

Local Political Participation: What Citizens Want, What Governments Do, and What Academics Assume

Southern European Evidence for an International Debate



Doctoral Thesis

Pau Alarcón Pérez

Director:

Joan Font Fàbregas

Tutor:

Ismael Blanco Fillola

December 2014

Instituto de Estudios Sociales Avanzados (IESA—CSIC)

Phd studies on Public Policies and Social Transformation

Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques (IGOP—UAB)



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Acknowledgements

This dissertation has been possible thanks to the Personnel Training Programme (FPI) scholarship of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO). Additionally, my participation in the research teams “Mechanisms of Local Participation in Comparative Perspective: Causes and Consequences (MECPALO), with reference CSO2009-08968, and “The Results of Participatory Processes: Public Policies and Government-Society Relationships (Cherry-picking)”, with reference CSO2012-31832, has been crucial. Both research projects have been directed by Joan Font and funded by the Spanish Science Department. Also, the contribution of the Institute for Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC) has been essential, providing a friendly working environment and financial support. The main survey used in the first part of the dissertation and the corresponding publications has been possible thanks to the CIS 2860 module. I also want to thank the IGOP team and especially Ramon Canal for his help during the process.

I want to sincerely thank all the coauthors of the publications: Joan Font, Carol Galais, Donatella della Porta, Herbert Reiter, Lola Sesma and Magdalena Wojcieszak. Not just for their permission to present these publications, but especially because I have learned a lot working with them. Likewise, I want to thank the rest of the members of the research teams: Paloma Fontcuberta, María Jesús Funes, Eloísa del Pino, Mathias Rull, Yves Sintomer, and Julien Talpin (MECPALO); Laurence Bherer, José Luis Fernández, Patricia García, Manuel Jiménez, Fabiola Mota, Sara Pasadas, Carlos Rico, and Graham Smith (Cherry-picking); Clemente Navarro (CIS 2860 module). And I am also very grateful to all the people who have collaborated on the fieldwork: the Technical Unity of Applied Studies of the IESA, the personnel of the CIS, the practitioners, public servants, participants, and politicians. Ernesto Ganuza also deserves a mention for his support in different phases of the research.

I want to thank all my colleagues with whom I have shared a workplace in Córdoba, Sydney, London and Montréal. The fruitful international stays have been possible thanks to Ariadne Vromen (University of Sydney), Graham Smith (University of Westminster), and André Blais (Université de Montréal).

Thanks to Auria and Daisy for their English proofreading of most publications and the dissertation.

When I was a student, two teachers were really special encouraging me to start an academic career. I want to thank Carolina Bescansa and Rosa de la Fuente, as without their suggestions and support I would not have taken this exciting path.

I want to thank my family, friends and housemates for going along with my stresses and absences and helping me when I needed them. The list is too long, but I want to mention at least Andrés, Regina, Mireia, Enric, Ana M., Carol, Ángel, Daisy, Ana V., Lola, Paco, and Jaume.

I have been very lucky with the supervisors of my research. Thanks to Ismael Blanco for his helpful comments and suggestions. And thanks to Joan Font, it is really pleasing to do research on the shoulders of a giant, academically and humanly speaking. If I have got here it is because of him.

Finally, I want to thank the *indignados* and *indignadas* movement for opening the debate about participatory democracy in society and making it so interesting. And thanks to Podemos, Guanyem/Ganemos, Crida, Procés Constituent and other participatory candidacies and grassroots movements for making this research gain political relevance recently.

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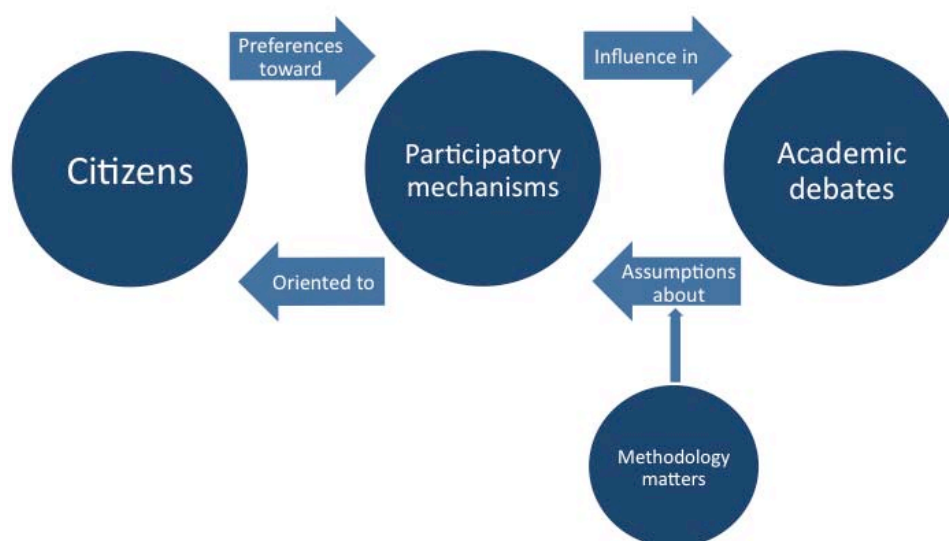
Introduction

Introduction

This dissertation focuses on participatory democracy. The analysis tackles the implementation of democratic innovations for involving citizens in the decision-making process at the local level, which have been labelled as participatory and/or deliberative mechanisms. Besides the study of participatory mechanisms themselves, citizens' preferences in that field and academic assumptions will be introduced in the debate. The empirical analysis focuses on the Southern European region but is in constant debate with the international reality.

Therefore, local political participation is addressed from three different but complementary points of view: 1) citizens, the main figures in participation processes; 2) participatory mechanisms developed at the local level; and 3) the academic debates in that regard, paying special attention to methodological and conceptual implications. Figure 1 outlines this threefold dimension and the relations among the different components to be analysed. Through the research developed in seven publications, synthesised in the conclusions, we will describe and analyse what citizens want in terms of participatory democracy, what local governments do (i.e. what kind of participatory mechanisms is being developed), and what academics assume about these democratic innovations.

Figure 1. Diagram of the content of this thesis



Source: Compiled by author.

The details about each section of this dissertation are developed in the different publications. In this introduction, the object of study is presented in general terms. The main research questions are introduced below, with their respective general hypotheses and methodologies.

Local participatory mechanisms have been well-known since some successful experiences were turned into an emblem for certain sectors in the academic, social and political world. Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre stands out, developed by the Partido dos Trabalhadores since 1989 and catapulted to international fame through academic and political diffusion, and through the loudspeaker of the World Social Forum organised in that city in 2001. Participatory mechanisms (not only Participatory Budgeting but a wide range of devices) continue to be more the exception than the rule (Font, 2003; Akkerman et al., 2004). However, they have multiplied and spread considerably over the last decades, and are growing in use (Lowndes et al., 2001).

These democratic innovations are designed to involve citizens and associations in the networked, participatory and proximity government, resulting in a very diverse and widespread reality (Blanco and Gomá, 2002). Among more specific objectives, these mechanisms may be able (or should be able) to improve managerial capacities (implying a greater transparency and circulation of information), transforming social relations,

reconstructing social capital, solidarity and trust, and “democratizing democracy” (Bacqué et al., 2005). Citizens’ participation has also been promoted under a managerial perspective for government to be more responsive to the demands of its “users” and “clients” (Moore, 1995). This instrumental logic includes the promotion of participatory mechanisms to incorporate new insights, experiences and creativity into the policy-making process (Fischer, 2003); to deepen the quality of policy debates (Niemeyer, 2004); to aid implementation (Kjær, 2004); or to improve the efficiency and quality of service delivery (Bovaird, 2007).

From the Porto Alegre experience, participatory mechanisms started travelling in the boats of the left and the social movements. In Europe, the approach to Participatory Budgeting was specifically proposed by organisations of the global justice movement, discussed in the European Social Forums (organised yearly by this movement in Florence, 2002; Paris, 2003; London, 2004; and then every two years until 2010), and supported by local Social Forums (Della Porta, 2008). Some generally left-wing European local governments started promoting participatory budgeting in the 2000s, but more limited and controlled than the Brazilian experiences (Sintomer et al., 2008). In the environmental field, ecologist associations promoted certain parts of the Agenda 21, including participatory processes at the local level. But, even when reacting to the requests of social movements for participatory democracy, the promotion of these mechanisms has generally been top-down (Chapter 3).

These participatory mechanisms have fascinated lots of social activists but also social scientists interested in democratic innovations. The growing academic attention paid to local participatory mechanisms has mainly materialised as case studies. This research has mostly focused on those most successful experiences. Although these studies constitute a rich source of theoretical contributions (Fung, 2001; Mansbridge, 1980), it is also true that they may have contributed to the diffusion of a distorted image of the reality of global participatory processes.

In contrast with case studies, one of the objectives of the research project “Mechanisms of Citizen Participation in Comparative Perspective (MECPALO)”, directed by Joan Font, was the creation of a participatory mapping of six Southern European regions. This large-N strategy provides broader (but rather less deep) information about this object of study. This project looks into both the reasons explaining the development of the participatory mechanisms and some possible consequences, combining different methodologies. The research on participatory mechanisms presented here is part of this project.

The object of study has been delimited considering Southern Europe as a relatively homogeneous region in terms of citizen and participatory configurations (Sintomer and Del Pino, 2014). In this region populations are more inclined to engage in protest. Some common features, at least in some countries, are low levels of political trust (Van Deth et al., 2007), relatively low political interest (Martin and Van Deth, 2007), low membership in organisations (Morales, 2009), and relatively low political participation in general. The Spanish case is especially interesting because the initiatives taken by politicians and civil servants to introduce participatory mechanisms are recent (Annex 1). Also, political interest is higher at the local level in comparison with other levels like the regional or national ones (Bonet et al., 2006).

In terms of politics, Southern European countries share a strong left-right divide, low levels of political trust and a significant presence of former communist parties. In these countries, governments and legislation are not very open to citizen participation, although strong traditions of radical social movements do exist. Participatory mechanisms usually tend to be a “political” matter rather than a mere “managerial” one. The transfer of knowledge between countries in this region in the domain of citizen participation has also been significant (Font et al., 2014).

For the mapping of participatory mechanisms in Southern Europe, a few regions from Spain and Italy that have municipalities with active participation policies have been selected. Some diversity has been introduced in political and economic terms. Some regions are rich (Catalonia, Madrid and Tuscany) and some are poor (Andalusia and Apulia). At the same time, some regions have more supralocal support to participatory policies (Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia) than others (Andalusia and Madrid) (Sintomer and Del Pino, 2014).

The unit of analysis is each participatory mechanism, defined as any organised activity that attempts to involve citizenry in the discussion or in making decisions about local issues, and it has gained recognition as such from public institutions (Font et al., 2014). Under the label of participatory institutional mechanisms, different models underlie, related to a specific balance of different qualities. In this research, the features of participatory mechanisms will be analysed attempting to identify the presence of different models.

The characteristic of the central role played by a government providing legitimacy to these processes is important because it provides a direct link between participation and the decision-making process (Font et al., 2014). In that sense, deliberation or citizen participation in social movements or associations is not considered as part of our object of study. These

activities mostly focus on internal deliberations and are only loosely or indirectly connected with the policy-making process. However, social movements and associations also take part in participatory mechanisms. In fact, the professionalisation and institutionalisation of protest may be changing social movements into something more like pressure groups within the arena of conventional politics (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998).

Participatory democracy obviously focuses on involving citizens in the decision-making process. Individuals are not drawn into the process because they wish to deliberate, but because they wish to get infrastructure for their own neighbourhoods, to improve their lives (Abers, 2003). In most countries where participation has been analysed there is a link between the expected effects on authorities and the probability of involvement in a particular kind of participation (including protest). In other words, citizens participate because they want to have a say to influence the decision-making process. The paradox is that these processes are responses to the perceived declining trust in government, but at the same time require that trust (i.e. that the effort of participating will be useful) in order to be successful.

In that sense, practitioners and academics are recurrently concerned about what effect participatory mechanisms have on policy making. Empowerment has two dimensions: an individual dimension (citizens' empowerment in terms of skills and capacities) and an institutional dimension (empowerment in terms of decision-making institutions) (Johnson, 2009). In this research, we are aware of the latter: the "expectation that citizens' participation and deliberation will directly affect public action" (Fung, 2003: 118-19). In a similar way, in their CLEAR model, Lowndes et al. (2006) point out that one of the conditions for a successful participation is the evidence that citizens' views have been considered.

This empowerment dimension of participatory mechanisms is crucial, because if participation does not have an impact on policies, suspicion may spread about the limited scope of the political process or even about the manipulation and co-optation of these arenas by political elites to legitimize their own decisions (Smith, 2009). In fact, the most extended view is that most public deliberation processes do not directly alter public decisions and actions (Levine et al., 2005). For example, one study in the UK found that only one-third of local authorities felt that public participation had a significant impact on decision making (Lowndes et al., 2001).

The main goal of this research is to help to understand the participatory reality beyond the theoretical debate and case study analysis. The large-N strategy to approach the phenomena means that the analysis cannot be very deep in the understanding of the

participatory dimensions and the implications. But, instead, it can provide a general picture of what citizens want and what kind of participatory mechanisms are being developed, establishing a fruitful debate with the previous theoretical framework developed mostly from case study research.

The first section of the dissertation points to citizens and their preferences toward decision-making processes, specifically centred on the Spanish context. The objective is to analyse citizens' attitudes toward participatory democracy: what decision-making model is preferred in terms of who makes the decisions, either citizens or politicians. The highly participatory and deliberative *indignados* movement importantly criticised the status quo, where citizens are “merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers”, and calling for a “real democracy”. More recently, Podemos and local candidacies—in part made up of activists of that previous movement—are strongly incorporating the demand of citizen engagement into their discourses and proposals, with a clear success. So the hypothesis is that an important part of citizens would prefer a more participatory democracy, contradicting other positions (for example, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002).

In order to analyse citizens' opinions, the methodology consists in analysing two surveys. The data come from a couple of Spanish surveys to the general population: a 2006 survey of the Spanish adult population living in cities of 100,000 to 400,000 inhabitants that includes 3,994 interviews (CIS study 2661), and a 2011 survey of the Spanish adult population consisting of 2,500 interviews (CIS study 2860). Preferences towards the decision-making process will be tested in relation to Spain in general and to three specific issues: abortion, immigration, and the economy. Different explanatory factors will be analysed both regarding individuals (from their previous participatory experiences and the intensity of their attitudes toward different issues) and their relationship with the political context (the perception that one's own ideas are part of a general consensus, and conflict aversion).

The second part of the thesis focuses on participatory mechanisms at the local level in the Southern European region. The main research question is what these mechanisms are like, beyond the most renowned cases. The hypothesis is that the actual participatory mechanisms developed by local governments are less strong than the theoretical ideal or the image offered by case studies.

The methodology consists in a large-N approach through the mapping of participatory mechanisms in five Southern European regions, with a comparative

perspective. Those data, including 551 experiences developed in Andalusia, Madrid, Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia, will allow the description of some characteristics of these mechanisms. This participatory mapping is not a perfectly exhaustive or representative collection of all participatory experiences, but it represents a quite diverse picture of what is the broader reality of participatory processes developed at the subregional level in these countries. The descriptive analysis of this data is highly interesting in itself because we lack this kind of participatory mappings.

The analysis will focus on the different qualities that must be present—at least to some extent—in order for participatory mechanisms to work: significant participation of citizens, real deliberation through open debates, and some degree of empowerment as indicated by real consideration for the decisions made through the process. Therefore, this second part of the thesis, based on a broad and rigorous data collection process, lays the foundation of the object of study thoroughly demarcating the main features of Southern European participatory mechanisms.

Finally, after demarcating this participatory reality, both in terms of citizens' preferences and participatory mechanisms, the third part entails a debate between the empirical data analysed and some academic debates. Participatory mechanisms have spread during the last decades, and some academic assumptions should be rethought. Specifically, the hypothesis would point to some participatory specificities of the Southern European region. Also, in an attempt to understand what the participatory reality is like beyond exemplary cases, the methodological debate plays a central role. Does it make sense to combine data collected through different methodologies from a large-N perspective? What kind of participatory mechanisms is collected through each strategy?

For the methodological discussion, we will compare the results obtained through two different data collection strategies. By means of this comparison we will try to identify different kinds of bias introduced by the data collection method, whose understanding is relevant in order to polish the subsequent data analysis.

The last part strikes up the debate between this empirical evidence and some existing academic debates led by the English-speaking academy. Through the presentation of the deliberative practices developed in the Southern European context, we want to contribute to a certain descriptive and conceptual gerrymandering of the idea of public deliberation. We will address the debate about the definition of the object of study (the tension between participatory and deliberative democracy), the characteristics of the actors promoting

participatory mechanisms, the role of participatory professionals or the reproduction of the already existing inequalities among participants.

Throughout the chapters, each part of the dissertation will be analysed separately (see table 1). The conclusions summarise the main findings and responses to the hypotheses, also building bridges between them and suggesting some implications (for example, in relation with the new candidacies such as Podemos and Ganemos/Guanyem). The objective is to bring us closer to this broad object of study, helping us to understand better what reality is like from this three-dimensional perspective (citizens, participatory mechanisms, and academy) and what implications could be considered in relation to the current academic, political and social landscape.

Table 1. Publications dealing with each question

Question	Publication	Chapter
What Citizens Want	Las preferencias ciudadanas sobre los procesos políticos (Font and Alarcón, 2012)	Chapter 1
	Citizens and participation (Font, Galais, Wojcieszak and Alarcón, 2014)	Annex 1
	Consenso y conflicto: Dos prismas para comprender la participación (Alarcón and Wojcieszak, 2012)	Chapter 2
	El papel de la intensidad de las actitudes y de la participación (Wojcieszak and Alarcón, 2012)	Annex 2
What Governments Do	Institutional participatory initiatives and democratic qualities (Della Porta, Reiter and Alarcón, 2014)	Chapter 3
What Academics Assume	Methodological challenges for the large N study of local participatory experiences. Combining methods and databases (Galais, Font, Alarcón and Sesma, 2012)	Chapter 4
	Where are the boundaries of deliberation and participation?: A transatlantic debate (Alarcón and Font, 2014)	Chapter 5

Source: Compiled by author

What Citizens Want

Chapter 1

2. Las preferencias ciudadanas sobre los procesos políticos

Joan Font y Pau Alarcón

El objetivo de este capítulo es empezar a presentar y analizar qué tipo de procesos políticos considera más deseables la ciudadanía española. Como hemos explicado en la introducción, *Stealth Democracy* ha generado un interesante debate al respecto. Por ello, empezaremos este capítulo en comparación explícita con esta obra y veremos cómo se comportan en España los indicadores básicos que Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) utilizan para ver el tipo de procesos políticos deseados por la ciudadanía norteamericana. También veremos quiénes prefieren procesos políticos con más y menos protagonismo de la ciudadanía. Después, en coherencia con las críticas que formulábamos en la introducción, vamos a tratar de enriquecer la información sobre los procesos políticos deseados por la ciudadanía a través de una serie de preguntas adicionales al respecto, cuyos resultados haremos dialogar con los indicadores originales de *Stealth Democracy*. Las conclusiones de este capítulo se convertirán en la base sobre la que construimos el resto del volumen, puesto que aquí justificaremos cuáles van a ser las principales actitudes sobre procesos políticos deseados que vamos a tratar de entender a lo largo del libro.

2.1. Procesos políticos deseados: una mirada genérica y comparativa

Una de las aportaciones importantes de *Stealth Democracy* es la propuesta de que para comprender mejor la vida política debemos utilizar una lógica bidimensional: además de las posturas en clave de izquierda y derecha (liberal-conservador en Estados Unidos), hemos de tener en cuenta qué tipo de procesos políticos se prefieren, donde un extremo de la escala sería que la ciudadanía tomara directamente todas las decisiones y el otro extremo que fueran los políticos quienes las tomaran todas⁵.

En la primera parte de *Stealth Democracy*, esa escala bipolar supone la herramienta empírica fundamental. Sin embargo, tras demostrar que los procesos políticos importan y conllevan consecuencias, la segunda parte olvida este indicador argumentando que sus grupos de discusión muestran que la ciudadanía no tiene interés en participar y se centra en presentar el índice que va a dar título a su obra. A su entender, este índice capturaría el apoyo a un modelo de democracia que es el que cuenta con el verdadero respaldo ciudadano, donde la intervención directa de la ciudadanía no sería necesaria y podría sustituirse por el rol de expertos o personas exitosas en el ámbito empresarial o profesional, personas que fueran capaces pero que no se movieran en función de los mismos intereses que los políticos profesionales actuales. Más allá de este poco justificado salto empírico y conceptual, ¿cómo miden el apoyo a cada uno de estos conceptos y qué ocurre si los aplicamos al caso español?

⁵ Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002: 54) utilizan esta lógica bidimensional, aunque también advierten que las reglas del juego para la dimensión de procesos políticos no serían las formuladas típicamente por Downs, tanto por los límites constitucionales que constriñen las reglas del juego como por un tema de credibilidad de los partidos, a quienes la ciudadanía no creería si propusieran ceder demasiados espacios de poder.

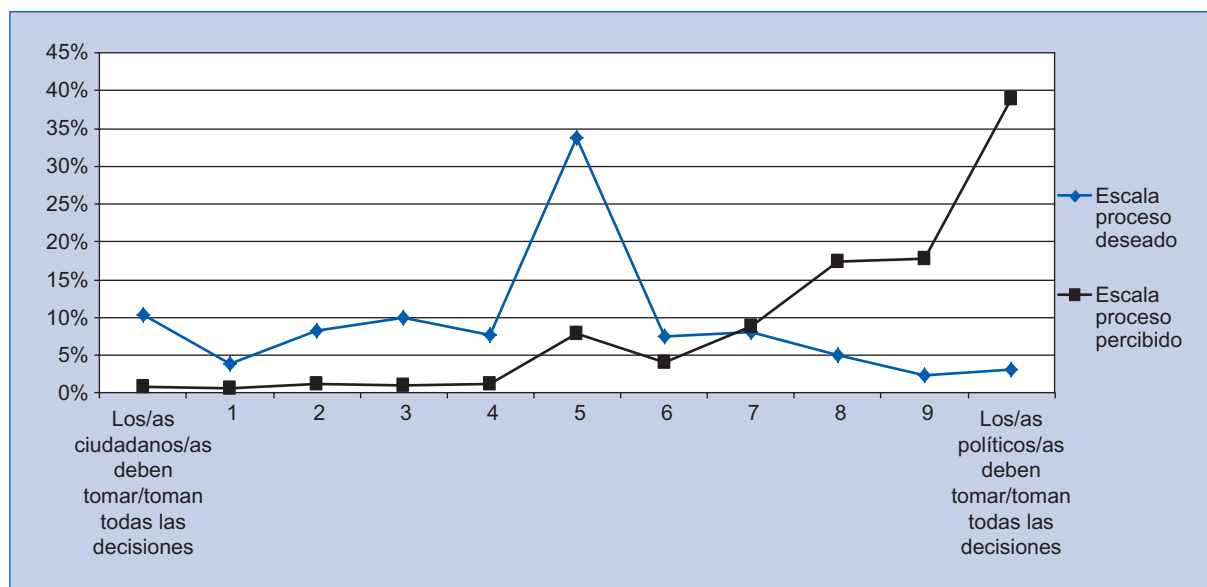
Si empezamos mirando la respuesta a la escala bipolar que contrapone el rol de ciudadanía y políticos profesionales⁶ para el caso español, nos encontramos con dos constataciones igual de importantes (gráfico 2.1). En primer lugar, como ocurre en la escala izquierda-derecha, la mayoría de la ciudadanía es moderada y opta por posiciones intermedias, donde se entiende que decisiones tomadas directamente por la ciudadanía y decisiones tomadas por los políticos deberían convivir. En segundo lugar, esos procesos políticos deseados serían mucho más participativos que la situación actual, que la inmensa mayoría de la ciudadanía percibe como fuertemente desequilibrada del lado «los políticos toman todas las decisiones»⁷. Mientras que la gran mayoría desearía unos procesos políticos equilibrados en cuanto a intervención de ciudadanía y representantes en el proceso de toma de decisiones⁸, esa misma gran mayoría percibe que son estos últimos quienes toman casi en exclusiva las decisiones hoy. Hasta aquí, las dos características son idénticas a lo que Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002: 47) identifican para el caso norteamericano. Sin embargo, la moderación del caso español refleja una mayor inclinación hacia el lado participativo que la moderación norteamericana: la media en Estados Unidos es de 4 en una escala de 1 a 7, lo que traducido a una escala 0-10 como la utilizada en España se convierte en un 6,3, que supone un fuerte contraste con el 4,5 del caso español.

El segundo indicador fundamental del libro de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) es la escala de apoyo al modelo que bautizaron como «democracia sigilosa». Su argumento es que el aparente apoyo a propuestas más participativas que muestra la escala que acabamos de analizar es en realidad solo el reflejo de la aversión que los norteamericanos tienen a los políticos y su disposición a quitarles poder a cualquier precio. Pero en realidad, como mostrarían los grupos de discusión que utilizan también en su libro, la ciudadanía no tiene ningún interés en participar más y no confía tampoco en que los demás sean capaces de hacer bien ese trabajo (véase el capítulo 6). Por ello, en la mayor parte del libro estos autores hacen una apuesta por confiar básicamente en un nuevo indicador, el índice que construyen de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa.

⁶ La pregunta dice: «Queremos saber cómo le gustaría a Vd. que se tomaran las decisiones políticas en España. En una escala de 0 a 10 donde el 0 significa que los/as ciudadanos/as corrientes como Vd. o como yo deberíamos tomar directamente todas las decisiones y el 10 que los/as políticos/as deberían tomar todas las decisiones, ¿dónde se colocaría Vd.?».

⁷ Aunque los datos de esta encuesta son previos a la aparición pública del movimiento 15-M, la fuerte visibilidad que este ha dado a los temas participativos no parece haber alterado radicalmente las preferencias de la ciudadanía. El estudio 1112 del IESA, una encuesta a una muestra representativa de la población adulta residente en Córdoba, replicaba la misma escala y mostraba niveles de apoyo muy similares a las posturas más participativas. La media era ligeramente más favorable a una mayor intervención ciudadana (4,2), debido sobre todo a que eran menos las personas que se posicionaban en el extremo favorable a las decisiones exclusivamente en manos de los políticos (solo un 2 por ciento elegían el 9 o el 10). Esto puede deberse tanto a características específicas de la cultura política local como a un muy ligero cambio de preferencias de la población, pero el hecho de que este sea muy limitado refuerza la idea de que la escala es un instrumento apropiado para medir una actitud realmente existente.

⁸ Sin embargo, no se puede descartar que una parte de esa moderación esté realmente reflejando indefinición y que el punto medio de la escala sea una manera de adoptar una postura poco comprometida ante un tema escasamente reflexionado, tal como ocurre también con las personas que eligen el punto medio en otras escalas.

Gráfico 2.1. Procesos políticos deseados y percibidos en España

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Este índice (que va de 0 a 3) se forma a partir de la agregación de dos tipos de preguntas diferentes⁹. En primer lugar, incluye un par de preguntas que miden en mayor grado la relación general con la política. Estar de acuerdo o muy de acuerdo con cada una de las frases que se enuncian en esas preguntas aporta un punto al índice. En segundo lugar estos autores incluyen dos preguntas que engloban soluciones al tema de quién toma las decisiones políticas. Ambas preguntas proponen soluciones que, cuando menos, obvian el componente democrático de las decisiones políticas, trasladando su responsabilidad a empresarios exitosos y expertos. En este caso, el acuerdo con cualquiera de las dos frases supone el tercer punto posible de ese mismo índice¹⁰. Tal como argumentaremos en la sección 2.3, existen buenas razones para dudar de la fiabilidad de este índice¹¹, pero para los lectores que simpaticen con la idea y para facilitar la comparación con Estados Unidos presentaremos ahora los rasgos fundamentales de su apoyo en España.

Si realmente este índice mide el apoyo a algo que podemos denominar «democracia sigilosa», este apoyo es muy alto en el caso español, más elevado aún que el de Estados Unidos o Finlandia¹² (gráfico 2.2). El apoyo al componente decisionista del concepto de democracia sigilosa, la idea de que los políticos deben hablar menos y actuar más, es aún más unánime en España (95 por ciento) que

⁹ Se trata de los 4 ítems de la pregunta 15 del cuestionario (véase el anexo).

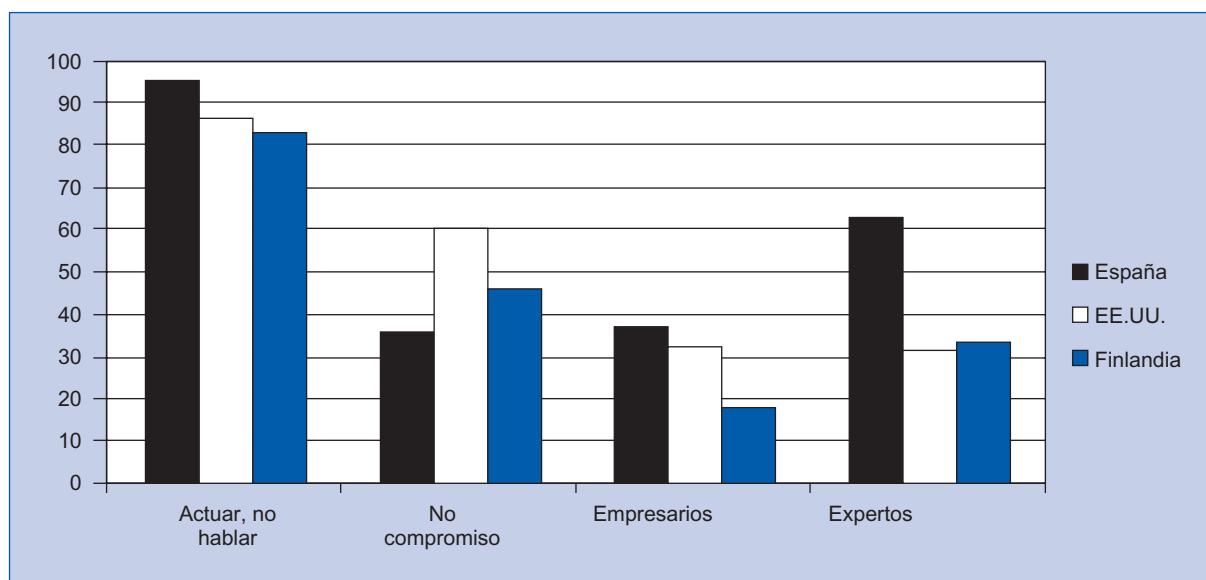
¹⁰ Para el cálculo del índice se excluyen a las personas que no responden a alguna de las preguntas.

