

The Sustainable Neighborhoods Network:

A City-citizen Partnership to Promote More Sustainable Behaviors

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outline

- Accomplishments in our 3 year period
- Why your program is of interest to scholars
 - Literature: co-opting; janus-faced; monitoring and evaluation; politicization; individuation of climate change; social marketing
 - How we studied it
- Many pitfalls and problems with civic participation programs “beyond-the-state” and “individuation”
- The innovative SNN model avoids them and potential to be a model
 - Reasons why
- That’s why you have had these successes:
 - Quotes and things
- Looking forward:
 - Keep doing: building community (beyond private and public spheres)
 - Allow spaces for activism outside SNN so SNN isn’t seen as a tool to squash activism
 - Watch out for, or change (is it gendered? See harwood’s Spain quote)
 - Ensure everyone feels comfortable seeking assistance (Harwood)
 - Don’t make it seem like “taking care of the neighborhood” is like “taking care of the home” – it lessens the power of women and the actions they’re doing

Literature context

- ‘technologies of citizenship’, which are defined as the multiple techniques of self-esteem, of empowerment and of consultation and negotiation that are used in activities as diverse as community development, social and environmental impact assessment, health promotion campaigns, teaching at all levels, community policing, the combating



Sustainable Neighborhoods Program

Your neighborhood. Your ideas. Your home.

Started by
Lakewood
Sustainability
Division
Manager in
2012

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[Information](#)

[Sustainable Neighborhoods Lakewood](#)

[Sustainable Neighborhoods Denver](#)

The **Sustainable Neighborhoods Program** gives residents the opportunity to become active partners in building vibrant and sustainable communities. Is your neighborhood ready to become a Certified Sustainable Neighborhood?

Program Overview



Intende
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In 2013

expressed interest in the program. Lakewood developed the Sustainable Neighborhood Network as a vehicle to share the program with interested communities.

Intended to encourage direct citizen action, the Sustainable Neighborhood Program provides support to neighborhoods in order to assist citizens in enhancing neighborhood sustainability and reducing the environmental footprint of residents. Neighborhoods in the certification program earn credits for participation and for achieving project goals.

How it Works

Neighborhoods use guidance from city/county staff to organize **workshops, projects, and events** that enhance the livability of their neighborhood and reduce resident's ecological footprint.

5 Goal Areas: Air, Land, Energy, Water, People



Benefits & Recognition

- **Neighborhoods earn credits (points)** from the city/county based on participation and project accomplishments.
- **Yearly Designations:** “Participating” or “Outstanding receive recognition from elected officials and custom neighborhood signage.

Sample Projects in the 5 Goal Areas

- Bike to Work Day
- Sidewalk assessments
- Carbon footprint challenges
- Fireplace replacement
- Home energy & water audits
- Solar Fair
- Low water landscaping workshops
- Vehicle maintenance
- Stream bank projects
- Fertilizer reduction campaign
- Noxious weed removal
- Compost & recycling sign up
- Bee-safe campaigns
- Community /school gardens
- Helping hands networks
- Neighborhood historic tour
- Local lunch club
- Health & Wellness promotion

