



Hell no!

participation?

Citizen

**Goal?**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**  
 is a game that gathers 42 reasons, arguments, pretexts, etc. for NOT giving voice to citizens in local governance! We all know, indeed, that not everyone – especially within public authorities (both from the elected officials side or the civil servants one) is keen on developing citizen participation. Not everyone is convinced of its added value, not only for democracy but also for better policies and services.

What are the arguments of those who are against or at least 'not convinced' by citizen participation? What are you often told? What are the critiques of citizen participation that you hear? And what can we do to deconstruct them?

**Origin?**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**  
 is a game created by Christophe Gouache for the Active Citizens' URBACT action planning network. The game was created based on the long experience of Strategic Design Scenarios on citizen participation, forms of participatory approaches, social innovation and design for policy, public innovation, action-research processes, etc.

SDS has worked for more than 10 years together with elected officials and civil servants, hearing a lot of comments, arguments, pretexts from some people to justify their non-engagement towards more participatory processes, and they've all been gathered in the game you're holding.

1/2

**Rules for a game of 1 to 2 players**

**1. Setting up the game**  
 Place the shuffled pile, face down, in front of you, then lay the 3 «occurrence» cards, face up, on the table

**2. Time to play!**  
 Take turns drawing a card and asking yourself the following question: «Is this argument something you hear often in your organisation? Discuss this and then place the card in one of the three categories of occurrence. Repeat this action for the whole pile of cards.

**3. Are you done?**  
 You have sorted the whole pile? Now it's your choice. You can either stop the game by setting aside the pile of «Yes» cards to make a note, photo and keep record of them. OR you can continue the game (see steps 4 and 5).

2/2

**Rules for a game of 1 to 2 players**

**4. Easy to act upon?**  
 Collect the 'Yes' cards. Discard all the others. Line up the two «Axis» cards on each side of the table to form a line. Then place, one by one, each of the «Yes» cards on this axis according to how easy or difficult it is to act on them.

**5. And?**  
 Once you have placed all your «Yes» cards on the axis, you will now think about how to act on the cards you have judged to be more actionable: What could be put in place? With whom? In what way? What could be done?



1/2

**Rules for a game of 3 and more**

**1. Setting up the game**  
 Place the shuffled pile, face down, in front of you.

**2. Time to play!**  
 Each player picks 3 cards and looks at them. All good? Trading is now open! Each player can discard the cards they don't think are relevant and place them face up on the table. Each player must always have 3 cards in their hand. You can discard as many cards as you like and draw new cards either from the pile or from the cards discarded by other players. There is no order, no turn.

Trading stops when everyone is (fairly) satisfied with their three cards.

**3. Cards on the table!**  
 Each player, in turn, reveals his or her three cards by laying them face up on the table and then comments on his or her selection.

