, because of psychological attitudes - like trust, but also values and norms - that are shaped through the position one has within society (Verba and Nie, 1972; Marshall, 2001). In the USA it was found that ethnic minorities participate more in order to compensate for their lower socio-economic status. In other words: what they could not acquire because of a lack of personal resources in terms of income or education was aimed at through (political) participation. In this case, trust in the general political system is high. But also contrasting views are found, which state that trust between groups is low (ethnic groups trust only their own kind) and consequently participation is low (Uslaner, 2003). Clearly, there is a strong relation between ethnicity, trust, and participation, but it is not quite clear which direction this takes.

**Community level explanations**
The second approach to the explanation of the participation of residents concentrates on the *community* level. Studies examining the effects of social context specifically focus on neighbourhoods and the extent to which individuals are socially connected to others in their neighbourhood (Marshall, 2001). An important basic finding is that people associate more easily with others who have a similar income, education, ethnicity and lifestyle (Gerson et al., 1977). If people can readily identify with a group in the neighbourhood, their capacities to
participate in that group will be enhanced. This is an important starting point for the analysis in this paper, because it means that an individual living in a neighbourhood with many individuals with the same characteristics, will participate more than the same individual in a neighbourhood with fewer peers. So a person with an ethnic origin will participate more if he or she lives in a neighbourhood with a high share of ethnic minorities of the same kind. Having a considerable share of the same ethnic group in a neighbourhood is then considered an asset for participation for an individual belonging to that ethnic group. One of the explanations can be that ethnic communities develop a consciousness of each other because of the pressures from the outside, which makes them feel more cohesive (Olsen, 1972) or even force them to search for support among their peers.

The same kind of reasoning may hold true for the unemployed, or low educated, or the low income individuals. In neighbourhoods with concentrations of disadvantaged residents – such as some of the large housing estates that are studied here – residents may feel very cohesive, and consequently participate more to improve their situation. Also the contrary may be found, because these groups feel abandoned, for example by local politicians, and consequently not willing to become involved in neighbourhood management. Or, as Ross and colleagues formulate it “Persons feeling abandoned on an island of disadvantage may believe it safest to suspect everyone and trust no one” (2001, p. 572-3). In this case a disadvantaged person in a disadvantaged neighbourhood can be expected to participate less than if this same person would live in a more prosperous neighbourhood. It has been found that more advantaged places have higher levels of informal social ties that bind neighbours together (Sampson and Groves, 1989), which may generate a positive effect on participation. The direction of the impact of the social networks clearly correlates with the degree of advantage in a socio-economic sense, but again it remains unclear which direction this relationship takes.

Similar to social ties, other social researchers have focused on the role of social organisations for political participation. These studies are of interest here, because neighbourhood organisations often have a say in political processes as representatives of the community. De Tocqueville (1967 [1835]) already indicated in the first half of the nineteenth century that social organisations function as ‘schools of democracy’ where one learns to work together, trust and respect one another, and the basic principles of democracy. Almond and Verba (1989 [1963]) continued on this line of thought and concluded that individuals that are active in a social organization are also politically more active. Putnam’s ideas (1993; 2000) on social capital can be placed in this tradition. The underlying theoretical idea is that the more individuals interact with others in organisations and institutions, the more they are exposed to social norms of political behaviour and opportunities to participate. The degree to which an individual has the opportunity to participate in social organisations in the neighbourhood - because there is a high density of attractive organisations for this person to become part of - will thus have a positive impact on their participation in neighbourhood management as well.

Finally, the characteristics of the local environment are thought to influence participation in neighbourhood organisations. Problems, although they are experienced at the individual level, exist at the neighbourhood level. It will probably depend on the other characteristics of the neighbourhood in relation to the individual characteristics of the residents - as described above - if one is willing to do something about the problems. If people can associate with people like themselves in their neighbourhood (from their own group), they will trust each other and form civic organisations that can fight the threats that come upon them (Uslaner and Badescu, 2003). On the other hand, if one cannot associate with others within the neighbourhood, doing something against the problems in the neighbourhood will be extremely difficult.

All in all, it seems that the opportunities to identify with others in the neighbourhood for an individual is very important for the possibility to participate in its neighbourhood management. And then only if there are existing social structures that one can become part of.
National opportunity structures as an explanation

As Pickvance argues (2001), most societies change relatively slowly, and their features are important conditions that help to explain the topic of interest, in this case participation in neighbourhood organisations. Internationally comparative research involves the study of societies that are scattered over space, and are chosen because they represent different values of variables that are controlled or structural for a given society (p. 14). The countries in this research are scattered over Europe. Former state socialist societies are included, as well as societies with a longer democratic history. We may expect that the degree to which residents are active in neighbourhood organisations is influenced by this history. In countries with a longer democratic history (such as France, Spain and The Netherlands), residents may be more used to participation, while in countries without such a history (such as the former socialist countries) starting with participation is considered much more difficult. When residents are not used to participation, they might feel hindered to embark on participation activities.

