

# Satisfaction with residential environments: Effects of participation

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Residential environments have an indubitable value for most of the people as this is where their home is and where they spend a significant part of their time. Levels of satisfaction with residential environments have a great impact on residents' quality of life and on their behavior within those environments (e.g. moving behavior, contributing to the good of the neighborhood).

Satisfaction with residential environments depends on how well residential characteristics satisfy important needs and values of people. Besides physical needs (e.g. proper housing, access to clean water and air), residents also have social needs that must be met in order to maintain residential satisfaction. This makes social qualities of residential environments and their effects on residential satisfaction an important research topic.

One of the important social qualities affecting residential satisfaction is participation in residential decision making. It has been found in a number of studies that involving residents in shaping and maintaining their living environments results in higher residential satisfaction when compared to treating residents as passive consumers (e.g. Taylor, 1996; Dassopoulos & Monnat, 2010). Although it has been assumed in those studies that participation satisfies social needs of residents, it is still not clear which particular needs are better satisfied due to higher participation. In the current research, we aim to identify the needs and values satisfaction of which depends on different levels of participation. Moreover, there are many ways to involve people in residential decision making, and more

research has to be done on which types of participation serve the interests of residents best. To address this question, we study the effects of different types of participation on residential satisfaction.

In two field studies, we presented Dutch households with scenarios of varying levels and types of participation in residential decision making. We asked how such residential conditions would affect their satisfaction with different needs and values (e.g. health, freedom, pleasure). We found that high levels of participation resulted in increased satisfaction with basic (leisure time, accessibility) as well as higher-order needs and values (social justice, freedom, self-respect, safety, and privacy). We compared individual participation and community participation with regard to their effects on satisfaction with the needs and values of residents. To tap on the potential negative effects of participation, we manipulated the amount of responsibilities and obligations accompanying involvement in residential decision making.

We will present the results of the two studies in the congress and discuss their theoretical and practical implications.

## References

- Dassopoulos, A., & Monnat, S. M. (2010). Do perceptions of social cohesion, social support, and social control mediate the effects of local community participation on neighborhood satisfaction? *Environment and Behavior*, 20, 1-20.
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