2/2

**Rules for a game of 3 and more**

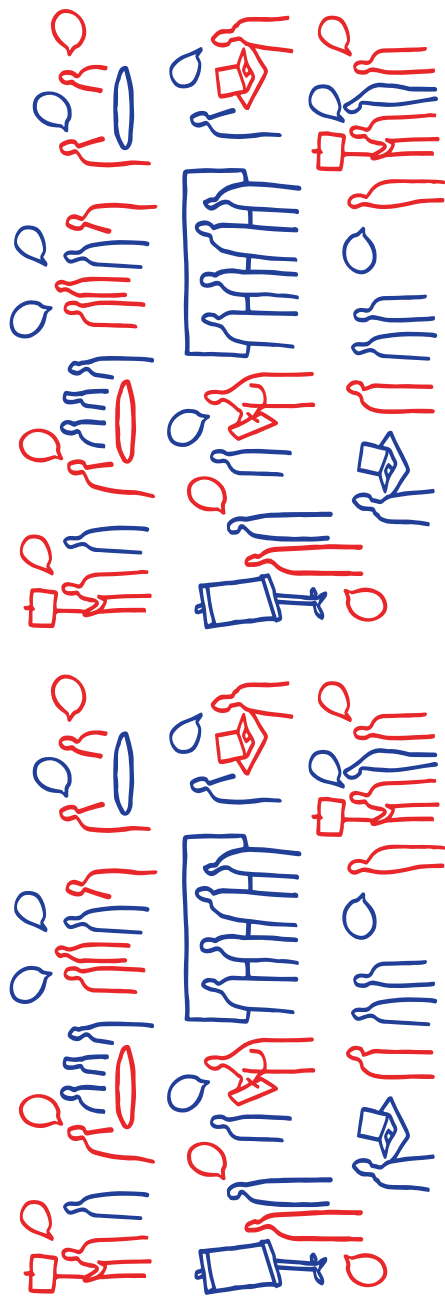
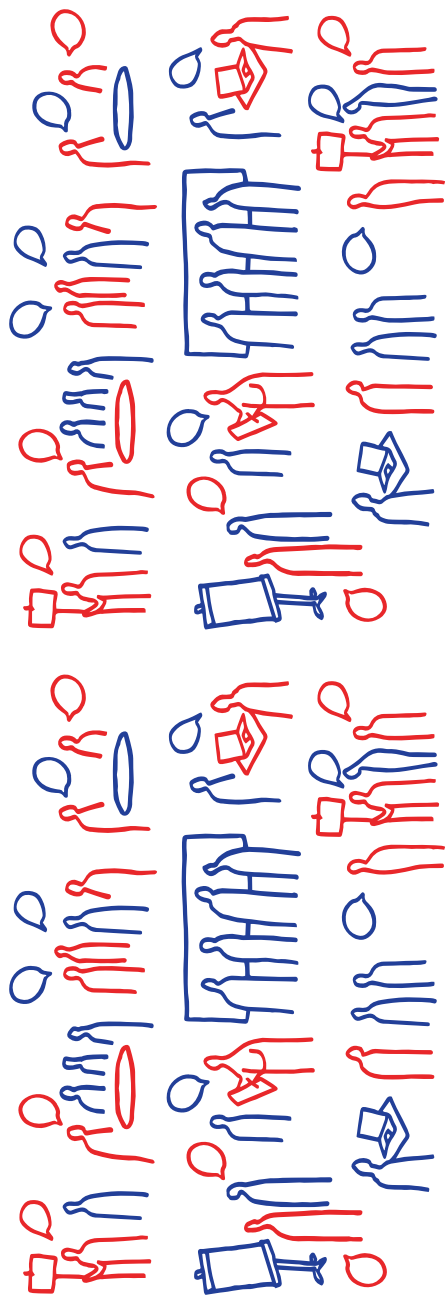
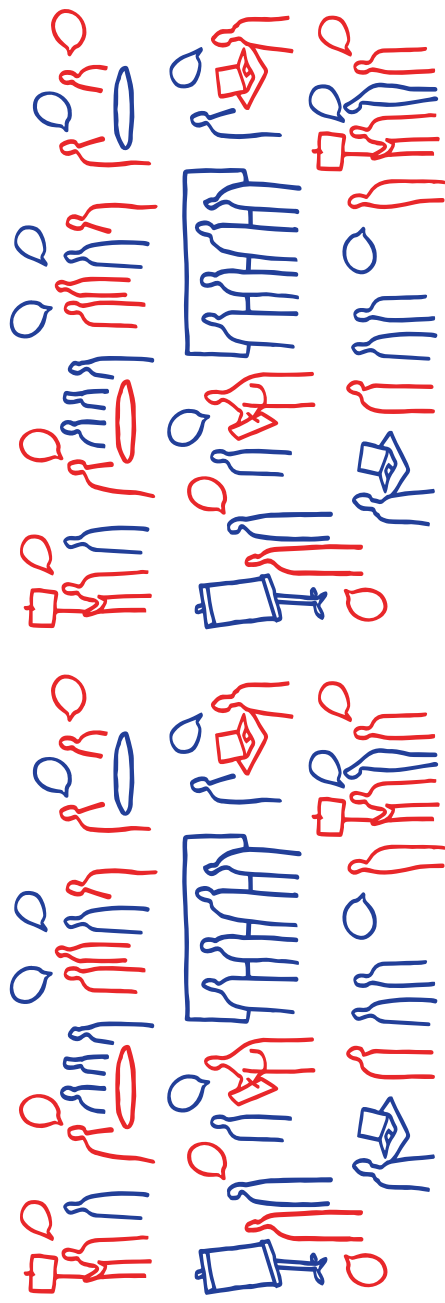
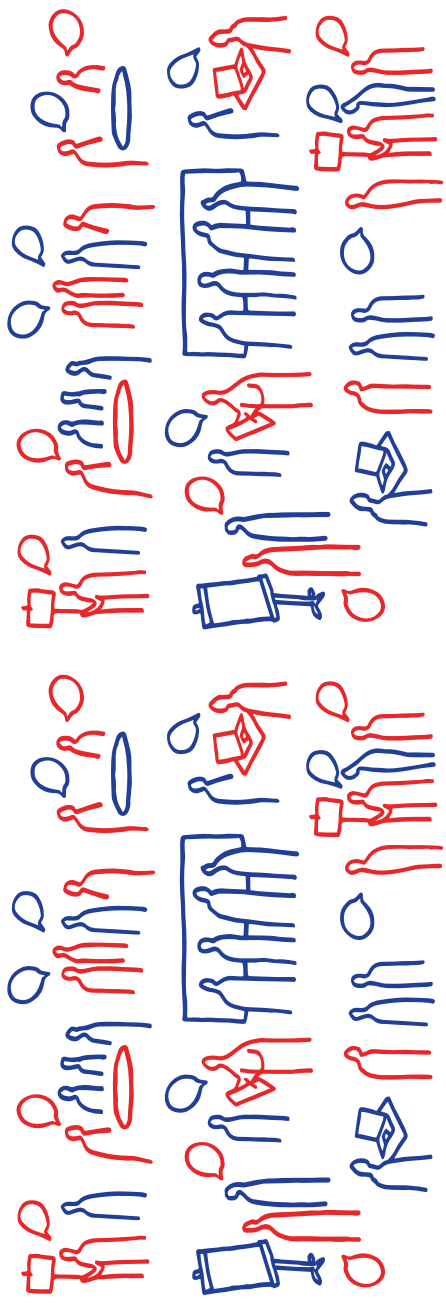
**4. Are you done?**  
 The choice is yours! You can either stop the game by collecting your selections and taking a picture of them to keep track OR continue the game (see steps 5 and 6).

**5. Easy to act upon?**  
 Line up the two «Axis» cards on each side of the table to form a line. Then place each of the cards from your collective selection on the axis according to how easy it is to act on them.

**6. And?**  
 Once you have placed all your cards on the axis, you can now reflect all together about the cards you have judged to be more actionable: What to put in place? With whom? In what way? What could be done?



Occurrence card



Axis card

**We can't act**

**quickly...**



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

Because the old-generation of politicians don't want to change their ways of doing.



Axis card

**We can act**

**quickly ...**



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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

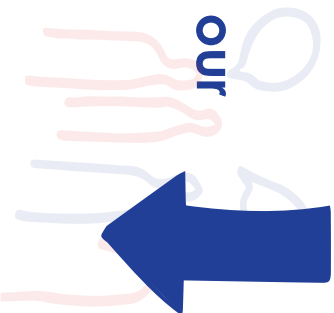
Because citizen participation is only a political move to gain extra citizens' votes.



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Occurrence card

**No,**  
it's not so  
relevant in our  
case



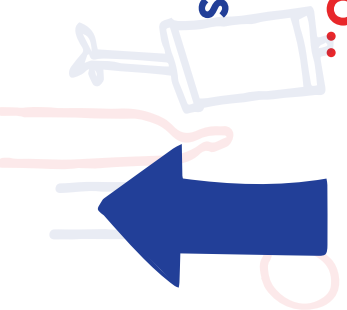
**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

Because the citizens we would like to hear think that they are not able or legitimate to participate to any public debate.