¹¹ Más allá del significado discutible del índice, el indicador más habitual de medición de fiabilidad de los índices agregativos, el alfa de Cronbach, es de solo un 0,18 para las preguntas que componen este índice en el caso español, lo que queda muy lejos de los estándares aceptables habituales.

¹² Los datos del caso finlandés proceden de Bengtsson y Mattila (2009).

en los otros dos países. Solo la frase que alude al compromiso y al consenso recoge un nivel de apoyo inferior¹³. El apoyo a la idea de que sean los empresarios exitosos quienes tomen decisiones políticas alcanza niveles algo superiores a los norteamericanos y muy superiores a los finlandeses, mientras que la mayor diferencia aparece en el apoyo a decisiones tomadas por los expertos, que recibe un respaldo mayoritario en el caso español (63 por ciento), que no se da en los otros casos.

Gráfico 2.2. Apoyo a los rasgos de democracia sigilosa en España, Estados Unidos y Finlandia



Fuentes: CIS 2860, Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) y Bengtsson y Matilla (2009).

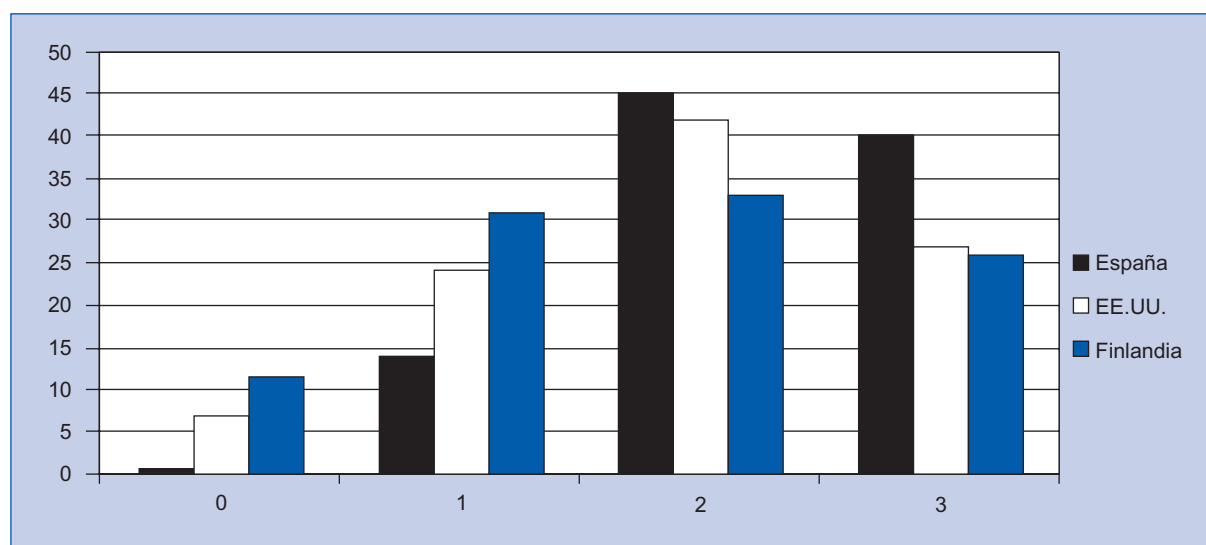
En definitiva, si los primeros datos europeos mostraban que el apoyo a un modelo de democracia sigilosa era algo menor en Finlandia que en Estados Unidos, en el caso español este es bastante mayor, con una presencia muy baja de quienes muestran poca simpatía por el modelo (15 por ciento, frente al 40 por ciento de Finlandia) y una presencia mucho mayor de sus incondicionales (40 por ciento, frente al 26-27 por ciento en los otros países, véase el gráfico 2.3).

¿Quiénes son los defensores de un modelo más participativo y quiénes son los máximos defensores de la democracia sigilosa? Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) muestran que en Estados Unidos el apoyo a la democracia sigilosa es menor entre las personas liberales o que se sienten demócratas y entre quienes experimentan una fuerte aversión al conflicto. En el resto de los trabajos publicados encontramos diversas explicaciones al origen de estas actitudes. Para Dalton, Bürklin y Drummond (2001) el apoyo a propuestas más participativas tiene fundamentalmente su origen

¹³ La frase no es una traducción literal de la idea inglesa («what people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out in one’s principles») que no se entendía en español, sino el equivalente más similar posible («en política se llama consenso a lo que realmente significa renunciar a los propios principios») que el equipo organizador, con el apoyo del CIS y de asesores bilingües, fue capaz de encontrar.

en la falta de confianza política y en el extremismo. Por tanto, estos autores podrían coincidir con el argumento de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) de que los defensores de más participación son personas que realmente optarían por cualquier propuesta que redujera el poder de los políticos porque no confían en ellos. Bengtsson y Mattila (2009) coinciden parcialmente con esa tesis pero le incorporan un argumento adicional, al recuperar la importancia de la ideología: en efecto, los desconfiados serían más proclives a defender cualquier reforma, pero los desconfiados de izquierdas apostarían más por los referendos y las propuestas participativas, mientras que los de derechas constituirían el máximo apoyo para las propuestas de democracia sigilosa. Finalmente, Donovan y Karp (2006) realizan el único análisis comparado del tema y constatan que el apoyo a un mayor protagonismo de la democracia directa proviene sobre todo de personas jóvenes y con interés por la política, en abierto contraste con los resultados discutidos anteriormente.

Gráfico 2.3. Distribución del índice de democracia sigilosa (0-3) en España, Estados Unidos y Finlandia



Fuentes: Véase el gráfico 2.2.

En nuestro caso, los perfiles sociales que se asocian a las respuestas a esos dos ítems (escala de procesos e índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa) son bastante diferentes (tabla 2.1). Así, a la hora de posicionarse ante la escala, serán los más jóvenes (18-34), los abstencionistas o quienes viven en ciudades pequeñas-intermedias (50.000-100.000) quienes más apuesten por fórmulas más participativas, frente a grupos muy diversos que son quienes menos entusiastas se muestran ante estas fórmulas (las personas de mayor nivel económico, junto a los mayores o a las personas sin estudios). De hecho, la educación es probablemente la variable más importante pues también aparece claramente asociada —en negativo— al apoyo a la democracia sigilosa, con los universitarios (junto a las personas de izquierdas, los votantes de IU o quienes viven en grandes ciudades) como los sectores sociales que menos apoyan esta fórmula, que alcanza sus máximos niveles de entusiasmo entre las personas con menores niveles de estudios.

Tabla 2.1. Apoyo medio a la escala de procesos y al índice de democracia sigilosa según diversos sectores sociales

		Escala procesos (0-10)	Apoyo democracia sigilosa (0-3)
Género	Mujer	4,48	2,20
	Varón	4,42	2,26
	F ¹⁴	0,36	3,04
Edad	18-34	4,14	2,23
	35-64	4,45	2,22
	65+	4,95	2,28
	F	14,55	0,67
Estudios	Sin estudios	4,89	2,45
	Primaria	4,45	2,33
	Medios / FT	4,21	2,20
	Universitarios	4,68	2,07
	F	4,93	12,25
Ingresos	Muy bajos	4,27	2,30
	Bajos	4,40	2,21
	Medios	4,52	2,23
	Altos	4,85	2,14
	F	2,23	1,96
Voto	PSOE	4,62	2,23
	PP	4,72	2,31
	IU	4,42	1,94
	Otros y blanco	4,22	2,16
	No votó	4,10	2,21
	NC	4,42	2,24
	F	3,59	3,40
Ideología	Izquierda	4,16	2,13
	Centro	4,62	2,27
	Derecha	4,68	2,31
	NS/NC	4,31	2,25
	F	5,74	4,95
Tamaño municipio	< 10.000	4,53	2,31
	10.000-50.000	4,53	2,22
	50.000-100.000	4,03	2,37
	100.000-400.000	4,45	2,21
	> 400.000	4,52	2,09
	F	2,32	5,97

En negrilla diferencias significativas para $p < 0,05$.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

¹⁴ La magnitud del indicador F de Fischer que se incluye en las tablas da cuenta del impacto de la capacidad explicativa de la variable independiente (en filas) sobre la dependiente (en columnas).

2.2. ¿Qué más sabemos sobre cómo prefiere la ciudadanía española que se tomen las decisiones?

Los datos comparados sobre la participación que resulta deseable para la ciudadanía no son muy abundantes, pero sí existe alguna información que entra en contradicción con (al menos parte de) las conclusiones de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002). En general, la mayoría de datos disponibles apunta a que el apoyo a un mayor uso de instrumentos participativos es amplio, ha crecido (Dalton, Bürklin y Drummond, 2001) y se produce en contextos políticos diversos (Bowler, Donovan y Karp, 2007). Si durante algún tiempo la limitada información disponible apuntaba más bien al deseo genérico de mayores espacios para la intervención de la ciudadanía en la vida política, en los últimos años existen valoraciones referidas a instrumentos más concretos, generalmente los referendos, para los que el apoyo es muy mayoritario en casi todos los países (Bowler, Donovan y Karp, 2007).

También en el caso español los datos anteriores parecen apuntar hacia un amplio apoyo a procesos más participativos. Así, la encuesta 2588 del CIS (2005) reflejaba un 68 por ciento de apoyo a la idea de tomar más decisiones mediante procesos participativos¹⁵. Otra encuesta del mismo CIS en 2005 mostraba un mensaje algo menos rotundo: el apoyo a tomar decisiones por medio de referendos en temas importantes era muy amplio (68 por ciento a favor, solo 7 por ciento en contra). Pero cuando se preguntaba por una serie de prioridades políticas, si bien esa apuesta participativa recogía un apoyo amplio (6,3 de media en una escala 0-10), era menor que el asociado a otros valores como la igualdad, la justicia o los derechos de las minorías. También la encuesta analizada por Navarro, Cuesta y Font (2009) muestra un nivel de apoyo amplio a procesos participativos, en este caso en los municipios de tamaño intermedio y con especial claridad en los municipios que más habían desarrollado su oferta participativa.

Para poder conocer mejor estas preferencias en el caso español, la encuesta 2860 en la que se basa este libro incluía otra serie de preguntas en las que se pedía a las personas entrevistadas que valoraran diferentes procedimientos de toma de decisiones. Concretamente, la encuesta incluía dos baterías similares, una más centrada en estilos de toma de decisiones y otra en mecanismos concretos, incorporando cada una de ellas cuatro modelos potencialmente distintos: consultas al conjunto de la ciudadanía (referendos), decisiones a través de expertos, participación y debate (asambleas) y representación¹⁶.

A priori las preguntas que indagaban de manera más genérica sobre los cuatro modelos parecen obtener un nivel de apoyo muy similar, con medias casi idénticas para todos ellos. Por el contrario, la evaluación de mecanismos concretos que se hace en la segunda batería de preguntas

¹⁵ Mota (2006) incluye un análisis más pormenorizado de los resultados de esa encuesta en las preguntas referentes a temas de participación.

¹⁶ Véanse las preguntas 14 y 31 del anexo.

ayuda a los entrevistados a definirse mejor¹⁷: los niveles de apoyo tan elevados para los cuatro modelos descienden de forma generalizada y en algunos casos como los referendos o las decisiones en manos de los gobernantes se incrementa la polarización entre la población, que se refleja en una mayor desviación estándar. Precisamente porque polariza menos que los demás modelos, es la toma de decisiones utilizando consultas a expertos el que obtiene una media ligeramente más alta¹⁸.

En todo caso, la ciudadanía no tiende a percibir estos cuatro modelos como antagónicos, ni siquiera si nos limitáramos a confrontar los dos con un componente más participativo (referendos y asambleas) respecto al otro par: las correlaciones entre todas estas escalas o bien son positivas o al menos cercanas al 0¹⁹, excepto con la pregunta final. Esta última pregunta, referida a la toma de decisiones por los representantes políticos, muestra su comportamiento más polarizador, que puede apreciarse muy claramente en cuanto relacionamos las posturas respecto a estas frases con el posicionamiento en la escala de procesos participativos (gráfico 2.4). Para ello hemos dividido las respuestas a la escala de procesos en tres categorías: las personas que defienden un modelo participativo (respuestas entre 0 y 3 en la escala), las moderadas (respuestas entre 4 y 6) y las defensoras de un modelo representativo (respuestas de 7 a 10). Así, podemos ver que los modelos y mecanismos participativos son mejor valorados por quienes optan también en la escala por conceder mayor protagonismo a la ciudadanía en el proceso de toma de decisiones, lo que ya constituye un primer indicador de que las personas entrevistadas han entendido las preguntas y responden a las mismas al menos con cierto grado de coherencia. Estas diferencias en función de la respuesta a la escala de procesos son aún más importantes en esa pregunta final sobre el gobierno de los representantes, que alcanza la máxima diferencia entre la valoración otorgada por los sectores más y menos pro-participación. Por el contrario, el debate sobre cuánto escuchar a los expertos es el tema que menos relación tiene con la actitud pro-participación: aunque estas sean en la dirección esperada (más pro-expertos quienes optan por dar menos protagonismo a la ciudadanía), son muy escasas y apuntan a que este tema constituye una dimensión de la actitud ante los procesos políticos muy independiente, como veremos en la siguiente sección.

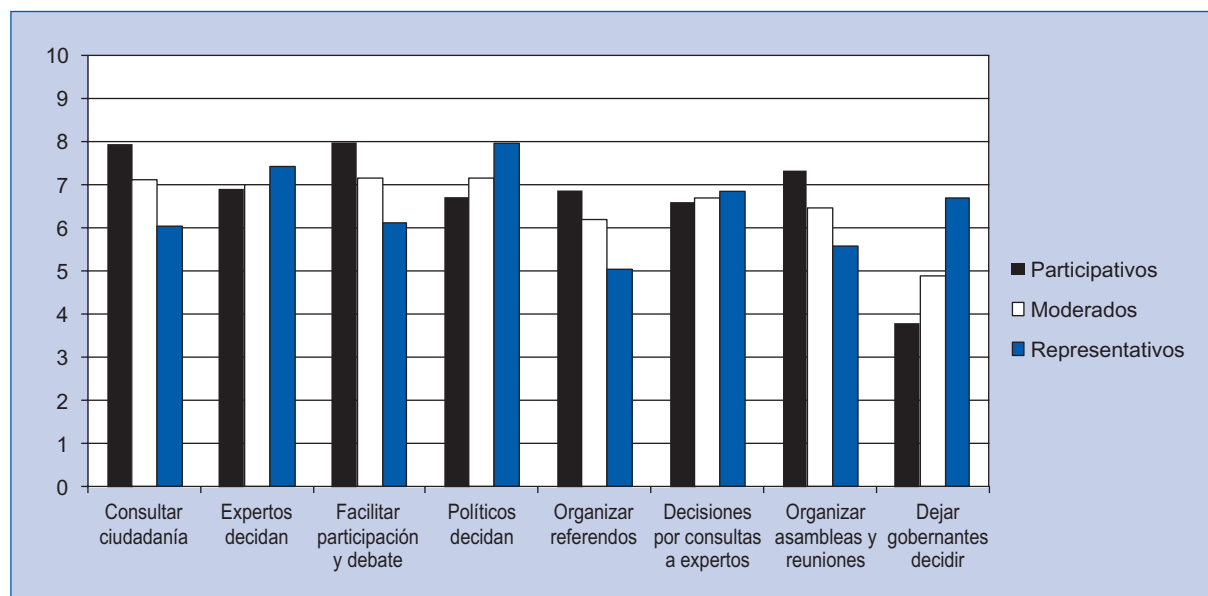
La encuesta preguntaba también por las potenciales consecuencias que podría tener la incorporación de más participación ciudadana en las decisiones públicas. Los resultados muestran una clara división de opiniones, con un claro equilibrio entre las consecuencias positivas y negativas:

¹⁷ Pero al obligar a definirse sobre cosas concretas también generan una mayor no respuesta, que es cinco puntos más alta de media en los mecanismos concretos que en los modelos.

¹⁸ Para que el modelo resultara verosímil, el enunciado no es idéntico a los demás y el uso de la expresión «consultas» a expertos probablemente insinuaba un modelo donde su capacidad de tomar decisiones finales era menor que el que asumían políticos o ciudadanos en las frases alternativas.

¹⁹ Estas correlaciones positivas podían deberse a un fenómeno de aquiescencia, por el que algunas personas entrevistadas respondieran sistemáticamente a todas las respuestas con valoraciones muy elevadas, pero el porcentaje de quienes responden a las 8 preguntas con valoraciones de 8 a 10 no alcanza el 2 por ciento de la población.

Gráfico 2.4. Valoraciones favorables hacia distintos procesos de toma de decisión, según posición en la escala de procesos



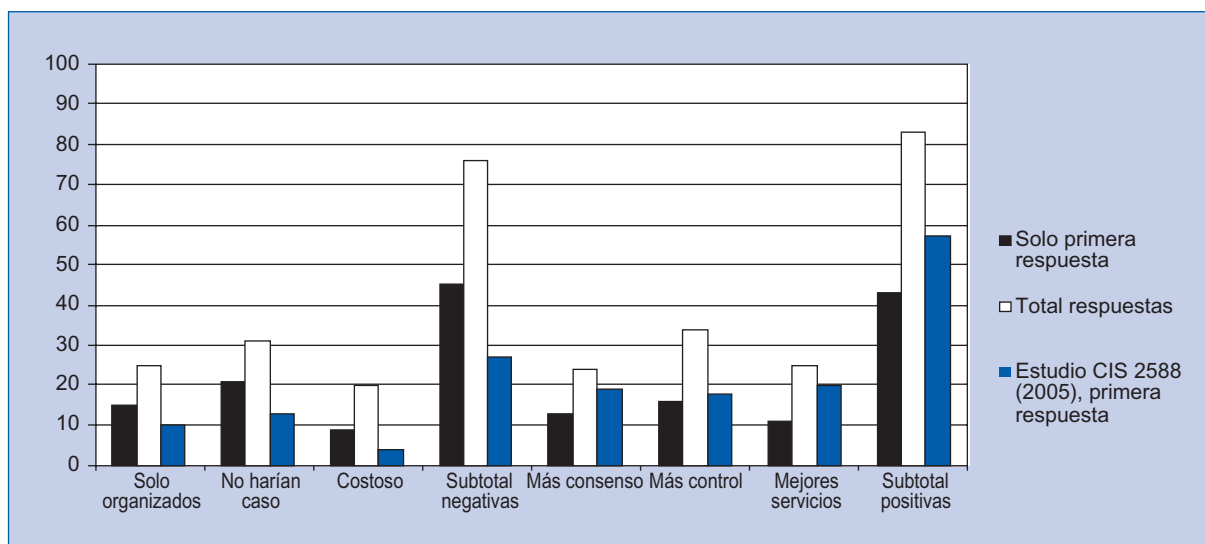
Fuente: CIS 2860.

si nos fijamos solo en la primera respuesta elegida²⁰ hay una pequeñísima diferencia a favor de las respuestas negativas y si lo hacemos en la suma de la primera y la segunda respuesta permitidas, el equilibrio se rompe ligeramente del lado de las positivas (gráfico 2.5).

Aunque las seis posibles consecuencias propuestas logran un nivel de apoyo notable y no muy heterogéneo entre sí, la que destaca entre las negativas no es tanto fruto de una visión negativa de las consecuencias de la participación como de una visión escéptica sobre su capacidad de influencia en las decisiones políticas finales («no harían caso»). En el lado positivo, la respuesta que mayor apoyo recibe es la de facilitar un mayor control a los políticos. Este acento en la ventaja de la participación más tradicionalmente liberal (control de los gobernantes y establecimiento de «accountability») encaja con el clima de desconfianza hacia estos que sugiere buena parte de la encuesta. En todo caso, el apoyo a las tres posibles consecuencias positivas y negativas está bastante repartido, apuntando a que todas ellas forman parte o por lo menos son capaces de conectar con el imaginario colectivo sobre el tema.

De hecho, las respuestas a esta pregunta apuntan a la existencia de varios grupos entre el público: quienes tienen una valoración positiva de los efectos de la participación y como resultado citan dos consecuencias positivas de la misma (26 por ciento), quienes se sitúan en el otro extremo y solo citan consecuencias negativas (22 por ciento) y los dos grupos intermedios que o bien perciben alguna

²⁰ La pregunta permitía señalar un máximo de dos consecuencias posibles sobre una lista de seis, la mitad positivas y la mitad negativas. Véase la pregunta 24 en el anexo.

Gráfico 2.5. Consecuencias previstas de la participación²¹

Fuente: CIS 2860 y CIS 2588.

de cada lado (26 por ciento) o bien solo citan una consecuencia, sea esta positiva o negativa (11 por ciento). Las valoraciones positivas y negativas, por tanto, de los efectos de la participación, se encuentran muy equilibradas entre la sociedad española.

En todo caso, estos resultados son significativamente distintos a los que aparecieron cuando se hizo esta pregunta por última vez (Estudio 2588, 2005), donde las opiniones sobre consecuencias favorables tenían mucho más apoyo que las desfavorables. Este cambio puede estar reflejando un movimiento real de la opinión pública (que podría haber adquirido mayor conciencia de los problemas potenciales de la participación a medida que algunos de estos espacios participativos se han ido desarrollando), aunque tampoco puede descartarse plenamente que el cambio se deba más bien a razones metodológicas²².

¿Son los perfiles de quienes apoyan cada una de estas ideas y propuestas similares a los que hemos visto en el apartado anterior? Para responder a esta pregunta hemos seleccionado tres indicadores diferentes: las escalas de apoyo a dos de los mecanismos que más polarizaban a la ciudadanía (referendos y decisiones en manos de los gobernantes), así como el porcentaje de personas que mencionan dos consecuencias positivas de la participación (tabla 2.2).

²¹ En el cuestionario 2588 la categoría de respuesta utilizada fue «se recogerían mejor las opiniones de los ciudadanos», mientras que en el 2860 ha sido «daría lugar a mejores servicios públicos».

²² Por un lado, las categorías de respuesta no eran idénticas (véase la nota anterior) ni lo era su orden. Por otra, el conjunto del cuestionario 2588 (y particularmente las dos preguntas anteriores a esta) desprendían una actitud menos problematizante hacia la participación que en el caso del Estudio 2680, lo que podría haber provocado cierto efecto cuestionario (en función de la visibilidad dada a lo largo del mismo a los argumentos más críticos relacionados con la participación).

Tabla 2.2. Apoyo medio a tres indicadores de procesos participativos según diversos sectores sociales

		Escala apoyo referéndums (0-10)	Escala apoyo gobernantes (0-10)	% menciona consecuencias positivas
Género	Mujer	6,28	4,84	29,3
	Varón	6,13	4,94	32,9
	F/Coef. Pearson ²³	1,73	0,89	-0,04
Edad	18-34	6,22	4,53	31,2
	35-64	6,24	4,84	32,3
	65+	6,05	5,61	26,9
	F/Coef. Pearson	0,77	23,31	0,05*
Estudios	Sin estudios	5,81	5,45	26,8
	Primaria	6,31	5,05	28,6
	Medios / FT	6,22	4,57	32,7
	Universitarios	6,05	4,84	34,9
	F/Coef. Pearson	1,82	6,62	-0,10**
Ingresos	Muy bajos	6,33	4,76	30,2
	Bajos	6,26	4,77	30,5
	Medios	6,19	5,05	31,6
	Altos	5,85	4,81	34,2
	F/Coef. Pearson	1,57	2,21	-0,07**
Voto	PSOE	6,11	5,20	30,9
	PP	6,15	5,19	27,7
	IU	7,15	4,37	49,4
	Otros y blanco	6,47	4,54	35,1
	No votó	6,21	4,34	29,7
	NC	5,90	4,89	29,2
	F/Coef. Pearson	3,65	7,96	0,02
Ideología	Izquierda	6,36	4,64	34,7
	Centro	6,14	4,99	32,5
	Derecha	6,20	5,47	22,9
	NS/NC	6,13	4,57	26,0
	F/Coef. Pearson	0,98	8,67	0,09**
Tamaño municipio	< 10.000	6,35	5,01	29,5
	10.000-50.000	5,84	5,14	29,8
	50.000-100.000	6,76	4,04	34,9
	100.000-400.000	6,12	4,91	34,0
	> 400.000	6,27	4,91	28,7
	F/Coef. Pearson	1,73	0,89	-0,01

En negrilla diferencias significativas para $p < 0,05$; en la tercera columna, un asterisco significa correlación significativa para $p < 0,05$; dos asteriscos, significativa para $p < 0,01$.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

²³ En las dos primeras columnas se trata de un coeficiente F, mientras que en la tercera es un coeficiente de correlación.

Aunque los resultados varían para cada uno de los indicadores, hay algunos rasgos en común a todos ellos. Por ejemplo, los votantes de IU, las personas que se ubican en la izquierda y las personas que viven en los municipios de 50.000 a 100.000 habitantes se encuentran invariablemente entre los más firmes defensores de las percepciones más positivas de los procesos participativos. Otros grupos tienen un comportamiento más dependiente del indicador concreto y en algún caso pueden acompañarles los abstencionistas o los jóvenes (rechazo a dejar que sean los gobernantes quienes tomen las decisiones), las personas con estudios universitarios (consecuencias positivas de la participación) o las que tienen ingresos muy bajos (defensa de los referendos). En el otro lado, los sectores sociales más reticentes a los procesos participativos son más inconstantes y pueden oscilar entre quienes no declaran su voto, las personas de derechas o con menos estudios o los votantes del PP, que son quienes menos consecuencias positivas ven en la participación.

Estos perfiles mantienen la tónica general que hemos visto en el apartado anterior: mayor apoyo a las ideas que suponen apuestas más participativas entre personas de izquierdas y que viven en municipios intermedios y a menudo también entre las personas con mayores niveles educativos, aunque las variables y categorías concretas que reflejan estas tendencias con más nitidez pueden cambiar para los diferentes indicadores utilizados.

2.3. ¿Qué miden exactamente los indicadores de *Stealth Democracy*?

Este conjunto de nuevas informaciones sobre qué tipo de procesos políticos gustan más y menos a la ciudadanía española nos permite retomar algunos de los interrogantes que planteábamos al inicio de este texto, discutir las opciones metodológicas que hacen Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) y valorar cuáles van a ser los indicadores fundamentales que emplearemos a lo largo de este libro.

Para ello utilizamos un análisis factorial que nos permite ver cómo se relacionan entre sí las diferentes preguntas que hemos examinado a lo largo de este capítulo²⁴. El análisis apunta a que este conjunto de 13 variables se pueden ordenar en torno a cuatro grandes ideas (factores), que se recogen en la tabla 2.3: en primer lugar, un factor que mediría el apoyo a las propuestas más participativas (que cuenta con fuertes cargas de las preguntas sobre los dos tipos de modelos e instrumentos participativos, variables de la tabla con valores en negrita en la primera columna); en segundo lugar, un factor de apoyo a una democracia tecnocrática, donde juegan un papel muy fuerte tanto las dos variables originales de *Stealth Democracy* que preguntan por la conveniencia de ceder decisiones a empresarios y expertos respectivamente como las incluidas sobre esta

²⁴ En coherencia con las dudas que genera el índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa, no lo incorporamos como tal, sino que utilizamos cada una de las cuatro variables que lo componen originalmente. Por el contrario, no incluimos la pregunta sobre consecuencias de la participación, ya que tiene un formato multirresposta diferente a las demás y un mayor nivel de no respuesta.

temática en las dos baterías complementarias (filas 5 a 8 de la tabla, en negrita en la segunda columna); en tercer lugar aparece la dimensión de apoyo a la democracia representativa, con un peso especialmente grande de la valoración de este modelo (fila 10), pero también de otras variables como la misma escala de procesos políticos; finalmente, en cuarto lugar encontramos un factor al que denominamos «decisión y consenso» con fuertes cargas de las otras dos variables del índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa (en negrita en la cuarta columna), que muestran su escasa relación con las otras preguntas que las acompañan en el índice original²⁵.

Tabla 2.3. Factores que aparecen tras las variables que miden apoyo a procesos políticos

	Componentes			
	Participación	Tecnocracia	Representación	Decisión y consenso
Total de varianza explicada	56,44			
Varianza explicada por factor	22,20	15,87	10,58	7,80
Consultar ciudadanía	0,766	0,127	0,131	-0,140
Participación y debate	0,769	0,120	0,194	-0,230
Organizar referendos	0,719	-0,127	-0,205	0,165
Asambleas y reuniones	0,743	-0,145	-0,081	0,062
Consultas a expertos	0,315	-0,640	0,293	0,257
Decisiones por empresarios	0,078	0,658	0,020	0,172
Decisiones por expertos	0,058	0,747	0,001	0,221
Expertos decidan	0,168	-0,469	0,599	-0,099
Escala proceso	-0,463	0,052	0,450	0,315
Elegir políticos	0,039	0,011	0,798	-0,119
Gobernantes decidan	-0,368	-0,069	0,497	0,377
Menos hablar más decidir	-0,113	0,099	-0,088	0,632
Consenso es renunciar	0,043	0,131	0,034	0,556

Nota: La negrita resalta los valores más elevados.

Método de extracción: Análisis de componentes principales. Método de rotación: Normalización Varimax con Kaiser.

La rotación ha convergido en 6 iteraciones.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

¿Qué conclusiones podemos sacar de toda esta información? En primer lugar, se reafirma la idea de que el índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa está mezclando componentes muy diferentes que difícilmente pueden agregarse. Quienes se muestran reacios al consenso y quieren más eficacia y menos debate, tienen poco que ver con quienes desean un gobierno técnico y poco político. El índice original de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa mezcla ideas que no están

²⁵ El mismo análisis se ha repetido añadiendo y quitando algunos bloques de variables, y su estructura básica permanece muy estable, aunque las cargas concretas de las variables en los distintos factores cambien algo en cada caso.

empíricamente asociadas en las preferencias de la ciudadanía. En segundo lugar, constatamos que las preferencias sobre procesos políticos son complejas y que un examen detallado de las mismas debería ser idealmente multidimensional: para muchas personas entrevistadas las ideas de profundizar los componentes participativos, delegar en personas independientes o confiar en los representantes electos no son ideas rotundamente antagónicas, o todo ello hubiera aparecido asociado a un mismo factor. A su vez, el conjunto de las correlaciones entre las variables examinadas (véase el anexo 2.1) o las propias cargas medias-altas de algunas variables en varios factores apunta a que estos factores son distintos pero que tampoco se perciben como rotundamente antagónicos.

