

# — Citizen participation in local security policy

*Conference on Citizen Participation in Security and Crime Prevention*

*Brussels 30/5/2024*



Bachelor in Applied Security Studies / Centre of Expertise in Social Innovation



# — **Citizen participation in local security policy**

1

— **Context and methodology**

2

— **Results**

- **Defining citizen participation in security policy**
- **(Rethinking) perceived policy contradictions**

3

— **Conclusion**

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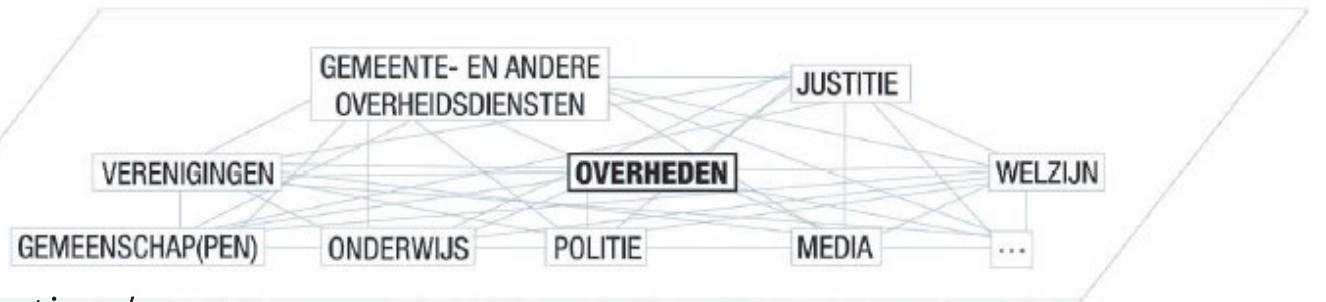
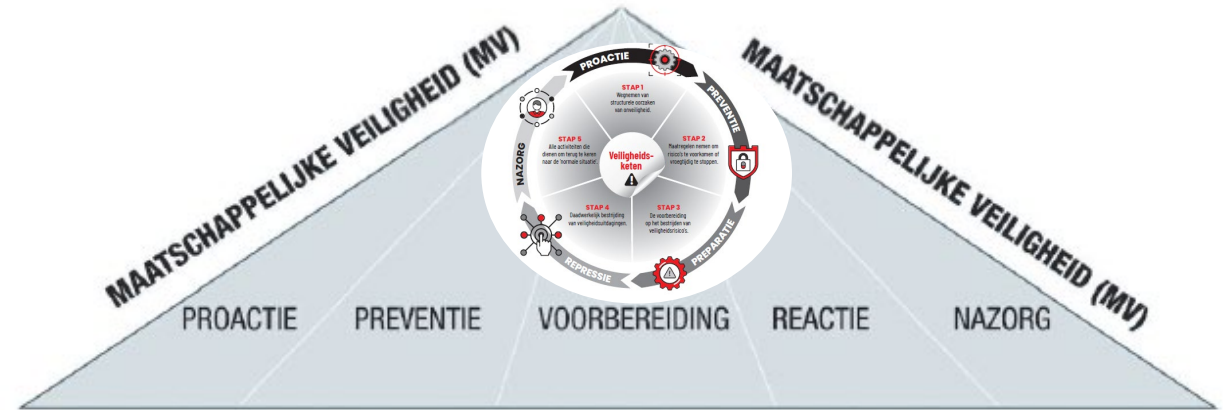
# — 'Integral and integrated security'

= shared responsibility

Important role of citizens!

In practice? Contradictions!

-> How can citizens be engaged in local security policies? How can 'citizen participation' be implemented in practice?



## — Methodology

→ How can citizens be engaged in local security policies?

- Desk research; literature, www
- In-depth-interviews; local security practitioners, key informants

|   | By students<br>BaMV<br>2019-2020 | By researcher<br>s CE Social<br>Innovation |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Interviews  |                                  |  |
| Local government (policy makers, prevention officers, PCSOs...) | 36                               | 5  |
| Local police  | 16                               | 4  |
| Other (ngo, fire department, citizens, federal actors...)       | 5                                | 7  |
| TOTAL   | 57                               | 16   |