Occurrence card

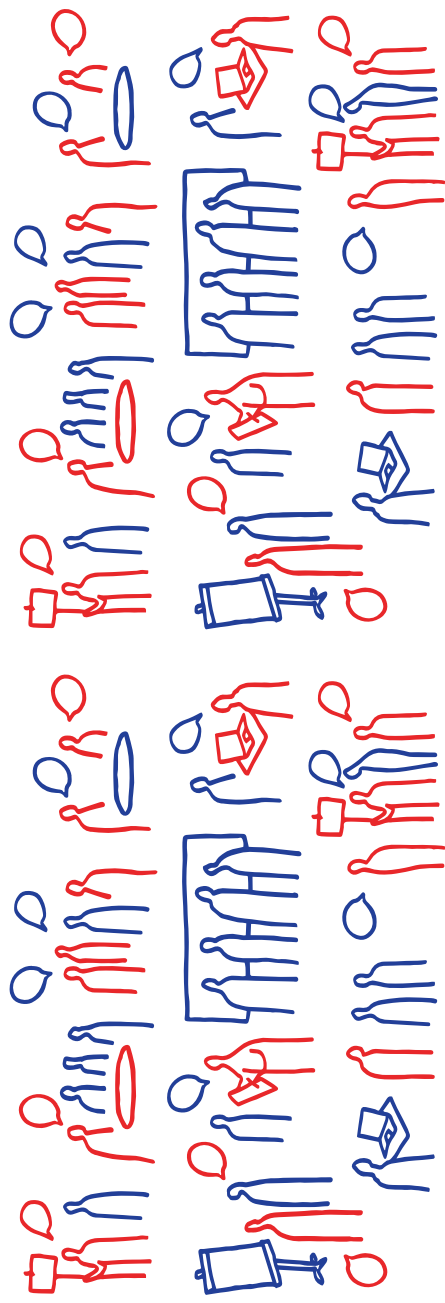
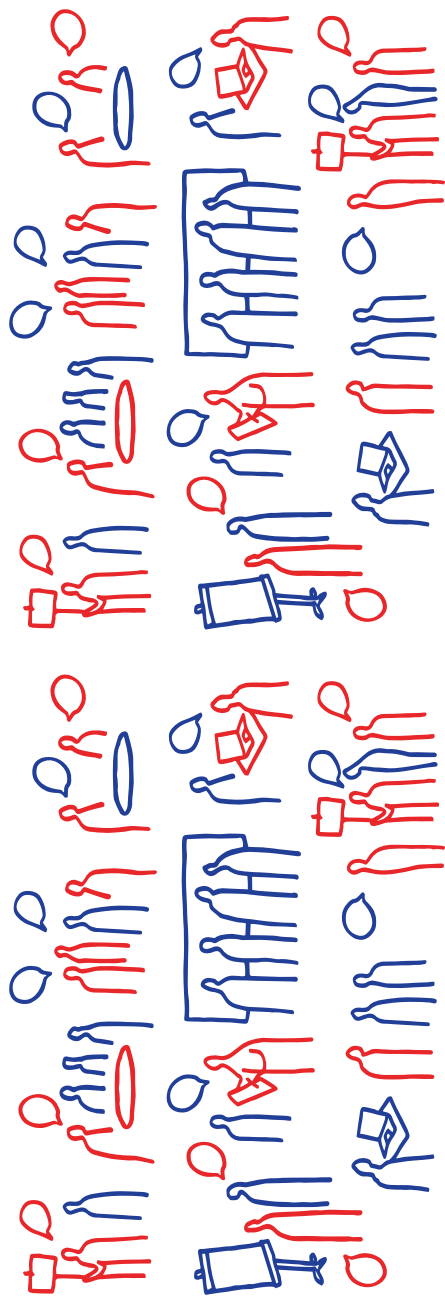
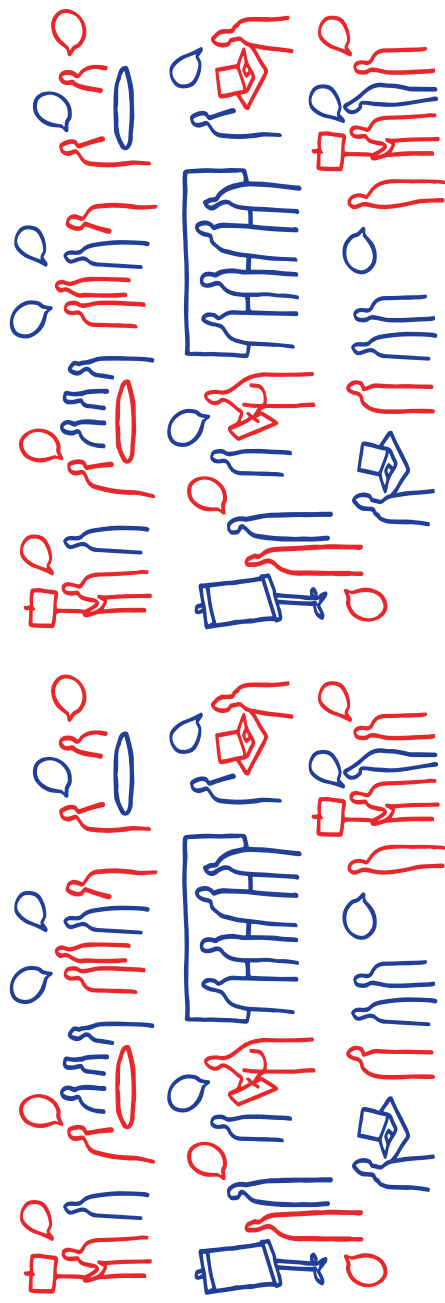
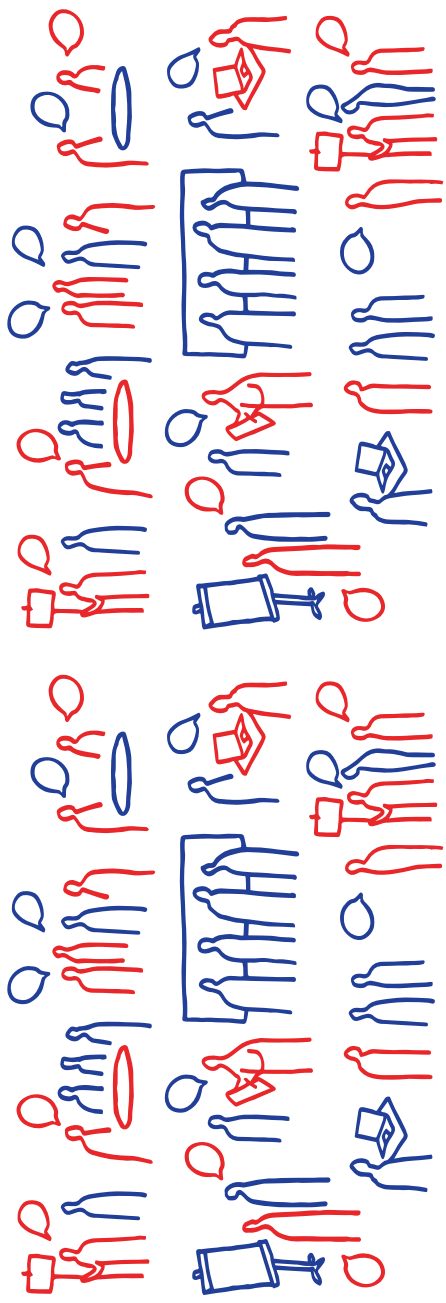
**Yeah ...no...**  
a bit,  
sometimes



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

Because conversations always remain superficial and without depth.