Program Resources

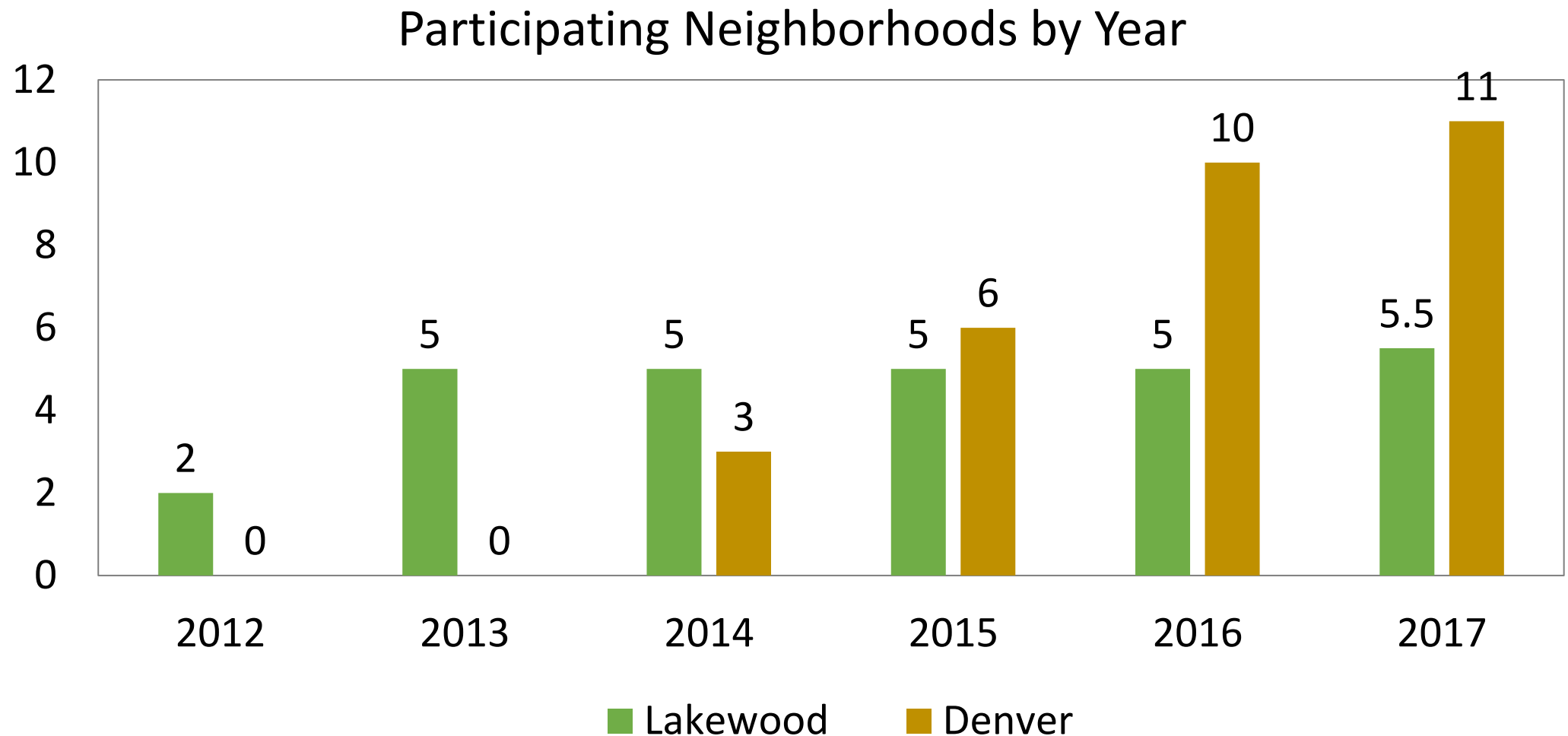
Lakewood

- Sustainability Division
- Funding source: Division's administrative budget, until 2017
- Staffing
 - 2013-2016 Intermittent 15 hr/week interns 2013-2016
 - 2017: $\frac{3}{4}$ FTE + 15 hr/week assistant
 - Division manager's spare time
- Other funding
 - Newsletter, Mailings, Flyers
 - Neighborhood launches & certifications
 - Small items, e.g. water at earth day