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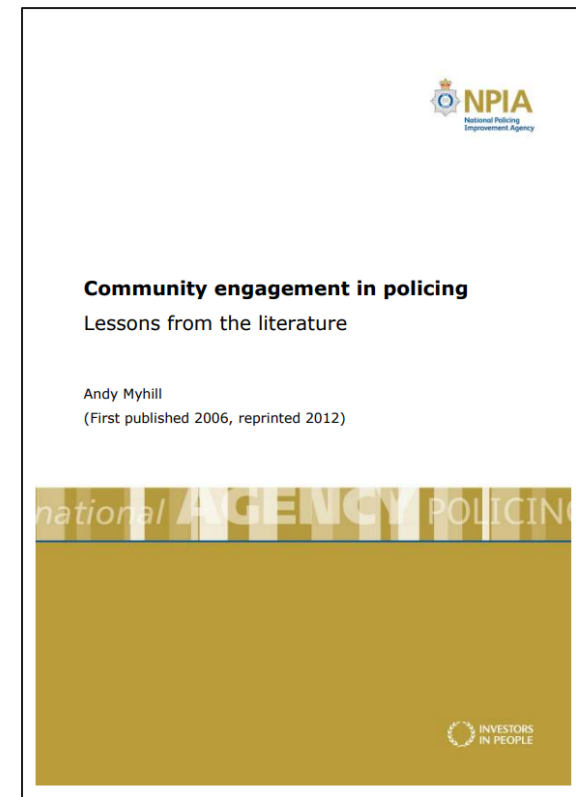
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## — “Citizen participation”

‘The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in [local security policies] at their chosen level’

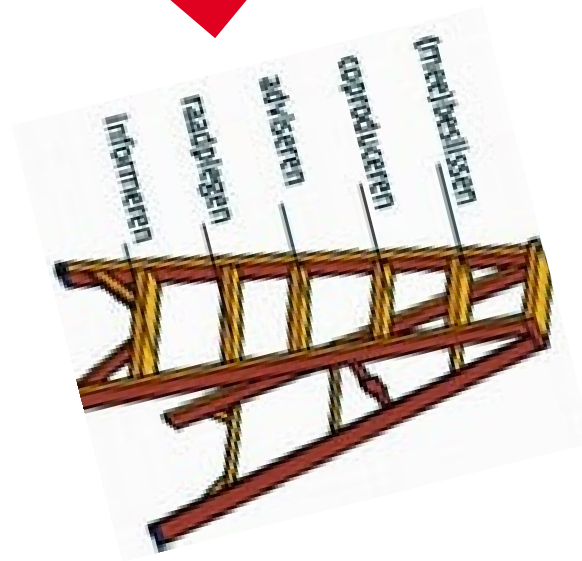
(Myhill, 2012)



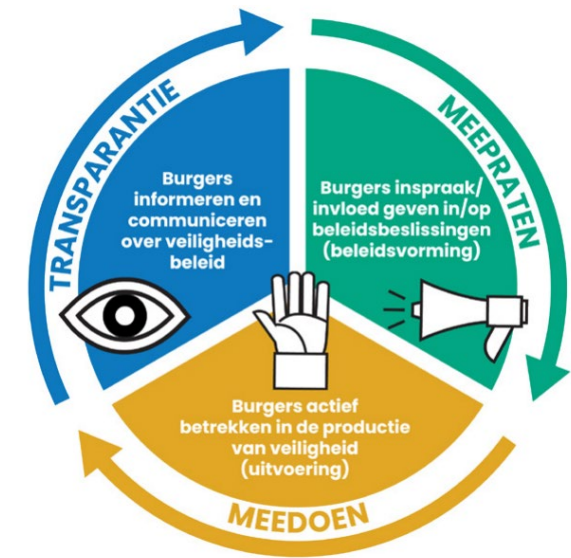
# — ...at their chosen level

*An important shift*

'Ladder of participation'  
(Arnstein, 1969)



Participation wheel



Figuur 1: Vormen van beleidsparticipatie

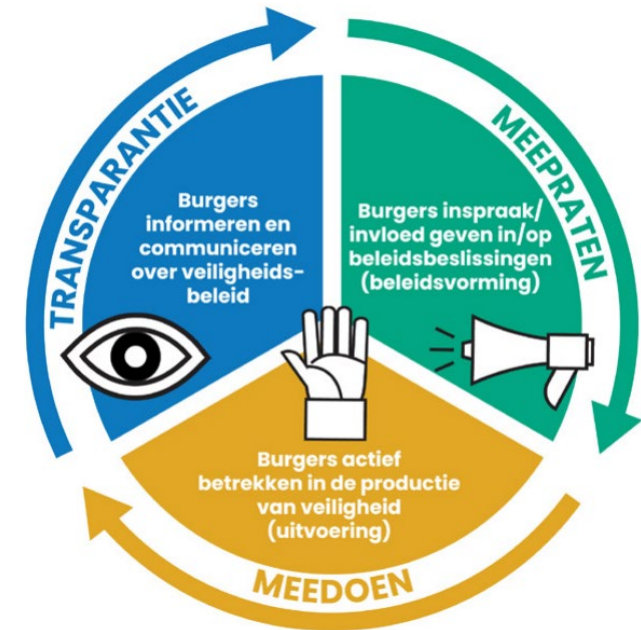


## — “Citizen participation”

‘The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in local security policies at their chosen level, ranging from:

- Providing information and reassurance (‘transparency’), to
- Empowering them to influence strategic priorities and decisions (‘policy formation’), and
- identify and implement solutions to local problems (‘policy implementation’).’