**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens are not interested by strategic planning or agenda setting or any other high-level thinking activity.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens are better at complaining, than at finding solutions.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens have tons of different interests, the consensus is unreachable.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens show up randomly, it's totally hazardous.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because they don't trust public authorities anyway, they are suspicious about our intentions.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because if you listen & follow citizens, extreme things might come up (like re-establishing death penalty, etc.)**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens are already given a right to vote for people to represent them.**

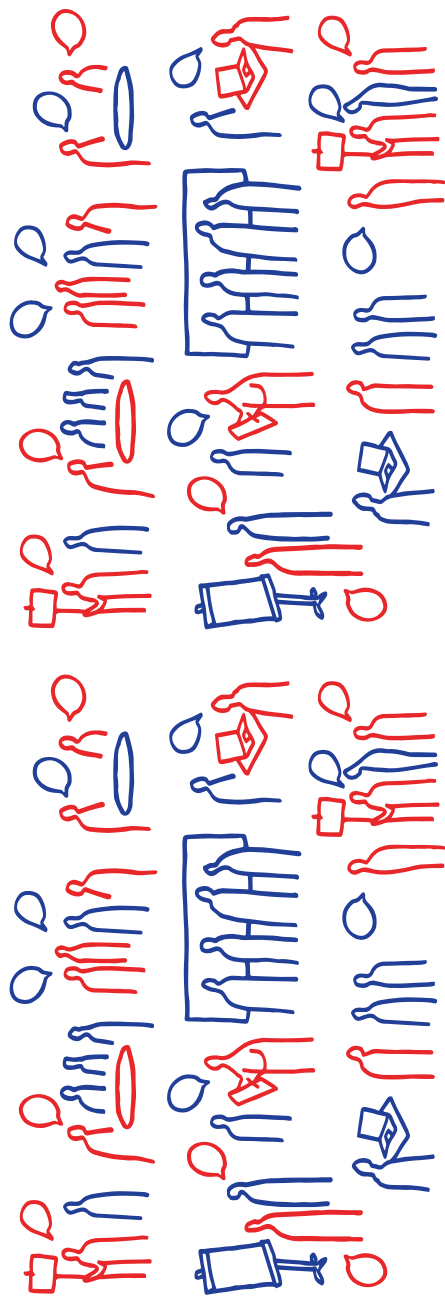
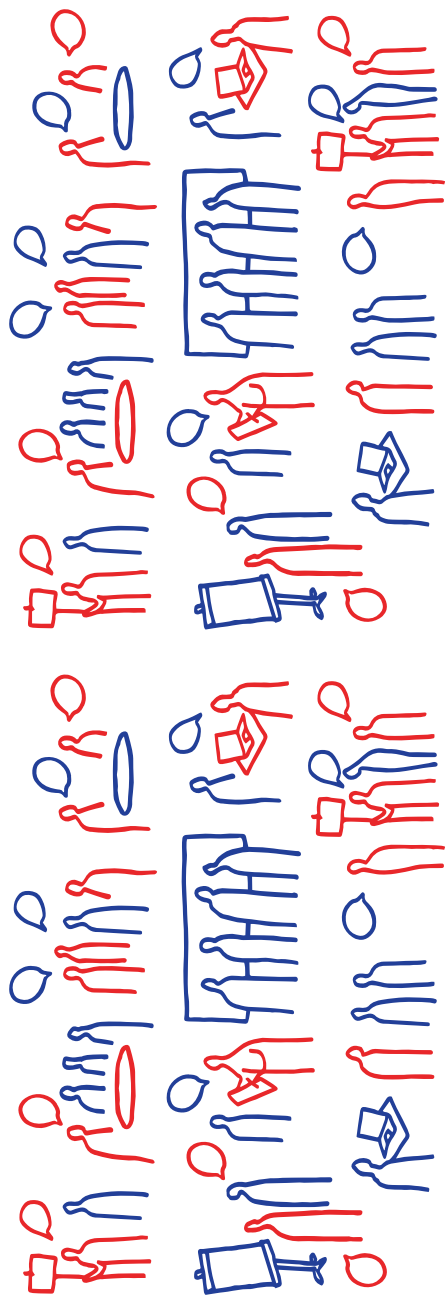
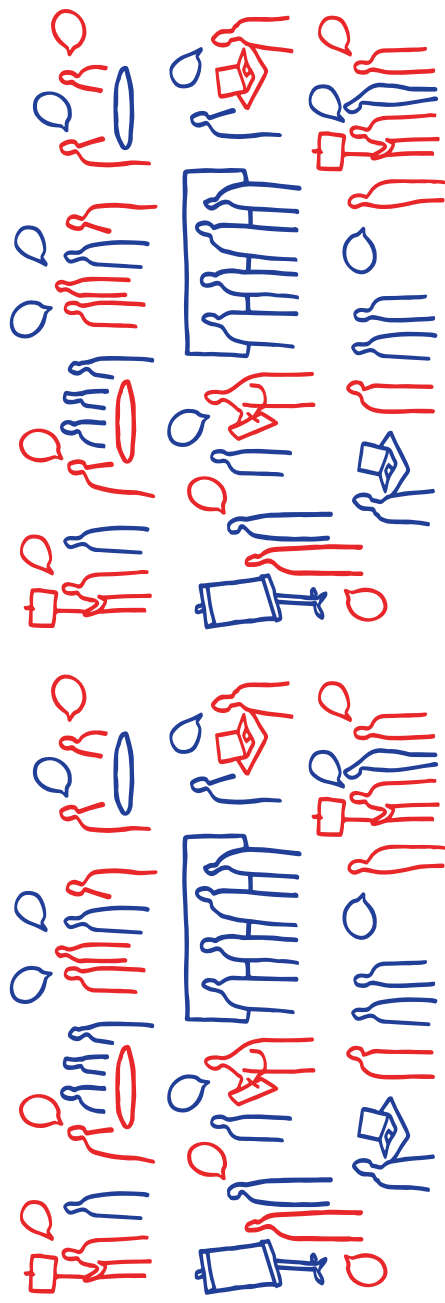
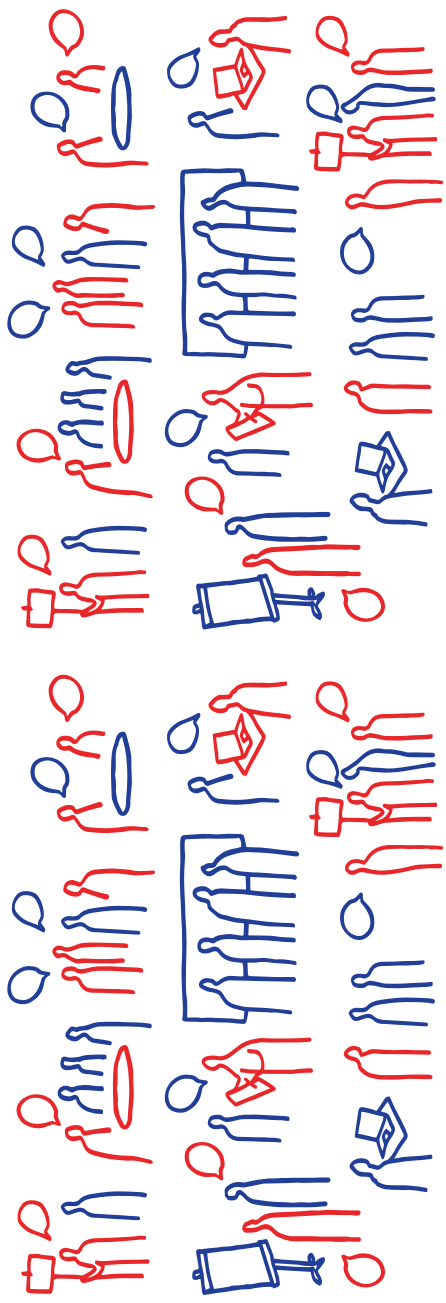
**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens don't understand politics & how a city administration works.**

