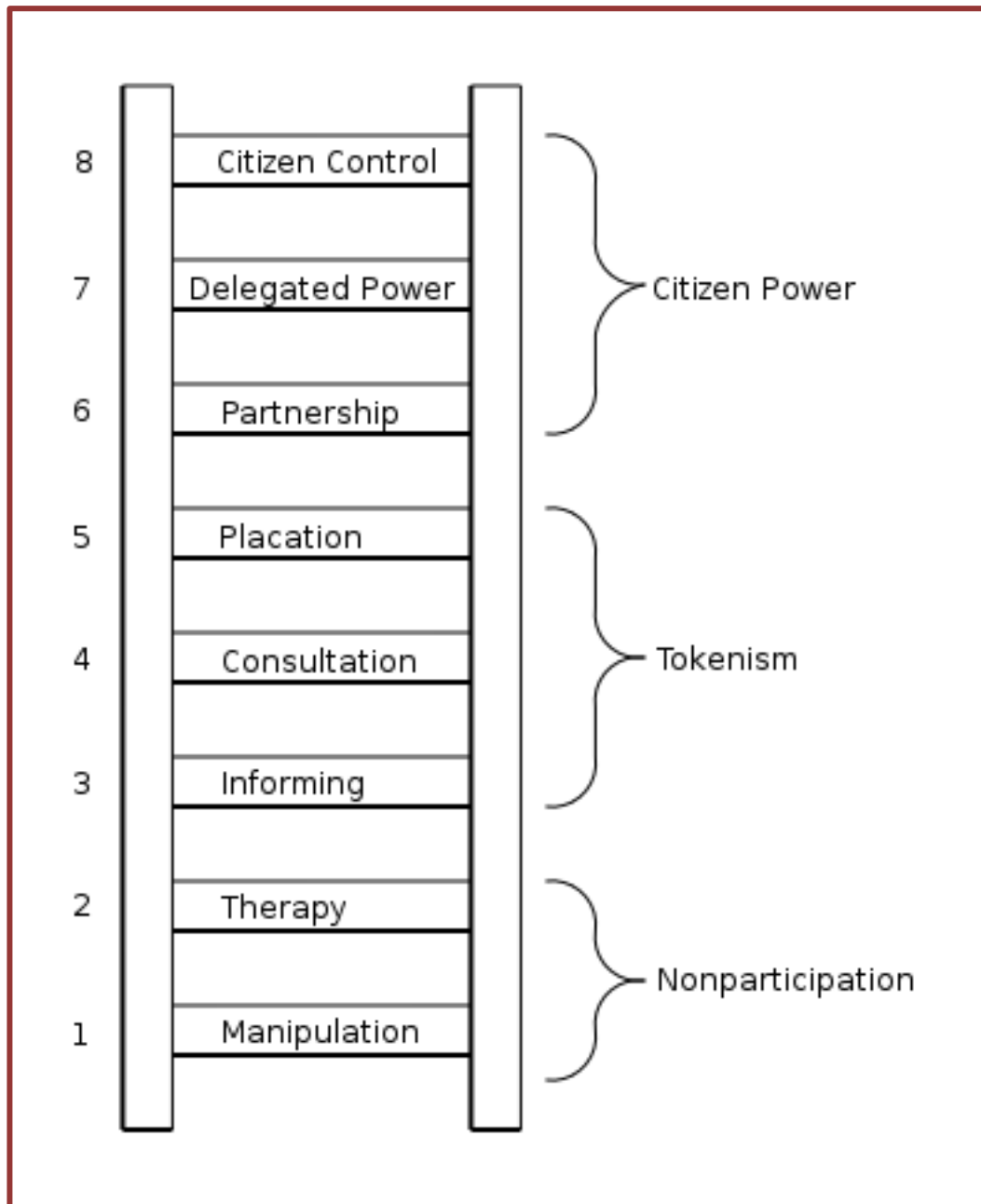


The Ladder of Self-Governance for Nation Rebuilding



Adapted from Sherry Arnstein, 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

This is a simple diagram setting out the levels or rungs on the ladder towards achieving genuine self-governance, decision-making authority and responsibility. In other words, this ladder sets out the steps towards self-determination for nation rebuilding.

In real life there are many more rungs and complications

involved.

The bottom two rungs of the ladder are **manipulation** and **therapy**. These two rungs describe levels of ‘non-participation’ and a *lack of* ‘self-governance’. Manipulation and therapy have been developed by outsiders as a substitute for genuine control and participation. Manipulation and therapy are about the people with power ‘educating’ or ‘curing’ participants rather than giving people a meaningful way to participate.

Rungs three and four of the ladder move to levels of ‘tokenism’ that allow Indigenous groups to be informed and have a voice. When **informing** and **consultation** are offered by power holders as the total extent of participation, Indigenous people may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When governance is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no ‘muscle’, and hence no assurance of changing the status quo.

Rung five, **placation**, is simply a higher level of tokenism because the ground rules allow Indigenous groups to advise, but the power holder retains the right to decide. In this situation, Indigenous people are still not calling the shots, nor are they able to assume responsibility for their own decisions and actions.

Further up the ladder are levels of ‘citizen power’ with increasing degrees of decision-making and governance influence. As citizens of their communities and nations, Indigenous groups can enter into a **partnership** that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with external power holders. The lack of a level playing field in regards to Indigenous people’s access to resources and expertise needed for such negotiations imposes real constraints on genuine governing authority.

At the topmost rungs, **delegated power** and **citizen control**, Indigenous groups obtain the majority of decision-making seats, full managerial and policy control, and/or agreed areas of devolved jurisdiction.