In Central and Eastern Europe the transition from a communist to a more democratic regime has not meant that large numbers of people have joined voluntary organisations. As Uslaner and Badescu say "the state repression ended, but the culture left by more than half a century of authoritarian government endured. People had been socialised not to trust their neighbours. They had few opportunities to participate in civic life. The only forms of participation permitted tended to be activities that reinforced, rather than challenged the regime. People could join the Communist Party or unions, but civic engagement that was divorced from political authority or that could in any way threaten governmental authority was generally prohibited." (2003, p. 219). Uslaner (2003) even goes so far as to state that both civic engagement and trust are far lower in communist countries than in the West. He shows how people in former communist, dictatorial countries are still reluctant to trust each other and to take an active part in one’s community.

Finally, we may expect that participation of residents in neighbourhood organisations is helped by ‘top down’ policies that focus on ‘bottom up’ mobilisation (Body-Gendrot and Martiniello, 2002). It is the national political culture that defines the framework of legitimacy within which political claims are made and participation options are offered. In the Netherlands, for example, the involvement of the residents in neighbourhood development plans is a prerequisite to obtain funding from the national government. The idea behind this is that neighbourhood improvement needs to be supported by those it concerns (=legitimacy) because this will enhance the effectiveness of the policies.

In a democratic society its citizens do not only have the right to have a say, but are also listened to, otherwise having a say is no use. A good democratic state, therefore, makes democracy work as Putnam said. One of the ways to do so is by actively giving people a voice through empowerment. Empowerment is the action that leads to a situation in which people feel they have a voice, which is listened to by policymakers. Empowerment is about giving people the capacity to act, while participation is the act itself. There are numerous studies, especially in Northwestern and Southern Europe, on how people can best be empowered (see, e.g. Fitzpatrick, 1999; Docherty et al., 2001; Peterson et al., 2005). One of the important things that governments can do is to provide funding: financial support of community workers, for activities, for participation processes to take place. Another action is that training is provided for those that are or want to be active in their neighbourhood. And finally, building networks that bring people together and bridge the differences between groups is important. If there is a (national) policy that actively empowers people, we may expect that participation is higher in these countries.

The arguments mentioned above lead to the following research questions:

1. How does participation in neighbourhood organisations differ over the regions of Europe?
2. To what extent are neighbourhood context variables helpful in explaining differences in individual participation in neighbourhood organisation?
3. To what extent are national opportunity structures helpful in explaining differences in individual participation in neighbourhood organisations?

**Post-WWII neighbourhoods in Europe: a brief characteristic**

In many European countries the parts of cities that emerged in the first three or four decades after the Second World War were built as large estates and show large similarities between countries (see Turkington et al., 2004; Murie et al., 2003; Musterd and Van Kempen, 2005): they contain mostly apartment blocks in middle- and high-rise structures, often, but not always, intermingled with single-family dwellings. A generation of pre-war modernists (such as Le Corbusier) were able to put their stamp on the new estates. This resulted in large blocks, large open fields between the blocks, and a separation of functions. Carefully designed urban landscapes emerged. Positive opinions and evaluations about the large housing estates were very common in the early days of their existence (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2005).

The ownership structure of the housing units differs in the various countries. In Southern and Eastern Europe, owner-occupation is the most prevalent form, although this is a more recent development in the East because formerly social rented dwellings were sold to their occupants since the fall of the communist governments (see Murie et al., 2005). In the case of Northern Europe local government owns the majority of the dwellings, renting them out to low-income families. In Western Europe most dwellings in the estates can be found in the social or public rented sector. In general, dwellings in this part of Europe are affordable for low-income households.

In many cases the estates were built for family households. As this happened often already 30-40 years ago, the original population is now ageing, leading to an overrepresentation of elderly. This is especially true in Southern Europe. In Eastern European estates, the age cohort between 19 and 65 is overrepresented. These estates are able to attract well-educated families. The influx of ethnic minorities is more typical for estates in Northern and Western Europe than for estates in the Southern and Eastern parts of Europe. In Western Europe examples exist of estates in which already over 80 per cent of the total population belongs to a minority ethnic group (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2005).

At present, many large housing estates in European cities are not that popular anymore. The areas developed very problematic areas in many respects. Dekker and Van Kempen (2005) listed the following problems (see also, e.g. Taylor, 1998; Power, 1997; Evans, 1998; Hall, 1997; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Cars, 2000; Wacquant, 1996; Musterd et al., 1999):

- many dwellings show clear signs of physical decay;
- dwellings have become relatively cheap in these areas, resulting in concentrations of households that cannot afford to live elsewhere;
- high unemployment rates;
- many unsafe spots in the areas;
- increasing number of traffic-jams and parking problems;
- shopping centres are closed down because of declining demand;
- vacancies in the housing stock because of lacking demand;
- drug abuse;
- lack of meeting places for youngsters;
- stigmatisation of the estate by outsiders.