Asimismo, este análisis nos permite reforzar la confianza en algunos de los indicadores originales de *Stealth Democracy*. En primer lugar porque nos ayuda a validar la capacidad de la escala de procesos políticos de medir adecuadamente la oposición representación *versus* participación: la ciudadanía no se ha ubicado en ella al azar sino que su posición en la misma es coherente con otras actitudes sobre procesos participativos (tal como nos indican tanto las correlaciones como las cargas del análisis factorial) y es parte fundamental, tanto de la dimensión de apoyo a procesos participativos (en negativo) como del apoyo a un modelo representativo (en positivo). En segundo lugar, si bien Hibbing y Theiss-More (2002) no serían capaces de crear un índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa fiable para el caso español, al menos sí tenían razón al reivindicar que sus dos preguntas sobre expertos y empresarios de éxito eran relevantes: el apoyo a un gobierno «técnico» y/o meritocrático es una actitud distinta y poco relacionada tanto con el firme apoyo a la representación como con la apuesta fuerte por procesos participativos, como nos muestra ese segundo factor que recoge estos dos indicadores junto a las nuevas escalas de apoyo a soluciones basadas en expertos²⁶.

En todo caso, su aportación más importante radica en la escala de procesos políticos, que hemos validado a través de su consistencia con otra decena de actitudes ante diferentes modelos e instrumentos democráticos. La fuerza de esta escala no está solo en su validez, sino también en su eficiencia. En esta primera parte hemos podido utilizar una decena de indicadores para examinar los contenidos del tipo de procesos políticos que desea la ciudadanía. Pero esa no es una estrategia muy habitual porque exige consumir mucho tiempo en términos de cuestionario o nos dibuja una realidad excesivamente compleja si queremos pasar a explicar de dónde provienen estas preferencias. Además, nuestros cuatro factores tienen una profunda desventaja frente a la simpleza de la escala de procesos políticos: solo podemos calcularlos eliminando a las personas que han dejado de responder a cualquiera de las preguntas, con lo

²⁶ Bengtsson (2011) alcanza resultados muy similares en su análisis del estudio postelectoral finlandés de 2011, con tres factores diferenciados de apoyo a soluciones tecnocráticas, representativas y participativas. Este apoyo a soluciones tecnocráticas no distingue hasta qué punto se trata de opciones más o menos democráticas, sus argumentos podrían valer para avalar situaciones democráticamente muy diversas, desde un gobierno tecnocrático legitimado por el Parlamento como el de Italia en 2012, a un Ross Perot o un Fujimori que hubiera sido elegido por la ciudadanía o al gobierno de concentración que proponían parte de los golpistas españoles del 23-F.

que hemos terminado perdiendo a más de una tercera parte de las personas entrevistadas. Frente a ello, la escala de procesos políticos, con una sola pregunta (adaptable a temáticas y/o escalas territoriales concretas) y con un bajísimo nivel de no respuesta (4 por ciento), representa una medida fiable y que correlaciona adecuadamente con las que consideramos las principales dimensiones de este debate: el apoyo a procesos políticos más participativos o más representativos. Por estos motivos, esta escala (y sus derivados) constituirá el objetivo central de los restantes capítulos de este volumen²⁷. Antes de cerrar este tema queda pendiente retomar la comparación que Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) establecen entre esta escala y una de las herramientas fundamentales del análisis político, la escala ideológica²⁸. Si, tal y como afirman, los procesos políticos importan y si las preferencias sobre los mismos son independientes de las posturas ideológicas (es decir, que se puede estar a favor de la mayor participación siendo de derechas o de izquierdas), ¿tiene sentido plantearse un espacio político bidimensional donde ambas escalas jueguen un papel comparable de estructuración del mapa político y de las preferencias en el mismo?

Nuestra respuesta es afirmativa y negativa a la vez. En primer lugar, la escala de procesos es un instrumento heurístico que la inmensa mayoría de la ciudadanía española es capaz de utilizar (tabla 2.4). De hecho, son muchas más las personas que aceptan ubicarse en esta escala que en la de izquierda-derecha. Su dificultad para ubicar a los partidos no es mucho mayor que en la escala ideológica, excepto para el caso de IU. Y como resultado podemos ubicar a la ciudadanía en un espacio político bidimensional, que presenta bastantes semejanzas y alguna diferencia con el norteamericano. En ambos casos las diferencias percibidas entre partidos son mucho mayores en la escala ideológica que en la de procesos y también en ambos casos la ciudadanía ocupa una posición intermedia en la competencia interpartidista en la escala ideológica, mientras que se ubica bastante más cerca del polo participativo que todos los partidos. La diferencia estriba en que la presencia de IU en el caso español provoca que haya más distancia máxima entre los tres partidos españoles analizados que entre los demócratas y republicanos en Estados Unidos. También, al igual que en el caso norteamericano, las posturas de la ciudadanía en una y otra escala son bastante independientes entre sí, de manera que podemos encontrar españoles de izquierdas y de derechas tanto entre los defensores como entre los detractores de las apuestas participativas (aunque, como hemos visto, haya algo más de apoyo a las posturas participativas entre la izquierda).

²⁷ También sería posible capturar el debate participación *versus* representación a través de los valores del factor 1, como hemos hecho en otros trabajos (Font y Alarcón, 2011), sin que los resultados difieran enormemente. Sin embargo, el uso de la escala tiene muy claras ventajas: permite utilizarla en esta encuesta para otros temas y ámbitos territoriales y permite su réplica en otras encuestas nacionales e internacionales que no puedan dedicar muchas preguntas al tema. Sin embargo, si los recursos lo permiten, animamos a los investigadores a incluir indicadores adicionales sobre los procesos de toma de decisiones políticas deseados, para seguir validando la escala de procesos políticos.

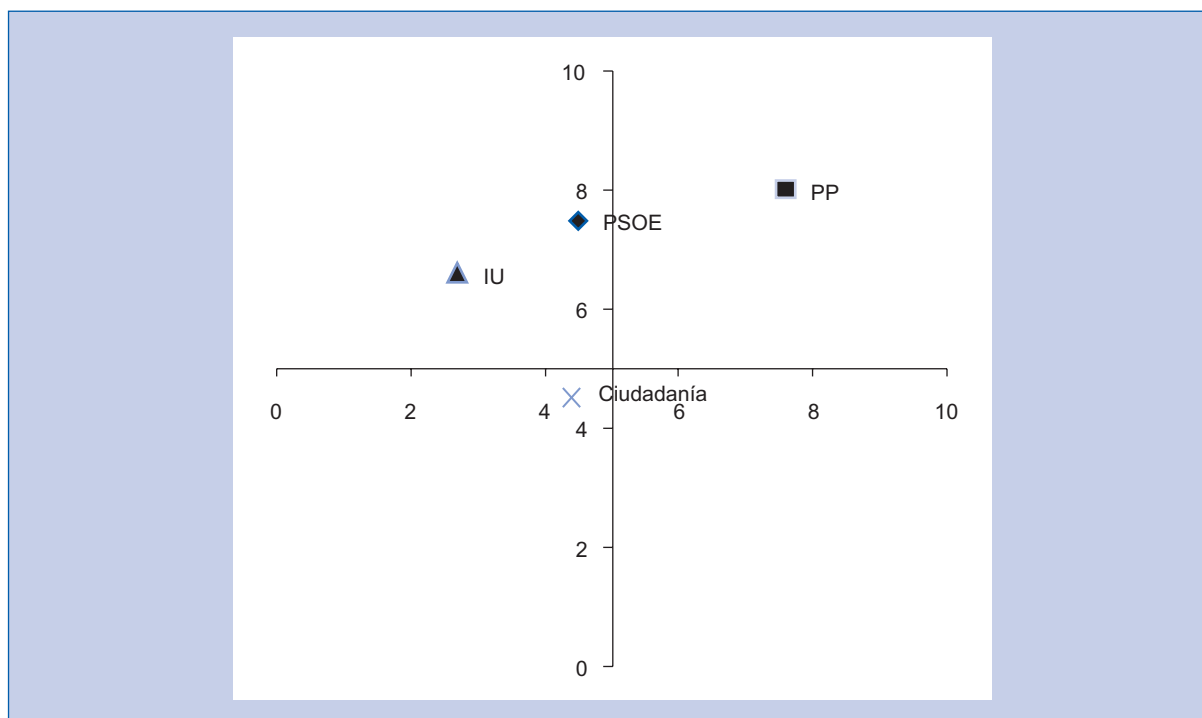
²⁸ En EE.UU. dicha escala enfrenta las posturas conservadoras y liberales, mientras que en Europa se presenta como una dicotomía entre izquierda y derecha.

Tabla 2.4. Autoubicación y ubicación percibida de los principales partidos en escala ideológica y de procesos (media y porcentaje de no respuesta)

	Ubicación media escala 0-10		% no sabe/no contesta	
	Ideología	Procesos	Ideología	Procesos
PSOE	4,5	7,5	24	25
PP	7,6	8	22	27
IU	2,7	6,6	21	38
Ciudadanía	4,4	4,5	18	5

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Gráfico 2.6. Ubicación de los principales partidos y autoubicación de la ciudadanía según ideología y preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones



Nota: El eje horizontal va de 0 (extrema izquierda) a 10 (extrema derecha), el eje vertical va de 0 (la ciudadanía toma las decisiones) a 10 (las decisiones las toman los políticos).

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Hasta aquí las buenas noticias respecto al potencial explicativo de la escala de procesos en la vida política española. Aunque un análisis de sus potenciales consecuencias va mucho más allá de las pretensiones de este volumen, el contraste rápido entre el mapa que nos dibuja el gráfico 2.6 y los resultados electorales nos muestra claramente que la escala de procesos no puede

tener la capacidad explicativo-predictiva que se atribuye a la escala ideológica, puesto que en ese caso IU (en tanto que la ciudadanía lo ubica como más cercano a sus preferencias en esta escala) debería ser una fuerza política mucho mayor en términos electorales. Sea porque a diferencia de lo que afirman Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) esta dimensión no es tan importante para la ciudadanía a la hora de votar o porque las diferencias que ven entre partidos no son lo suficientemente claras como para orientar su voto, el hecho incuestionable es que su potencial relación con el voto aparece como mínimo como limitada para el caso español.

2.4. Conclusiones

De todo lo anterior emergen tres conclusiones principales. En primer lugar, el conjunto de las actitudes examinadas muestran una preferencia (moderada) por que se incorporen más mecanismos participativos con intervención ciudadana en los procesos políticos de toma de decisiones. Tanto las posturas en la escala de procesos políticos como las respuestas a todas las preguntas restantes muestran una sociedad española con defensores y detractores de la participación, a menudo algunos más de los primeros que de los segundos, pero con buena parte de la ciudadanía situada en posturas intermedias. Posturas intermedias que, en todo caso, representan una preferencia hacia procesos políticos más participativos que los actualmente existentes y de los que la ciudadanía percibe que ninguno de los tres grandes partidos defiende. Si bien pueden estar en lo cierto quienes afirman que algunas actitudes participativas son el resultado de preguntas fáciles y sesgadas, el amplio abanico de indicadores utilizado aquí fortalece la seguridad de que esta preferencia (moderadamente) participativa está realmente instalada en la sociedad española. Esta conclusión para el caso español coincidiría con buena parte de la investigación comparada más reciente (Dick y Baldassare, 2009; Donovan y Karp, 2006; Neblo *et al.*, 2010) que ha señalado que la demanda de participación y la disposición a participar de parte considerable de la ciudadanía es mayor de la que se apuntaba en Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002).

En segundo lugar, los apoyos sociales a estas ideas son heterogéneos y no se ubican en un sector social o político muy concreto. Los apoyos más rotundos cambian dependiendo de los indicadores utilizados, pero son mayores entre las personas de izquierdas, entre quienes votan a IU y entre quienes viven en municipios de 50.000 a 100.000 habitantes. En todo caso, los capítulos 4 a 6 seguirán profundizando en el análisis de los apoyos sociales a estas ideas.

Y, por último, el contraste que se daba en el caso de Estados Unidos entre apoyo a procesos más participativos y apoyo simultáneo a un modelo de democracia sigilosa, no solo también existe en el caso español, sino que se acentúa: la ciudadanía española se sitúa más cerca del polo participativo que la norteamericana a la vez que muestra un apoyo más entusiasta a la democracia sigilosa. Así, nuestros análisis confirman su idea de que una dimensión de las preferencias sobre los procesos políticos es el apoyo a soluciones tecnocráticas (un gobierno no político formado por «los mejores») y que esta es bastante independiente del apoyo a modelos más participativos

y/o más representativos. Pero si Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) resuelven este dilema apostando por su indicador de democracia sigilosa, aquí hemos mostrado que las sospechas existentes a priori respecto a su composición demasiado heterogénea, mediante ideas demasiado diferentes que no se pueden agregar en el terreno conceptual, se han visto confirmadas en el terreno empírico: no se puede construir una escala fiable de apoyo al modelo de democracia sigilosa con los indicadores propuestos por estos autores, al menos en el caso español.

Sin embargo, nuestros análisis muestran también que, al menos para el caso español, su escala de procesos políticos es una herramienta que recoge adecuadamente las posturas de la ciudadanía en ese debate sobre cuánto protagonismo conceder a la intervención directa de la ciudadanía y cuánto dejar en manos de los representantes electos. En este sentido, la escala que utilizan Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) representa una contribución al estudio de las preferencias sobre los procesos políticos, que vamos a utilizar como columna vertebral de nuestros análisis a lo largo del resto de este volumen.

Anexo 2.1.

Tabla 2.5. Correlaciones entre las variables utilizadas en el análisis factorial

	Escala proceso	Consultar ciudadanía	Expertos decidan	Participación y debate	Elegir políticos	Organizar referendos	Consultas a expertos	Asambleas y reuniones	Gobernantes decidan	Decisiones empresarios	Decisiones expertos
Escala proceso	1	-0,282**	0,081**	-0,294**	0,194**	-0,270**	0,042	-0,278**	0,426**	-0,019	0,054*
Consultar ciudadanía	-0,282**	1	0,181**	0,644**	0,062**	0,440**	0,088**	0,380**	-0,231**	0,021	0,044*
Expertos decidan	0,081**	0,181**	1	0,227**	0,340**	-0,002	0,449**	0,094**	0,111**	-0,196**	-0,278**
Participación y debate	-0,294**	0,644**	0,227**	1	0,138**	0,362**	0,135**	0,451**	-0,259**	0,020	-0,017
Elegir políticos	0,194**	0,062**	0,340**	0,138**	1	-0,057**	0,228**	0,017	0,248**	-0,056*	-0,069**
Organizar referendos	-0,270**	0,440**	-0,002	0,362**	-0,057**	1	0,245**	0,503**	-0,229**	-0,022	0,029
Consultas a expertos	0,042	0,088**	0,449**	0,135**	0,228**	0,245**	1	0,285**	0,081**	-0,170**	-0,298**
Asambleas y reuniones	-0,278**	0,380**	0,094**	0,451**	0,017	0,503**	0,285**	1	-0,267**	-0,030	-0,023
Gobernantes decidan	0,426**	-0,231**	0,111**	-0,259**	0,248**	-0,229**	0,081**	-0,267**	1	-0,031	0,018
Decisiones por empresarios	-0,019	0,021	-0,196**	0,020	-0,056*	-0,022	-0,170**	-0,030	-0,031	1	0,343**
Decisiones por expertos	0,054*	0,044*	-0,278**	-0,017	-0,069**	0,029	-0,298**	-0,023	0,018	0,343**	1

** La correlación es significativa al nivel 0,01 (bilateral). * La correlación es significativa al nivel 0,05 (bilateral).

Fuente: CIS 2860.

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What Citizens Want

Chapter 2

5. Consenso y conflicto: dos prismas para comprender la participación

Pau Alarcón y Magdalena Wojcieszak

Ya hemos visto que las preferencias hacia procesos democráticos más o menos participativos constituyen un fenómeno complejo. En este capítulo avanzaremos en este intento de comprender las diversas aristas que configuran esas preferencias, tratando de aproximarnos al objeto de estudio desde dos puntos de vista opuestos aunque necesariamente complementarios: la percepción de consenso en la sociedad y la aversión al conflicto.

Si alguien percibe que sus ideas forman parte de un consenso general en la sociedad, ¿considerará preferible un proceso donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones o más bien sucederá todo lo contrario y creará que al existir ese preacuerdo no es necesaria la deliberación? Y, mirando desde el lado del choque de ideas, ¿las personas que se sienten incómodas ante el desacuerdo o la discusión política rechazarán la idea de tener procesos más participativos para evitar a toda costa verse implicadas en contextos conflictivos? ¿Hasta qué punto?

En su modelo para justificar las preferencias hacia una democracia sigilosa, Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) argumentan extensamente la centralidad de estas dos dimensiones. Junto al desinterés político, la aversión al conflicto y las percepciones de que existe un consenso en la agenda constituyen las tres condiciones suficientes (cualquiera de ellas) para orientar a alguien hacia la democracia sigilosa. Así, según estos autores, la percepción de que existe consenso hace innecesario el debate público y la participación ciudadana directa, ya que se parte de un posicionamiento básico compartido. Y por otro lado, ante una cuestión que genera diferentes posicionamientos, la tendencia a evitar situaciones conflictivas también conduciría a esa preferencia hacia un proceso político que excluya la participación.

De este modo, desde dos puntos de partida diferentes llegamos a la misma conclusión: 1) si creo que ya hay un consenso, no considero necesaria la participación; y 2) si creo que puede haber discusión, no quiero participar. Además de indagar en la validez de estas premisas y extenderlas al contexto español, donde esos factores pueden tener un impacto distinto, el cuestionario del estudio 2860 del CIS incorpora diversos ítems que nos permiten tener una visión más global sobre la percepción de consenso y la aversión al conflicto. Por lo tanto, nuestra intención es profundizar en estas dos dimensiones de la disputa política para poder entender mejor su relación con las preferencias de la ciudadanía.

5.1. Dos perspectivas sobre las consecuencias del consenso percibido: teoría y resultados

Esta parte del capítulo se centra en la percepción de consenso de la ciudadanía, analizando en qué medida y hasta qué punto influye en las actitudes ante el proceso de toma de decisiones de la población española. En general, la ciudadanía suele percibir la existencia de consensos tanto en sus posiciones políticas como en referencia a temas específicos. De hecho, numerosos estudios han demostrado que la mayoría de las personas suele atribuir sus propias opiniones a la población en general,

fenómeno al que se ha denominado «falso consenso» (Ross, Green y House, 1977), «atribución egocéntrica» (Fields y Schuman, 1976), o simplemente un «efecto de proyección» (Christen y Gunther, 2003). De este modo, la gente tiende a sobrestimar el grado de apoyo hacia sus propias posiciones. Este hallazgo se ha comprobado en temas tan variados como la globalización (Wojcieszak, 2008), las actitudes raciales (Fields y Schuman, 1976; O’Gorman, 1975; O’Gorman y Garry, 1976), los derechos de los animales (Gunther *et al.*, 2001), la energía nuclear y la regulación de la polución (Taylor, 1982), el medio ambiente (Glynn y Park, 1997), la eutanasia (Gunther y Christen, 2002), el pago de una multa e incluso el aparecer en el anuncio de un supermercado (Ross *et al.*, 1977).

En el marco de nuestro análisis, este fenómeno puede influir en las preferencias sobre el tipo de procesos políticos deseados, tal y como postulan los autores de *Stealth Democracy* (2002) y como también sugiere la investigación en comunicación política. De estas investigaciones surgen dos posibles explicaciones sobre cómo influyen estas percepciones en las preferencias analizadas: la *espiral del silencio* o el desarrollo de «acciones correctivas».

La *espiral del silencio* supone que las personas que perciben que sus opiniones son mayoritarias suelen expresar sus puntos de vista en mayor medida que quienes consideran que la mayoría no comparte sus convicciones. Esto se debe al miedo al aislamiento, que anima a quienes se ubican en la mayoría a expresarse en público mientras lleva a quienes se consideran en minoría a retirarse de la participación, independientemente de la distribución real de su posición en la sociedad (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Un meta-análisis de estudios de la espiral del silencio revela una relación significativa entre el apoyo público percibido hacia una opinión y la voluntad de expresarla, aunque esta relación es más bien pequeña (Glynn, Hayes y Shanahan, 1997; Scheufele y Moy, 2000). Otros estudios también revelan que las personas que se ubican en la minoría expresan sus opiniones con menos rapidez que quienes se sitúan en la mayoría (Bassili, 2003). Además, la percepción de que se cuenta con el apoyo público puede aumentar las intenciones de participar en acciones en torno a diversos temas (Bauman y Geher, 2002; Botvin, Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury y Goldberg, 1992).

Estos mecanismos quizás pueden aplicarse a las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos que desea la ciudadanía. Aplicando la teoría de la espiral del silencio, la percepción de que se forma parte de un consenso público —es decir, que gran parte o la mayoría de la ciudadanía comparte una idea propia— estaría relacionada con el apoyo hacia procesos participativos. Después de todo, si el resto comparte las propias preferencias ideológicas y opiniones sobre diversos temas políticos, sería lógico desear que se involucre en la toma de decisiones para avanzar así en esas aspiraciones compartidas.

En cambio, la perspectiva de las *acciones correctivas* sugiere la relación inversa entre el consenso percibido y las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos. Según Rojas (2010), la percepción de que los medios de comunicación están sesgados en contra de las preferencias individuales (el efecto de los medios hostiles) predice la participación en acciones «correctivas» para conseguir que esas preferencias individuales estén presentes en la esfera pública. Estas acciones pueden consistir en expresar opiniones políticas, tratar de persuadir a otros o participar en foros de dis-

cusión o en protestas públicas. Esta perspectiva sugiere que quienes perciben que el resto de la ciudadanía está en contra de sus puntos de vista tenderán a involucrarse en los procesos políticos para comunicar sus posicionamientos y compensar los sesgos percibidos. Sin embargo, existen diferencias entre la percepción de la opinión de los medios y de la opinión pública. ¿Estas ideas son extensibles al consenso percibido en la opinión pública?

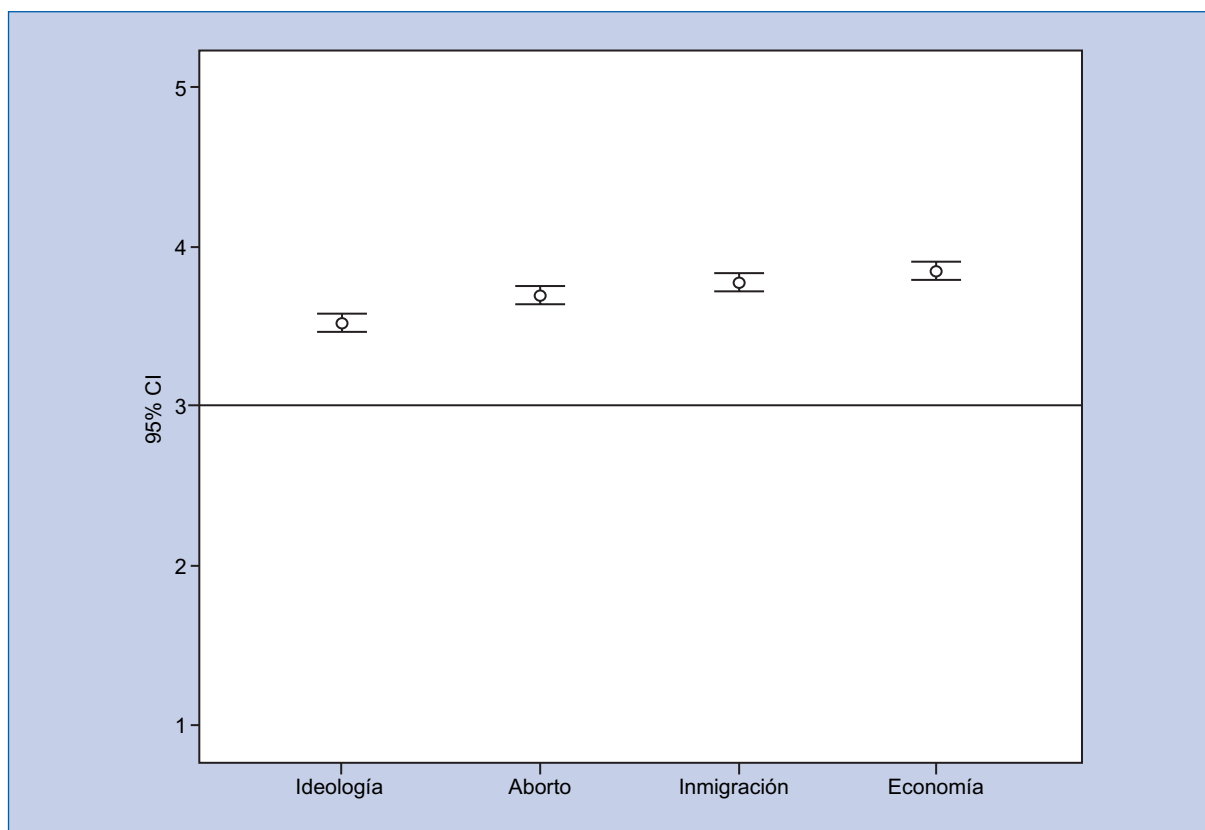
El libro *Stealth Democracy* respondería afirmativamente: la percepción del consenso incentiva las preferencias hacia procesos representativos y, por tanto, solo quienes se ubican en posiciones minoritarias preferirán procesos más participativos. De hecho, Hibbing y Theiss-Morse sostienen que «sería racional que quienes creen que los estadounidenses están de acuerdo sobre los temas que más necesitan la atención del gobierno [...] aceptaran la democracia sigilosa» (2002: 134). Es decir, quienes perciben una falta de consenso respecto a sus opiniones por parte de la población (es decir, un público «hostil») están más dispuestos a involucrarse personalmente y a querer que los demás se involucren en los procesos de toma de decisiones con el fin de resolver los conflictos o el desacuerdo. Así pues, aunque no se explicita, la tesis de *Stealth Democracy* se apoyaría en el mecanismo de las acciones correctivas.

Según la espiral del silencio, cabe esperar que la percepción de un consenso público anime a la ciudadanía a expresar sus opiniones y —por extensión— preferir procesos participativos, mientras que el sentirse en minoría aumenta las preferencias por procesos representativos. En cambio, como sugiere la perspectiva de las acciones correctivas y como señalan los autores de *Stealth Democracy*, la percepción de que hay un consenso público aumentaría la preferencia hacia procesos representativos, mientras que quienes se sienten en minoría optarían por procesos participativos.

En esta sección del capítulo empezaremos por comprobar si el consenso ideológico percibido está relacionado con las preferencias hacia el proceso político en España. Asimismo, presentaremos esta relación entre consenso ideológico percibido y preferencias políticas respecto a los tres temas concretos. Además, para comprobar si la idea de *issue publics* se extiende al consenso público percibido, también analizaremos las relaciones entre el consenso percibido en relación a cada uno de los tres temas y la respectiva escala de preferencias en cada temática.

Para indagar en estas relaciones, en el cuestionario se preguntaba a los encuestados qué cantidad de españoles creen que comparte sus preferencias ideológicas en la escala izquierda-derecha, así como respecto a sus opiniones sobre el aborto, la inmigración y la economía (desde «muy pocos» hasta «la mayoría»)⁵⁸. Como muestra el gráfico 5.1, la ciudadanía percibe un mayor consenso respecto a sus opiniones sobre inmigración y economía que en relación a la ideología y el aborto. De todos modos, las medias, que están siempre por encima de 3,5, indican que la ciudadanía percibe la existencia de bastante consenso respecto a sus posicionamientos (el valor 3,0 se corresponde con «más o menos la mitad» y el 4,0 significa «muchos»).

⁵⁸ Véanse las preguntas 32a, 33a, 34a y 38a del cuestionario.

Gráfico 5.1. Medias de la percepción de consenso ideológico y respecto a diversos temas

Nota: La escala va de 1 (muy pocos comparten sus ideas sobre el tema) a 5 (la mayoría comparte sus ideas).

Fuente: CIS 2860.

¿Cuál de los dos supuestos anteriores sobre la asociación entre el consenso percibido y las preferencias hacia el proceso político es más adecuado? Para comprobar esa relación, analizamos las medias de las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos diferenciando entre la ciudadanía con distintos niveles de percepción del consenso ideológico: bajo (quienes piensan que «pocos» o «muy pocos» españoles comparten su ideología), medio (quienes piensan que «más o menos la mitad» comparte sus ideas, una opción no leída por el encuestador pero expresada espontáneamente por los encuestados) y alto (quienes perciben que «bastantes» o «la mayoría» están de acuerdo con su posicionamiento)⁵⁹. Como se ha señalado antes, la mayoría percibe un consenso grande tanto a nivel general como para cada uno de los temas analizados⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) consideran que el consenso percibido es *alto* cuando uno cree que «la mayoría» de la gente está de acuerdo sobre cuál es el problema más importante que enfrenta el país. De acuerdo con estos análisis, también codificamos el consenso como «alto» cuando uno piensa que «la mayoría» comparte su ideología y sus opiniones sobre los tres temas.

⁶⁰ Consenso ideológico (porcentajes): bajo 17, medio 20, alto 63; consenso sobre aborto: bajo 15, medio 16, alto 69; consenso sobre inmigración: bajo 19, medio 8, alto 73; consenso sobre economía: bajo 12, medio 12, alto 76.

También medimos la distancia de las preferencias políticas entre quienes se sitúan en los dos extremos. Así, los valores positivos indican que quienes perciben un consenso elevado prefieren procesos más representativos que quienes perciben poco consenso. En cambio, los valores negativos indican que quienes perciben que la mayoría es «hostil» a sus posicionamientos prefieren procesos más participativos donde la ciudadanía corriente sea quien decida.

La tabla 5.2 muestra que quienes piensan que la ciudadanía es «hostil» a su propia ideología prefieren que sea la ciudadanía corriente —y no los políticos— quien decida en España. En cambio, quienes perciben que bastantes o muchos españoles comparten sus preferencias optan por procesos más representativos. Puesto que, en general, la ideología mide un posicionamiento común para distintos temas (todas las correlaciones entre ideología y opiniones temáticas son significativas, mostrando que la ciudadanía de derechas se opone al aborto, la inmigración y la regulación de la economía; al contrario que la ciudadanía de izquierdas), también analizamos si el consenso ideológico percibido se relaciona con las preferencias hacia los procesos respecto a cada uno de los temas analizados⁶¹.

Como también muestra la tabla 5.1, la ciudadanía que percibe un consenso público en torno a su ideología (es decir, los de izquierdas piensan que muchos o la mayoría de los españoles también son de izquierdas, mientras que los de derecha consideran que el público español también se sitúa a derecha), igualmente optan por procesos más representativos —y no participativos— en referencia al aborto, la economía y, marginalmente, la inmigración. Este patrón es coherente con la teoría de las acciones correctivas y con los hallazgos de *Stealth Democracy*.