(Myhill, 2012)



Figuur 1: Vormen van beleidsparticipatie

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## — Citizen participation according to local security practitioners

'We don't have a monopoly on security, so we have to collaborate with others to contribute to security in society.'

'The community is actually our single most important partner in the whole story, they are our eyes and ears in the field.'

## — Citizen participation according to local security practitioners

'The community is actually our single most important partner in the whole story, they are our **eyes and ears** in the field.'

– Narrow interpretation and implementation?



## — Perceived policy contradictions

'Yes, BUT..'

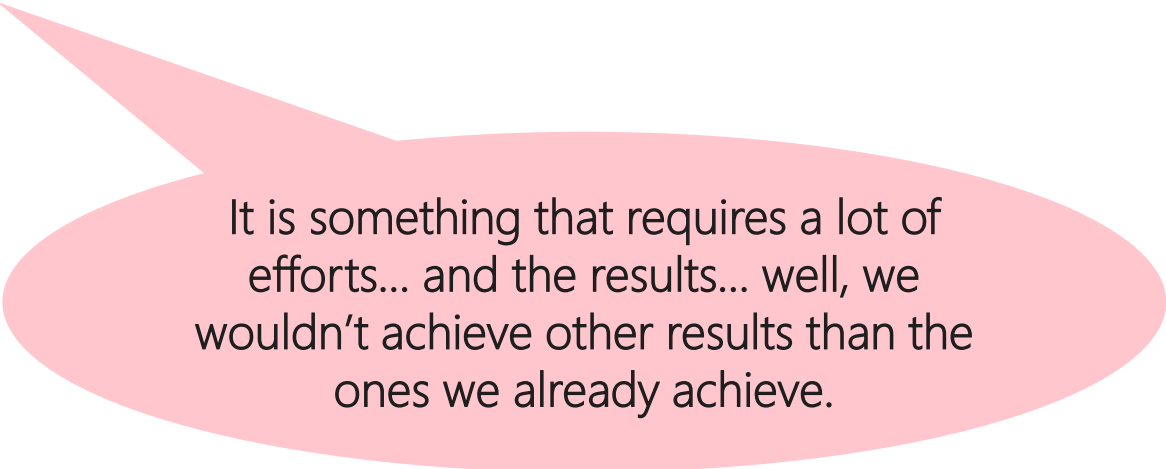
1. 'Citizen participation is not effective'
2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest'
3. 'Citizen participation is not efficient'



'Yes, AND..'



— **1. 'Citizen participation is not effective'**



It is something that requires a lot of efforts... and the results... well, we wouldn't achieve other results than the ones we already achieve.

# — 1. Citizen participation is (probably) not (directly) effective

*...longer term, indirect effects on objective and subjective security?*

## BUURTINFORMATIE- NETWERKEN EN LOKALE VEILIGHEID

Wim Hardyns  
Thom Snaghaan  
Lieve Pauwels

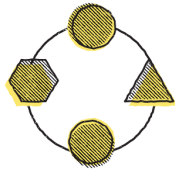
Een evaluatiestudie op basis van een  
mixed-method experimenteel design