The separation of functions and large green public areas between the housing blocks that are so typical for these areas are now seen as both an asset and a problem. The positive side is that there is often a lot of space for recreation purposes, parking facilities and lack of disturbances by public functions. Unfortunately these assets also have their problems; often the green areas and public spaces are maintained poorly, especially in Central and Eastern European estates, but also in some Western European ones. Consequently, these spaces sometimes cannot be used or are vandalized. Areas where cars are not allowed minimise the
possibilities for police patrol, and may easily attract all kinds of criminal behaviour such as drug dealing and abusing.

Safety is now one of the major problems in many estates. Because the estates function at the bottom of the housing market, they attract mostly poor people and in some estates vacancy rates are high. These two developments can lead to a lack of budget for maintenance, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, and feelings of insecurity (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2005). Spirals of decline can easily set in when an estate becomes unsafe (Prak and Priemus, 1985).

Data collection and methods

This paper is based on the results of a survey carried out in 29 post-WWII housing estates, which were part of the so-called RESTATE project (Restructuring Large-scale Housing Estates in European Cities). In the RESTATE project, research in large housing estates was undertaken in 16 cities in ten countries: France (Lyon), Germany (Berlin), Hungary (Budapest and Nyiregyháza), Italy (Milan), the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Utrecht), Poland (Warsaw), Slovenia (Ljubljana and Koper), Spain (Barcelona and Madrid), Sweden (Jönköping and Stockholm) and the United Kingdom (Birmingham and London). For the present paper we have decided not to include the two neighbourhoods in Berlin (Germany) because of the very specific national situation. This leaves us with 27 estates in 9 countries for the analysis.

The same survey was used for all the estates, which makes it – within margins – possible to make comparisons between them, between the cities, and between the countries. Among many other questions the survey also included questions on participation. Previous reports were based on this survey: they put the estates in one country (or sometimes even in one city) to the fore (see Aalbers et al., 2005; Andersson et al., 2005; Belmessous et al., 2005; Černič Mali et al., 2005; Hall et al., 2005; Knorr-Siedow and Droste, 2005; Pareja Eastaway et al., 2005; Tosics et al., 2005; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2005; Węclawowicz et al., 2005; Zajczyk et al., 2005). For an in-depth analysis we refer to these reports. A report by Musterd and Van Kempen (2005) shows results per estate in a comparative perspective.

The survey was carried out between February and June 2004. In each case, a random sample was drawn, usually from the whole estate. For some estates, address lists were used as the basis for the sample; in other cases, the researchers first had to take a complete inventory of addresses themselves. Survey teams were hired to carry out the survey. They worked under the supervision of the RESTATE partners. Briefings were organised to instruct the survey teams. In some cases (as, for example, in Amsterdam and Utrecht) interviewers were recruited with a specific ethnic background in order to raise the response rate among, for example, the Turkish and Moroccan residents on the estates. In other cases, family members translated questions during a face-to-face interview. The questionnaire could be completed by the respondents themselves, but also by the interviewers in a face-to-face interview. The response rate differed per estate, but tended to be around 40 percent. In general, older people and natives were over-represented in the survey, while younger people and non-natives were under-represented. For the young people, this discrepancy probably relates to the fact that they have more activities outside the home. The under-representation of the non-native population is presumably related to language and cultural differences. However, all authors of the country reports stressed that, despite over- and under-representations, the survey results are generally reflecting the local situations rather well (for more detailed information on the (non) response, see Musterd and Van Kempen, 2005).

Furthermore, we have analysed the national opportunity structure on the basis of a comparative study of the policies with regard to large-scale housing estates in the RESTATE research neighbourhoods mentioned above. In one report per country the following questions were answered: What is the philosophy behind the different existing policies with regard to the large-scale housing estates? What are the main aims? What are the main activities included in the policies and what is the balance between these activities? How are the
policies organised? Who participates in the policy and who has decided about this participation? Can the policy be seen as a top-down or as a bottom-up process? (See Aalbers et al., 2004; Belmessous et al., 2004; Hall et al., 2004; Öresjö et al., 2004; Pareja Eastaway et al., 2004; Ploštajner et al., 2004; Szemző et al., 2004; Węclawowicz et al., 2004; Zajczyk et al., 2004). For an in-depth analysis we refer to these reports.

To answer these questions mentioned above, reports and memorandums were analysed. These reports and memorandums were written by the state, municipality organisations and evaluation teams. In addition, a number of stakeholders in the neighbourhoods, at the municipal level and at the level of the central government were interviewed, varying from ministers, mayors and policy coordinators at the city level, to representatives for companies and people working in the respective neighbourhoods. Also, virtual meetings (discussions on the internet) have been held with several groups of international urban representatives in the RESTATE project.