Tabla 5.1. Apoyo medio a la escala de procesos en España y para los distintos temas según el consenso ideológico percibido

	España	Aborto	Inmigración	Economía
Consenso percibido				
Bajo	4,05	3,14	4,77	5,17
Medio	4,55	3,94	5,25	5,85
Alto	4,55	3,77	5,05	5,50
Bajo - Alto	-0,50	-0,63	-0,28	-0,32
F	4,65	7,51	2,40	4,90

Nota: Valores positivos indican que quienes perciben un consenso alto prefieren procesos más participativos que quienes perciben un consenso bajo, y viceversa.

En negrilla, diferencias significativas para $p < 0,05$, para la inmigración diferencias significativas para $p < 0,10$

Fuente: CIS 2860.

⁶¹ La ideología está relacionada con la opinión sobre: el aborto, $r = -0,35$; la inmigración, $r = -0,27$; y la economía, $r = 0,09$, todas las correlaciones son significativas para $p < 0,00$.

Ahora bien, ¿esa relación cambia según la temática? Comprobamos esta pregunta midiendo la relación entre el consenso percibido respecto al propio posicionamiento en cada tema y la escala de preferencias correspondiente a cada uno de esos tres temas. La tabla 5.2 muestra unos resultados interesantes: percibir el consenso *temático* —es decir, sobre la postura en cada uno de los tres temas que analizamos— *no* influye en las preferencias hacia el correspondiente proceso político. Es decir, el hecho de pensar que los demás comparten una opinión propia sobre el aborto, sea en contra o a favor de que las mujeres puedan abortar libremente y sin restricciones, *no* afecta a las preferencias sobre los procesos de toma de decisiones sobre el aborto. Del mismo modo, el hecho de percibir que hay consenso entre la ciudadanía en relación a la inmigración, ya sea apoyando u oponiéndose a que los inmigrantes decidan libremente si quieren venir a vivir a España, *no* conlleva ninguna preferencia hacia una democracia más participativa y menos representativa en relación a la inmigración. Por último, el nivel de consenso percibido vinculado a la economía, ya sea apoyando u oponiéndose al mercado libre, tampoco afecta a las preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones sobre este tema.

Tabla 5.2. Apoyo medio a la escala de procesos para los distintos temas según el consenso público temático percibido

	Aborto	Inmigración	Economía
Consenso percibido			
Bajo	3,66	4,96	5,43
Medio	3,80	5,01	5,66
Alto	3,68	5,05	5,46
Bajo - Alto	-0,02	-0,09	-0,03
F	0,21	0,17	0,44

Nota: Valores positivos indican que quienes perciben un consenso alto prefieren procesos más participativos que quienes perciben un consenso bajo, y viceversa

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Estos resultados sugieren que solo el consenso *ideológico* percibido influye en las preferencias hacia el proceso de toma de decisiones políticas. El patrón muestra claramente que quienes perciben que la ciudadanía comparte sus mismas preferencias ideológicas optan por procesos con mayor componente representativo en la toma de decisiones políticas en general, así como tampoco en relación a los tres temas analizados. En cambio, quienes piensan que la opinión pública es «hostil» respecto a su ideología optan por procesos democráticos más participativos. Quizás la explicación radique en que, al percibir que los demás comparten los propios planteamientos, se puede confiar en ellos y en los políticos, por lo que no se desea una mayor involucración ciudadana al considerar que el proceso representativo ya tomará las decisiones que personalmente se prefieren.

No obstante, este patrón no es extensible al consenso *temático*: como hemos visto, no hay *ninguna* relación entre el hecho de que uno piense que la gran parte o la mayoría de la ciudadanía comparta sus opiniones sobre el aborto, la inmigración y la economía y el que se prefieran procesos más representativos o participativos respecto a esos temas. Este patrón podría estar indicando que el poder explicativo de la ideología es más potente que el de las opiniones temáticas.

Para estudiar este asunto con mayor detalle, analizamos la relación entre el consenso ideológico percibido y la valoración de los entrevistados respecto a distintos procedimientos para la toma de decisiones: facilitar que la gente participe y debata las grandes decisiones políticas, convocar referendos y organizar asambleas y reuniones para tomar decisiones entre todos (escalas desde 0, «la peor forma de tomar las decisiones», hasta 10, «la mejor forma de tomar decisiones»⁶²). Así, según Hibbing y Theiss-Morse o la hipótesis más general de las acciones correctivas, quienes perciben un consenso público deberían valorar estos procesos como menos útiles que quienes piensan que la opinión pública no comparte sus posiciones.

En general, los resultados avalan, aunque solo en parte, esta idea. Quienes consideran que la mayor parte del público comparte su ideología valoran *peor* las asambleas y reuniones que quienes perciben estar en «minoría ideológica» (media de 6,48 frente a 6,84, $p < 0,05$), aunque no existen diferencias en cuanto a los debates y los referendos.

En conjunto, los hallazgos que hemos mostrado aquí sugieren que una proporción significativa de la población española percibe la existencia de un consenso compartido, ya sea ideológico o sobre temas políticos concretos. Como señala la idea original de *Stealth Democracy* y la teoría de las acciones correctivas (Rojas, 2010), esas percepciones tienen consecuencias reales sobre las preferencias políticas que expresa la ciudadanía. Nuestros resultados muestran que el apoyo público percibido se relaciona con preferencias hacia una democracia representativa. Quizás, como plantean Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, la ciudadanía que percibe un consenso no es consciente de la existencia del conflicto de intereses y —precisamente por eso— prefiere que sean los políticos quienes decidan en vez de optar por procedimientos participativos destinados a resolver colectivamente el conflicto, dado que habría muy poco sobre lo que discutir.

5.2. El papel de la aversión al conflicto y la heterogeneidad de las redes sociales

Tal y como hemos comentado al principio de este capítulo, otro argumento central en las tesis de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse apunta hacia la otra cara de la contienda política: la aversión al conflicto. Según estos autores, el deseo de la ciudadanía de evitar situaciones conflictivas constituye una condición suficiente para estructurar la preferencia hacia procesos políticos que no exijan su par-

⁶² Véanse las preguntas 14 y 31 del cuestionario, en el anexo.

ticipación. De este modo, esta aversión se traduce en un apoyo hacia una democracia sigilosa, al margen de las opiniones sobre la bondad del debate o la búsqueda del consenso (2002: 135).

De hecho, se han realizado importantes aportaciones en la comprensión de la relación entre el sujeto y su contexto social. Ulbig y Funk (1999) muestran que la aversión al conflicto está inversamente relacionada con la participación en relación a diversas actividades políticas. En concreto, defienden que la aversión al conflicto predice la (no) participación solo en aquellas actuaciones más propensas a implicar conflicto. Asimismo, diversas investigaciones, desde la perspectiva de la psicología social, muestran que el conflicto interpersonal genera una tensión psicológica negativa con su consiguiente objetivo o deseo de evitar el conflicto por todos los medios (Eagly y Chaiken, 1993; Petty y Cacioppo, 1981). En esa misma línea, a partir de estudios cualitativos se ha señalado que algunos individuos evitan la participación política porque representa una amenaza a su «armonía interpersonal» (Rosenberg, 1954-1955; Mansbridge, 1980). Y como contrapartida, Verba y Nie (1972) señalan que las personas con menor aversión al conflicto están más dispuestas a involucrarse en actividades que conllevan asociado un mayor conflicto.

Estos hallazgos indican que la aversión implica una menor participación. Ahora bien, más allá de estos efectos en la propia actitud o comportamiento participativo, ¿esta tendencia de la ciudadanía con aversión al conflicto también se traduce en una preferencia hacia procesos democráticos menos participativos?

Planteado según la terminología del enfoque económico clásico del comportamiento electoral, la aversión al conflicto imprimiría un coste muy elevado a la participación (la posibilidad de generar situaciones no deseadas), superior a cualquier beneficio que pudiera generar esa participación o a la capacidad de influencia que esté asociada. Por tanto, siguiendo con la lógica de la teoría de la elección racional, en el cálculo de los costes y beneficios que conlleva el comportamiento político (en este caso, el apoyo a procesos más o menos participativos), la aversión al conflicto llevaría al individuo a preferir procesos donde los políticos tomen las decisiones.

En nuestra aproximación al fenómeno no queremos limitarnos a analizar la dimensión psicológica individual del mismo, ya que se ha comprobado que los contactos con otras personas pueden ser un motor que facilite distintas formas de participación (Anduiza y Bosch, 2004). Tal y como indica Mutz (2006), los estudios de redes sociales muestran que la gente tiende a exponerse de manera selectiva a otras personas que no comparten su punto de vista. En concreto, esta autora argumenta que en el caso de las personas con aversión al conflicto, la diversidad de las redes sociales desalienta la participación política, ya que posicionarse podría conllevar dificultades con la gente de su entorno. Y al contrario, las redes sociales homogéneas alientan y refuerzan los puntos de vista, generando una mayor tendencia hacia el activismo y fomentando el fervor más fácilmente. En esa misma línea, Green, Visser y Tetlock (2000) describen varias formas en las que la gente evita encontrarse en situaciones que le enfrenten a puntos de vista políticos adversos.

Aquí trataremos de analizar la relación entre aversión al conflicto y participación para el caso español. En primer lugar definiremos las variables para medir diferentes dimensiones de la aversión al conflicto, para acercarnos al fenómeno desde una perspectiva amplia que tenga en cuenta tanto las redes sociales como las orientaciones individuales. Comprobaremos la validez de estos indicadores, recurriendo a variables que miden otros rasgos de la personalidad. A continuación comprobaremos su relación con la escala de preferencias sobre los procesos políticos, la coherencia de nuestros datos con el modelo de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse y finalmente su articulación con las variables sobre participación.

5.3. La heterogeneidad de las redes sociales y la aversión al conflicto

En su trabajo, Hibbing y Theiss-Morse miden la aversión al conflicto con una sola pregunta que se convierte en determinante en su modelo para medir las preferencias de la ciudadanía hacia los procesos políticos⁶³. En el cuestionario replicamos esa misma pregunta: «Se siente incómodo/a cuando la gente discute sobre política»⁶⁴. Según las respuestas, en el caso español encontramos mayor aversión al conflicto: en Estados Unidos un 26 por ciento de la gente entrevistada contestó que se sentía incómoda o muy incómoda, mientras que en España ese porcentaje asciende al 45,4 por ciento⁶⁵. En principio, este resultado es coherente con las tesis de estos autores puesto que, como hemos visto en el capítulo 2, en España también es más elevado el índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa.

En este apartado vamos a analizar más detenidamente esta relación. Con esta finalidad, la encuesta contenía dos baterías de preguntas que permiten medir la aversión al conflicto de dos formas diferentes. La primera batería nos permite analizar las redes sociales del entrevistado, al plantearle con qué frecuencia habla con personas de ideas muy diferentes a las suyas sobre aborto, inmigración, economía y temas políticos en general⁶⁶. Esta frecuencia en el establecimiento de conversaciones que entrañan el riesgo de contener enfrentamientos no está midiendo la actitud sino el comportamiento. Así, estas preguntas indicarían más bien la homogeneidad o heterogeneidad de las redes de discusión, lo que a su vez nos puede orientar sobre si la ausencia de contactos con personas de ideas diferentes implica cierto grado de aversión al conflicto y, en consecuencia, provoca que esas personas prefieran procesos donde no tengan que participar, para evitar situaciones indeseadas.

Como muestra el gráfico 5.2, solo en el tema del aborto predominan quienes *no* han hablado sobre ello con gente de ideas diferentes (un 60 por ciento no lo ha hecho nunca o raramente). En

⁶³ Se pedía a los encuestados que indicaran si estaban muy de acuerdo, de acuerdo, en desacuerdo o muy en desacuerdo con el siguiente ítem: «When people argue about political issues, you feel uneasy and uncomfortable».

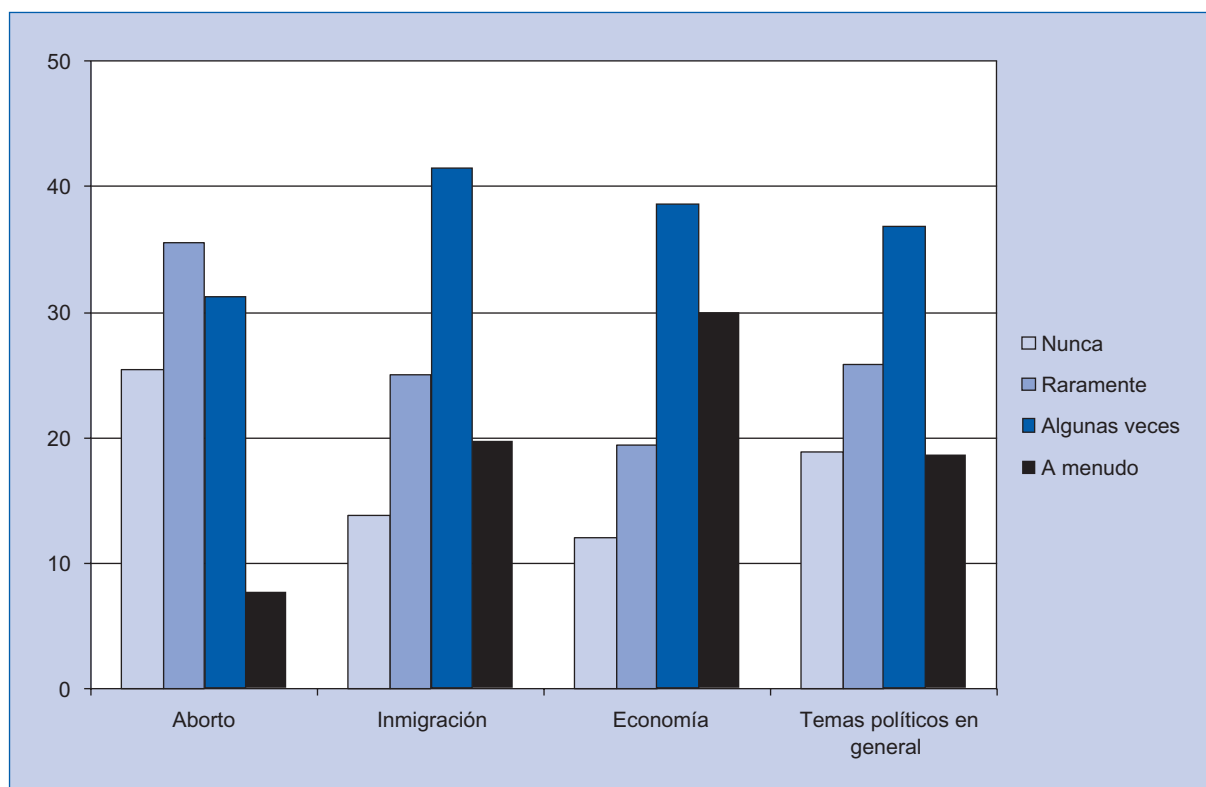
⁶⁴ Véase la pregunta 23d del cuestionario en el anexo.

⁶⁵ N = 2.349; tasa de no respuesta del 4,3 por ciento.

⁶⁶ Pregunta 35 del cuestionario, en el anexo (tasa de no respuesta del 1,3 por ciento o inferior para todos los indicadores).

el resto de temas predominan quienes hablan a menudo o algunas veces con gente de opiniones diferentes: sobre temas políticos en general, un 55,4 por ciento; sobre inmigración, un 61,2 por ciento y sobre economía, un 68,6 por ciento.

Gráfico 5.2. Frecuencia de conversaciones con gente de ideas contrarias según diversos temas



N = 2.421, 2.428, 2.423, 2.421.

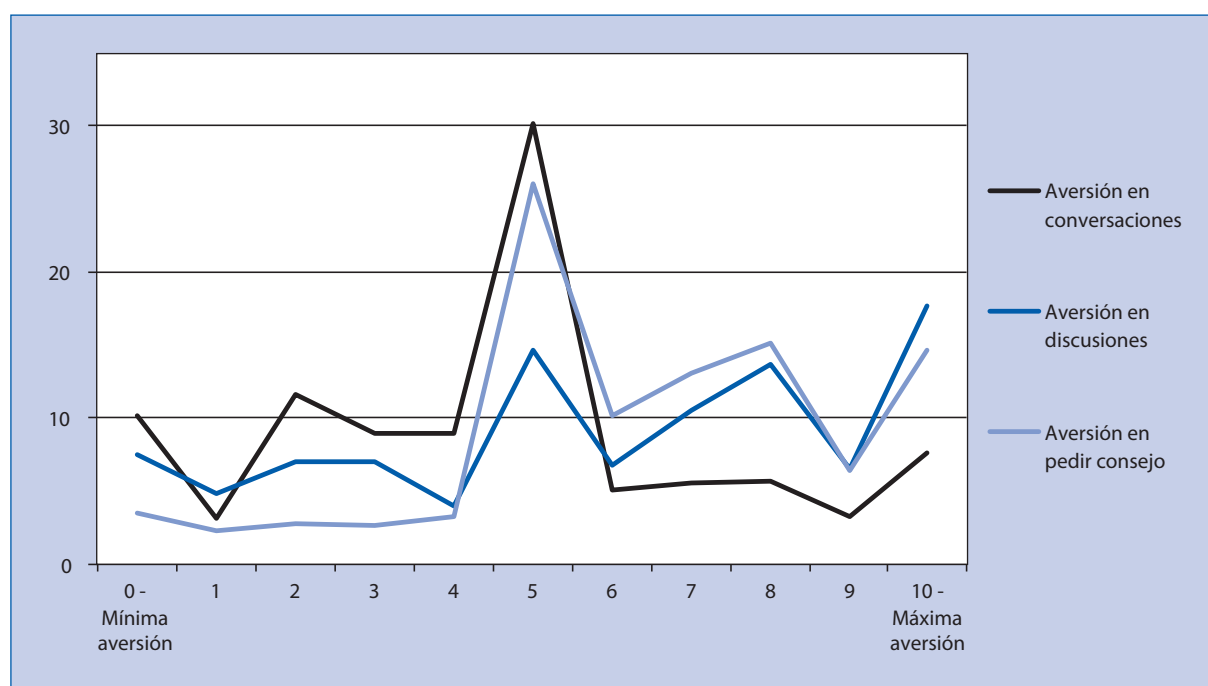
Fuente: CIS 2860.

La segunda batería de preguntas, que nos permite medir de forma más directa la aversión al conflicto, se centra en tres frases diferentes, en las que la persona entrevistada puntúa entre 0 y 10 según si las frases no le describen en absoluto o le describen perfectamente. La primera frase plantea si prefiere las conversaciones entre personas que tienen opiniones muy diferentes sobre un tema; la segunda si se siente incómodo cuando la gente discute acaloradamente para defender su punto de vista; mientras que la tercera indaga en si prefiere pedir consejo a personas que comparten sus mismas ideas⁶⁷. De este modo, podemos obtener una fotografía que enfoca diferentes aspectos de la aversión al conflicto, reflejando varios rasgos de esta actitud.

⁶⁷ Véase la pregunta 36 del cuestionario, en el anexo. Las tasas de no respuesta son del 7,1, 5,0 y 8,8 por ciento, respectivamente.

En base a estas tres escalas, podemos establecer tres indicadores sobre el grado de aversión al conflicto en relación a las conversaciones, las discusiones y pedir consejo, cuyas distribuciones se plasman en el gráfico 5.3⁶⁸. Como vemos, la máxima aversión radica en las preferencias hacia pedir consejo a personas con opiniones diferentes, donde un 59,3 por ciento se muestra reacio, un 26,1 por ciento se sitúa en el punto medio y tan solo un 14,5 por ciento no muestra inconvenientes (media de 6,37). Esta mayor aversión puede tener relación con el hecho de que este tipo de comportamiento se relaciona con aspectos del ámbito íntimo o personal. En relación a las discusiones la aversión es algo menor, un 55 por ciento de la gente puntúa entre 6 y 10 en la escala (la media se sitúa en el 5,87). En cambio, en cuanto a las conversaciones la mayoría de la gente no siente aversión (la media es de 4,59).

Gráfico 5.3. Distribución de los indicadores de aversión al conflicto en conversaciones, discusiones y al pedir consejo



N = 2.238, 2.332, 2.279.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

En conjunto, por tanto, en este apartado utilizaremos 8 ítems del cuestionario: la pregunta utilizada en *Stealth Democracy* para medir aversión (el grado de incomodidad ante las discusiones políticas), los cuatro ítems que miden la frecuencia de las conversaciones con personas que piensan diferente y los tres ítems que miden aversión en conversaciones, discusiones y a la hora de

⁶⁸ Es probable que, tal y como sucede en otras escalas, las elevadas concentraciones de respuestas en el punto medio del continuo (5) estén reflejando cierta indefinición.

pedir consejo. Para comprobar que todas estas variables están midiendo realmente aversión (o al menos algo parecido), calculamos las correlaciones entre ellas y, efectivamente, todas correlacionan positivamente y de manera estadísticamente significativa.

Los ítems referidos a la frecuencia de las conversaciones sobre diferentes temas correlacionan bastante entre sí (correlaciones entre 0,40 y 0,66), arrojando un alfa de Cronbach de 0,83. Es decir, quienes suelen hablar con gente de ideas contrarias en un tema, también frecuentan estas conversaciones en los demás asuntos, y viceversa. En cambio, las correlaciones de estos ítems con el grado de incomodidad ante las discusiones son muy bajas (inferiores a 0,1) y moderadas con los otros ítems de aversión (entre 0,12 y 0,37). En resumen, esta batería no está midiendo exactamente aversión, como sospechábamos, pero sí nos proporciona información oportuna y muy relacionada sobre la heterogeneidad de las redes habituales de la ciudadanía.

Los 4 ítems referidos a la frecuencia de las conversaciones con personas de ideas diferentes constituyen una batería de preguntas cohesionada, con un alfa de Cronbach de 0,83. Mediante un análisis factorial, todos los ítems se agrupan en un único componente, con cargas elevadas en la misma dirección, y construyendo un indicador único que explica el 65,71 por ciento de la varianza. Utilizaremos la variable resultante, que llamaremos heterogeneidad de las redes sociales, para medir la relación entre la frecuencia de las conversaciones con las preferencias hacia procesos más o menos participativos⁶⁹.

Considerados en su conjunto, estos 8 ítems proporcionan información muy completa sobre la aversión al conflicto y el contexto de las relaciones sociales de la gente entrevistada. Al realizar un análisis factorial las variables se agrupan de una forma bastante coherente, con los cuatro ítems referentes a la frecuencia de las conversaciones con gente que piensa de forma distinta cargando en el primer factor y el resto en el segundo (excepto el ítem que mide la aversión en conversaciones, que carga en ambos factores). No obstante, la escala resultante no resulta fiable, con un alfa de Cronbach extremadamente bajo (0,02)⁷⁰. En consecuencia, el análisis de la relación entre estos ítems con las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos se realiza de forma desagregada en la próxima sección.

⁶⁹ En cuanto a los ítems para medir aversión en diversos ámbitos, las relaciones son más complejas. Las correlaciones entre la aversión en conversaciones, discusiones y a la hora de pedir consejo con la pregunta sobre si se siente incomodidad cuando la gente discute sobre política son de 0,12, 0,37 y 0,13 respectivamente. Por otro lado, quienes muestran más aversión a pedir consejo a personas de ideas diferentes también presentan actitudes desfavorables ante las conversaciones con ese tipo de gente y se incomodan con las discusiones (correlaciones de 0,12 y 0,24). Finalmente, la correlación más baja (0,09) se produce entre la aversión en conversaciones y discusiones, reflejando que se puede sentir mucha incomodidad cuando se discute acaloradamente, pero no tener problemas en conversar con personas de ideas diferentes.

⁷⁰ Asimismo, eliminando uno o varios ítems, el análisis de fiabilidad sigue siendo insuficiente. Tampoco es posible construir una escala con las variables que miden aversión en conversaciones, discusiones y en el hecho de pedir consejo (el alfa de Cronbach en este caso es de 0,04).

5.4. La aversión al conflicto como inhibidora de participación

¿Qué relación hay entre la aversión al conflicto y las preferencias hacia procesos más participativos o representativos? ¿Es cierto, como afirman Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, que la aversión al conflicto es un factor determinante a la hora de estructurar las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos?

Si fuera así, la relación entre la aversión y la escala de preferencias políticas debería ser elevada. Los datos muestran que en todos los casos la correlación es positiva; es decir, que a mayor aversión, mayores preferencias hacia procesos donde sean los políticos quienes tomen las decisiones. No obstante, la mayoría de las correlaciones no son estadísticamente significativas. Las dos correlaciones que sí lo son, la aversión a las conversaciones y la aversión a las discusiones, son extremadamente débiles (0,05 y 0,03, respectivamente), por lo que no se puede considerar que haya una relación clara (y mucho menos que la aversión sea un factor explicativo decisivo). Respecto al ítem que utilizaban Hibbing y Theiss-Morse como determinante en su estudio (la aversión a las discusiones políticas), en el caso español muestra una desconexión con las preferencias hacia procesos más o menos participativos⁷¹.

Tras observar el comportamiento de estas variables y su débil relación con las escalas de preferencias de procesos más o menos participativos, cabe preguntarnos qué papel juega en realidad la aversión al conflicto en la explicación del apoyo al modelo de democracia sigilosa: las correlaciones entre el índice que proponen estos autores para medir el apoyo a la democracia sigilosa con cada una de las variables utilizadas para medir la aversión al conflicto resultan muy débiles (entre 0,00 y 0,06), con la excepción de la aversión a las discusiones sobre política (0,14), que sí es estadísticamente significativa para $p < 0,01$. De nuevo, si según estos autores la aversión al conflicto es una condición suficiente para desear una democracia sigilosa, esa correlación debería ser mucho mayor.

Lo que hay detrás de la debilidad en la relación entre aversión al conflicto y apoyo a la democracia sigilosa se puede ver con el siguiente análisis, diferenciando entre quienes muestran máxima y mínima aversión en algunos ítems. Si nos fijamos en quienes se sienten más incómodos cuando la gente discute acaloradamente de política —es decir, quienes contestan «muy de acuerdo»—, observamos que un 90,9 por ciento puntúa en los valores más altos del índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa (puntuaciones de 2 y 3). En contraste, entre los menos incómodos ante las discusiones —quienes contestan «muy en desacuerdo»—, un 79,6 por ciento también se ubica en las puntuaciones más

⁷¹ Para profundizar nuestros análisis sobre las actitudes y comportamientos temáticamente específicos, y para extender las investigaciones sobre *issue publics*, analizamos también las relaciones entre las preferencias sobre procesos políticos y la frecuencia de las conversaciones con personas con ideas diferentes sobre los tres temas. En cuanto a la temática de las conversaciones, la frecuencia en que se conversa con gente de ideas distintas sobre el aborto, la inmigración y la economía no comporta preferencias diferentes hacia procesos más o menos participativos en cada uno de esos temas concretos.

altas del índice de democracia sigilosa⁷². En resumen, observamos cierta relación entre la aversión al conflicto y la preferencia hacia los procesos democráticos (a mayor aversión, más apoyo tanto a procesos donde los políticos tomen las decisiones como al índice de democracia sigilosa de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse), pero esta relación es muy débil. La aversión al conflicto influye, pero cuenta poco a la hora de estructurar las preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones.

Ahora bien, si la aversión al conflicto no tiene una influencia fundamental sobre las preferencias hacia los procesos más o menos participativos, ¿tampoco la tiene hacia la participación efectiva? En otras palabras, ¿las personas que expresan una mayor aversión al conflicto son menos participativas, independientemente del tipo de proceso democrático que prefieran? Las correlaciones entre estas variables de aversión al conflicto con las variables referentes a la participación que vimos en el capítulo 4 (asociacionismo, nivel de participación y satisfacción con la participación) muestran que, en efecto, existe una relación estadísticamente significativa entre la gran mayoría. La gente que tiene mayor aversión al conflicto está menos asociada, participa menos y, entre quienes han participado, muestran mayor insatisfacción con la participación⁷³. Estas correlaciones son más elevadas cuando nos fijamos en el indicador construido a partir de los ítems que miden la frecuencia de las conversaciones con gente de opiniones diferentes (van de 0,26 a 0,41). En contraste, el indicador que mide la aversión a la hora de pedir consejo a personas con opiniones distintas no correlaciona con la participación.

Estos resultados nos indican que la aversión al conflicto es una actitud a tener en cuenta en los análisis sobre participación ciudadana. No obstante, su efecto —al menos en España— no es muy grande en las preferencias hacia procesos más o menos participativos. En cambio, influye en un grado mayor en cuanto desmotivadora de la participación efectiva. En otras palabras, la aversión al conflicto conlleva una menor participación política real, pero no una preferencia hacia procesos donde sean los políticos y no la ciudadanía quienes tomen las decisiones.

5.5. Conclusiones

En este capítulo hemos profundizado en dos aspectos centrales para explicar las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos, como son la percepción de que existe consenso político en la socie-

⁷² Sucede algo muy similar respecto a la frecuencia de las conversaciones. Por ejemplo, el 88,6 por ciento de quienes nunca hablan de temas políticos con gente de ideas contrarias puntúan alto en la escala de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, mientras que también obtienen altas puntuaciones el 79,6 por ciento de quienes hablan a menudo. Finalmente, con los otros ítems que miden aversión ocurre el mismo fenómeno o ni tan solo conllevan diferencias: entre quienes muestran una aversión baja en conversaciones (puntúan entre 0 y 4 en una escala que va hasta 10), un 83,7 por ciento puntúa alto en el índice de apoyo a la democracia invisible; mientras que entre quienes muestran una aversión más alta (puntúan entre 6 y 10 en ese ítem), también un 83,7 por ciento obtiene valores más altos en el índice de estos autores.

⁷³ Dentro de los ítems a partir de los cuales hemos construido el indicador de la satisfacción con la participación, las mayores correlaciones se dan entre las variables de aversión con la importancia del tema, los conflictos interpersonales surgidos, el sentirse mejor con uno mismo y el sentirse bien con otras personas. Las correlaciones son prácticamente inexistentes con la percepción de que no sirvió para nada la participación o la sensación de que se perdió el tiempo.

dad y la aversión al conflicto. La motivación original para analizar la influencia de estos factores radicaba en la importancia que Hibbing y Theiss-Morse les atribuían para determinar las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos. La percepción de que no existe ninguna disputa política o el rechazo a verse implicado representarían puntos de partida suficientes para que se opte por procesos donde no haya participación ciudadana, ya sea por innecesaria o indeseada. Sin embargo, los resultados obtenidos ponen en cuestión la centralidad de estos factores.

A nivel teórico, este capítulo arroja dos conclusiones notables. Primero, tal y como postulaban Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, y como también sugieren investigaciones recientes sobre las «acciones correctivas» (Rojas, 2010), hemos constatado que la percepción de un consenso ideológico orienta las preferencias hacia procesos políticos del lado *representativo*. Esta relación no surge solo en relación a los procesos genéricos, sino también se extiende a las preferencias sobre cómo se deberían tomar las decisiones sobre el aborto, la inmigración y la economía. En cambio, quienes perciben que el público español es «hostil» a su ideología prefieren en mayor medida que sea la ciudadanía quien tome las decisiones.