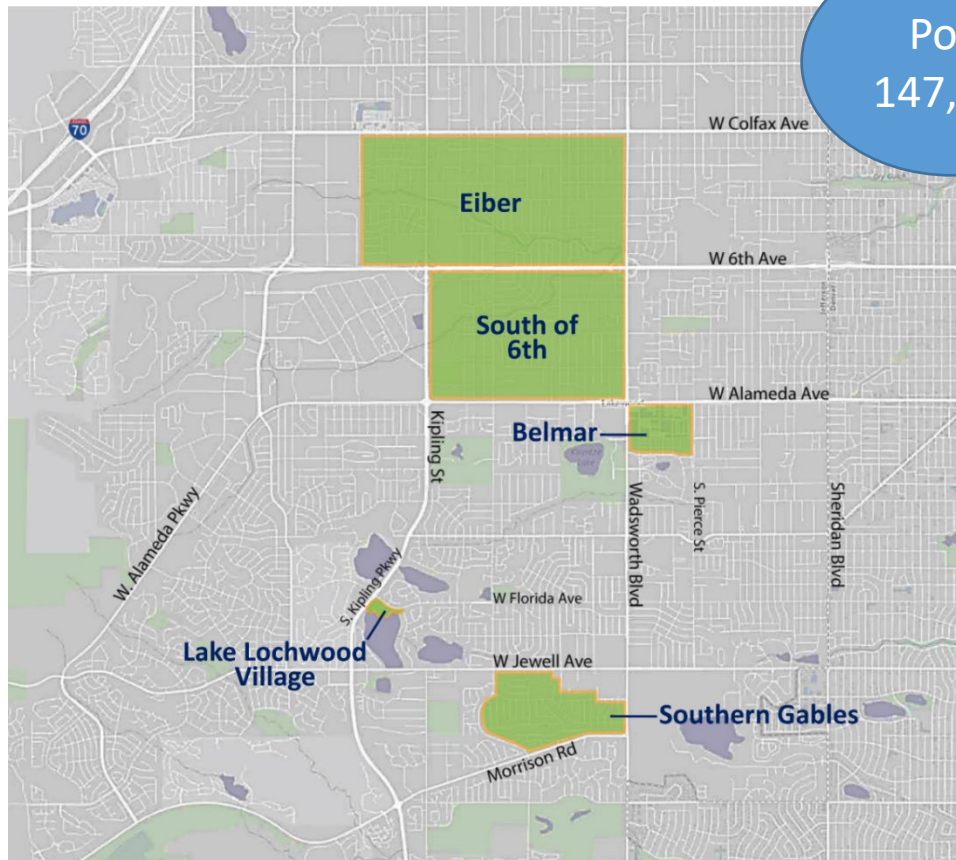
Denver

- Department of Environmental Health
- Funding source: landfill proceeds
- Staffing:
 - 1.5 FTEs approved every 2 years
- Other funding
 - Neighborhood launches
 - Newsletters, mailings, flyers
 - 2016: \$10,000 for small grants to neighborhoods
 - Future goal: \$5,000 for each neighborhood

Program Evolution in Lakewood & Denver



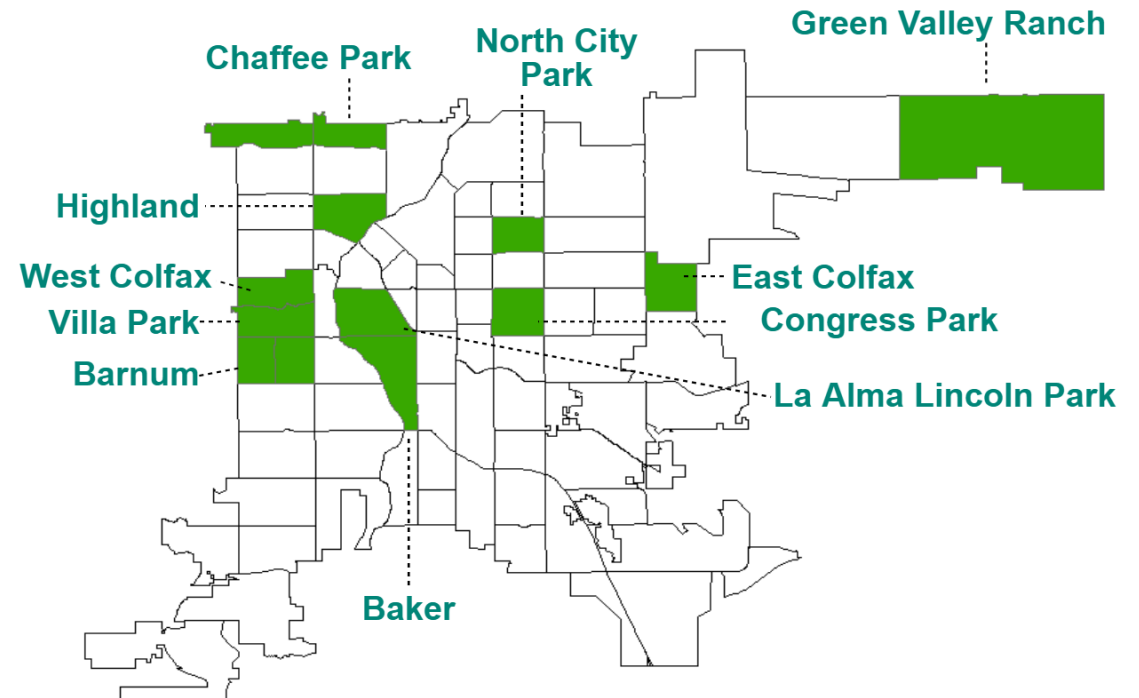
Participating neighborhoods are a small share of the total



Pop.
147,000

2017 NEIGHBORHOODS

Pop.
650,000



Lakewood started with stable neighborhoods to reduce risk of failure for an untested program

Denver is targeting low and moderate income neighborhoods and communities of color

Why study this?

Appropriate scale to promote sustainability

“Individuation” of climate change

Eco-localisation

“responsibilization” of the consumer

Climate pledges and guilt

City-led Sustainability Systems, e.g. STAR Communities

Can social Marketing work?

What about class, race, and gender

Community Development

Democracy is in trouble...local government is the answer

If states won't sustain citizens, cities will

People don't know their neighbors

Divides stem from isolation and self sorting

Why do the same people engage?