We distinguish two aspects of the national opportunity structure on the basis of these reports. The first one is the degree to which there is an active empowerment policy from above, i.e. the national government: is any action taken to improve the voice that comes from below (the residents), and is this voice listened to by policymakers?

For Northwestern European countries there is without doubt action taken by national governments to empower the residents. Of course, policy evaluations have shown that these actions are not always accurate or perfect, but at least the local or national government makes an effort to empower its citizens (Aalbers et al., 2004; Belmessous et al., 2004; Hall et al., 2004, Öresjö et al., 2004;).

In Southern European countries experiences are mixed. For Spain the situation is not so clear. Here, social movements have been important carriers for claiming political liberty and for increasing the quality of urban life in the neighbourhoods, especially in Madrid. These social movements still have an important presence in many districts and neighbourhoods. In some neighbourhoods participation has been actively stimulated and is part of the Community Development Plan (Pareja Eastaway et al., 2004). Also Spain can therefore be considered a country with an active empowerment strategy, although the origins are different from the Northwestern European countries.

In Italy there has been a decrease of citizens’ participation through formal and traditional institutions at the local level over the last decade. Instead, participation is more and more organised according to activism and the formation of bottom-up neighbourhood committees, and active, deliberate empowerment of bottom-up movements is scarce (Zajczyk et al., 2004). Italy, like Slovenia (see below), is not considered here as having an active empowerment policy despite the fact that there is a certain degree of participation policy.

In Slovenia several forms of residents’ participation can be distinguished, such as people’s initiatives, assemblies (obligatory and consultative), referenda, consumer protection councils, public presentations, public exhibitions and public discussions. Despite all these initiatives by the local level to promote participation, the national institutions do not listen to the voice from below and decide on policy design and implementation (Ploštajner et al., 2004). The voice that comes from below is thus mostly not listened to, and Slovenia is therefore not considered here as having an active empowerment policy.

Finally, in the other two Central European countries, Poland and Hungary, participation is very limited, for example to two or three meetings a year organised by the cooperatives with their managers (Węclawowicz et al., 2004; Szemző et al., 2004). These two former communist countries clearly do not have active empowerment policies.

The second aspect of the national opportunity structure that we distinguish is the history of inclusive citizenship. As we indicated before, civic engagement was far lower in communist countries than in the West (Uslaner, 2003). In a dictatorship it is dangerous to place confidence in people who are not familiar to you (for example those living on the other side of the street or in another street in the same neighbourhood), because they could be agents of the state and confidence in them could lead to betrayal. In democratic societies the stakes are smaller and strangers usually do not get you into that much trouble. People living
in formerly dictatorial countries used to live their lives in small social networks made up of people they knew well (Völker, 1995; Flap and Völker, 2003). Even after the change towards a democratic system people are reluctant to trust others and to take an active part in the community (Uslaner and Badescu, 2003).

On the basis of the democratic history we divide the countries in this research into two groups: those with a previous dictatorial system (Slovenia, Hungary, Poland) and those with a longer democratic history (Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kindom, France, Spain and Italy).

**Measuring participation**
The dependent variable, participation, is based upon a question in the survey: “Do you or one of the members in the household actively participate in an association that aims to improve the neighbourhood?” The people who answered ‘yes’ form one category (participation = 1) and those who answered ‘no’ form the other category (0).

**Independent variables**
The independent variables at the individual level include social-demographic status: first, a continuous variable for the respondent’s age (in years in three classes). For the multivariate analysis, the log function of age in years is taken to avoid the possible impact of outliers. Then a dichotomous variable for household composition (with or without children) is taken. Also ethnicity is included in the analyses as a dichotomous variable (those of native origin, and ethnic minority groups) (natives = reference category (0)).

Three indicators of social-economic status are discerned: first, income was recoded into a trichonomous variable (low-medium-high). This variable is based upon the question how the respondent would classify the monthly household income when compared to national levels. Low represents the bottom 30%, medium represents between the bottom 30% and top 30%, and high represents the top 30%. The higher incomes are the reference category (0). Second, education is included in the analyses as a trichonomous variable. This variable is based upon the question how many years the respondent has followed school education since the age of six. A low education means between 0 and 6 years of education and is approximately comparable to primary eduction in most countries. A medium education means between 6 and 12 years of education and is comparable to secondary education in most countries. A high education is 13 years or more and is comparable to a higher education like university or college (high education is reference category = 0). Last, a dichotomous variable represents the degree of social inclusion (those with a paid job, and those without a paid job =0).

The housing situation is first reflected in a dichotomous variable (moved into the neighbourhood before 2001 (= 0) or those that moved into the neighbourhood => 2001). Another trichonomous variable measures home-ownership (homeowners including condominiums (= 0), tenants, and others). Many of the variables above correspond with those that have been used in other research on participation (Marschall, 2001; Kang and Kwak, 2003).