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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it's  
useless, citizens  
are not experts!**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens  
strongly disrupt  
public authorities.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because instability  
can quickly arise  
with participatory  
democracy.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because you  
only get activists  
& militants with  
whom it is hard to  
collaborate.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens  
only care for very  
concrete & pragmatic  
things that have  
impact on their daily  
routines or lifestyles.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it  
requires a lot of  
resources to train  
citizens.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

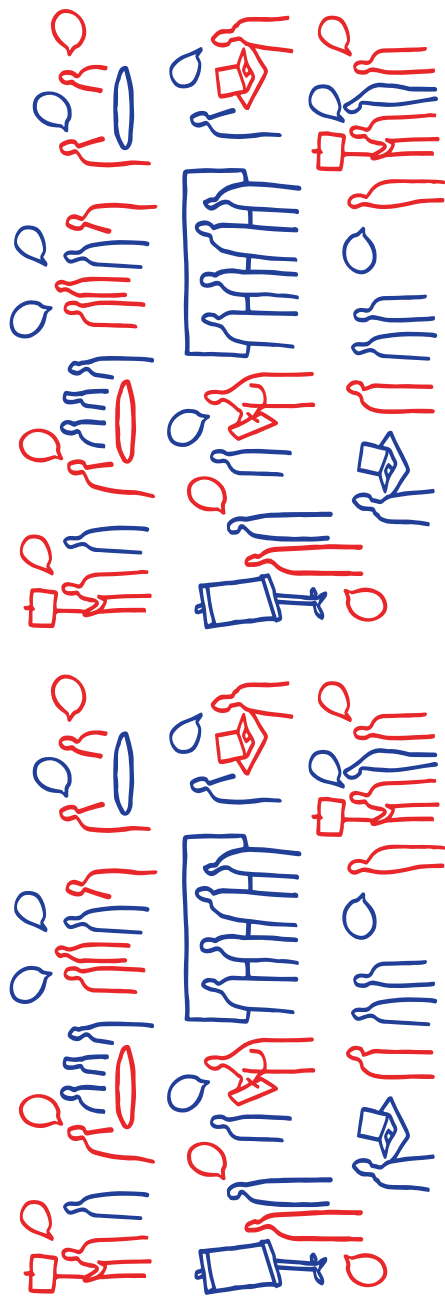
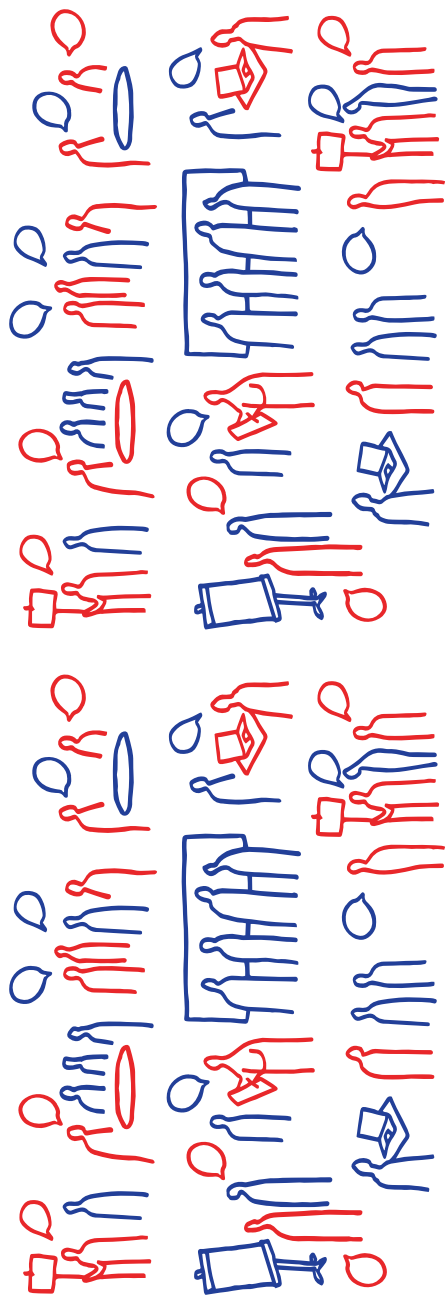
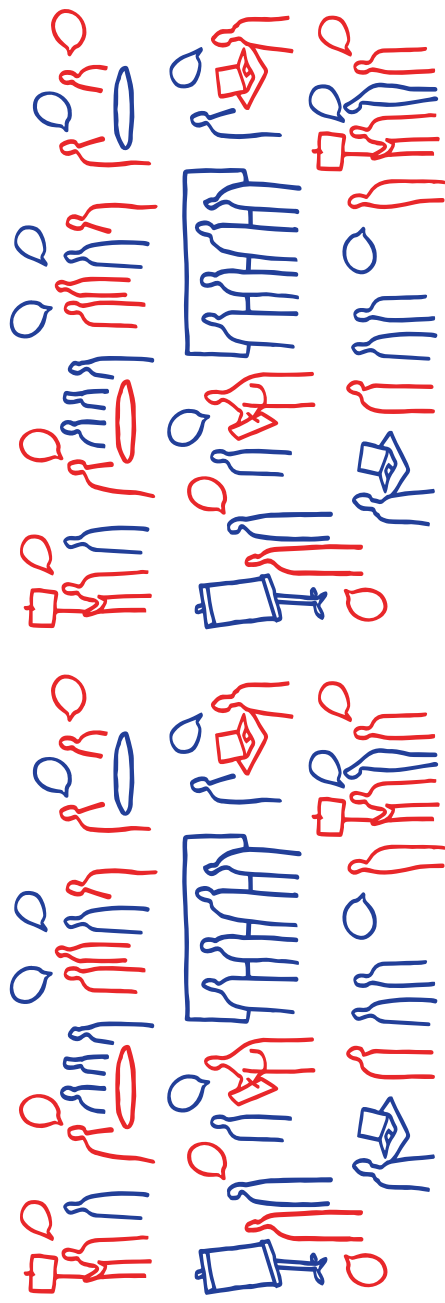
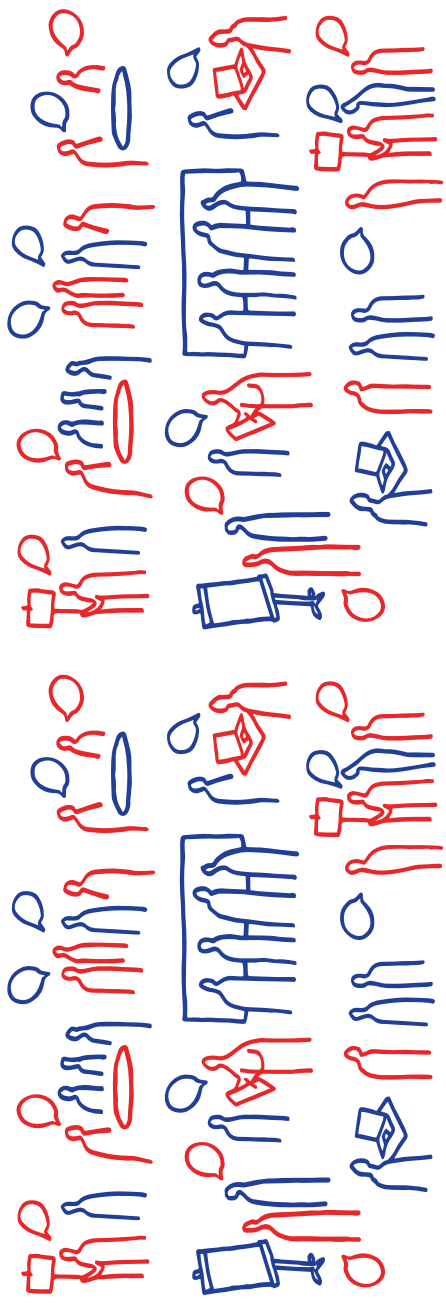