El segundo hallazgo con notables implicaciones está relacionado con la aversión al conflicto. Si bien Hibbing y Theiss-Morse la consideran como un elemento central para preferir procesos políticos donde la ciudadanía no tenga que participar, en el caso español hemos comprobado que esta relación es muy débil. Aunque, en general, las personas que muestran niveles más elevados de aversión tienden a preferir procesos que impliquen una menor participación, esta relación es mínima y en varios casos poco consistente. Hemos comprobado que la aversión al conflicto está más relacionada con la actividad participativa que con las preferencias hacia unos procesos más o menos participativos. Estos hallazgos podrían estar relacionados con la mayor aversión al conflicto en España que en Estados Unidos, y deberían ser analizados en mayor profundidad en futuras investigaciones sobre las preferencias y comportamientos políticos de los españoles.

En síntesis, en este capítulo hemos comprobado que, efectivamente, la percepción del consenso y la aversión al conflicto juegan un papel desde dos puntos de vista opuestos (la visión del acuerdo y de la confrontación) pero, a la vez, su papel es limitado y —en consecuencia— no podemos considerar estos factores como elementos suficientes para configurar esas preferencias.

Metodológicamente, este capítulo sugiere que el cuestionario del estudio 2860 del CIS ofrece la posibilidad de analizar en profundidad la aversión al conflicto, teniendo en cuenta tanto factores psicológicos individuales como elementos contextuales asociados a las redes sociales. En base a estos indicadores de aversión al conflicto, hemos comprobado que, si bien esta influye de forma modesta sobre las preferencias políticas (unos ítems más que otros), afecta en mayor grado a la participación (tal y como sugiere la literatura).

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What Governments Do

Chapter 3

4



Institutional Participatory Initiatives and Democratic Qualities

Donatella della Porta, Herbert Reiter and Pau Alarcón

The beginning of the new millennium saw the rise of various movements in Florence mobilizing for (among other things) new ways of democratic participation, partly in open disagreement with the Democrats of the Left (DS), the main centre-left party in government at the local level (which shortly, along with reformist Catholic forces, would form the Democratic Party). The appearance of new participatory mechanisms explained in chapter 3 had a clear expression in this city: approximately fifty citizens' committees sprang up, some of the most active ones in Oltrarno, a part of the city on the left side of the Arno river increasingly affected by the transformations in mass tourism that for years had had a profound impact on the rest of the historical city centre. These citizens' committees promoted the "Stati generali dell'Oltrarno", a self-organised and mostly self-financed participatory process aimed at providing solutions to the various problems of everyday life in the area, ranging from traffic congestion to the use of public spaces to culture and leisure opportunities. Using both innovative (website, online questionnaire) and traditional (citizen assemblies, working groups) methods, the organisers from autumn 2002 to the summer of 2003 managed to involve approximately two thousand citizens. The process was aimed at individual and not organizational involvement. As some of the organisers stated in the press,¹ the objective was to construct a model similar to a social forum. This, however, provoked disinterest and even hostility in organised stakeholders. In addition, although the Oltrarno section of the DS was figured as one of the organisers, the city government also maintained a disinterested attitude. Institutional politics in particular pointed at dwindling participation which became evident in the final assembly for which only eighty people showed up (i.e., fewer than the 130 who had signed up for participation in the working groups²). The

seventy-two proposals voted on by the final assembly, whose realization was supposed to be negotiated with the city government by an ad hoc association constituted on the same occasion, remained a dead letter.

The impact of the social forum process, already visible with the “*Stati generali dell’Oltrarno*”, was more direct with the “*Forum per Firenze*”, which aimed at developing, in view of the coming local elections in 2004, a project for the city “from below”, aggregating the political energies and the social conscience rekindled with the Florence European Social Forum in November 2002. In this largely self-financed, “bottom-up” participatory process, the local social forum worked together with the LABDEM (Laboratorio per la democrazia, an association emerging from the “movement of the professors” that in early 2002 had organised anti-Berlusconi protests criticizing the opposition tactics of the main centre-left forces as weak and ineffective), Aprile (a left current within the Democrats of the Left) and Arci (the cultural and recreational association formerly linked to the Italian communist party). About twenty-five movements and networks participated in the project, among them the main centre-left and left parties that distinguished themselves, however, for their low profile and disinterested attitudes. After an initial phase of constituent assemblies from October 2003 to February 2004, working groups were formed to provide shared solutions on single issues, later published in a document entitled “*Through Citizen Participation: The Project of the City We Want*”. When neither the centre-left parties nor the mayor and the city government showed any interest in the project, the “*Forum for Florence*” split over the course to take regarding the upcoming local elections. Some forum members, together with the communist party, Rifondazione, presented an independent list in the local elections in June 2004, which gained 12.3 percent of the vote, forcing the DS mayor into a run-off election.

Notwithstanding the distance and the doubt maintained by the mayor towards pressure for participation “from below”, after his reelection he created an assessorship for democratic participation within the city government and conducted as a first participatory process a consultation on his program for the years 2004–2009. In a certain way, it was a counterproject to the “*Forum for Florence*”; even the slogan used for the flyers (“*Florence will be the city we want*”) was a participatory process to be used within the “*Piano strutturale*” (long-term city planning). In eight months, starting in April 2005, this process led to fifty-four meetings, five information points, 4,021 participants, 729 persons were accredited by the administration, 823 interventions and 186 written contributions.³ The “*Piano strutturale*”, however, had already passed through a long period of traditional consultation with stakeholders, and a final version had already been approved. The participatory process was inserted in a phase anticipated by regional law 1/2005, in which further observations could be made by citizens, associations and stakeholders and to which the city government had to provide a response. From the very beginning, critics pointed to the difficulty of making any significant changes to the plan at this stage. Some participants even accused

the city government of being indifferent, incompetent or manipulative; concrete accusations went from falsifying the minutes of meetings to the appointment of facilitators on the basis of their political beliefs.

This brief account of some of the most visible and contested moments of experimentation with participatory processes in the city of Florence—reconstructed through a web-mining strategy—well illustrates some of the main hopes and disappointments that often develop around such attempts. These processes also show the different (real or assumed) motives of the various actors involved, as well as the special challenges resulting from the paradox that these processes are both responses to perceived declining trust in government, but at the same time require that trust in order to be successful. The episodes finally point to the different qualities that must be present—at least to some extent—in order for participatory mechanisms to work: significant participation by citizens, real deliberation through open debates and some degree of empowerment as indicated by real consideration for the decisions made through the process.

All these issues are central concerns in this chapter, which aims at describing the multiple characteristics and varying qualities of what we have subsumed under the definition of institutional mechanisms of participatory democracy. In particular, we shall use indicators for what we consider to be three important qualities of these mechanisms, not all easy to maximise at the same time: participation (not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of equal access), deliberation (as high quality discussion) and empowerment (as degree of integration of these institutions in public decision-making). In addition to describing the distribution of the institutional mechanisms based on these indicators, we will also look at the role of available resources, the institutional design adopted, and the actors involved.

One of the main conclusions of this chapter is that mechanisms of participation vary greatly and can have extremely different qualities. Research on co-management in public policies at the national and, especially, local levels has found, if not a change in paradigm, at least experimentation with institutional models with different bases of legitimacy through the incorporation of different perspectives. Although participatory decision-making processes continue to be more the exception than the rule (Font 2003, 14; see also Akkerman, Hajer and Grin 2004), they are growing in use (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker 2001) and are a topic of continuing interest. Within the framework of “governing with the people”, experiments in deliberative and participatory democracy have developed with the claim of increasing the participation of citizens, creating high-quality communicative arenas and empowering citizens. The adopted formulas, however, vary in format and democratic quality. In a study commissioned by the OECD, Shand and Arnberg (1996) propose a continuum of participation from minimal involvement to community control through regular referenda, with intermediary techniques such as consultation, partnership and delegation (in which control over developing policy options is handed to a board of community representatives within a

framework specified by the government). Similarly, Bishop and Davis (2002) distinguish between consultation, partnership and control. Consultation practices include interest group meetings, public meetings, discussion papers and public hearings; partnership includes advisory boards, citizens' advisory committees, policy community forums and public inquiries; controls include referenda, "community parliaments" and electronic voting. We might add participatory budgets as instances of the control type of participation. One could also distinguish, with Graham Smith (2009), two main institutional formulas: first, an assembly-based model, and the second oriented to the construction of "mini-publics", usually selected by lottery (Smith 2009). For both types, research has often been concerned with "best practices", focusing on only the most successful examples.

As far as the *assembly-based model* is concerned, institutions of participatory democracy such as neighbourhood or thematic assemblies, neighbourhood councils or consultation committees now form part of local government in most democratic countries. In addition, user representatives are often admitted to the institutions that govern schools or other public services, which sometimes are even handed to citizens' groups to manage. The participatory budget process in Porto Alegre, a Brazilian city of 1,360,000 inhabitants, has attracted particular interest, including at the institutional level. Over this long-term experiment, the participatory budget acquired an articulated and complex structure, oriented to achieving three main objectives: social equality, citizen "empowerment" and better governance. A fundamental criterion in the distribution of public funds has become, in fact, the level of privation of services and well-being in different neighbourhoods. The organisation of the process was oriented to controlling the limits of assemblies, in particular in terms of the possibility they give to minorities to block decisions, without renouncing the advantages of direct democracy. Recognising its success, the United Nations has defined the participatory budget process as one of the forty "best practices" at a global level (Allegratti 2003, 173).

As for the "*mini-publics*" model, from the beginning of the 1970s the idea of drawing lots as a democratic method for choosing representatives was implemented in *citizens' juries* that emerged in Germany and the United States: small groups of citizens, drawn from population registers, met to express their opinion regarding certain policy decisions (Dienel 1978). Similarly, in Denmark, beginning in the 1980s, *consensus conferences* (also composed of citizens selected at random) were established to discuss controversial issues, including those with high technical content. These are in part similar to the *deliberative poll* model, which is based on informed deliberation among citizens selected randomly to reflect certain social characteristics of the broader population (Fishkin 1997; Sintomer 2011). While traditional surveys follow the logic of aggregation of individual preferences, deliberative surveys—which may involve hundreds of people—attempt to model "what the public *would* think, had it a better opportunity to consider the question at issue" (Fishkin 1997, 162).

Both types, assembly-based and “mini-public” mechanisms, have proliferated at the national and, above all, the local level, but they have also been mixed with a third, more traditional form of citizen or stakeholder consultation, “interactive policy-making”, commonly used in strategic planning, Agenda 21, urban planning, and so on. The “interactive policymaking” process is defined as the “political practices that involve consultation, negotiation and/or deliberation between government, associations from civil society and individual citizens” (Akkerman, Hajer and Grin 2004, 83; see also Akkerman 2001).⁴

All these forms of institutional participation will be analysed in this chapter, sometimes in a more pure form, sometimes as part of a process based on a mix of forms. We shall, in fact, note that the intensity of participation, the quality of deliberation and the degree of empowerment vary greatly between the different participatory devices, as do the objectives pursued: we find intertwined to different degrees the objective of improving managerial capacities through greater transparency and the circulation of information, with that of transforming social relations, reconstructing social capital, solidarity and trust and, from a political perspective, “democratising democracy” (Bacqué, Rey and Sintomer 2005).

In what follows, we shall develop some new knowledge, especially on the variety of institutional participatory mechanisms that have developed at the local (or, in a few cases, regional) level in two European countries, Italy and Spain. We shall refer here to data collected mainly through Internet mining in five regions: Tuscany and Apulia in Italy, and Madrid, Catalonia and Andalusia in Spain (on Tuscany, Andalusia and Catalonia, see, respectively, della Porta and Reiter 2009; Font et al. 2011; and Font and Galais 2011).

As mentioned in chapter 1, the main method we used for data collection is “web-content mining”. We have used search words on municipal and other websites to collect information on as many participatory experiments as possible (appendix 1). Previous research reveals the possibility of certain biases in our sources, such as the undersampling of smaller administrative units and the greater presence of more participatory and inclusive types of experiments, if compared with surveys with representatives of municipalities (Galais et al. 2012). Aware of these biases, our aim is not to offer a complete picture of the participatory universe in the five sampled regions but rather to collect information on a large and diverse number of experiments, in order to look at their general characteristics as well as the main motivations behind them. Surely, the large-N data-mining strategy used does not allow for a rich understanding of all the details of each of the processes analysed here but has enabled us to measure a few important characteristics of how they developed. One advantage of our source is, however, the presence of qualitative information, which, focusing on the Tuscan case, we will use to illustrate our quantitative results, trying to better understand the basic mechanisms that lay behind observed correlations.

We will look, in particular, at three main qualities of our institutional mechanisms: a participatory quality, linked to their capacity to get citizens involved; a

deliberative quality, linked to their capacity to promote a high-quality discourse; and an empowerment quality—that is, their capacity to impact on decision-making. While we are aware of the difficulties in devising institutional mechanisms that can simultaneously maximise all three qualities (della Porta 2013), our aim is to understand which variables can have an impact on these “qualities”. In particular, based on previous literature, we shall, for each quality, look at the issues at stake as well as the actors involved.

4.1. HOW MUCH PARTICIPATION?

Since resources for collective mobilisation are unequally distributed among social groups, two of the main questions about participatory experiments are their capacity to mobilise and their degree of inclusiveness. Identifying the shift of attention from participation to deliberation as a significant change in the critical project of democratic theory, Emily Hauptmann has noted that “most theorists of deliberative democracy, despite such fundamental criticisms of the participatory view, still insist that deliberation is a kind of participation or somehow essential to it” (2001, 408). Clear tensions can be seen between participatory and deliberative democracy (Held 2006), but attempts to combine them have to be noted. If good deliberation requires inclusiveness, there are two main issues our data must allow us to address. One is the size of the arena: how many citizens have been mobilised? The other is the openness of the arena itself: is it (in principle) open to the participation of all? While normative theorists stress the virtues of participation, empirical research indicates the difficulties these institutional experiments encounter in involving citizens. For instance, according to a survey of sixteen organisations that attempt to foster better public deliberation in local and national communities, “[P]articipation is closely associated with educational level, which in turn is connected to indicators of socio-economic status. Given the selection techniques of these organisations (word of mouth, facilitating meetings at public institutions like libraries or town halls, advertising in local media) it is likely that their reach does not extend much beyond this highly participatory demographic base” (Ryfe 2002, 365). This, in turn, creates problems of legitimacy for these institutional experiments, which risk being characterised not only by low participation but also by the reproduction of the social inequality observed in other forms of political participation (or at least only a partial reduction of it). However, according to other research on different forms of participation, with the exception of groups of the very poor, the social distribution of participants is broad and heterogeneous (Smith 2009, 41 ss.), with, for example, great involvement of the popular classes in the Porto Alegre participatory budget (Gret and Sintomer 2005, 77). In terms of the level and quality of participation, the characteristics of the experiments vary according to different dimensions: “Participation is shaped by the policy problem at hand, the

techniques and resources available and, ultimately, a political judgment about the importance of the issue and the need for public involvement” (Bishop and Davis 2002, 21).

In general, higher numbers of participants are reached in assembly models. Institutional mechanisms inspired by participatory budgeting emphasise the participation of all interested citizens. The Porto Alegre process involved thousands of participants (from slightly more than six hundred individuals in 1998 to seventeen thousand in 2002 in the largest round of assemblies; see Fedozzi 2007), combining working groups and assemblies on various thematic policy areas and territorial subareas of the metropolitan city. Various rules are aimed at increasing active participation, among them a rigorously kept equal turn in speaking, the election of delegates in proportion to the number of participants in public assemblies and a fixed annual agenda of the main assemblies. The participatory budget model stresses participation of all citizens affected by budgetary decisions. Citizens are pushed to mobilise their neighbours, “because the more people that go to the meetings, the more likely they will be able to win the prioritizing vote that determines which neighbourhoods will benefit first” (Abers 2003, 206). The administration also provides various incentives to participate. For instance, it “hired activists from neighbourhood movements to help organize the process” by calling meetings, “(visiting) neighbourhoods that had not yet participated” or “(seeking) out potential leaders and (helping) them organize from scratch” (205). In Porto Alegre, and similarly in Kerala (India), this brought about high rates of participation by poorer, less educated citizens and particularly women.

In contrast, for “mini-public” experiences such as deliberative polls, inclusiveness refers to the ideal of a broadly representative jury selection that is able to draw on a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. Numbers usually remain quite low in these cases, and invited participants are selected randomly. The rationale is, in fact, more to see how citizens would decide in conditions that allow for an informed discussion. In general, the environment of mini-publics is structured so as to facilitate the voice of and interaction between citizens through independent facilitators (Smith 2009, 83).

Qualitative evidence from our cases, however, complicates the picture. Participatory budgeting—even if open to all—is not always well participated. For instance, in Saione—an administrative district of the Tuscan city Arezzo with ca. 28,500 inhabitants (out of a city total of 98,017)—the centre-left administration of the district together with members of the local social forum initiated participatory budgeting in open conflict with the centre-right city administration. In 2006 the Saione participatory budget process involved the participation of 331 citizens, with weak participation of the young, women and immigrants. The following year, participation rose slightly, to 370, with, however, the problem of representativity remaining all but unchanged. Moreover, among our cases, we also found participatory processes following a mini public model in which participants were

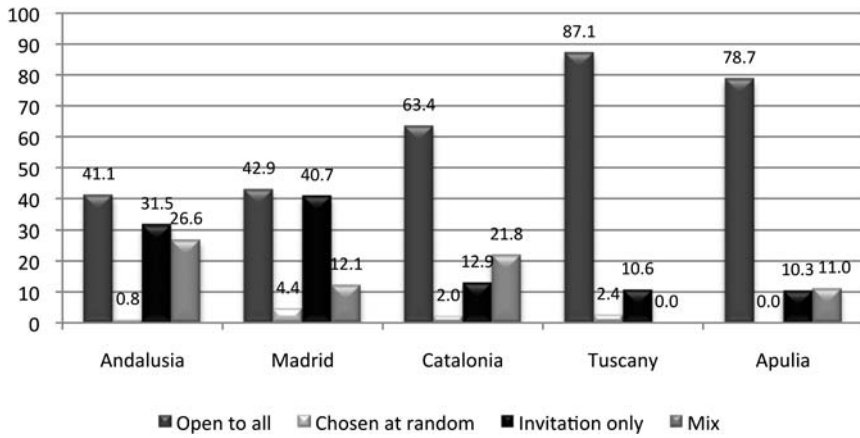
not randomly selected. In such cases, problems of representativity can arise, in particular for processes combining participation open to all interested citizens with the participation of institutional actors “by right” and the invitation of stakeholders. The workshops of the Agenda 21 of the Florentine area, for instance, were dominated by representatives of local administrations with organised groups of “normal citizens” counting for only 10–15 percent of the participants.

A problem of representativity can also arise for participatory processes following a model of open inscription of participants, in particular if the organisers declare the objective of an extension and diversification of participation. This was the case for the Electronic Town Meeting organised by the region Tuscany as the central participatory event of the process leading to the law on participation. Participants were representative for the Tuscan population as far as gender was concerned, but they were younger, better educated, more interested in politics, more to the left and had more experience in prior participatory processes than the general population (Cellini, Freschi and Mete 2007).

While on the basis of the quantitative dataset we could not check the social inclusivity of the surveyed processes, our codebook included a series of indicators of participation, that we could indeed find in our sources, such as the degree of formal openness of the arena to citizens, the number of participants, the types of participants and the proclaimed aims of the arena. As we are going to see, these indicators show significant attention to citizen participation but also the hybridization of assembly-based models with an interest in the participation of organised groups.

4.1.1. Criteria of Selection of Participants

Institutional participatory mechanisms vary in the criteria for selecting participants, in part reflecting the classification we mentioned in the previous section: as in the assembly-based model, they may foresee all-inclusive arenas, open to all those who want to participate; or, as in the mini-publics, the administration may select the participants at random; or, in an associational perspective, it can invite representatives of specific groups or organizations (Ganuza and Francés 2012b, 2013). As we can see in graph 4.1,⁵ participation open to everyone is the most widespread formula in our cases, while only on rare occasions are participants chosen at random, following a mini public model. Participation by invitation is also common, following a model of participation by stakeholders, or at least relevant local groups and organizations. The assembly-based model, open to all, is especially widespread in Tuscany and Apulia, followed by Catalonia. Participation by invitation scores (considerably) above average in Madrid and Andalusia, while mixed methods are a bit more present in Andalusia and Catalonia. In general, we see a larger diversification of selection methods in the Spanish regions, while for the Italian regions the assembly-based model emerges as clearly dominant.⁶



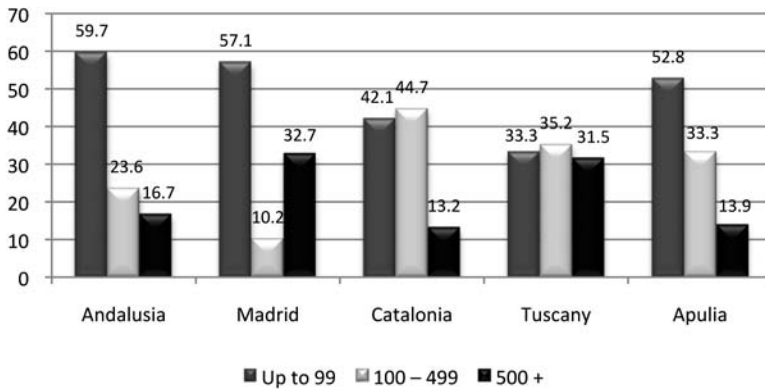
Graph 4.1. Method of participants' selection by regions (%) (Cramer's V .25***). Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011). N = 124 (Andalusia), 91 (Madrid), 108 (Catalonia), 85 (Tuscany), 136 (Apulia).

4.1.2. Number of Participants

Institutional participatory mechanisms vary as far as the number of participants is concerned. In our cases, experiments that involve less than twenty-five participants or more than one thousand are rare, while medium-size arenas are more widespread. Differences between the regions are, however, quite significant (graph 4.2). Small arenas are overrepresented in Andalusia, Apulia and Madrid (the region with the highest percentage for invitation as a selection criteria). Medium-size arenas are especially overrepresented in Catalonia and in Tuscany and slightly above average in Apulia, in other words, in regions that frequently used open participation. Very large numbers of participants emerged in Tuscany, as this region promoted some of the experiments that involved the most participants, and in metropolitan Madrid.

Although we concentrate here on overall numbers of participants, we also have to consider that participation numbers can show considerable variation over time. In both of the Florentine large arena participation processes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—the “bottom-up” “Stati generali dell’Oltrarno” and the “top-down” “Piano strutturale”—participation declined more or less continuously over time. A similar phenomenon can also be observed for small-arena participation processes, for instance, the urban planning workshops concerning the Piazza Bovio in Piombino (Tuscany).

Moreover, the number of participants should be seen in relation to the number of inhabitants of the respective municipalities. If we consider the percentage of the population mobilised, participation in the Florentine “Piano strutturale”



Graph 4.2. Number of participants by regions (%) (Cramer's V .23***).
 Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011). $N = 72$
 (Andalusia), 49 (Madrid), 76 (Catalonia), 54 (Tuscany), 36 (Apulia).

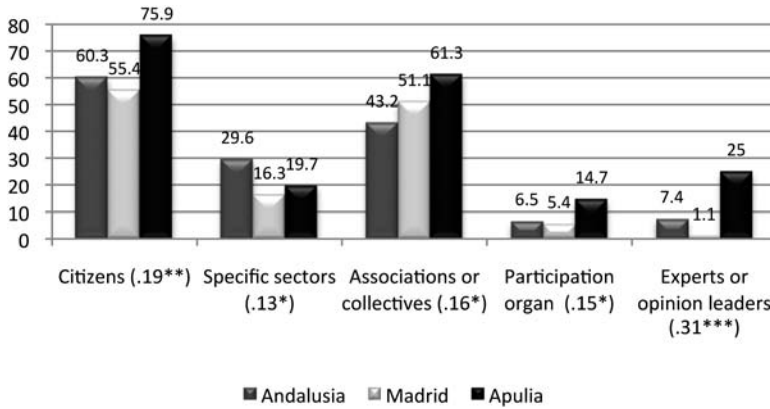
process with four thousand participants was lower than participation in the Saione participatory budget with 370 participants (representing 1.1 percent and 1.3 percent of the population, respectively). In fact, the number of participants shows a strong correlation with the number of inhabitants (Cramer's V .26***), and 71.7 percent of the participatory processes with five hundred or more participants were conducted in municipalities with more than fifty thousand inhabitants.

4.1.3. Main Actors to Which the Experiment Is Directed

A different emphasis is to be noted also in the definition of the main addressees of the institutional participatory mechanisms. In three of our five regions (Andalusia, Madrid and Apulia), we have recorded which actors were foreseen as participants by the administration (graph 4.3). By and large, the general population is the most frequently quoted target, being mentioned in almost 70 percent of the cases—and even more often in the Italian region where approximately three out of four experiments explicitly aimed at mobilizing the citizenry at large. Here, as mentioned, assembly-based (open to all) formulas go together with higher numbers of participants and direct appeals to the population. Regional differences are in fact large and statistically significant (Cramer's V .19**). Specific sectors are, however, also often mentioned: in about 22 percent of the cases and even more in Andalusia (Cramer's V .13*). Associations and other community groups are targeted in more than 50 percent of our cases, and up to 61 percent in Apulia. Apulia also stands out for targeting participatory institutions and experts more than the two Spanish regions.

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Graph 4.3. Actors mentioned as targets to mobilize (% of yes).

***: Sign. 0.01; **: Sign. 0.05; *: Sign. 0.1.

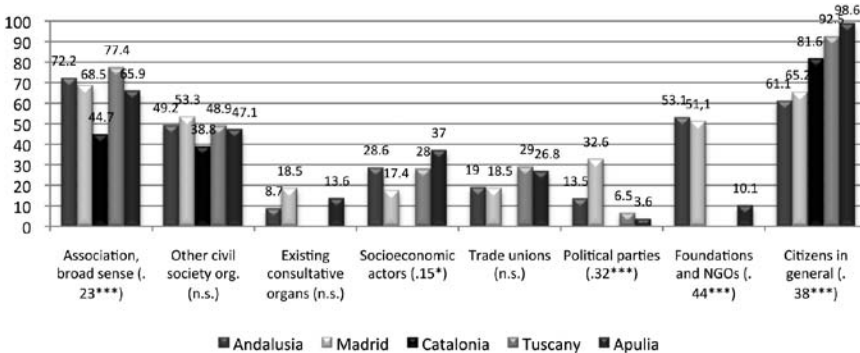
Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011). No. of valid responses are respectively 355 (citizens), 354 (specific actors), 354 (associations or collectives), 352 (participation organ), 350 (experts or opinion leaders).

Looking at the correlations between the different actors targeted, the strong negative ones between citizens on the one side and sectors (Pearson's⁷ $-.57^{***}$) and associations ($-.42^{***}$) on the other stand out. In fact, the targeting of citizens in general does not show a positive correlation with any of the other actors mentioned. While specific sectors show a connection with associations (Pearson's $.23^{***}$), the latter are also connected with experts ($.25^{***}$) and participatory institutions ($.13^*$). These institutions are further correlated with experts, but they show no connection with the targeting of the citizenry in general, and if we select only the Apulian cases we even find a negative correlation (Pearson's $-.20^*$). This means that we find, first of all, a cleavage between those mechanisms that aim at attracting citizens as such and those that, instead, aim at the participation of representatives of aggregated interests. The presence of specific bodies of the public administration does not affect the presence of either one of the two groups—that is, they do not seem to privilege either one of the two models. Rather, they have an effect in terms of involving experts in the process.

4.1.4. Who Did Take Part

A final indicator of participation is to be found in the type of actors that actually took part in the institutional participatory mechanisms (graph 4.4). This information confirms that even though these processes mainly target the general population, they also aim at (and tend to succeed in) involving not only (or mainly) citizens as such but also their organised expressions. This result does not

come as a surprise, given the long tradition of involving organised stakeholders in decision-making, also in the form of consultative bodies. Associations were mentioned as participants in 66 percent of the cases, most often in Tuscany (77.4 percent) and Andalusia (72.2 percent), and least often in Catalonia (44.7 percent) (Cramer's $V .23^{***}$). Also present are other civil society organizations, mentioned in 47.4 percent of the cases, without major differences between the regions. Consultative bodies also frequently took part in the process: in approximately 13 percent of the cases. Unions and organised groups also frequently participated: as to be expected given a longer tradition of involvement of stakeholders in local decision-making in Italy, to a greater extent there than in the Spanish regions. With the exception of Madrid, the participation of political parties as such is generally rare (in about 13 percent of the cases; as a Cramer's $V .32^{***}$ indicates, the correlation is quite strong and statistically significant), in particular in the Italian regions, confirming an often-noted decline in the territorial rootedness of political parties. Reflecting the main purpose of participatory institutional mechanisms—to find a new basis for government legitimacy in the population at large—citizens as such are the dominant actor: being mentioned in 80 percent of the cases—higher in the Italian regions and lower in Andalusia and Madrid (Cramer's $V .38^{***}$). As far as the involvement of administrations other than local government is concerned, Tuscany (59.1 percent) and Apulia (54.5 percent vs. an overall 32.5 percent) stand out, a phenomenon that probably can be explained by the role that both Italian regional administrations assumed as promoters of participatory experiments.



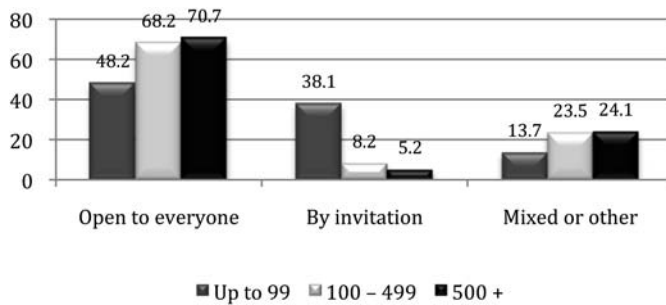
Graph 4.4. Type of participants by regions (% of yes; Cramer's V).

***: Sign. 0.01; *: Sign. 0.1.

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011). No. of valid responses are 552 (associations), 551 (other civil society org.), 350 (existing consultative organs), 449 (socioeconomic actors), 449 (trade unions), 449 (political parties), 356 (foundations and NGOs), 352 (citizens in general).