To measure the impact of the neighbourhood context, we included ratio variables on the share of unemployed, share of ethnic minorities, share of owner occupied housing. These figures are based on locally available data from the authorities. We also include an index of experienced problems in the neighbourhood in the eyes of the respondent. This index is the result of a list of 16 items which refer to serious problems that are personally experienced in the neighbourhood by the respondent (Cronbach’s alpha is .8144 so they do indeed measure the same kind of issues). This list was made relative by dividing the number of experienced problems through the total number of problems (count/16). The problems are: dirt on the streets; drug abuse; burglary in dwellings; burglary in cars; graffiti/vandalism, feelings of unsafety; upkeep of public spaces; condition of the roads; playgrounds for children; maintenance of the buildings; lack of employment; quality of the schools; quality of
the commercial services; quality of public services; different values/norms/lifestyles; 
racism/racist harassment. The last indicator we use to measure the impact of the 
neighbourhood context is the share of respondents in the neighbourhood that is active in a 
sports club, cultural association or another organised social activity in the neighbourhood.

The national opportunity structure is measured in two dichotomous variables: first, if 
there is an active empowerment policy or not (0 = no). The countries were coded according 
to the findings in the ‘Policies and practices’ RESTATE reports that were described above. 
Secondly, a dichotomous variable represents the inclusive citizenship history: if a country 
has had a democratic system for at least 30 years or not (previous dictatorial system = 0). 
We have taken 30 years as the limit, because research has shown that the children of 
parents with a traumatic experience often share similar traumas, but that the grandchildren 
mostly do not do so. The Dutch Foundation Centrum ‘45 for example, does treat children of 
the victims of war, but not specifically their grandchildren. Hence the choice to define Spain 
as a democratic system, although the first democratic elections were only held in 1977. 
Slovenia, Hungary and Poland are regarded as having a previous dictatorial system. See 
table 1 for an overview of the national opportunity structures per country.

Table 1: National opportunity structures per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Active empowerment policy</th>
<th>Inclusive citizenship history</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>No active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>No active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Previous dictatorial system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>No active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Previous dictatorial system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>No active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Previous dictatorial system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom</td>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>Democratic system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Analytical strategy

To answer the research questions, bivariate analyses were first used to analyse how 
participation in neighbourhood organisations differs over the regions of Europe. We have 
used cross-tabulations with chi² to analyse if there is any impact of individual- and household 
variables, which are mostly measured on a nominal or ordinal scale. We then aimed to find 
out to what extent neighbourhood context variables are helpful in explaining differences in 
individual participation (research question 2). As these independent variables are measured 
on a ratio-interval scale, we used the t-test for independent samples.

In the introduction to this paper it has been stated that the influence of the national 
context on participation in urban neighbourhoods is an under-researched topic. The main aim 
of this paper is therefore to find out if an effect of the national context does exist. To reach 
this aim, we have carried out a logistic regression. The dependent variable for the 
multivariate models below is binary and indicates if respondents participate (=1) or do not 
participate (=0). The models are designed to isolate the effect of each of a set of ordinal or 
rational independent variables on this dichotomous dependent variable (Schutjens et al., 
2002). By applying it here, it helps us determine whether, for instance, the neighbourhood 
context will still be significant when they are analysed jointly with individual variables (model 
2). Of course the main aim of the analysis is to find out if the national context matters when 
variables on the individual (or household) level and on the neighbourhood level are analysed 
jointly (model 3).

Results

The importance of individual characteristics
As has been stated in the theoretical section of this paper, several researchers have indicated that personal and household characteristics generally have positive correlations with participation. In general, previous results can be summarised as follows: the more resources one has and the more time available, the more people are interested to participate. Also in the present research these general ideas can be more or less confirmed (see table 2). However, the general goal of this research is to find differences between countries. Therefore, table 2 shows the differences between the three parts of Europe (Northwest, South and Central). The main results following from this (bivariate) table are:
Table 2: Characteristics of the residents related to participation in neighbourhood organisations, per European region (percentages per category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>NW Europe</th>
<th>CE Europe</th>
<th>S Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does participate %</td>
<td>Does participate %</td>
<td>Does participate %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (NW**)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 years</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-44 years</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without children</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (NW ***)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natives</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-natives</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (S*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of education (NW **)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-6 years</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 years</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years or more</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid work</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No paid work</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time lived in the neighbourhood (NW ***)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2001</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=2001</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (NW and S ***)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-owner</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % active to improve the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighbourhood ***</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N (= 100% abs.)</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * including condominiums in CE Europe
Statistically significant difference: * = P < 0.1; ** = P < 0.5; *** = P < 0.01
Source: RESTATE survey 2004