**Because citizens are  
just concerned by  
what they can get  
right now or what's  
just under their nose.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it is a  
pain to organize  
logistically  
speaking.**





**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because whatever citizens say, in the end, is not taken into account.**

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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because we already work with NGOs, unions, associations of consumers.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because public policies and services are way too complex for citizens to understand.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because there is just no point in consulting them.**

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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because the citizens can be influenced and their propositions can be easily biased by external actors & facilitators.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because citizens have no interest in public actions & matters.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

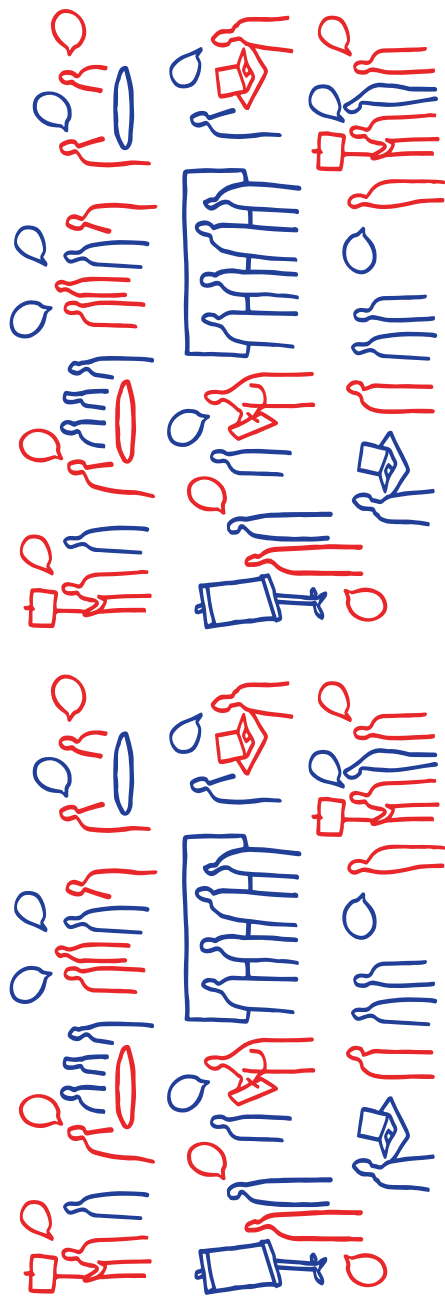
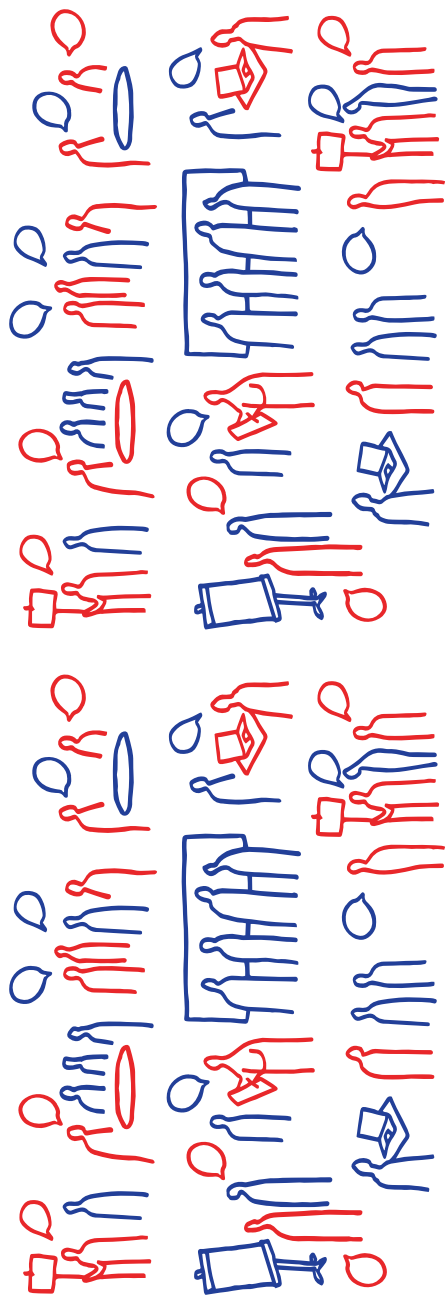
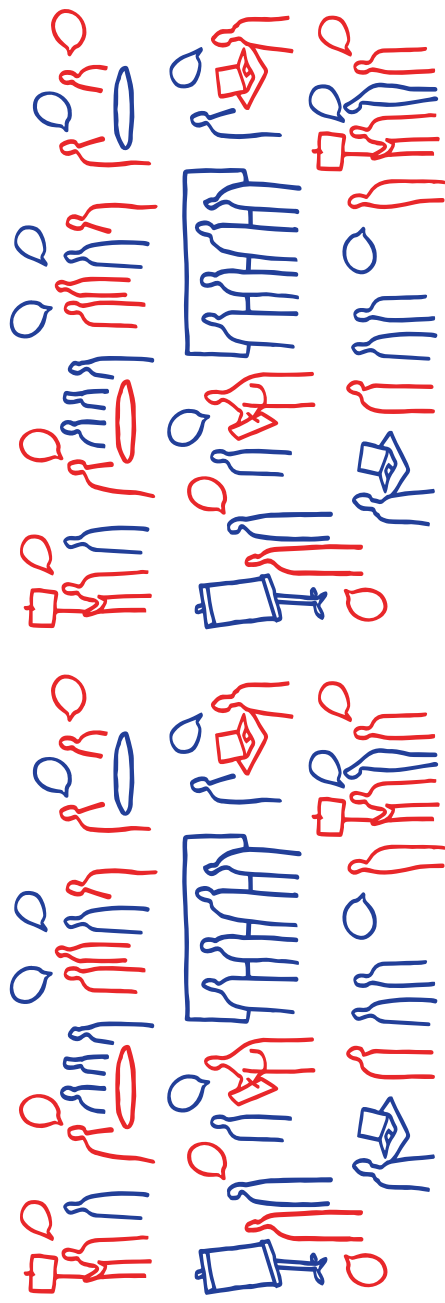
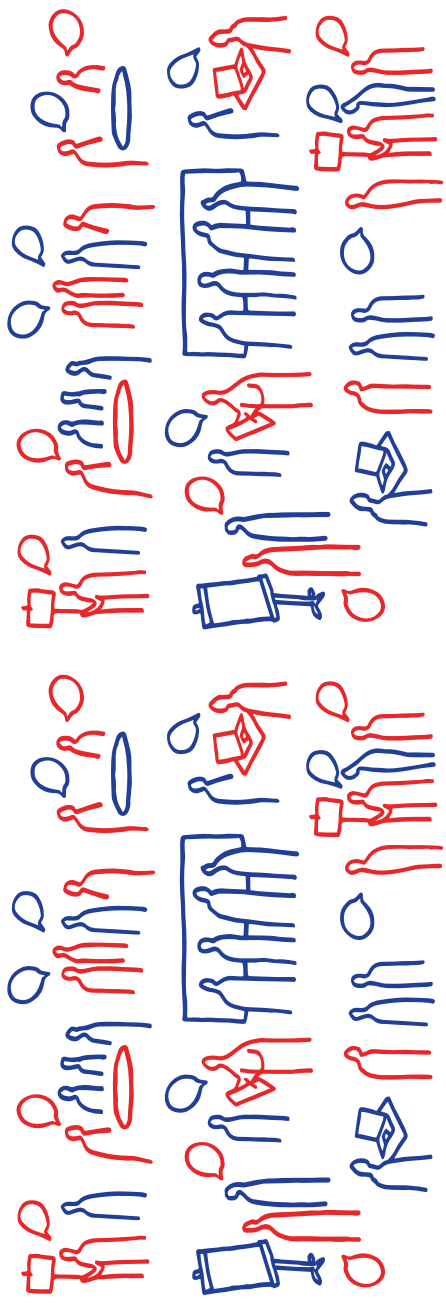


**Because it requires too many human resources.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because elected officials see it as a loss of legitimacy and power.**



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because citizen participation is just a temporary trend which will soon be over.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because it slows down every project or process.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because you will never, ever, get the silent voices of the weakest and/or loneliest citizens.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because we are not equipped (with tools) for participation.**

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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because citizens represent their own personal interest, not the common good.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because we have never been trained (with methods) for participation.**