Research Approach

- 3 Year study
- Analysis of project database
 - 10 Neighborhoods (5 from each city; minimum of 2 years in program)
- Participant observation through “RA/Interns”
- Interviews with staff and residents
- Online survey open to city residents
- \$4,000 in small grants from CU Denver

What are the direct and ancillary benefits of the SNN?

Is this a sustainable model?
Is it scalable & replicable?
Who participates?
Is it effective?
Why?

FINDINGS

Direct and Ancillary

The Numbers: 10 neighborhoods (2012-2016)

Is it improving sustainability? Whose Participating?

Lakewood Project Goals	Projects	Credits	Direct Participants
People	159	489	
Land, People	52	161	
Energy, Air, Water, Land, People	31	143	
Land	27	56	
Energy	22	51	
Energy, Air, People	18	120	
Air, Water, Land, People	14	46	
Energy, People	11	32	
N/AV	9	8	
Water	8	18	
Water, Land, People	8	34	
Air, People	6	18	
Energy, Land, People	5	14	
Air, Land, People	4	10	
Energy, Air, Water, Land	4	8	
Water, People	4	20	
Energy, Air	3	4	
Energy, Air, Land, People	3	28	
Air, Land	2	6	
Energy, Land	1	4	
Energy, Water, Land	1	0	
Air, Water, Land	1	0	
	393	1270	52

Denver Project Goals	Projects	Credits	Direct Participants
People	73	305	
Land, People	49	202	
Energy, Air, Water, Land, People	28	146	
Water, Land, People	9	28	
Energy	6	12	
N/AV	5	10	
Energy, Land, People	5	28	
Water, Land	5	10	
Energy, Air, Land, People	4	18	
Land	4	14	
Energy, Air	3	9	
Air, People	2	0	
Energy, Land	2	0	
Energy, People	2	0	
Energy, Water, Land, People	2	0	
Air, Water, Land, People	1	4	
Energy, Air, People	1	0	
Energy, Air, Water	1	0	
Energy, Air, Water, People	1	0	
	203	786	47

From the residents:

- People have significantly changed behaviors: education, awareness, tools, camaraderie
 - “What does sustainability mean to me? “Well there’s the classic UN definition, but ...”
- Connecting people to others who are “like-minded”
- Creates its own momentum: In Lakewood, “We don’t want the government to solve all of our problems, even if they could”
 - Ownership and empowerment
- Involvement in other city goals
- Citizens are emotionally invested
- Respect and admiration for the city planners leading their SN program

“This Sustainable Neighborhood Program is one of the best community building ideas that government has ever come up with. And I think it reminds us that we should all be better stewards of the land. Everything these folks do makes our planet healthier. Thank you.”- **Councilmember Charley Able, Ward 1**

“The programs that you’re doing are meaningful, and they are going to make a difference in our next generation here in our city. But really, what is important, and what impresses me the most is that the people that are on a day-to-day basis giving your time, talent, and stepping to the table to be present for this community. *You are what makes Lakewood, Lakewood.*” –**Councilmember Ramey Johnson, Ward 1**

“The key to this program is not only making a difference in your community, but it is getting together and knowing your neighbor and building the community. That has been so special and we heard over and over tonight about how getting out and meeting folks and having an exchange of ideas has been so healthy. And that is what this program is all about. So thank you all.” –**Mayor Adam Paul**



Discussion: Successes & Challenges

Affordable, equitable, practical, effective, enduring, wide-reaching, reliable, and scalable to other places?

Strengths

Positive
Individuation
of Climate
Change

Neighbors like
sharing ideas with
other neighborhoods

Civic Engagement beyond
SNN:
from SN to City Council
Access to businesses &
nonprofits

Promotes inter-
agency problem
solving

City is a hub
for resources,
continuity, and
“re-launches”

Neighborhoods
aren't using it
to wield power
or steer other
funding

Politicians are
learning bout
and embracing
sustainability

Weaknesses

Reliance upon **unique inside-advocate** planners who are passionate, patient, rational, cautious and strategic: what if they leave?