In addition, there are strong negative correlations between participation of citizens and participation of organizations, be they associations in the broad sense (Pearson's $-.22^{***}$), other civil society organizations ($-.24^{***}$), foundations and NGOs ($-.34^{***}$) or political parties ($-.27^{***}$). This seems to confirm the aforementioned divide between (older) forms of consultation with those who are considered to be representative of stakeholders through organizational delegates, and more innovative ones that bypass delegates and aim at directly involving citizens.

We can add that a rather strong correlation exists between the method of selection of participants and their number. In fact, the cases in which all those who want to can participate are those that tend to attract a higher number of participants: 71 percent of those attracting more than five hundred participants are, in fact, open to everyone (59 percent of the total number of experiments) (graph 4.5). This indeed reveals a certain consistency between the aim and the results in assembly-based formula.



Graph 4.5. Selection method by number of participants in all regions (Cramer's $V .27^{***}$).

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); $N = 282$.

The decision regarding which actors or combination of actors to target can be influenced by the overall objectives of a participatory process. The forum on immigration in the Tuscan city Follonica in an initial phase, when the objectives of the process centred on security and conflict resolution, exclusively targeted immigrants. In a second phase, when the main objective became integration, mobilization efforts were broadened to the general population. We also have to consider that the targeting of a specific actor can be for very different motives. If we take the targeting of citizens in general, motives for doing so can vary from introducing new forms of democracy, furthering social cohesion (the responsabilisation of citizens for the common good), to even making citizens co-responsible

for decisions the local government does not want to take sole responsibility for (see chapter 5).

The definition of who the main targets of institutional participatory mechanisms are impacts in a predictable way both selection method and the number of participants (tables 4.1 and 4.2). Participatory mechanisms mentioning the general population as the predominant target to mobilise are open to the participation of anyone interested and are characterised by larger arenas. Experiments targeting specific sectors or associations or collectives are overrepresented among processes using invitation as a selection method and for smaller arenas.⁸

Turning to the actors actually participating in the experiments confirms this picture (tables 4.3 and 4.4). The participation of the general population is strongly correlated with openness towards the contribution of anyone interested and with larger arenas, whereas the participation of associations or of other agents of civil society shows significantly higher percentages for invitation as a selection method and for smaller arenas.

Table 4.1. Selection Method by Actors Mentioned as Targets to Mobilise in All Regions (Percentage Yes)

Directed at (Cramer's V)	Citizens (.65***)	Specific Sector (.36***)	Associations or Collectives (.33***)	Participatory Institution (n.s.)	Experts or Opinion Leaders (n.s.)
Open to everyone	75.5	26.6	44.3	39.4	50.0
By invitation	5.7	53.2	39.3	33.3	25.0
Mixed or other	18.8	20.3	16.4	27.3	25.0
N	229	79	183	33	44

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

Table 4.2. Number of Participants by Actors Mentioned as Targets to Mobilise in All Regions (Percentage Yes)

Directed at (Cramer's V)	Citizens (.30**)	Specific Sector (.22*)	Associations or Collectives (.34***)	Participatory Institution (n.s.)	Experts or Opinion Leaders (.21*)
Up to 99	44.4	73.9	71.3	53.3	52.6
100–499	27.8	13.0	17.2	26.7	42.1
500+	27.8	13.0	11.5	20.0	5.3
N	90	46	87	15	19

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

Table 4.3. Selection Method by Actors in All Regions (Percentage Yes)

Actors (Cramer's V)	Citizens (.58***)	Associations (.28***)	Other Agents of Civil Society (.32***)
Open to everyone	73.4	53.1	47.0
By invitation	9.5	27.7	32.8
Mixed or other	17.1	19.2	20.2
N	432	354	253

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

Table 4.4. Number of Participants by Actors in All Regions (Percentage Yes)

Actors (Cramer's V)	Citizens (.33***)	Associations (.12 n.s.)	Other Agents of Civil Society (.10 n.s.)
Up to 99	39.8	52.9	53.6
100–499	35.7	27.7	29.0
500+	24.4	19.4	17.4
N	221	191	138

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

Our data for four regions (excluding Catalonia) allow us to go into further detail as far as associations are concerned. Participation by invitation is correlated particularly with foundations/NGOs (Cramer's V .47***), political parties (.38***) and trade unions (.16**) as actors, leading, especially for the first two types of associations, to limited numbers of participants. Notwithstanding the fact that in this case invitation as a selection method is not overrepresented, a limited number of participants is also characteristic of the presence of socioeconomic actors (e.g., trade unions, business associations, etc.) (Cramer's V .17*).

The participation of established associations, be they NGOs, trade unions, political parties or business associations, therefore seems to go hand in hand with restrictions concerning both selection method and number of participants. A different picture emerges for citizen committees (i.e., more informal social movement organizations usually concentrating on conditions affecting a specific neighbourhood) that were only coded for in the two Italian regions. Their participation, even more than the participation of the general population, is correlated with experiments open to anyone interested (88.1 percent yes vs. 84.5 percent) and with larger arenas, seeing the participation of 100 to 499 participants (41.9 percent yes vs. 36.9 percent) or even 500 or more (38.7 percent yes vs. 26.2 percent). In short, the sampled institutional participatory mechanisms tend to follow an assembly-based conception: participation tends to be open to all citizens, it develops within spaces characterised by medium-sized or (more rarely) large numbers of participants, and citizens in general are mentioned as the main group

to mobilise, and indeed are the major participants in these institutional mechanisms. There are some regional differences, as this is more true for Tuscany and Apulia, followed by Catalonia, and then by Andalusia and Madrid. However, we must add two caveats: First, there is also a substantial group of experiments that are not open to all, but organised by invitation-only, and, secondly, even when citizens are targeted as individuals, there is significant participation of (more or less) organised groups, ranging from associations to unions, interest groups, and less formalised civil society organizations.

4.1.5. Explaining Participation in Institutional Participatory Mechanisms

As we have seen, the degree of participation in the institutional mechanisms we studied varied in terms of numbers as well as openness to all citizens. Given that research in the field has been mainly oriented towards case studies, and biased towards successful cases, we do not know much about what explains different degrees of participation, in terms of both size and openness of institutional design. In an exploratory way, in what follows we shall therefore aim at singling out the impact of certain variables that we find in our sources and that we consider to be potentially relevant. As we will see, and in line with some findings in the literature, the issues addressed during the participatory process, the characteristics of the policy entrepreneur that sponsors it and the national administrative culture seem to affect the scale of participation and the degree of openness of the participatory arena.

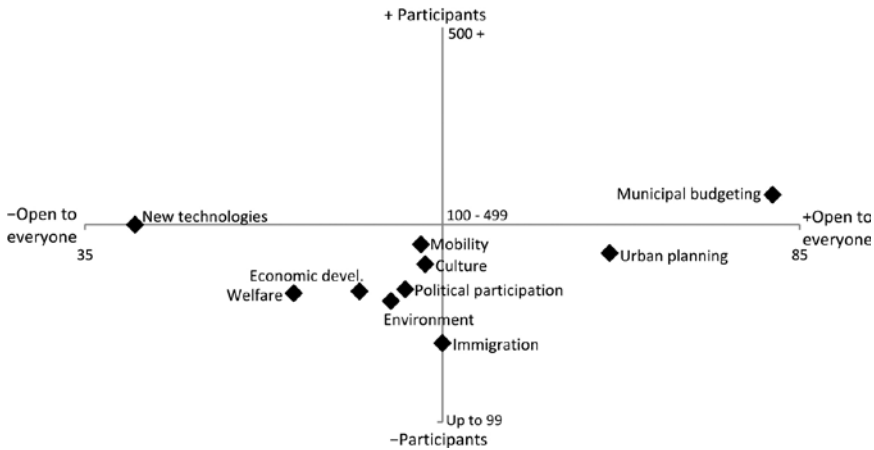
First of all, participation in institutional participatory mechanisms has been linked to the *type and range of issues* addressed. As examples from urban planning show, participatory processes even on the same issue can have very different characteristics. As in the cases presented at the beginning of this chapter, we find both “top-down” and “bottom-up” experiences. Moreover, we find large-scale processes on long-term urban planning versus small-scale processes on the regeneration of limited areas—which are often the ones in which participants have more decision-making power. In Florence, for instance, in the same period when a large and complex strategic planning process was taking place, the participatory process “Trepiazze” was organised, sponsored by the same city government and the same assessor for participation. Starting in spring 2004, this process concerned the restructuring and revitalization of three piazzas outside the tourist circuit but important for the everyday life of city residents. Workshops were established in which participants could develop their ideas about the future spaces. The guidelines developed on this basis were an integral part of the architectural competition conducted by the city to choose the final projects. Meetings were arranged between the architects whose projects had reached the final stage and the participants in the workshops. While the participatory part of the large scale “Piano strutturale” mentioned at the beginning of this chapter had no visible effects on its outcome, the vote of the workshops on these projects counted for 20 percent in the final decision. After the final decision, the workshops were again

activated for the planning in detail. For this project, in November 2005 the city of Florence was awarded a prize by “Dire & Fare”, the regional fair on innovation in public administration. In 2008 the work was concluded and the restructured piazzas were reopened to the public.

Previous research has noted that issues are not fixed, but rather shift over time. Abers (2003, 204) and Fedozzi (1999), for instance, explain the participation of the general population in the participatory budget experiments they studied by the fact that the programs initially focused on local issues that were important to neighbourhood residents. Individuals are “not drawn into the process because they wish to deliberate, but because they wish to get infrastructure for their own neighbourhoods, to improve their lives” (Abers 2003, 206). Nevertheless, “through the participatory process itself, people begin to perceive the needs of others, develop some solidarity, and conceptualize their own interests more broadly” (206).

Even with these caveats in mind, however, we can expect the issues being addressed by each participatory mechanism to have some impact on the participatory quality. Cohen and Rogers distinguished between those projects aimed at solving “bounded policy challenges” and those aimed at “transform[ing] fundamental balances of social power” (2003, 260). In general, we can, in fact, expect greater participation on issues which are (or are perceived as) less technical and of more direct interest to the general population. These should also be the topics on which citizens are more often invited to participate.

In our database, we noted some effects of the issues addressed on size of participation and formal inclusivity. In particular, we saw a higher percentage of cases open to everyone on policy issues such as urban planning and participatory budgeting, while those by invitation only tended to more frequently be related to issues such as economic development or welfare (graph 4.6). We again find here two of the three models of participation mentioned earlier (correlation with random selection being not statistically significant here): those rooted in direct citizen participation (in the case of urban planning) and those relying on negotiation with various organised groups (e.g., on economic development). The nature of the issues also seems relevant, with initiatives with access by invitation being more frequent on more specialised topics, such as new technologies. Participation by all citizens is also very high on public budgeting, as this follows in most cases the inclusive model developed in Porto Alegre. The mechanisms focusing on the issue of the municipal budget are, in fact, those that very frequently attract the most participants—although some initiatives with a large number of participants have been organised on other issues. Conversely, institutional mechanisms which focus on the general issue of political participation are not particularly open to all those who want to take part, nor do they attract high numbers of participants. A possible explanation for this could be that general rules on participation touch rooted interests of stakeholders who are used to being consulted on specific policy issues. This may lead administrations to resort to selection of participants by invitation or mixed models in order to involve these interests in the process.



Graph 4.6. Percentage of experiences open to everyone (horizontal axis) and number of participants (% , vertical axis) by different themes (a).

Source: Our database (the themes immigration and culture were not coded for Catalonia; the theme new technologies was not coded for Catalonia and Tuscany); N = 535 (open to everyone), 287 (number of participants).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means for each theme in relation to openness (0 = not open to everyone, 100 = open to everyone); vertical axis shows the means in relation to number of participants (1 = Up to 99 participants, 2 = 100-499, 3 = more than 500).

Differences among the various models of institutional participatory initiatives also depend upon the characteristics of the *policy entrepreneurs* and the political support they achieve for specific democratic innovations. In terms of degree and quality of participation, the characteristics of the experiments vary according to “the policy problem at hand, the techniques and resources available and, ultimately, a *political judgment about the importance of the issue and the need for the public involvement*” (Bishop and Davis 2002, 21; emphasis added). Different political judgments are made by the different actors that participate in the process. Administrators, citizens, stakeholders and experts may all desire participation, but for rather different reasons. Thus they may have different ideas about how the process should be conducted and evaluate the results of specific experiments accordingly (Renn, Webler and Wiedemann 1995, 5). Relevant questions address the origin of the democratic experiment: who took the initiative in setting it up? In particular, cases have been distinguished in which the process originates from the top and those in which it originates, at least in part, from the bottom (Fung and Wright 2003).

Some democratic innovations have been jointly promoted by social movement organizations and by political parties. The model for many of these is the

aforementioned participatory budgeting, implemented since 1988 in Porto Alegre (Alfonsin and Allegretti 2003; Avritzer 2002; Baiocchi 2005; Wampler 2010). Established by left-wing parties and deeply rooted in civil society associations, the experiment aimed at mobilising and activating the poor and dispossessed. There, “the relevant participatory bodies are both effect and cause of a wider political mobilization that enabled groups to participate who had not participated before, and, importantly, those bodies have much wider powers than the more policy-specific bodies considered in the US cases” (Cohen and Rogers 2003, 251).

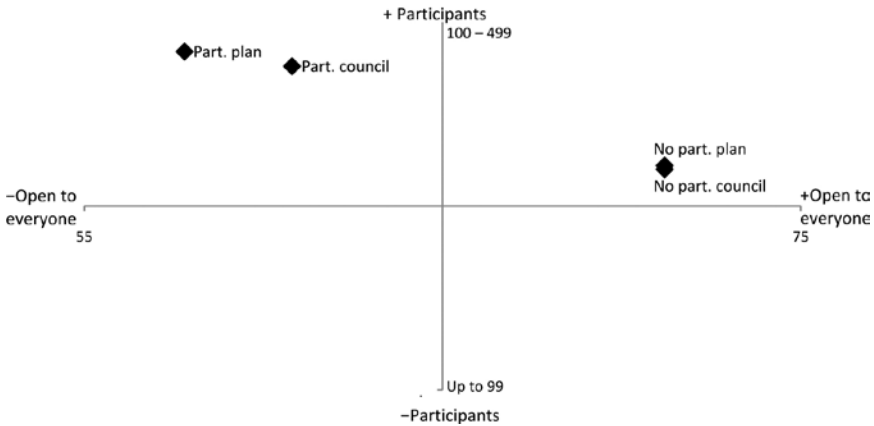
In Europe, this approach to local budgeting was specifically proposed by organisations of the global justice movement (e.g., Carta del nuovo municipio in Italy), discussed in the European Social Forums and supported by local Social Forums (della Porta 2008). European municipalities, especially those governed by the Left, began at the beginning of the new century to promote participatory budgeting experiments, although generally on a more limited and controlled scale than in Brazil (Sintomer, Herzberg and Röcke 2008a). Moreover, environmental associations in particular promoted parts of the Agenda 21, stimulating participatory processes at the local level concerning socially and environmentally sustainable development (a conception approved at the Global Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1990 and characterised by a widening space for the participation of citizens and their associations).⁹ However, as was mentioned in chapter 2, even when reacting to social movements’ requests for participatory democracy, the most deliberative experiments have been promoted from the top down, and in some cases only by specific institutions under the pressure of citizens.

We might expect that initiatives that include some push from below would value participation more and that this would also be the case when the initiative is led by a participation advisor, who, as the very name of his/her position states, should be particularly sensitive to innovative forms for getting citizens access to public decision-making. Given their general values, we might also expect that higher numbers of participants and open methods of access would be more likely with left-wing rather than with right-wing local governments (as Ganuza and Francés 2012b, 2013, demonstrate for Spain), even if strategically right-wing governments might also choose to appeal to citizens when they perceive that associations tend to favour their opponents (see chapter 3).

In our research, we collected data on certain indicators that allow us to investigate some of the questions related to promoters of participation. We distinguished between experiences initiated solely by local governments and others initiated with a contribution from citizens and civil society organizations. The former are, in fact, characterised by a lower percentage of the experiences being open to everyone interested (60.5 percent vs. 73.5 percent) and a higher percentage being for small arenas with up to ninety-nine participants (51.1 percent vs. 34.1 percent). These tendencies exist in all the regions studied (with a few exceptions in which the number of experiences not initiated solely by local governments is below 4 percent and proportions became distorted).

We also coded the presence of certain institutions specialised in participation, such as a municipal council or counsellor or a plan for the coordination of participatory activities. While the presence of these institutions increases the number of participants (this is true for each region without exception), it seems to have limited effects on the method used to select participants—slightly reducing the number of experiments open to all and increasing those by invitation only (graph 4.7). This could be an indication that these institutions increase the diversity of experiments, at least in terms of the methods of selection of participants. However, the presence of both participation council or counsellor and participation plan is strongly correlated with country (Cramer’s V .42*** and .46***) and even more so with region (Cramer’s V .51*** and .57***), indicating the existence of deep-rooted territorial traditions. In fact, while the presence of a participation council or counsellor in the Spanish regions leads to higher percentages of invitation as a selection method, in the Italian regions it leads to higher percentages of experiences open to the participation of everyone interested.

While it should be noted that in both Tuscany and Apulia, centre-left regional administrations have promoted participatory institutions, weak correlations exist between participatory qualities and the party of the mayor. For the selection method (Cramer’s V .16*), the category open to everyone accounts for 100 percent of the processes for centre and others, 63 percent for the Left,



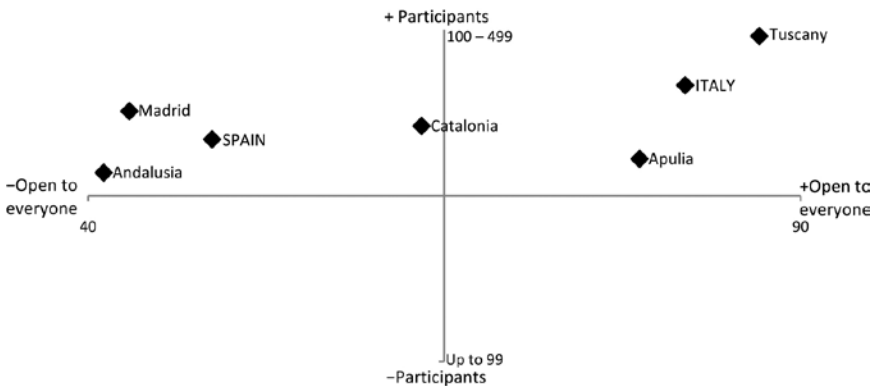
Graph 4.7. Percentage of experiences open to everyone (horizontal axis) and number of participants (% of total, vertical axis) by presence of participation council/counselor and participation plan (a).

Source: Our database; N = 452 (open to everyone), 240 (number of participants).

61 percent for social democrats, and 55.6 percent for the Right. Regarding the number of participants (Cramer's V .29*), we found higher levels of participation for the Left.

As noted in chapter 2, the *national administrative and political cultures* or “frames” (Röcke 2014), within which participatory experiments develop, also play an important role. As for our two countries, two different hypotheses can be put forward. The long tradition of consultation of stakeholders in Italy (especially in Tuscany) might lead towards a “delegated” design, privileging the consultation of influential organizations. In Spain, the role that neighbourhood associations have played since the transition to democracy could also lead to this result.

Our data show that the two Italian regions surveyed privilege an assembly-based model open to all, more than the Spanish regions do. Conversely, the Spanish cases fall more often within the other two categories, even if as many as almost half of them follow an assembly-based model. Interestingly, however, alongside of a national model, we also notice the development of regional traditions (see graph 4.8). Moreover, for both selection method and number of participants, there is, in fact, a rather sustained correlation (Cramer's V .37***) with the provincial level (see also conclusion).



Graph 4.8. Percentage of experiences open to everyone (horizontal axis) and number of participants (% , vertical axis) by country and by region (a). Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); $N = 537$ (open to everyone), 287 (number of participants).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each country and region in relation to openness (0 = not open to everyone, 100 = open to everyone); vertical axis shows the means in relation to number of participants (1 = Up to 99 participants, 2 = 100-499, 3 = more than 500).

4.2. HOW MUCH DELIBERATION?

Deliberation implies that preferences are formed and even changed through debate with others, resulting in an outcome potentially distinct from an individual's preexisting private interests (Habermas 1996; Rawls 1997; Mansbridge et al. 2010). This process involves considering the perspectives of others (Miller 1993) in a search for common interests (Cohen 1989; Elster 1998). Therefore, it differs from other conceptions of democracy, such as democracy as an aggregation of preferences, democracy of the prince, or democracy of experts (della Porta 2013). Empirical evidence shows the existence of an impact of deliberation on decision-making processes in national legislatures (Steiner, Bächtiger and Spörndli 2004).

Conceptions of citizen participation are often grounded in a deliberative ideal, according to which participants engage with one another directly as equals, reasoning together about public problems. Some evidence suggests, however, that the reality is very different and must be conceived as a continuum and not as a quality that simply does or does not exist (Fung 2004).

Much empirical research into deliberation among ordinary citizenry is based on small group discussions and laboratory experiments (Mendelberg 2002). Citizen discussion in the latter kind of experiment is likely to produce different outcomes from situations in which discussion may result in a decision or the possibility of practical influence (Thompson 2008; Talpin 2011). There is much debate about the specific arenas in which deliberation develops (della Porta 2005), but empirical investigation shows that different public spheres (institutions and social movements) have different *grammars* (Talpin 2011; Doerr and Haug 2006). The quantitative research presented here provides empirical evidence to contribute to the analysis of the place of deliberation in participatory devices.

Thompson (2008) identifies three key elements in the analysis of political deliberation: conceptual criteria, evaluative standards and empirical conditions. In this section, we present some indicators of the empirical conditions which can facilitate deliberation. We have divided them into three groups: the information provided, the preparation of the arena or information collected, and facilitation of deliberation. The first two are related to the flow of information (both to participants and to the public administration). The presence of a facilitator in participatory mechanisms is the clearest indicator of the resources dedicated by the organisers to promote deliberation.

We will first analyse the distribution of each of these variables, before discussing some possible explanations of the conditions for deliberation in relation to thematic arenas, policy entrepreneurs and administrative differences.

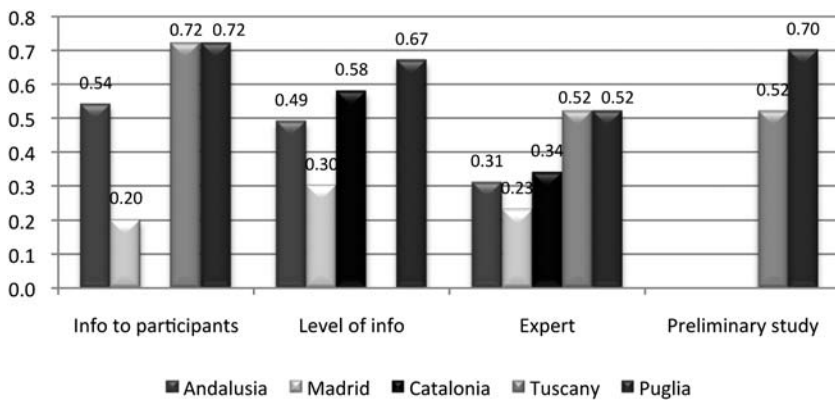
4.2.1. Information Provided

The acquisition of knowledge is considered to be a key goal of the deliberative process (Mansbridge et al. 2010). Local government can contribute to the

promotion of collective deliberation through the provision of new information to participants. The result of citizen participation may be based either on individual judgments—narrow private interests and preexisting knowledge—or on collective judgments (Smith 2009).

Therefore, the opportunity for free and equal deliberation and the construction of a common set of assumptions increase with, among other things, the provision of information. Our data allow us to measure this dimension through different variables: whether or not information was provided to participants, what type of information¹⁰ and the presence of experts (providing an impartial perspective). In the Italian regions, we can also examine the existence of a preliminary study.

Graph 4.9 shows the distribution of the means of these indicators. There are rather high correlation coefficients for all these indicators with the regions (information to participants, Cramer's $V = .40^{***}$; level of information, $V = .28^{***}$; presence of expert, $V = .24^{***}$; elaboration of preliminary study, $V = .18^{***}$). Madrid has the lowest level of information provision in participatory processes. In that region, less than a quarter of participatory mechanisms involve an expert or the provision of information to participants, and this information is of a low level in 67.6 percent of the cases (mean of 0.30). Andalusia and Catalonia show middle-level outcomes for these variables, whereas Tuscany and Apulia are dedicating comparatively more resources to the provision of information. However,



Graph 4.9. Information provided by regions (means of indicators) (a).

Note: All the mean differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 449 (information to participants), 326 (level of information), 552 (presence of expert), 215 (preliminary study).

a: For binary variables (information to participants, presence of expert and preliminary study), the category “no” has been considered as 0 and “yes” as 1. For level of information variable, graph shows the means of the codification: 0 = low information, 1 = medium and 2 = high.

in the two Italian regions around a quarter of experiences are developed without providing information to participants and almost half without the presence of experts. Apulia is the most “well-informed” region (in particular, a preliminary study is completed in 70.1 percent of experiences).

Regarding the kind of information provided to participants, in Andalusia a short introduction is provided in more than one-third of the experiences, while in the other regions it is present in less than 6 percent. In Madrid, each concrete type of information provided (a short introduction, a technical dossier of free consultation, a personalised technical dossier, local technical services, external experts) is present in less than 5 percent of the experiences, except for the utilization of prior sessions in 9.8 percent of the processes. In contrast, the presence of each of these indicators is much higher in Apulia,¹¹ where 52.2 percent of the participatory mechanisms receive technical support. The diversity and quality of information is lower in the Spanish experiences.

4.2.2. Information Collected

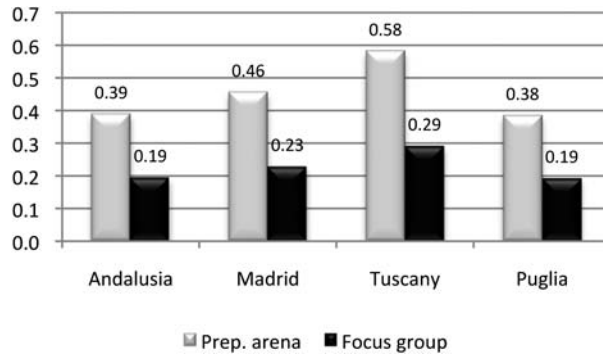
In terms of information flow between administration and citizenry, provision of information to participants is not the only dimension involved. The preparation of the deliberative arena reflects the efforts of public administration to develop tools to collect and distribute information on citizens’ perceptions and demands. In order to capture this dimension, an additive index has been constructed which analyses the use of questionnaires and interviews as a means of collecting and distributing information.¹²

To move beyond individual self-interest, interacting individuals must form a “moral point of view”, not from solitary reasoning but from concrete engagement with others who demand that their own needs, desires and perspectives be recognised (Young 2003; Habermas 1996). Local government can contribute to the promotion of this collective engagement by orienting deliberation methodologies to achieve this goal. In this sense, the presence of a focus group could be considered as an indicator of the presence of a methodology oriented to deliberation.¹³

As shown in graph 4.10, only in Tuscany do more than half of the participatory mechanisms show some preparation of the arena, while in Andalusia and Apulia this percentage is less than 40 percent. The presence of focus groups across all regions is lower than 30 percent, with Andalusia and Apulia again showing the lowest rates (19 percent) (Cramer’s V .44***). These differences by regions are statistically significant, both for preparation of the arena (Cramer’s V .12**) and especially for the presence of focus groups (Cramer’s V .44***).

4.2.3. Facilitator

In relation to the discursive interaction between participants, political theorists point to the necessity of establishing conditions for orienting individual



Graph 4.10. Information collected and use of focus groups by regions (means of indicators) (a).

Note: All the mean differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

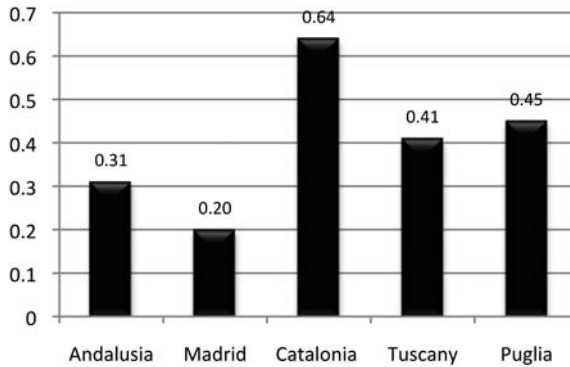
Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011);
N = 440 (preparation of the arena), 441 (focus group).

a: Preparation of the arena is a variable where 0 = no use of questionnaires or interviews; 1 = use of questionnaires or interviews; 2 = use of questionnaires and interviews. Presence of focus group is a binary variable (0 = no, 1 = yes).

perspectives to interaction with others (e.g., dynamizing the process towards mutual understanding and guaranteeing all participants provide their opinions and not just the most proactive individuals). The communication process is crucial in terms of generating horizontal flows, multiple contributors to content, extensive opportunities for interaction, confrontation on the basis of rational argumentation and reciprocal listening (Habermas 1984). In addition, the deliberative process should guarantee a fair hearing for all voices (McLaverty and Halpin 2008), respect for all participants and perspectives, as well as equal participation between participants with unequal power and prestige (Thompson 2008).

The presence of facilitators in the experiences should ease the establishment of these conditions, and empirical research has shown that, without it, the average quality of deliberation is much lower. Less than half the experiences (40.4 percent) are developed with the presence of a facilitator, which suggests that the majority of experiences are not dedicating enough resources to deliberation. The differences by regions are clearly shown in graph 4.11, with Catalonia leading, followed by the two Italian regions and then Andalusia and Madrid (Cramer's V .29***).

Deliberative democrats recognise the long-standing argument (Shapiro 1999) that effective deliberation can only take place among a small number of people. They expect a positive relationship between number of participants and difficulty in deliberating (Dryzek 2008; Brugué and Gallego 2001). Some even suggest that



Graph 4.11. Presence of facilitators by regions (means of 0-1 indicator) (a).

Note: The mean differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 552.

a: 0 = no presence of facilitator, 1 = presence of facilitator.

mass participation in deliberative processes is impossible (Fishkin 2009), though this is an open debate.

In this sense, the use of a facilitator and suitable methodologies is important, but it is also necessary to alternate times when all participants gather together with others when they can talk in small groups to increase deliberative quality and provide opportunity for participants to voice their opinions.

The analysis of an index based on the presence of information collected (preparation of the arena or use of focus groups), information provided (information to participants or presence of expert) and facilitation (presence of facilitator) shows in our cases a moderate orientation towards deliberation. The analysis shows that 15.1 percent of experiences present all three dimensions, 36.5 percent develop two of them, 37.4 percent only one and 10.9 percent of experiences are developed without any of them.¹⁴ That is, almost half of participatory processes are developed without information provision, information collection or facilitation, or with the presence of just one of them.