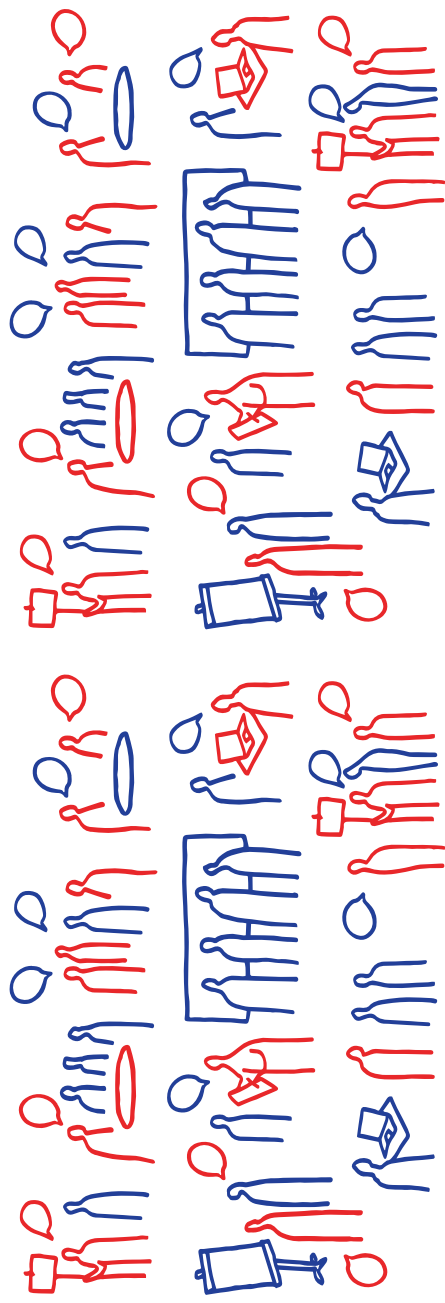
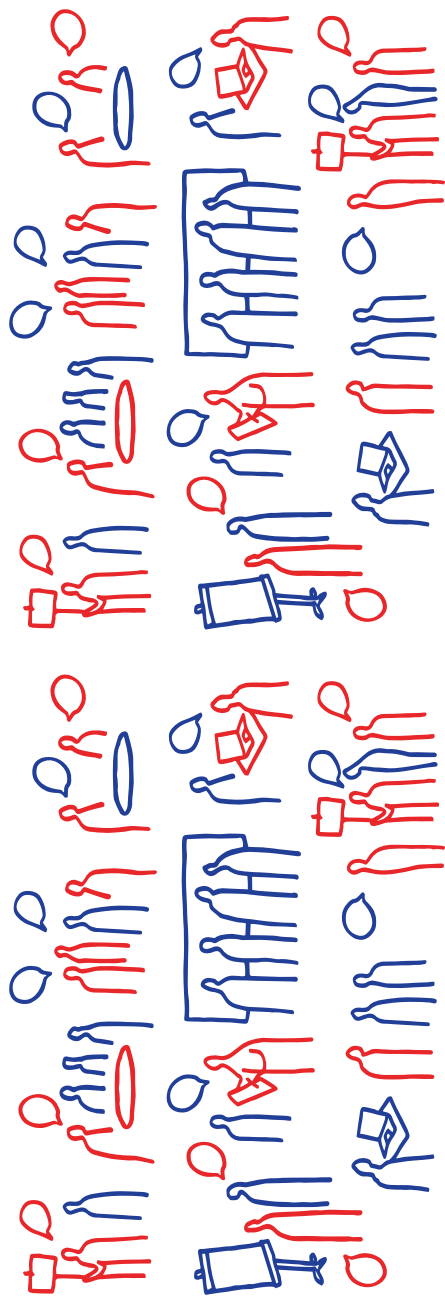
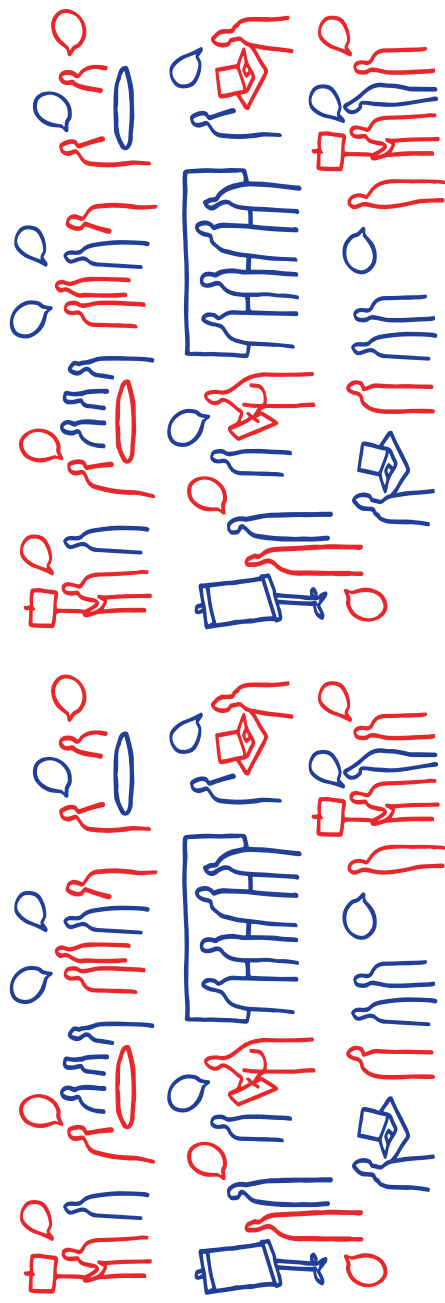
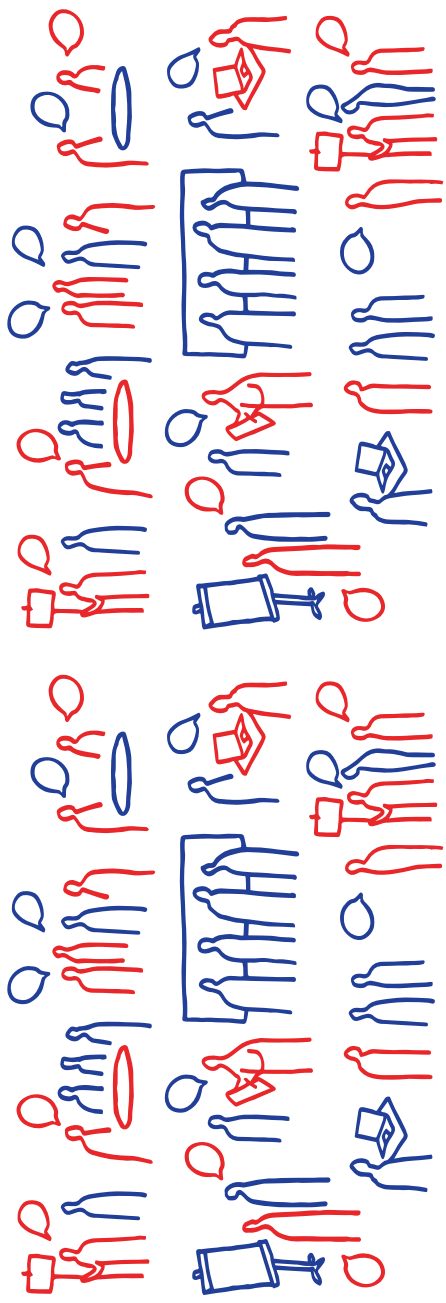
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**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because consulting a small group of citizens has no value.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

  
**Because it's nearly impossible to collaborate with the troublesome citizens.**



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it's complicated to work with citizens.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because civil servants already know what they are doing.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it costs too much money to engage with them.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because it takes way too much time to involve them.**

Game by Strategic Design Scenarios

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

**Joker\***

\*This card allows you to state a reason/ pretext of your choice.



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**

**Joker\***

\*This card allows you to state a reason/ pretext of your choice.



**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because we already have elected representatives to represent citizens.**

**Citizen participation? Hell no!**



**Because those who participate are not diverse enough anyway.**

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