Nonprofits informally involved for capacity in LI neighborhoods, but no funding

Institutional Hesitance: Agencies and politicians love it: but hesitant to fully fund it

Reproducing hierarchies within and across neighborhoods: Equity goal but most leaders are SF homeowners

Seen as fluff by some but not the majority

Opportunities

Nighborhood
Demand exists: many
want to do more and
bigger projects and
beyond
neighborhoods

Other agencies
eager to tap into
SN for citizen
outreach and
support, e.g.
implement HIA
actions

Developing,
tapping, and
strengthening
**informal and
relational networks
across sectors**

Steer/Nudge SN toward
Denver's 3 Big Goals:
Community Resilience
Net Zero
Mobility

New
simplified
credit
system

Utility and "Green"
businesses want to
access SNs
(SN makes sure they
don't market to
residents)

Threats

Neighbor frustration
from lack of
resources, direction,
and organization
from City

Another thing
privileged white
people do

Certain efforts
institutionally favor
SF homeowners

Avoidance of
political issues
and approaches

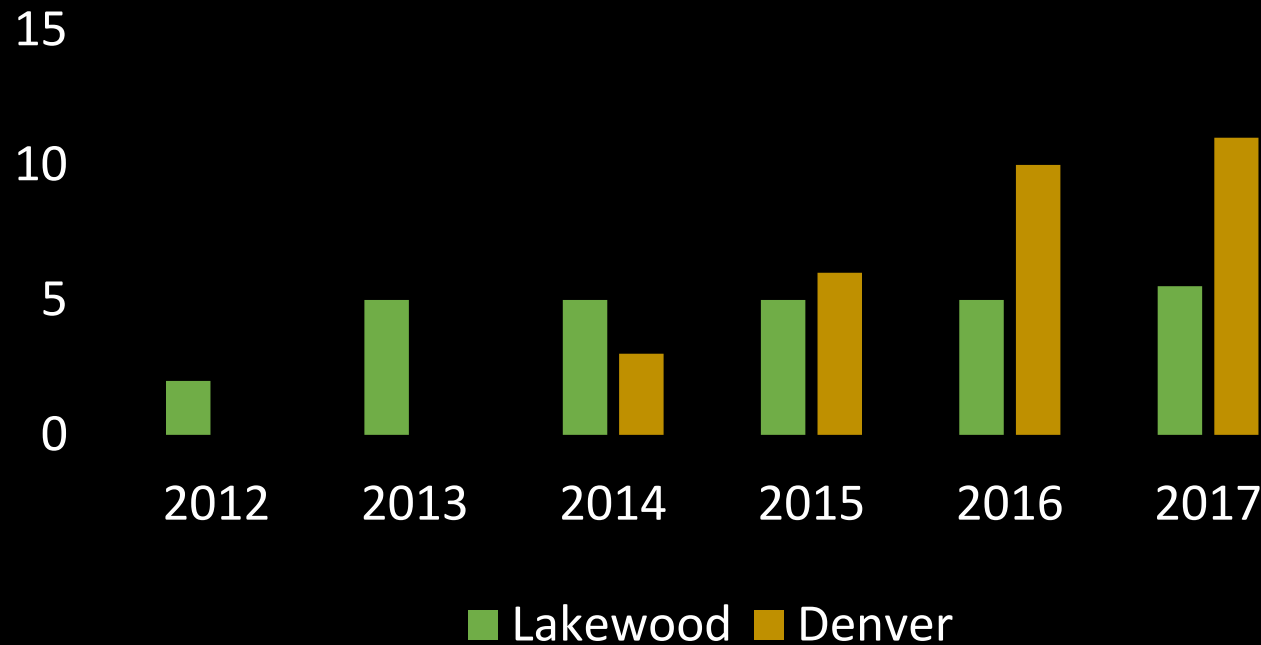
2-year funding
cycle: Denver
planner may be
“poached”

Decision making
and volunteering:
cultural, race, and
class divides

What's Next?



Participating Neighborhoods by Year



- Will Denver's steering be embraced by neighborhoods?
- Will Denver's neighborhood grants improve equity?
- Will freezing Denver neighborhoods improve responsiveness/organization?
- Will Lakewood's FTE be renewed?
- Will project types become more sophisticated?
- Will more cities join?

Take-aways

- This program has found a sweet spot between government led on the one hand and social movement or privatization on the other. Government hasn't left the building (privatization) nor have the groups tried to influence the government for personal gain
- Two-way learning
- Ripple effect is immeasurable
- Find ways to involve residents in non-participating neighborhoods
- Keep the market at-bay: once they're involved they would begin shifting things toward their way, which ultimately would lead to exclusion and bias toward things that earn them more capital
- Support ongoing, even increased, government support
- Accountability through the re-launches and point system

Other structures to pursue

- Governance arrangements are based on a common and distinctive set of features:
- Horizontal interaction among presumptive equal participants without distinction between their public or private status.
- Regular, iterative exchanges among a fixed set of independent but interdependent actors.
- Guaranteed (but possibly selective) access, preferably as early as possible in the decision-making cycle.
- Organized participants that represent categories of actors, not individuals (Schmitter, 2000, p. 4).