(Perceptions of) (in)security

# — 1. Citizen participation is effective

Citizen participation



Building and strengthening relationships



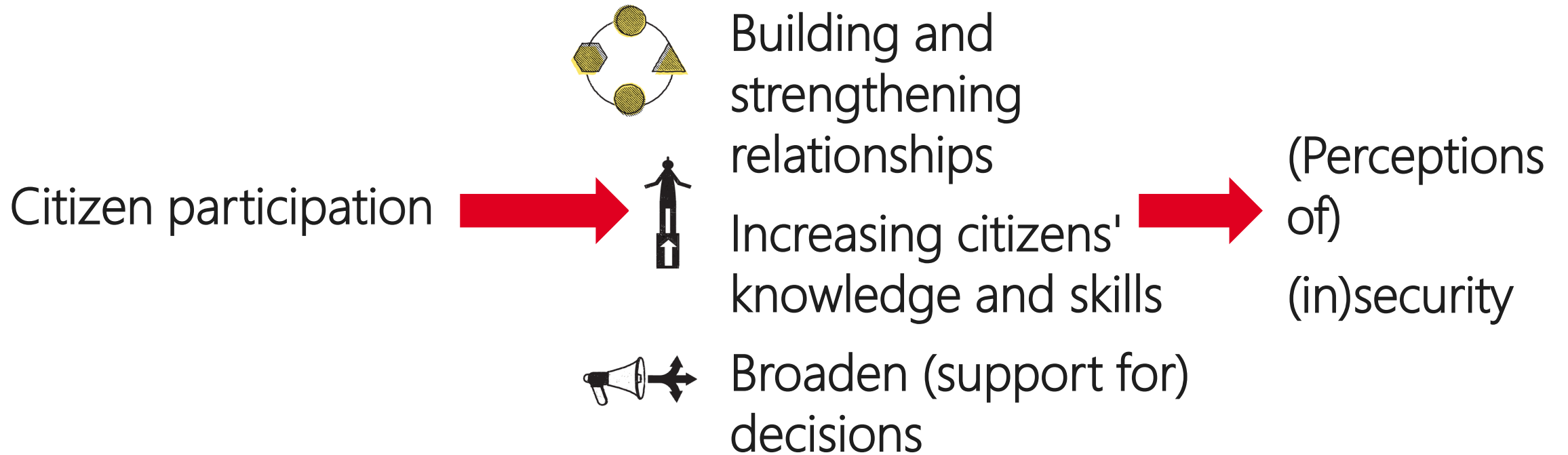
Increasing citizens' knowledge and skills



Broaden (support for) decisions



# — 1. Citizen participation is effective



# 1. 'Citizen participation is effective'

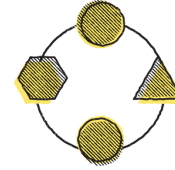


Formulate realistic objectives!

Rooted in local context

\*\*!! No participation 'because we have to' or 'is expected'!

-> Participatory processes that are not taken seriously achieve opposite effects!



Building and strengthening relationships



Increasing citizens' knowledge and skills



Broaden (support for) decisions

## — Perceived policy contradictions

1. 'Citizen participation is not effective' → 1. Formulate realistic objectives
2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest'

## — 2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest'

'It's always the same people who participate'

"I personally think ... that we must avoid that the loudest person in the room gets it his way"

'Citizens have too little expertise'