- The share of active residents is significantly higher in Southern Europe, compared to Northwestern and Central Europe.
- Age does make a difference: especially in Northwestern Europe participation is high among people with a higher age (especially among those between 55 and 65 years of age). In Central Europe the general participation rate is low and there are not very big differences between the age groups.
- In all three parts of Europe members of families with children seem to participate more than those without children, but the results are statistically not significant.
- The influence of ethnicity is only significant in the Northwestern part of Europe. Natives participate more than non-natives.
- Income is only significant in Southern Europe: those with higher incomes participate more than those with lower incomes. For the other two parts of Europe, income is statistically not significant.
- Education, on the contrary, only seems to matter in Northwestern Europe: the lower the education, the more participation.
- Those who have lived in the neighbourhood for a longer time participate more than those who have established themselves in the last few years. However, this relation only holds for people living in estates in Northwestern Europe.
• Tenure matters in Northwestern and Southern Europe: owner-occupiers are more eager to participate than tenants. In Centraleastern Europe the inhabitants of condominiums participate less in activities to improve the neighbourhood, than tenants do.

Taking it all together, it seems that individual variables in general matter more in Northwestern Europe than in the other two parts of Europe. However, the lack of many significant results for Central Europe does indicate that the general literature on participation and the research on correlations between individual variables and participation is not necessarily valuable for countries with a post-socialist history.

Table 3: Characteristics of the neighbourhoods related to participation in neighbourhood organisations (t-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% ethnic minorities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3805</td>
<td>29.64</td>
<td>26.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>28.71</td>
<td>26.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% unemployed***</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3805</td>
<td>12.70</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% homeowners**</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3805</td>
<td>44.45</td>
<td>30.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>47.81</td>
<td>30.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of problems experienced***</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3805</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% socially active residents***</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3805</td>
<td>13.29</td>
<td>9.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>18.34</td>
<td>9.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistically significant difference: * = P < 0.1; ** = P < 0.5; *** = P < 0.01
Source: RESTATE survey 2004

The importance of neighbourhood characteristics
Table 3 gives the results for the analysis on the neighbourhood level. As stated earlier in the paper, the basic idea of including neighbourhood characteristics is that the direct environment of residents might influence their behaviour in general and participation more specifically. We have included a number of neighbourhood characteristics from which we might expect significant results. The main results are:

• The percentage of ethnic minorities in a neighbourhood shows no statistical relationship with the participation rate. In the literature it was found that the role of ethnicity does differ from place to place and from research to research. Maybe the present result reflects this unclear situation. It might be the case that in some neighbourhoods the share of ethnic minorities does matter, while in other neighbourhoods this variable is not important. Clearly, a simple t-test analysis does not help us to solve this ambiguity.

• Residents do participate more in neighbourhoods with higher unemployment rates. Of course this does not mean that the percentage of unemployed people is a main cause for participation. A large number of unemployed people may be a proxy for a larger number of problems in the neighbourhood, which might trigger people to participate in neighbourhood activities.

• This idea finds support in the same analysis: indeed those living in areas with a large number of problems do participate significantly more than those living in areas with fewer problems.

• Also in areas with relatively many homeowners and in areas with relatively large numbers of socially active people, participation is higher than in areas with more
(social) rented dwellings and areas with fewer socially active people. These correlations find support in different other research projects.

In general terms, variables on the neighbourhood level seem to matter. However, it remains to be seen if they will also be significant in a multivariate analysis in which also the effect of variables on the individual and the national level are analysed.

**The importance of national variables**

As we have seen above, individual- and household characteristics are related to participation. Also neighbourhood characteristics were shown to be of influence. In this section, we will find out if there is an effect of the national context on participation. The research question that is answered here is: To what extent are national opportunity structures helpful in explaining differences in individual participation in neighbourhood organisations? To answer this question we have performed a logistic regression analysis.

The logistic regression models estimated for participation are summarised in table 4. The table shows the Beta’s for each variables, as well as the statistical significance. The Beta’s indicate how much the likelihood of the outcome changes for each unit increase in the independent variable (or in the case of categorical variables, for a change from one category to another). A Beta greater than 0 indicates an increase in the probability, and a Beta below 0 indicates a decrease of the chance that a person will participate.

In the first model (table 4) only the individual and household characteristics are entered into the model. The analysis show how participation in neighbourhood organisations increases with age, is higher for households with children, for low educated people, and lower for low income households, those that moved in after 2001, and tenants. These findings are consistent with those in the bivariate analyses (table 2). It should be noted that the model has a very low Nagelkerke’s R², which indicates that the model has a relatively poor fit.

The second model (table 4) includes not only the individual- and household characteristics, but also neighbourhood characteristics. The model indicates how this particular set of ordinal or rational independent variables affects participation. In the bivariate analyses above we found that the neighbourhood matters, but is that still true when they are analysed jointly with individual variables? The main findings are:

- In neighbourhoods with high shares of unemployed people, the respondents are a little more likely to participate than in neighbourhoods with lower levels of unemployed. However, the analysis show that an unemployed respondent in a neighbourhood with high shares of unemployed people, has a lower chance to participate. This would imply that a concentration of disadvantaged residents does not lead to a community that invites people to participate. Instead, a disadvantaged person in a disadvantaged neighbourhood participates less than if the same person would live in a more prosperous neighbourhood.