Table 4.5 shows a matrix of the correlations between all the indicators we have just discussed. In general, there is a statistically strong correlation, especially between the variables related to the provision of information to participants. The presence of a facilitator is positively related to the provision of information to participants and to the presence of experts. Conversely, the methodology of the focus group is not significantly related. Therefore, in general terms, the presence of one of these variables is related to the presence of more tools. It suggests that deliberation is conceived as a multidimensional goal, thus, when a participatory mechanism pursues this goal, different means are put into play.

Table 4.5. Correlations between Preparation of the Arena, Information and Deliberative Variables

	Information to Participants	Level of Information	Expert	Preliminary Study	Preparation of the Arena	Focus Group	Facilitator
Info Provided	Information to Participants	1	0.311**	0.255**	0.112*	-0.229**	0.404**
	Level of Information	0.561**	1	0.453**	0.092	-0.058	0.086
	Expert	0.311**	0.278**	1	0.063	-0.044	0.122**
Info Collected	Preliminary Study	0.255**	0.295**	1	0.218**	-0.052	0.037
	Preparation of the Arena	0.112*	0.063	0.218**	1	0.019	-0.038
Facilitator	Focus Group	-0.229**	-0.044	-0.052	0.019	1	-0.121*
	Facilitator	0.404**	0.122**	0.037	-0.038	-0.121*	1

** : Sign. 0.01; * : Sign 0.05

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

In order to confirm which dimensions are measured by these variables, table 4.6 shows the results of a factor analysis of dimensions reduction. The variables related to the provision of information are combined together in the first component. The index related to the preparation of the arena and the use of focus groups constitutes the second component. Finally, the use of facilitators—the most directly deliberative variable—remains alone in a third component. Therefore, statistical analysis confirms that these variables are measuring three different dimensions, which we have called information collection, provision and facilitation.

In the beginning of this section, we reviewed some elements of the deliberative ideal and pointed to evidence suggesting that the level of deliberation is uncertain. According to the empirical analysis developed in this section, conditions that we consider to facilitate deliberation are not always present in our cases. Governments are placing some deliberative tools at citizens' disposal, but with different dynamics and outcomes. Correlations between these variables have shown a tendency towards a combination of the different conditions. Statistical analysis has also shown that differentiation of these variables into information provision, collection and facilitation is accurate.

Table 4.6. Factor Analysis with Preparation of the Arena, Provision of Information and Deliberation Variables: Matrix of Rotated Components^(a)

	Component 1: Information Provided	Component 2: Information Collected	Component 3: Facilitation
Total Variance Explained	70.36%		
Information to Participants	0.826	0.039	-0.006
Level of Information	0.885	0.142	0.201
Expert	0.738	0.130	-0.002
Elaboration Preliminary Study	0.662	0.058	-0.463
Preparation of the Arena	0.268	0.677	-0.150
Focus Group	-0.031	0.861	0.094
Facilitator	0.087	-0.20	0.931
N	115		

Method of extraction: Analysis of principal components.

Method of rotation: Normalization Varimax with Kaiser.

a: The rotation has converged in three iterations.

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011).

4.2.4. Explaining Deliberation in Institutional Participatory Mechanisms

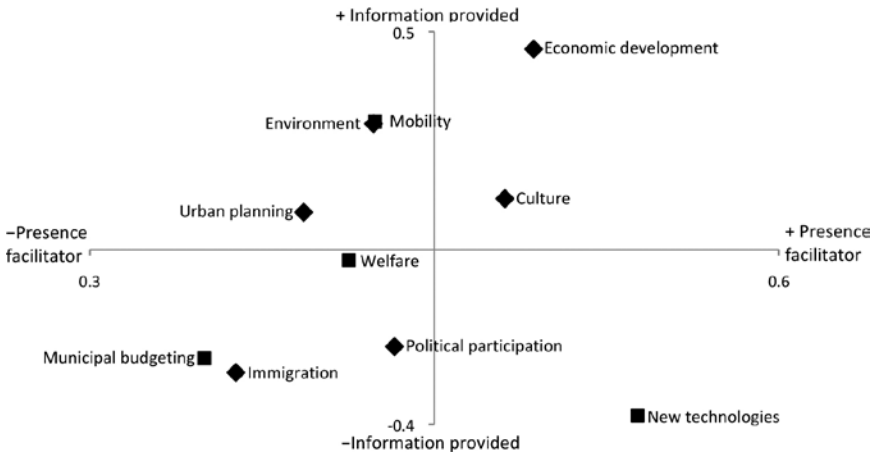
As we analysed in the previous section regarding participation, the next step consists of exploring possible factors related to deliberation. As most research has been centred on case studies and biased towards successful cases, our more inclusive analysis contributes to explaining the different amount of resources dedicated to deliberation by taking into account a broader range of cases. We attend to the same explanatory variables that have been demonstrated to be relevant (issues, policy entrepreneurs, and national and regional differences).

In order to look into these relations and simplify the analysis, we will consider two dimensions of the deliberative process: the presence of a facilitator, as the main deliberative indicator from a procedural point of view; and the information provided to participants (component 1 in the aforementioned factor analysis). The latter dimension is measured by a variable constructed from the punctuations of factor analysis built with the variables we have looked at previously.¹⁵ We analyse the relationship these deliberative designs have with the same independent variables we used in the previous section.

In the previous section, we examined differences in size of participation and formal inclusivity in relation to different issues. Are public administrations promoting deliberation in relation to certain specific issues? From the point of view of deliberation, higher provision of facilitation and information could be expected on issues in which consensus logic can be useful and achievable. More fragmented issues, in which different actors and stakeholders hold different interests more openly, could be less propitious to this deliberative orientation.

Graph 4.12 shows that the effort that public administrations invest in deliberation is distributed in a more complex way among these issues. The most interesting deliberative design, where information is provided and a facilitator is present, is linked with economic development, one of the most strategic areas for local government. Other issues where local governments are dedicating more resources regarding deliberation include culture, environment, mobility and, in terms of presence of a facilitator and with an intrinsic explanation (the necessity for help to become familiar with it), new technologies. One reason for this could be that these issues often take the form of general questions that very clearly affect the whole community (environmental questions, local cultural events or economic development orientation), so reaching deliberative agreements could be an important goal, more so than, for example, voting on different proposals.

Conversely, issues where deliberative resources are fewer or not provided include public budgeting and immigration, followed by urban planning, welfare and political participation. The reason for this distribution of deliberative resources could be that some of these participatory mechanisms are not oriented towards consensus building but rather dominated by a majority logic (especially in the case of public budgeting) and are based on the idea that most citizens are already aware of the most pressing needs for their neighbourhoods, so that facilitation or information provision could be less relevant.



Graph 4.12. Presence of facilitator (horizontal axis) and information provided to participants (vertical axis) in different issues (a).

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 550 (presence of facilitator), 550 (information provided).

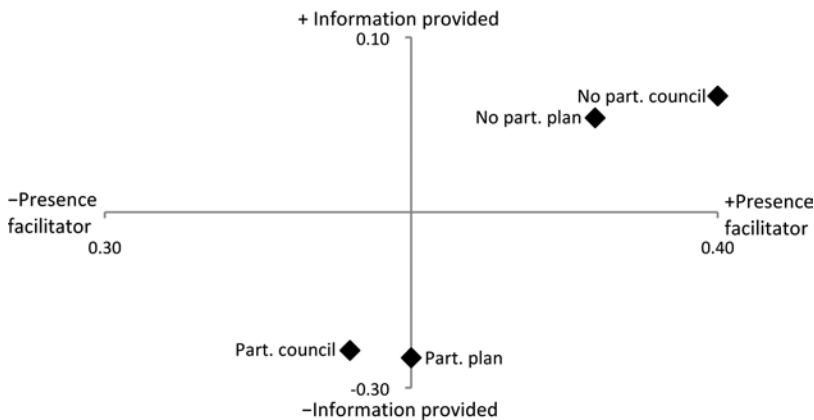
a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each theme in relation to presence of facilitator (0 = not, 1 = yes); vertical axis shows the means in relation to information provided (results of factor analysis, range from -2.23 to 1.86).

The impact of the bottom-up driving force on the design of participatory mechanisms is expressed in the deliberative dimension. As happened with other indicators, initiatives that include some push from below provide more information to participants (the factor analysis variable measuring information provision reveals a mean of 0.20 where civil society has participated in promotion versus -0.04 when mechanisms are initiated solely by local governments) and reveal a greater presence of facilitators (54.9 percent vs. 37.6 percent). In both cases, the effect of policy entrepreneurs on the investment in deliberation is statistically significant (i.e., the participation of civil society in the promotion produces experiences in which more resources are dedicated to deliberation) (Cramer’s V .11** and .12***, respectively).

Conversely, we found earlier that local governments which have a participation plan and/or a participation council or councillor have a greater number of participants, but these indicators appear to have limited impact on the method used to select participants. Is deliberation promoted in a similar manner in different institutional contexts? One might expect that the presence of a participatory plan or councillor, meaning longer experiences and investment in citizens’ participation, would also imply more attention to the presence of certain preconditions for deliberation.

As graph 4.13 indicates, as participation is more institutionalised in public administration, there is less information provided to participants (Cramer's V .526*** for the existence of both a participation plan and participation council) and less recourse to a facilitator (but this last is a very weak correlation, differences are not statistically significant). This difference is probably related to the competence and contribution of qualified experts in a context in which participation is regulated and structured. In more institutionalised participatory contexts, the personnel dedicated to participation could assume some of the tasks associated with facilitation, external experts and provision of information to participants. Nevertheless, the trade-off could be that the civil servants may be far less neutral (and often less skilled) when conducting discussions.

In the same way that the original boost to participatory mechanisms was given by left-wing political parties, we might expect more resources to be dedicated to deliberation in governments led by these forces, as interest in citizen participation and consensus is historically more present in their discourse. In general, these deliberative indicators (presence of facilitator and information provided) are lower in municipalities where the political party of the mayor is situated on the political right. In terms of the information provided to participants, this correlation is significant (Cramer's V .405***). Lower values in this index are linked



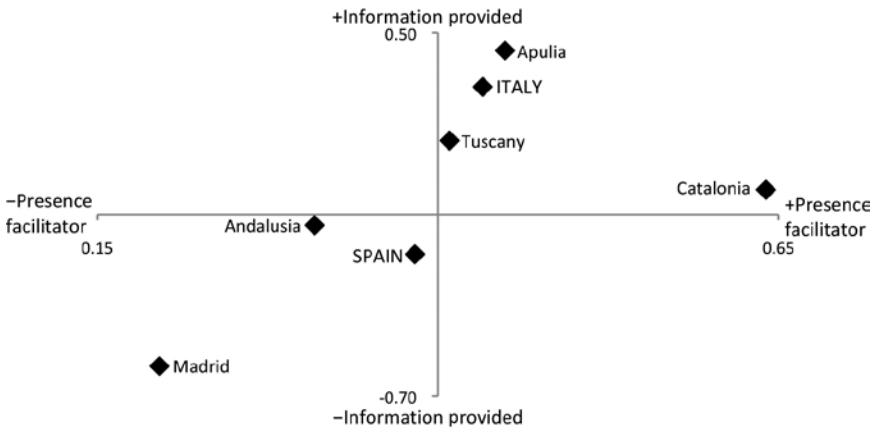
Graph 4.13. Presence of facilitator (horizontal axis) and information provided to participants (vertical axis) in different participatory institutionalized contexts (a). Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 464 (presence of facilitator), 464 (information provided).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each situation (presence of participation council/counselor and participation plan) in relation to presence of facilitator (0 = not, 1 = yes); vertical axis shows the means in relation to information provided (results of factor analysis, range from -2.23 to 1.86).

with right-wing political parties (-0.40), while the more informative experiences are developed under social democratic (0.04) and left-wing (-0.12) governments.

Comparing the experiences of both countries, a higher presence of conditions facilitating deliberation might be expected in Italy, the country with a more established tradition of democratic innovation. A more developed public administration in terms of political participation should be more able to provide deliberative tools and resources. Furthermore, the previous section demonstrated that in Italy, participatory mechanisms are generally open to all citizens, thus involving higher numbers of participants. Provision of information and facilitation in that setting would be more necessary than, for example, in experiences in which participants are specifically selected by invitation and are organised stakeholders (usually members of associations directly linked to the issue and, as a consequence, well informed and accustomed to discussion and collective interaction). It is also likely that the deliberative tradition has developed more in Italy (or, at least, in some of its regions) than in the Spanish case.

The differences between the two countries confirm these expectations, but with different intensity, as illustrated by graph 4.14. The differences are limited as far as the recourse to facilitators is concerned (43.3 percent in Italy and 38.3 percent in Spain; this difference is not statistically significant). Regarding information



Graph 4.14. Presence of a facilitator (horizontal axis) and information provided to participants (vertical axis) by region and country (a). Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 552 (presence of facilitator), 449 (information provided).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each country and region in relation to presence of facilitator(0 = not, 1 = yes); vertical axis shows the means in relation to information provided (results of factor analysis, range from -2.23 to 1.86).

provided to participants, this is higher in Italy than in Spain (the factor analysis variable measuring information provision shows 0.32 in Italy vs. -0.23 in Spain; this difference between countries is statistically significant [Cramer's V .952***]).

As analysed previously, the differences between regions in Spain point to a heterogeneous reality. Rather than a country-based differentiation, our data show that Madrid, followed by Andalusia, are the regions with less recourse to information and facilitation, while Catalonia joins Tuscany and Apulia in dedicating more resources to information (although this is especially the case in the Italian regions) and to facilitation (particularly Catalonia). Differences by regions are statistically significant for both information provision and presence of a facilitator (Cramer's V .850*** and .290***).

4.3. HOW MUCH EMPOWERMENT?

A third important quality of participatory experiences refers to the output of participatory experiences and the empowerment achieved through them. In general terms, empowerment can occur on a small scale, linking people through self-help, education, social action groups and network building, or, on a larger scale, through processes like community organization, social planning or policy development (Parsons 1991). In participatory mechanisms, empowerment refers to this larger scale, in turn connected to the political process. Following Archon Fung's definition, empowerment is the "expectation that citizens' participation and deliberation will directly affect public action" (2003, 118–19). We can consider two dimensions of empowerment in this way: individual (citizens' empowerment in terms of skills and capacities) and institutional (empowerment in terms of decision-making institutions) (Johnson 2009). The latter is the focus of analysis in this section.

The ideal of popular control is arguably the most significant means of differentiating deliberative innovations from traditional modes of consultation (Smith 2009). But while this ideal is continuously mentioned by politicians and other actors, a large proportion of current participatory processes remain far from this reality, achieving a higher level of empowerment.

The direct connection with the policymaking process is one of the main differences between laboratory experiments, for example, with university students and citizen engagement linked to the development of public policies. The latter refers to the deliberative strategies developed with the objective of involving those outside government in the policy development process (Stewart 2009).

The empowerment associated with the deliberative process is a key factor in structuring citizen perception and evaluation of public decision-making. In a negative sense, the failure to materially affect political decision-making generates disillusionment amongst the citizenry, the practitioners and democratic theorists.

This failure breeds doubt about the limited scope of influence that participatory experiences may have on the decision-making process or even suspicion about manipulation and co-optation of these arenas by political elites, in order to legitimise their own decisions (Smith 2009).

Perhaps the lack of effective empowerment represents the biggest challenge that deliberative mechanisms are facing. In practice, the impact of the mini-publics is often limited or unclear (Hendriks 2005; Smith 2009). This problem affects not only mini-publics but also a considerable proportion of all participatory devices. In addition, there is little evidence that participatory experiences have involved substantial power-sharing, both because of governments retaining control of these processes and because of citizens' inability and lack of motivation to participate effectively (Head 2007).

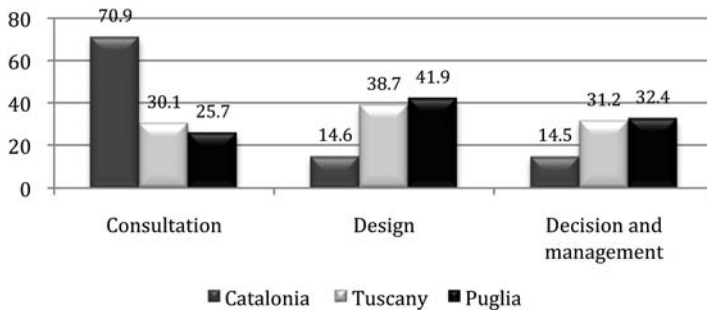
In the following section, we look at two factors related to citizens' empowerment: the level of policymaking addressed and the stage of involvement of participatory mechanisms. While these factors do not reflect final citizens' empowerment, which should be properly analysed through an assessment of the output of participatory mechanisms, they give us some information about institutional designs that might affect real outcomes. Finally, we will enquire about possible explanatory factors through these two measures considered as proxies of empowerment (level of policymaking and number of stages in which mechanisms are applied).

4.3.1. Level of Decision-Making

Since Arnstein's work (1969), a number of different typologies aimed at operationalizing the level of decision-making have been proposed. The most common is the elaboration of a participatory spectrum based on an increasing level of public impact on or participation in the policymaking process (e.g., Shand and Arnberg 1996; Fung 2006; Smith 2009; International Association for Public Participation 2007; OECD 2003; Bishop and David 2002; Walters et al. 2000; Ross et al. 2002). In opposition of this continuum scale, more fluid understandings of engagement have been developed, in which different types of engagement are conceived as strategies corresponding to different situations and outcomes (Stewart 2009).

In our data, one indicator linked with empowerment resonates with most of these typologies based on a scale conception, differentiating between three levels of participation: consultation, in which citizens are only consulted about their opinions or preferences; design/co-design, in which participants are asked to think of solutions and propose specific actions related to an issue; and decision/co-decision¹⁶ or management/co-management, in which citizens' opinions are oriented to decision-making or which include citizen involvement in the implementation of results.¹⁷

These typologies of empowerment, despite their value in illustrating the variety of participatory approaches, should be used with caution (Bishop and Davis



Graph 4.15. Level of decision-making by regions (%) (Cramer's $V = .29^{**}$).
Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); $N = 332$.

2002). Even when there is a formal intention to empower citizens, in practice participants may be unable to fully exercise any power for different reasons, especially due to a lack of permeability on the part of the public administration (Smith 2009). In fact, our Internet mining may not capture the real impact of participatory processes in policymaking but only the formal design that might affect them. Even if participation processes go beyond mere consultation, the implementation of the decisions taken may remain problematic. Conversely, a device which is formally consultative may have real impact on policies if the discussions are taken seriously by those who have decision-making power. A report on the efficacy of the Tuscan regional law on participation concluded that in a considerable number of cases, there was no speedy realization of the decisions taken in participatory processes conducted within the framework of the law, predominantly because of financial constraints (IRPET 2012).

Graph 4.15 shows the distribution of levels of decision-making indicators by region.¹⁸ The Italian regions present a higher level than Catalonia. The index in Catalonia shows, in fact, a decreasing distribution (from 70.9 percent of consultation to 14.5 percent of decision/co-decision and management/co-management). Italian regions show a more balanced distribution, with around 40 percent of experiences oriented to design/co-design and around 30 percent of experiences at the highest level.

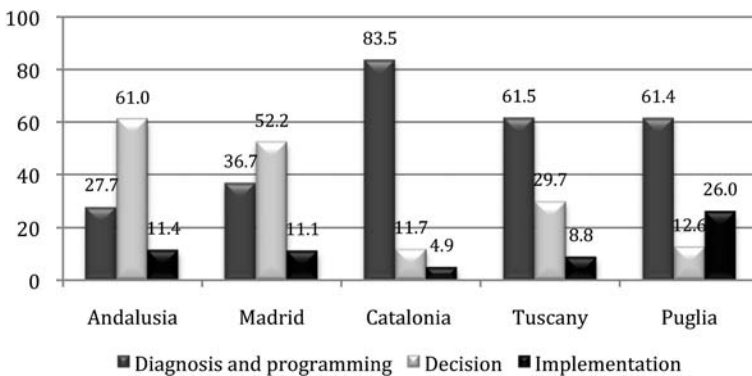
4.3.2. Stage of Involvement

We have seen that level of participation is directly related to the influence citizens' participation has in policymaking processes. Now, we focus attention on the policy stages the participatory experience is addressed to (from diagnosis to implementation).

The analysis of the phases of the political process in which the participatory mechanism is applied provides us interesting information about how participatory experiences are designed. After a general exploration, we will build a proxy index from this variable to get an idea of how empowerment is related to certain explanatory factors. The deliberation process can affect three different phases: diagnosis¹⁹ and planning, decision-making, and implementation²⁰ stages. These categories are based on classical distinctions in public policy analysis (see, for example, Butler 1991).

The stage of involvement index shows the highest policy stage to which the participatory mechanism is directed. Graph 4.16 displays a comparison of all regions against this index. Differences are strong and statistically significant (Cramer's V .35**). Andalusia and Madrid show the highest means. The main explanation is the very high percentage of experiences which were involved in the decision stage (61 percent and 52.2 percent, respectively) in these regions. The lowest mean we found was in Catalonia, where more than 80 percent of experiences are oriented to diagnosis and planning. Tuscany shows a similar distribution but with higher weight on the decision stage. In Apulia, fewer participatory processes are linked with the decision phase, while a high 26 percent is oriented to implementation.

In the remainder of this section, we consider the number of phases in which participatory mechanisms are applied as a proxy for empowerment (this index covers all regions). It might be assumed in general terms that a participatory process linked with two or three policy stages would imply a higher level of empowerment than other processes only affecting one stage. Differences by regions are statistically significant (Cramer's V .207***). Mechanisms are directed to the



Graph 4.16. Stage of application index by regions (%) (Cramer's V .35**).
Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 534.

most stages in Andalusia (with an average of 1.6) followed by Apulia (1.46), Tuscany (1.41) and Madrid (1.39). In Catalonia, the average is 1.14, as 88.3 percent of experiences apply to only one policy stage.

4.3.3. Explaining Empowerment in Institutional Participatory Mechanisms

The next step is to analyse how empowerment, one of the supposed attributes of participatory mechanisms, is linked to different participatory and territorial contexts. As we have seen with respect to participation and deliberation, substantial differences would be expected in the distribution of empowerment among experiences with different characteristics. Empowerment has been studied in concrete cases, but our data allow us to provide a general approximate picture of how empowerment is distributed according to different factors.

The main index of empowerment is the level of decision-making, but the number of policy stages of application is also considered here because it allows us to compare all regions. We consider as the most empowering participatory mechanism the one which includes the later phases of the decision-making process—decision and management—and which affects the three policy stages—diagnosis and programming, decision, and implementation.

Information is available for all regions on the number of stages, but information about the level of decision-making is only available in Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia. Even if the number of stages does not measure empowerment directly, the high correlation between the two suggests that it is highly related to the empowerment index (Cramer's V .507***), provides complementary information and can be used as a proxy in all regions.

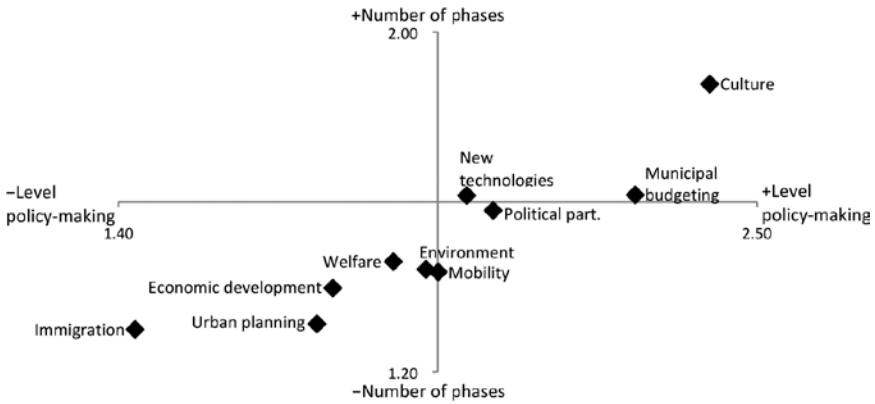
What are the issues in which a higher level of empowerment is allowed and developed? The criticism of the institutional deliberative experiments as not empowering participants is justified if the engagement of citizens in decision-making is limited to only trivial public matters (Smith 2009). Along these lines, some authors have pointed out a potential trade-off effect: the impact of citizens' voices can be higher when the issue at stake is less important (see, among others, Nez 2010).

On the basis of our data, it is not possible to determine how trivial the contents of the participatory mechanisms may be and the real impact of the mechanisms. We can, nevertheless, distinguish them according to the issues that they address. In this sense, is empowerment addressed to more strategic issues? It could be the case that empowerment is actually addressed to less strategic and more specific issues that initially could entail less political conflict and, as a result, less controversial decisions that would be easier for local government to adopt.

Graph 4.17 shows that participatory experiments oriented towards cultural matters present the highest level of empowerment, considering both indexes. This issue is followed in terms of empowerment by public budgeting, political participation and new technologies. In contrast, participatory arenas involving

less empowerment were related to immigration, urban planning and economic development. Thus the data seem to partially justify the criticism linking empowerment with trivial public matters, at least from the perspective of public administration if we take into account that local governments usually consider urban planning and economic development more strategically relevant than cultural matters or political participation.

Public budgeting and immigration would be two exceptions linking issues that local governments consider more strategic with lower empowerment indexes, but it can be explained. Public budgeting represents a concrete participatory experience historically linked to a high degree of empowerment. Concretely, the Porto Alegre model has had a huge impact, and subsequent experiences have been powerfully influenced by this successful symbol. Conversely, immigration is the issue which shows the worst general results (the worst position in both empowerment and deliberation indexes, and one of the lowest scores in relation to participation indexes). The fact that immigration is linked to the lowest scores on the indicators could be explained by different factors. On the one hand, it represents a nontrivial but highly politicised issue. On the other hand, despite its interrelation with other issues such as education or welfare—interweaved with local public administration responsibilities—this area of competence and legislation belongs to national and even supranational levels of governance. As a consequence, efforts by local



Graph 4.17. Level of policy-making (horizontal axis) and number of policy phases (vertical axis) in different issues (a).
 Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 331 (level of policy-making), 543 (number of phases).
 a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each theme in relation to presence of level of policy-making (0 = none, 1 = consultation, 2 = design, 3 = decision and management); vertical axis shows the means in relation to number of phases (from 0 to 3).

governments to promote empowerment or deliberation on this issue are lower than on other issues more connected to local politics.

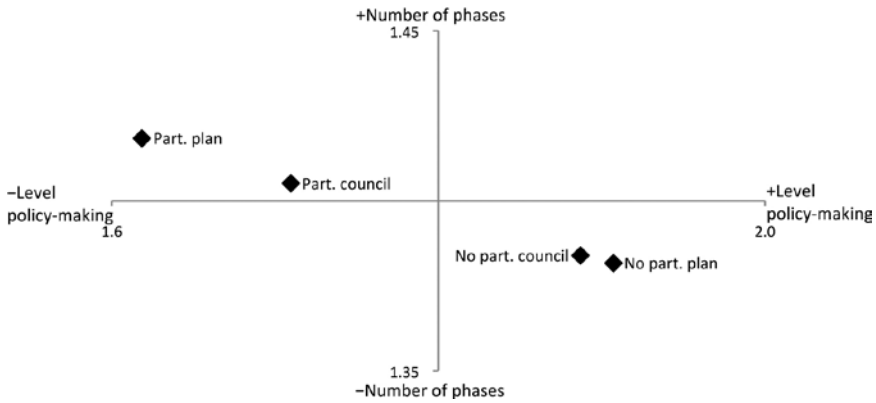
It might be expected that when civil society cooperates with local government in promoting participatory processes, a higher degree of empowerment will be present. In fact, participatory experiences promoted only by local government show lower levels of empowerment than those experiences in which civil society has played some role as a driving force (1.77 vs. 2.22 in terms of level of policymaking, and 1.39 vs. 1.55 in terms of the policy phases to which experiences have been addressed). These differences in empowerment level based on who is the driving force behind the experience are only statistically significant in the case of level of policymaking (Cramer's $V .216^{***}$). This correlation can have a dual explanation. On the one hand, forces in civil society can be the main actors promoting citizen empowerment and pushing for higher levels of influence in policymaking. On the other hand, studies find that empowerment is one of the most difficult objectives to achieve. For governments, it may be easier to promote empowerment when civil society is more structured and present throughout the participatory process. Additionally, the fact that civil society has collaborated with local government in the promotion of a participatory process could be related to a higher degree of understanding or support between these actors.

Citizen empowerment requires a real political will and this, in turn, implies some government personnel devoted to it and some kind of institutionalization of the participatory process. In this sense, a more favourable empowerment context would be expected where the level of institutionalization of participatory dynamics is higher.

Graph 4.18 contradicts this general idea. The presence of a participation plan and a participatory council or councillor are negatively related to a (at least formal) higher level of influence in policymaking (Cramer's $V .229^{***}$ and 142^* , respectively). In addition, the correlations between the number of phases affected and the presence of a participation plan and a participatory council or councillor are not statistically significant.

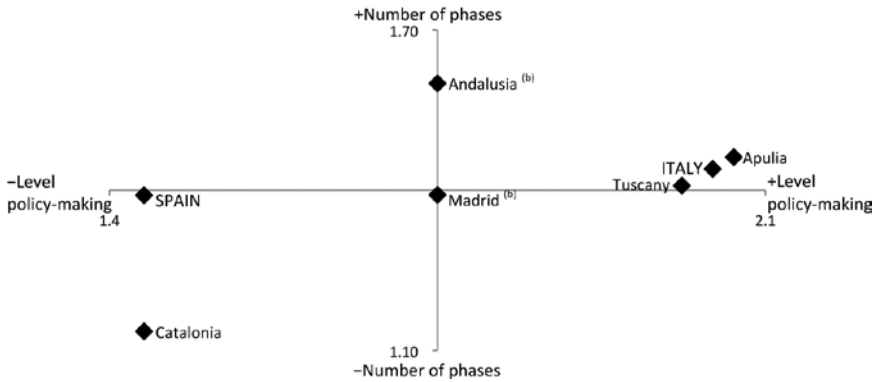
Empowerment is one of the most important goals of political participation; however, in practice it is very difficult to achieve. The fact that our main empowerment indicator is higher in municipalities with less institutionalised participatory dynamics suggests that institutionalization will not create by itself each of the potentially beneficial outcomes of these processes. Only further analysis can provide new light over this result, but we cannot rule out the possibility that the public administrations with a less institutionalised participation agenda may develop some experiences which have more ambitious expectations in terms of empowerment than others with more participatory experience and complexity.