## — 2. ‘Citizen participation does not serve the public interest’

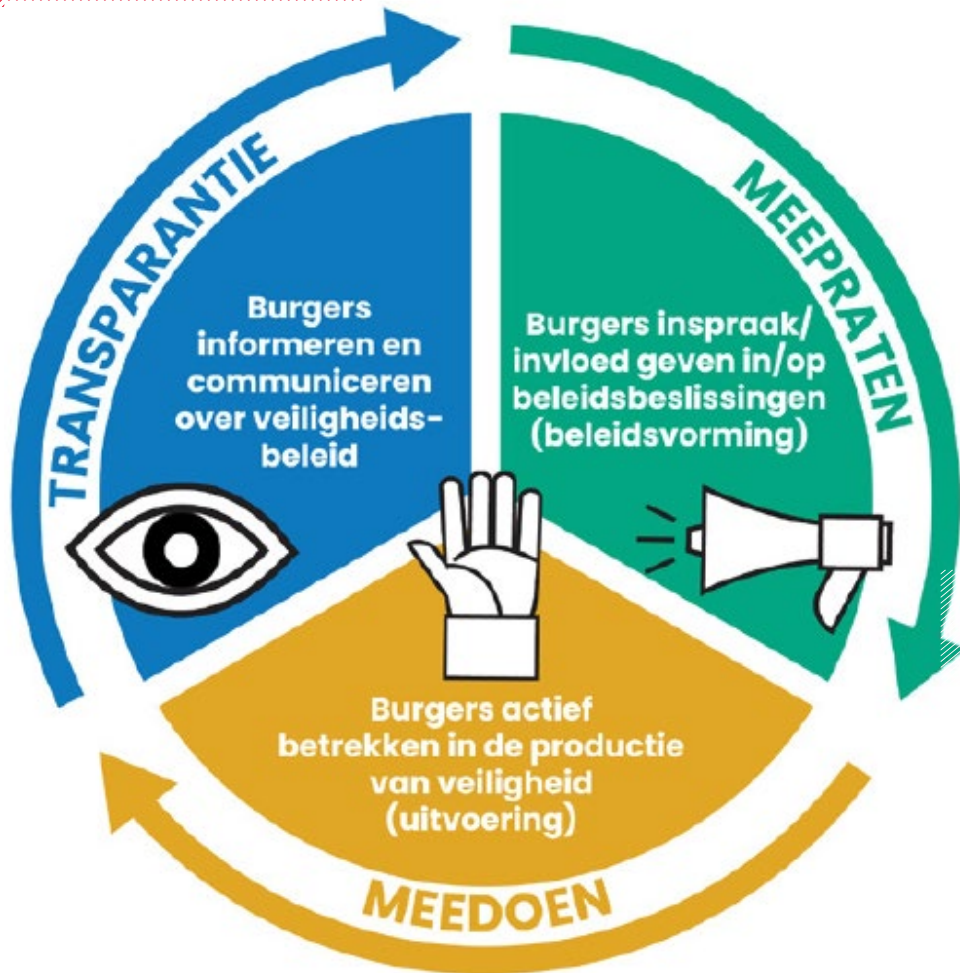


Only the most active and involved citizens are reached?

<-> Government must watch over the public interest, protect everyone equally!



## — 2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest'



Motivation to engage as many different groups of citizens as possible in security policies

Experimenting with ~~always the same~~ a combination of different (accessible) forms of participation, aimed at needs and interests of different target groups

## 2. Experiment with different types to reach different goals and target groups



**ibz BeSafe**

DG Sécurité & Prévention  
AD Veiligheid & Preventie  
GD Sicherheit & Vorbeugung



|                       | Relaties versterken | Beslissingen beïnvloeden | Capacity building |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Transparantie</b>  |                     |                          |                   |
| Algemene informatie   | ++                  | +                        | +                 |
| Veiligheidsinformatie | +                   | +                        | ++                |
| Public Relations      | ++                  | -                        | -                 |
| <b>Meepraten</b>      |                     |                          |                   |
| Inspraak              | +                   | ++                       | -                 |
| Meebeslissen          | ++                  | ++                       | +                 |
| <b>Meedoen</b>        |                     |                          |                   |
| Signaleren            | ++                  | -                        | ++                |
| Bemiddelen            | ++                  | -                        | ++                |

Tabel 1: Doelstellingen en geschikte vormen van burgerparticipatie

## 2. Experiment with different types to reach different goals and target groups



|                       | Relaties versterken | Beslissingen beïnvloeden | Capacity building |
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| Signaleren            |                     |                          |                   |
| Bemiddelen            |                     |                          |                   |



Tabel 1: Doelstellingen en geschikte vormen van burgerparticipatie



## — Perceived policy contradictions

1. 'Citizen participation is not effective' → 1. Formulate realistic objectives
2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest' → 2. Diversify! Experiment with different types to reach different goals and target groups
3. 'Citizen participation is not efficient'

### — 3. 'Citizen participation is not efficient'

Failure and conflict

Endangers monopoly position of the government

"The citizen should get an answer but should not step on the accelerator or stand at the wheel and steer left or right, that only creates chaos."

Security on the streets (...) please don't let citizens meddle in that. (...) keep it under control because ... if they start running around with batons and shotguns because they think some coloured fellow human being is going to come and do something there, then you have anarchy.

### — 3. Citizen participation is not efficient

Not an 'even' path, citizen participation is also (daring) to fail and allowing for conflict

Can undermine the government's authority and monopoly on violence, but it can also strengthen it!

- - Expectation management! Allow for trial-and-error
- Importance of trust, open communication, feedback!

"High quality participation has a lot to do with the quality of communication: credible, correct, timely, honest, sincere, justifying choices and indicating criteria that lead to choices. ... If people are taken seriously in this way and treated correctly by the government then people also understand that choices are necessary, that not everything is possible and that interests have to be weighed.

Communication is not a toy for marketing, it is the essence of participation policy."  
(De Rynck en Dezeure, 2009)

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## — **(Rethinking) perceived policy contradictions**

1. 'Citizen participation is not effective' → 1. Formulate realistic objectives
2. 'Citizen participation does not serve the public interest' → 2. Diversify! Experiment with different types to reach different goals and target groups
3. 'Citizen participation is not efficient' → 3. Value the process, including failure and conflict. Practice expectation management and communicate open and honestly



'Participation-judo':  
Embracing citizens and  
moving in the right  
direction together,  
making use of the  
strength and structure  
of the other

(Lam & Kop, 2020)

## — More information

<https://www.vives.be/nl/onderzoek/sociale-innovatie/burgerparticipatie-lokale-veiligheidszorg>

Questions:

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