- Earlier in this paper we refer to idea that people in a neighbourhood with many problems are more eager to improve the situation. This idea finds support in these analysis: indeed those living in areas with a large number of problems do participate significantly more than those living in areas with fewer problems.

- Last but certainly not least in this model is that the share of respondents active in a social organisation has a large positive impact on the chance that a respondent will participate in a neighbourhood management organisation. This means that the ideas of Tocqueville (1967 [1835]), Almond and Verba (1989 [1963]) and also Putnam (1993;2000) seem to hold. Indeed those that are active in a social organisation are also more active in a more formal forms of participation. The degree to which an individual has the opportunity to participate in social organisations in the neighbourhood indeed has a positive impact on the degree of participation in neighbourhood management activities as well.
The variance explained (Nagelkerke $R^2$) rises from .048 to .165, which means that neighbourhood characteristics do help to explain the variance in participation.

Now that we know that neighbourhood characteristics are helpful in explaining part of the variance in the chance that a respondent will participate, we turn to the final research question. To what extent are national opportunity structures helpful in explaining differences in individual participation in neighbourhood organisations? As we explained in the theoretical part of this paper, we expect that participation is higher in countries with a democratic history, and with a (national) policy that actively empowers people.

In model 3 (table 4) the national opportunity structure is taken into consideration, on top of the individual- and household, and neighbourhood characteristics. The findings support our hypothesis:

- It is very clear that the historical past of a country has great impact on the degree of participation: in countries with a dictatorial history, the chance that a respondent will participate in activities to improve the neighbourhood is relatively low when compared to countries with a more democratic history.
- It is also very clear that the existence of an active empowerment policy is positively related to participation. So, participation is lower in countries without an active empowerment policy. Empowerment does not only mean that people are given the capacity to act through funding, training, etcetera, but also that the opinion that is expressed by these people is listened to by policymakers. In countries with an active empowerment policy residents do actually have a voice in policymaking.
### Table 4: Logistic regression analysis: member of neighbourhood organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual- and household characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (log function)</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household with child</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.057 *</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.083 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>.677</td>
<td>-.421</td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>-.393</td>
<td>.007 ***</td>
<td>-.255</td>
<td>.095 *</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium income</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low education</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.026 **</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium education</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No paid work</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.002 ***</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved into nbh &gt;= 2001</td>
<td>-.430</td>
<td>.009 ***</td>
<td>-.318</td>
<td>.068 *</td>
<td>-.324</td>
<td>.064 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>-.310</td>
<td>.017 **</td>
<td>-.739</td>
<td>.005 ***</td>
<td>-.697</td>
<td>.010 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than tenant or homeowner</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>-.222</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>-.162</td>
<td>.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighbourhood characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Unemployed</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.000 ***</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.047 **</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% unemployed * no paid work</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>.006 ***</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>.002 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ethnic minorities</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.017 **</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ethnic minorities * ethnic minority</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% owner occupied housing</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.081 *</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.018 **</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% owner occupied housing * home-owner</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.050 *</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.077 *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index experience of problems</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.000 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% active in social organisations</td>
<td>1.656</td>
<td>.000 ***</td>
<td>1.612</td>
<td>.000 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National opportunity structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic system</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>.001 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, active empowerment policy</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.018 **</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>-4.436</td>
<td>.000 ***</td>
<td>-6.329</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-6.818</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>4171</th>
<th>4171</th>
<th>4171</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R2</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method: enter

Statistically significant difference: * = P < 0.1; ** = P < 0.5; *** = P < 0.01

Variable(s) entered on step 1: Log function of age, household with children (ref = no; 1 = yes), ethnicity (ref = non-ethnic minority; 1 = ethnic minority), income (1 = low; 2 = medium, ref = high), education (1= 0-6 years; 2 = 7-12 years, ref = 13 years or more), professional status (1 = no paid job; ref = paid job), year moved into the neighbourhood (ref = before 2001, 1 = > 2000), ownership structure (ref = home owner, 1 = tenant, 2 = other)

Variable(s) entered on step 2: same as in step 1, now additional neighbourhood characteristics: share unemployed, share unemployed*no paid job (interaction effect) share ethnic minorities, share ethnic minorities * ethnic minority (interaction effect), share owner occupied housing, share owner occupied housing*home-owner (interaction effect), index experience of problems, share active in social organisation.

Variable(s) entered on step 3: same as in step 2, now additional national characteristics: democratic history (ref = previous dictatorial system; 1 = democratic system for at least 30 years), active empowerment policy (ref = no, 1 = yes)

- The variance explained (Nagelkerke R²) rises from to .179 (this was .165 in the second model where national opportunity structures were not taken into account). This means that the national opportunity structures do help to explain the variance in participation, but that the share of correctly predicted participation does not rise immensely. However, the Beta's of the national opportunity structure indicators are relatively large and highly significant, which implies that both the democratic history, and the existence of an empowerment policy, do contribute more to explaining the variance than the neighbourhood characteristics (smaller beta's). An exception is the share of active residents in social organisations in a neighbourhood: this has the largest explanatory value for participation.

Summarising, participation is highest for elderly people, those with children, who do not have a paid job, who have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time in a home they own. Participation is also higher in neighbourhoods with high shares of unemployed (but in these neighbourhoods an unemployed person participates slightly less than in other neighbourhoods), high shares of owner occupied houses (but a home-owner in an area with many rented homes participates more than in these areas with many other home-owners), many problems, and a large share of the population that is active in social organisations. The most important finding is probably that a resident who lives in a neighbourhood in a country with a long democratic history, and an active empowerment policy, participates more than the same resident in a neighbourhood in a country with a dictatorial past, or no empowerment policies.

Conclusions
The main aim of this paper was to find out how participation in neighbourhood management can be explained by individual, neighbourhood, and national characteristics. Other studies already showed how individual and neighbourhood characteristics matter, therefore our specific focus was to find out if the effects of these sets of characteristics change when the national level is taken into account. The paper thereby contrasts with existing approaches to participation, which generally focus on individuals within the context of their neighbourhood, and thus neglect the multiple ways in which individual decision making is influenced by and embedded in the national context.

The results of the case study material underline the conceptual model outlined earlier in the paper. Individual variables are indeed important predictors of participation in neighbourhood management. Indicators of the characteristics of the neighbourhood (Share of unemployed, share of owner occupied housing, the experience of problems, and most of all the share of residents that is active in a
social organisation) also emerged as important. The interaction effects between the characteristics of the individual in relation to his neighbourhood give important evidence that a disadvantaged person (unemployed) in a disadvantaged neighbourhood actually participates less than if the same person would have lived in a better neighbourhood. This contradicts with previous research (Olsen, 1972) that suggests that in neighbourhoods with a concentration of disadvantaged residents cohesion may be higher, and consequently the residents may participate more to improve their situation. On the other hand, we did find that there is a strong correlation between the level of social activity in a neighbourhood, and more formal participation in organisations. This is in line with the findings of Sampson and Groves (1989) who state that in more advantaged places neighbours have higher levels of informal social ties that bind them together, which generates a positive effect on participation.

Maybe the most important result from this article is the fact that national factors like the democratic history and the existence of top-down empowerment policies do matter, also when variables on other levels are used in the same analysis. In countries like Slovenia, Hungary and Poland the chance that a person will participate is lower than in other European countries. Probably the fact that people have learnt that no-one can be trusted except your closest friends, and that civic engagement that threatens that government authority is prohibited, still influences the decision to participate nowadays. In addition, it was shown that national policies are important. In the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Sweden and Spain active empowerment policies do generate higher levels of participation. This makes us wonder what would happen if the former dictatorial countries would pay more attention to the issue of empowerment. Would that have the same effect as in the other parts of Europe? Or is the fact that people have learnt not to trust anyone of larger influence on their individual decision to participate or not? How many years does it take before the effect of an old system have been erased? These question are still open.

We have carried out this research in 27 post-WWII estates in Europe. Do these areas have very specific characteristics, so that it might be expected that the results only hold for these kind of estates? On the one hand, the characteristics of the residents are not that different from other older neighbourhoods: a large number of elderly people whom have lived there for a long time has a positive effect on participation. Many of the estates are more or less deprived areas, and like in other deprived areas this level of deprivation has a negative effect on participation. However, the enormous density and scale of the buildings in some estates, in combination with large public areas in between them, is generally supposed to enhance feelings of anonymity. This probably has a negative effect on participation that is not found in pre-war neighbourhoods, or recently developed neighbourhoods with a more personalised physical design. All in all, we may expect that participation is higher in neighbourhoods with less problems, and lower building densities. Also older neighbourhoods, where social organisations have had a longer time to flourish, will have higher levels of participation. As many policies focus on neighbourhoods nowadays, especially in Northwestern Europe, it would be very helpful to understand the factors that influence participation in different kinds of neighbourhoods: for example old as well as new, high density as well as low density, distressed as well as prosperous neighbourhoods.

This leads us to the last question of new research which would be helpful to understand the degree of participation. It was shown in this paper that a cross-national comparison is very helpful in understanding this issue. The national history was found to be very important in explaining participation, but can be considered difficult to influence through action. Probably it is best to monitor the changes over time to simply enhance our understanding. However, we have also shown that
policies that aim to empower people do have a positive effect on participation. What remains unclear, however, is which policies that aim to empower people have a positive effect, and how this varies over space. Further research could focus more on these different policy approaches which aim to empower people in a wide variety of social and spatial contexts.

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