In terms of administrative culture, until now Italy has shown the most advanced indicators for all participatory factors, and thus a better empowerment level might also be expected, at least in the design of the processes. In effect, Italian experiences show a higher level of policymaking influence, the main



Graph 4.18. Level of policy-making (horizontal axis) and number of policy phases (vertical axis) in different institutional participatory contexts (a).
 Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 270 (level of policy-making), 458 (number of stages).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each situation (presence of participation council/ counselor and participation plan) in relation to presence of level of policy-making (0 = none, 1 = consultation, 2 = design, 3 = decision and management); vertical axis shows the means in relation to number of phases (from 0 to 3).



Graph 4.19. Presence of facilitator (horizontal axis) and information provided to participants (vertical axis) by region and country (a).

Source: Own elaboration, Internet search database (2011); N = 332 (level of decision-making), 545 (number of phases).

a: Horizontal axis shows the means of each country and region in relation to presence of level of policy-making (0 = none, 1 = consultation, 2 = design, 3 = decision and management); vertical axis shows the means in relation to number of phases (from 0 to 3); b: Level of decision-making data are not available for Andalusia and Madrid.

empowerment index, and also cover more policy phases than Spanish experiences (both differences between countries are statistically significant, Cramer's V .409*** and .207***, respectively). Again, Italy shows higher scores than Spain, as has been found for almost all indicators we have seen in this chapter. Italian regions score similarly on both indexes, while in the Spanish regions, the differences are greater, with Catalanian experiences covering fewer policy phases and Andalusian ones affecting more. These differences between regions in Spain for these indicators, as well for the previous indicators in this chapter, suggest that participatory dynamics are not just more developed in Italy but also more homogeneous. In Spain, the recurrent differences by region reveal that participatory experiences are being developed with different characteristics and resources.

4.4. CONCLUSION

Research on various forms for opening up policymaking to citizen participation have often addressed the capacity of such instruments to solve problems created by local opposition to unpopular land-use policies (Bobbio and Zeppetella 1999). Renn, Webler and Wiedemann (1995, 2) spoke of “forums for exchange that are organized for the purpose of facilitating communication between government, citizens, stakeholders and interest groups, and businesses regarding a specific decision or problem”. Others have pointed out the difficulties in attracting more than just a few participants, who are often already politicised (Smith 2009). Several of these practices aim at reaching high deliberative quality in the sense that all potentially affected groups have an opportunity to get involved in the process (Baccaro and Papadakis 2009). Empirical research has found, however, that changes in participants' preferences, a main indicator of deliberation, happens very rarely (Dryzek 2010). Finally, while many democratic innovations have been perceived as a way to empower citizens, the practical challenge of integrating traditional electoral accountability with other forms has often jeopardised a shift of real power to emerging participatory institutions.

As often mentioned (see chapter 1), the extent to which institutional mechanisms of deliberative and participatory decision-making fulfil the high expectations we seem to have for them is still an open question. If, at the end of the 1990s, Bohman noted “a surprising lack of empirical case studies of democratic deliberation” (1998, 419), since then research has boomed, without, however, being able to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of new forms of participation.

Although not an exhaustive assessment, we have tried in this chapter to describe and, to a certain extent, explain three different dimensions of the democratic qualities of participatory mechanisms: participation, deliberation and empowerment. Even though we do not claim a high degree of generalizability for our results, what we have found is mainly the convergence, under the label of participatory institutional mechanisms, of rather different models, each tendentially

endowed with a specific balance of different qualities. In particular, in our five regions, assembly-based models—with participation open to all—were not only the most widespread but also those which attracted the most participants. Processes that followed the mini-public model were significantly less common: they usually had lower numbers of participants but greater variation in characteristics—such as use of experts or the dissemination of information—that have often been considered to facilitate successful deliberation. Participation also took a third form—aiming at the involvement not of the broader population as such but at delegated organizations considered to be representative of the organised interests of the population: of importance here was not the number of participants or the presence of experts and neutral information but rather the capacity of powerful actors to empower themselves in the process through their capacity to implement decisions.

The research indicates, in fact, that these different models start from very different conceptions of participation. In the assembly-based model, the possibility to participate and the number of people who take part in the meetings are considered its most important aspects. In the different models in which access was based on invitation, the logic was oriented towards either the statistical representation granted by random selection or the legitimacy given to delegates by the resources controlled by their own organizations.

Without being able to exploit the large potential range of explanations that are indeed still open to research, on the basis of the data we could collect from our data mining research, we found that the issues addressed, the policy entrepreneurs (and more in general, the actors involved), as well as historical legacy in terms of administrative culture indeed contribute to explaining the different democratic qualities of these instruments. Regarding issues, participation seems high in cases in which decisions concern citizens' everyday life more directly and where there is more conflict. In contrast, there is more of a search for expertise and dissemination of information on issues, which are considered to be more technical and specialised. The presence of certain actors seems indeed to resonate with their different general conceptions—civil society organizations having, for instance, a greater presence in assembly-based models, and business interests in more selective, invitation-only initiatives on economic issues. The particular spread of the assembly-based model in the two Italian regions locate the new forms of participation within a tradition of citizen participation which had been nurtured by the traditional Left and by new social movements in the 1970s. At the same time, concerted action with representatives of economic interests follows the attempt, since the 1980s, to develop economic growth at the local level through the local government facilitating major agreements between influential social actors. At the same time, especially in the Tuscan region—which appears to have invested a great deal, at least at the symbolic level, in opening up channels of institutional participation—attention has been given to new trends such as the presence of communication experts. In a way compatible with what has been observed in the

previous chapter on the conditions for the presence of participatory mechanisms in general, left-wing governments seems to have put more trust and energy in improving their quality, in terms of both participation and deliberation. Empowerment, however, remains the Achilles' heel of participatory processes, as the degree of competencies devoted to most of them remain low, and this reduces the credibility of efforts to get citizens really involved.

NOTES

1. La Repubblica, Florence ed., November 29, 2002.
2. La Repubblica, Florence ed., March 20, 2003; June 18, 2003.
3. Florence city press release, December 13, 2005.
4. In the same vein, this has been labelled "collaborative policymaking" (Innes and Booher 2003) or "cooperative democracy" (Bogumil 2002).
5. Here and below we use Cramer's V as a measure of association. Cramer's V is used to calculate correlation in tables which have more than 2x2 rows and columns. It measures the strength of the association between variables, varying between 0 (no association) and 1 (highest association). The *** refers to the probability that the association found in a sample reflects the one existing in the universe. We used the conventional *** to indicate high significance (0.001), ** to indicate mid-level significance (0.01) and * to indicate low significance (0.05).
6. For graphs 4.1 and 4.2, we remind the reader that the coding is not identical in the different regions. While we refer to appendix 1 for general details, we shall note here more in particular that for Tuscany we did not code a "mixed" value. As the codebook foresaw only one variable, in the case of more than one method we coded the "highest" (i.e., if it was open to all and also by invitation or also chosen at random, we coded open to all).
7. Similar to Cramer's coefficient, Pearson's r is a measure of the correlation between two variables on a scale varying between 0 (no correlation) and 1 (maximum correlation).
8. Targeting citizens in general shows a strong negative correlation with the targeting of both specific sectors (Pearson's $-.57^{***}$) and associations or collectives (Pearson's $-.42^{***}$). The targeting of experts is correlated with the targeting of both associations or collectives (Pearson's $.25^{***}$) and participation bodies (Pearson's $.21^{***}$).
9. Research indicates that the effective implementation of Agenda 21 varies greatly across countries and within countries; on the local level, there are great differences in the extent to which they are inclusive, participatory or involved in actual decision-making (Lafferty 2002; Lucas, Ross and Fuller 2003).
10. No data about the information provided to participants have been collected for Catalonia. With respect to the type of information, no data is available for the Tuscan region. The different types have been arranged normatively to be considered as different levels. In Catalonia, this variable is coded as low level (little information about the topic or process has been given), medium (information is provided only by municipal sources or as a brief introduction) or high level (when external experts have informed citizens during more than one session). In the other regions, a low level is understood to be when only a short introduction and/or a technical dossier of free consultation were provided, a medium level when a technical dossier was provided to each participant and/or municipal technical

services were present, and a high level when information sessions were provided prior to the beginning of the experience and/or external experts were present. In order to allow for representation in the same graph, this variable has been recoded into a 0-1 range (0 for low level information, 0.5 for medium and 1 for high level).

11. No information about these variables is available for Catalonia or Tuscany.

12. This index has been constructed by aggregating two dummy methodology variables (use of questionnaires and use of interviews, adding 1 if each is present and 0 otherwise). Catalonia has been excluded from the analysis. For that region, no independent variables for each methodology are available. Only two variables assess the two main methodologies used, which means that in an experience we cannot determine if, for example, a focus group is not present or is just not one of the two main methodologies used.

13. The focus group is the methodology in our database most meaningfully linked with deliberation, to the extent that it is oriented to establishing discussion between participants. Additionally, in our data, the use of focus groups is correlated with the presence of a facilitator, the variable most clearly linked with deliberation (statistically significant, Cramer's $V = .14^{***}$). But it is necessary to highlight that other deliberative tools could have been used in the experiences. Other methodologies are statistically correlated with the presence of a facilitator (e.g., workshops, IAP and brainstorming), but it is not clear that they are oriented towards deliberation, and as such they have been excluded from this analysis.

14. $N = 449$, Catalonia has been excluded for lack of data.

15. The variables include information provided to participants, level of information, presence of experts and elaboration of a preliminary study. We have excluded the two variables of the component 2 of the factor analysis showed in table 4.6 (preparation of the arena and presence of focus group) for two reasons: we need to select only two deliberative dimensions in order to reproduce the analysis of the other sections of this chapter, and these features are less frequent in some of the regions, so the cross-analysis would be less relevant. Missing values have been replaced with means in order to include all regions in the analysis.

16. In the Tuscan case, co-decision has a slightly stronger meaning since it refers to a decision made within the framework of the participatory experiment, in which the final decision is made by the participatory arena or is directly binding for the administration.

17. For each experience, the index shows the maximum level of planned influence in policymaking. For example, if one experience has been linked to consultation and design/co-design, this experience would score 2 in this index: design/co-design. In that sense, decision/co-decision and management/co-management have been considered together, to the extent that both imply the highest degree of empowerment. Additionally, few cases would be distributed in both categories considered separately.

18. No data is available for Andalusia and Madrid. Information for most experiences in these regions was too limited to code these variables with a minimum of reliability. These regions will be incorporated into the analysis in the next sections.

19. For Tuscany, this phase is conceived as the elaboration of a generic proposal.

20. All of them are dummy variables in the database for all regions, so we can check if a concrete participatory experience is addressed to each phase independently. In contrast, for Catalonia there are four items in order to indicate which of the five stages are present for each experience (diagnosis, programming, decision, implementation and evaluation). Thus if an experience is addressed to all stages, in our database we only have collected the reference to the four main ones.

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List of Contributors

Pau Alarcón currently holds a predoctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain and is researching at the IESA-CSIC. He is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Government and Public Policies of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. His research interests include local participation processes, political attitudes and public policies.

Joan Font is senior researcher at the Institute of Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC) in Córdoba (Spain). He has conducted research about elections, surveys, local participation processes, citizens' juries, deliberative polls and referendums, and he has published in journals like *European Journal of Political Research*, *Public Administration* and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Paloma Fontcuberta is a social researcher. She has been working for more than twenty years covering many different fields, including citizen and political surveys. She has worked for private companies and also public institutions like the Spanish National Research Council (IPP-CSIC).

María J. Funes is professor of sociology. She has conducted a great deal of research and participates as a member of several groups that focus on different kinds of participation: social movements, associations or processes arranged from institutions like citizens' juries or participative budgeting. In addition, she works in the theoretical approach to the study of collective action. She has published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Franco Angelli, ed.), *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, *REIS* and *RIS*, among others.

What Academics Assume

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE LARGE N STUDY OF LOCAL PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES Combining methods and databases

RETOS METODOLÓGICOS PARA EL ESTUDIO CUANTITATIVO DE LAS EXPERIENCIAS PARTICIPATIVAS LOCALES

Combinación de métodos y bases de datos

CAROLINA GALAIS carolina.galais@uab.cat

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB). Spain

JOAN FONT jfont@iesa.csic.es

PAU ALARCÓN palarcon@iesa.csic.es

DOLORES SESMA lsesma@iesa.csic.es

Instituto de Estudios Sociales Avanzados (IESA-CSIC). Spain

ABSTRACT

In this article we analyse the effects of different data collection strategies in the study of local participatory experiences in a region of Spain (Andalusia). We examine the divergences and similarities between the data collected using different methods, as well as the implications for the reliability of the data. We have collected participatory experiences through two parallel processes: a survey of municipalities and web content mining. The survey of municipalities used two complementary strategies: an online questionnaire and a CATI follow-up for those municipalities that had not answered our first online contact attempt. Both processes (survey and data mining) were applied to the same sample of municipalities, but provided significantly different images of the characteristics of Andalusia's participatory landscape. The goal of this work is to discuss the different types of biases introduced by each data collection procedure and their implications for substantive analyses.

KEYWORDS

Citizen participation; Data collection procedures; Internet data mining; Local participation; Participatory experiences; Survey administration mode.

RESUMEN

En este artículo analizamos los efectos de diferentes estrategias para la recolección de datos en el estudio de las experiencias participativas andaluzas. Examinamos para ello las diferencias y similitudes entre los datos recogidos mediante diferentes métodos, así como las implicaciones para la fiabilidad de los datos. Para ello, hemos utilizado dos procedimientos paralelos. En primer lugar, una encuesta a municipios y la minería de datos en Internet. La encuesta se realizó utilizando dos modos de administración diferentes, un cuestionario *online* y un cuestionario telefónico de seguimiento a los municipios que no respondieron al primer intento de contacto vía correo electrónico. Tanto la encuesta como la minería de datos fueron aplicados a la misma muestra de municipios, aunque arrojaron diferencias significativas en cuanto a las características del panorama participativo en Andalucía. El objetivo de este trabajo es discutir los diferentes tipos de sesgos introducidos por cada procedimiento de recogida de datos y sus implicaciones para posteriores análisis sustantivos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Experiencias participativas; Minería de datos online; Modo de administración de encuestas; Participación ciudadana; Participación local; Procedimientos de recogida de datos.

INTRODUCTION¹

Most previous attempts at providing a general picture of local participation activity have used self-administered surveys sent to municipalities (DETR 1998; Birch 2002; FEMP 2002; Ajángiz and Blas 2008). Is this a reliable strategy that can provide a good overall picture of reality? Are there other alternatives that could provide better information? In this paper we try to answer these questions through an analysis of the data collection process regarding participatory experiences completed at a local level in Andalusia, a region of Spain. To do so, we examine the divergences and similarities that arise from the comparison of two different methods (one of them with two modes of administration, making three different data sources) of collecting and coding information regarding a few hundred participatory experiences.

The first main goal of this paper is to discuss the virtues and limitations of two contrasting strategies of data collection. The first strategy used was the more traditional one, a survey of municipalities. The second was a data mining strategy using the Internet. With this aim, we conducted two parallel data collection processes that tried to capture the same reality. In addition, the survey faced a common problem related to this methodology: dealing with refusals and with the resulting moderate response rates. To address this, the first mode of administration (Computer Assisted Self Interview, CASI) was complemented with a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) survey. This allowed us to address two subsequent research questions. First, we asked whether the differences between our surveys were a product of comparing two different sets of municipalities (the larger and more engaged with the research topic, which answered our online survey in the first place versus the remaining ones that answered the telephone survey) or whether some of the differences were the result of using two different modes of administration (CATI vs. CASI). Second, once we aggregated these two sources of data, we were able to compare them with the results from our data mining approach to learn more about the biases each of them produced on the pictures of the reality obtained.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the next section we justify why making these comparisons is important and present the research design and data collection procedures we have used. Section 3 makes the first comparison between the two stages of the survey (CASI vs. CATI). In this first comparison, our two universes were different and, as a result, we also expect to find important differences in the characteristics of the experiences collected. We discuss whether all differences were compositional (i.e., caused by the fact that we are measuring two different parts of our final universe). The complementary explanation is that some of these differences may be the result of the

¹A previous version of this paper was presented at the Conference "Methodological challenges in participation research", IESA (CSIC), Córdoba, November 4-5, 2011. We thank the session discussant, the participants and Donatella della Porta for helpful comments.

two modes of administration used. Section 4 moves to the comparison of the final results of both data collection procedures (survey vs. Internet-collected information). We follow the same logic as in section 3, showing the differences in a few important variables and analysing to what extent they are due to the data collection mode. Section 5 briefly presents three potential future research strategies to continue exploring the causes of the remaining differences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper stems from the decisions and challenges faced when gathering information on participatory experiences at the local level for the MECPALO project². One of the main goals of the project is to build several regional databases of participatory experiences developed at the sub-regional level³. This is aimed at making a description of the characteristics of these experiences, as well as answering a series of questions related to the origins, democratic qualities and attitudinal consequences of those experiences.

We have argued elsewhere about the need to build close to local participation realities that go beyond the prevalent case study strategy (Font et al. 2011; Font and Galais 2011)⁴. However, drawing such a picture is not an easy task. Three different approaches are found in previous research. First, the selection of a limited subset of experiences that share some common organisational or territorial characteristics (“focused mappings” e.g., Schattan 2006; Sintomer et al. 2008). Second, the gathering of several varied experiences that try to capture the maximum diversity regarding those processes (Subirats et al. 2001; Della Porta and Reiter 2009). Third, the development of a survey of municipalities to obtain a list of the municipalities’ responses (DETR 1998; Birch 2002; FEMP 2002). Since the first approach allows building a more reliable but also more incomplete picture of reality, we wanted to assess the advantages and problems of the two remaining strategies.

It should be noted that we lack a census of experiences. That is, there is no sampling frame with which to start. Bearing this in mind, we started by designing a representative sample of Andalusian municipalities. Andalusia has 770 municipalities, from which we selected a sample of 400. These 400 municipalities are representative of the municipa-

² MECPALO is the Spanish acronym for the project *Local participation processes in Southern Europe: causes and consequences*. The project’s principal investigator (PI) is Joan Font and the research team includes researchers from three Spanish institutions, as well as a French team (PI: Yves Sintomer) and an Italian team (PI: Donatella della Porta).

³ The universe of analysis is formed by any participatory process (from a 2 hour consultation to a stable and periodical mechanism) whose aim is to discuss local policies or issues and which has either been promoted or has gained recognition from local authorities.

⁴ A similar argument has also been developed by other authors (e.g., Baiocchi et al. 2011).

lities with more than 1000 inhabitants⁵. The sample was stratified by province and city size (Font et al. 2011).

Our main unit of observation comprises experiences and not municipalities. Sampling Andalusian municipalities (those that develop participatory experiences as well as those that do not) allows us to answer additional research questions (e.g., why some councils conducted few or no participatory practices while others undertook quite a few), but this is not the aim of our particular research. In addition, our sampling strategy guarantees acceptable variability among the contextual explanatory factors.

We then designed a web-based questionnaire that addressed more than 50 questions on the existence and characteristics of participatory experiences, and sent a link to our survey to the public officials in charge of citizenship participation affairs in each of these 400 municipalities or—in the absence of this position—to the mayor. A total of 120 municipalities responded to the call after three follow-up messages, which means that the final response rate for the CASI survey was 30%. Higher response rates were obtained in municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants and slightly higher rates in those governed by the political party to the left of the social democrats (United Left, IU; response rate 37%). The municipalities included in the study were asked to provide up to two experiences. Some did not report any, some provided one, and a few completed the questionnaire twice, once per each experience. These experiences were transformed into our units of analysis. Considering that some municipalities had not developed a participatory process and some provided two, this made up a total of 156 experiences.

However, the response rate pointed to some of the limitations of our final sample. It is known that non-response bias may jeopardise the reliability of the portrait presented by the data, as well as the relationship between variables. In our case this is particularly true with regards to the link between city size and local government ideology. For instance, if municipalities ruled by left-wing parties were more prone to answer the survey regardless of their participatory performance, but those ruled by conservatives only answered if they had successful experiences to report, this could weaken our conclusions about the relationship between ideology and participatory initiatives.

The survey research literature has shown that when high non-response rates may jeopardise the representativeness and variability of data, a possible course of action is to switch the mode of administration (Dillman et al. 2009). Thus, we launched a second phase of the data collection process. This second phase consisted of contacting the remaining municipalities that did not answer our online survey, relying this time on telephone interviewing. Two main hypotheses about non-response drove this effort. First, for

⁵ There were two reasons for choosing only a section of the 770 municipalities. First, the need to exclude the smallest municipalities that develop interesting participatory practices, but hardly formalise them and do not have the resources to publish them on a website. Second, given the large number of municipalities in the next strata (1,000 to 10,000 inhabitants) we preferred to make a sample of them and retain more resources to undertake a more intense follow-up that could lead to a higher response rate.

municipalities without an evident interest in the field of citizenship participation, dealing with a (relatively long) self-administered questionnaire could be a reason for skipping the survey. Using a different mode of administration that avoided any writing and a shorter questionnaire lead by an interviewer, which conveyed a sense of duty to respondents while resolving their doubts, could increase the response rate. Second, we suspected that municipalities that did not have personnel devoted specifically to participation (especially smaller municipalities) might have been more reluctant to find the appropriate person to answer the survey. Experienced interviewers could reach this person more easily. The CATI survey achieved a 62% response rate (174 municipalities of the 380 that had not answered the CASI survey). As a result, the combined CASI and CATI surveys represent a 73.5% response rate (see section 3 for more details).

The next complementary strategy was carried out in an attempt to improve two previous processes to collect participatory experiences that had been performed in relation with the MECPALO project (Della Porta and Reiter 2009; Font and Galais, 2011). We searched the net for websites of the same 400 municipalities using keywords following the common standard for web content mining (Cooley et al. 1997). We used a codebook that followed the survey questionnaire, including most of the same information. This effort resulted in a new database containing 125 experiences⁶. Previous research on web content mining agrees that the main pitfall of this data collection method is that “in the absence of a known population, a truly random sample [of relevant websites] is not possible” (Miller, Pole and Bateman 2010:4). Our work, however, avoids this flaw because it starts with a representative sample of Andalusian municipalities.

In this respect, we first compare the two parts of the survey data collected through the CASI and CATI methods. In this case, we expect to find important differences in the data since they correspond to two different subpopulations of the local universe. In addition, both CASI and CATI have strengths and weaknesses. Thus, we will probably also find differences that are the result of the two different modes of administration. In online self-administered surveys, there is no interviewer to enhance social desirability. However, this means that no one can either clarify the meaning of the answers or encourage responses (Bradburn et al. 2004). It is quite likely that CASI data contain much more item non-response (Diaz de Rada 2011) and possibly more measurement error due to the misunderstanding of more difficult questions. On the other hand, telephone interviewing may show more random measurement errors, more survey satisficing, and more social desirability response bias (Chang and Krosnick 2009). These effects may cancel each other out and result in similar data quality, thus justifying the decision to merge both surveys⁷.

⁶Experiences where too limited information (less than 20% of the variables) was found were not included in the final database. Approximately 20 experiences fit in this category.

⁷A similar argument has been used in Diaz de Rada (2010) which shows that through the compensation of different sources of bias, the results of a combined personal and phone pre-election poll obtained better results than any of them alone.

Our second comparison is between (aggregated) survey results and our data mining search. To our knowledge, no comparisons between survey-obtained and web-collected data validity have been conducted to date. In this case, compositional effects should be more limited since the initial sampling for both strategies includes the same 400 municipalities. However, these differences should exist. First, because our survey strategy asked specifically about a maximum of two experiences per municipality, whereas the Internet search strategy would collect as many as were sufficiently documented on the web⁸. Second, both data collection procedures have their own potential problems. Surveys are affected by the most common sources of error: the questionnaire and the role the respondents play in answering them. In its turn, Internet data mining may also introduce biases coming from the search engine (visibility of the webs caused by the amount of inlinks and outlinks and user searches) and from the researcher, including the keywords selected and the interpretation and coding of the results (Hindman 2008).

We will proceed by comparing the distribution of several relevant variables in these databases, and then move forward by comparing the explanatory power of the data source (our main independent variable) in a series of multivariate analyses. For these analyses, we have selected a set of dependent variables that have been proven relevant in participation studies (Table 1). First, and as a way to approach the phenomenon of the impact of participation on politics, we will look at the number of policy phases that were actually accessible for citizens during the process. We selected this variable as a proxy for influence, i.e., the degree to which citizens were involved in the public decision (Arns-stein 1971; Parés 2009). We will count the number of phases (diagnosis, programming, decision, implementation, evaluation) in which citizens had a say (Font et al. 2011). This produces a numerical variable that ranges from 0 to 5.

Next, we will consider whether the local government was the only driving force of those experiences. Some scholars have suggested that the direction of the driving forces (top-down vs. down-top) may affect the design and results and, in short, the qualities of the participatory process (Fung 2006; Della Porta 2008; Font and Galais 2011). Thus, we have generated a dichotomous variable that differentiates those experiences where civil society had played some role in proposing or organising the experience.

Inclusiveness measures the attempt to involve wide and diverse sectors of society in the process (Fung 2006; Della Porta 2008). Such inclusiveness may be pursued either by extensive mobilisation strategies oriented to achieving a large number of participants, or through the plural representation of views and opinions. Thus, we use two different variables to capture this idea. First, we use a dichotomous variable that distinguishes experiences with an open call or random selection of participants from the census vs. all possible forms of restricted call (i.e., personal invitations). Second, we include the number of participants since this is a traditional indicator of the legitimacy of the participatory component of a process.

⁸ Seven municipalities include three or more experiences (six in one case). This means that these seven municipalities concentrate 32% of the total experiences included in the Internet-collected database.

Finally, we take into account whether we deal with a temporary experience (from a one-hour session to a two-year process) or with a stable mechanism that shows the will of the promoters to institutionalise citizens' participation.

Table 1.
Dependent variables: Dimensions, contents and response categories

Dimension	Content	Categories
Origin	Promoter/organiser of the experience	Dichotomous: Only local government vs. local government and civil society
Policies	Number of participatory policy phases	Continuous: 0 to 5
Inclusiveness	Plurality of actors	Dichotomous: Open to all or random selection vs. invitation
Inclusiveness	Number of participants	Continuous: Eight categories going from 1 (ten participants or less) to 8 (more than a thousand participants)
Stability	Temporary process or permanent mechanism	Dichotomous

A TWO-STEP SURVEY. MIXING MODES OF ADMINISTRATION

In order to offer a first glimpse of the similarities and differences of CATI and CASI data, this section begins by comparing the sampling differences between the two. It then looks for significant differences among the dependent variables mentioned above. Finally, multivariate analyses are used to test to what extent data source may bias results when explaining such participatory features.

Table 2 shows the virtues of the mix-mode administration of the final survey quite clearly. A comparison of the first and second column of the table shows that the CASI survey had significant biases in the response rates of the different categories (much higher for large municipalities, but also in the province of Cordoba or in municipalities governed by the leftist IU). In contrast, the comparison of the initial sample (first column) and the final survey results (last columns) are remarkably similar for all variables and categories. As a result, we can be quite confident that a survey with a high response rate (74%), which is distributed quite homogeneously among all sectors, does not contain significant biases regarding potential variables that need to be controlled.

On the other hand, precisely because the types of municipalities that have answered the CASI and the CATI survey are quite different, we should expect significant differences

in the type of participatory processes obtained through each of these procedures. As expected, the first important difference appears when comparing partial non-response, which tends to be much higher in the CASI method. To provide just a few examples, partial non-response was 10% versus 0% for easy questions such as having a department in charge of participation or not, and 49% versus 1% for more “difficult” questions such as the number of people working full time on participation-related activities for the CASI and CATI methods, respectively.

Graph 1 displays a pattern regarding the policy phases opened for participation that also appears in other questions. There are differences in the results found through both modes of administration, since participation in the diagnosis phase is significantly more common among the municipalities that answered the CASI survey. On the other hand,

Table 2.
Composition of initial and effective samples of Andalusian municipalities by province, city size and party

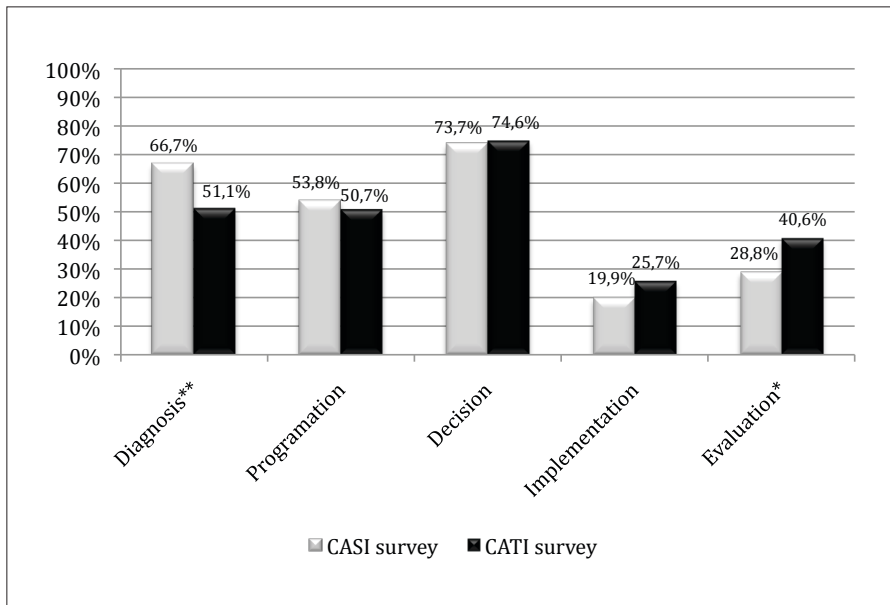
		Initial designed sample (%)	CASI Survey (%)	CATI survey (%)	Total Survey (%)
Province	Almeria	8.5	5.8	10.9	8.8
	Cadiz	8.5	10.0	8.6	9.2
	Cordoba	11	20.0	6.9	12.2
	Granada	18	14.2	20.1	17.7
	Huelva	9	5.8	9.8	8.2
	Jaen	13.5	13.3	14.4	14.0
	Malaga	12.5	12.5	12.6	12.6
	Seville	19	18.3	16.7	17.4
Inhabitants	1,000-5,000	44	34	49.4	43.1
	5,000-10,000	18.25	20	20.7	20.4
	10,000-20,000	18.25	15	16.1	15.7
	20,000-50,000	12.25	20	8.6	13.3
	+50,000	7.25	11	5.2	7.6
Political party of the mayor	PSOE	62.5	61.6	69.5	66.3
	PP	16.3	14.2	14.4	14.3
	IU	12.3	15.0	10.3	12.2
	PA	4.0	5.0	1.7	3.0
	Independent/ others	5.0	4.2	4.0	4.1
N		400	120	174	294

Sources: Survey E1107 (IESA)

participation in the decision, implementation and the evaluation phases in particular is more common in the phone survey. Such discrepancies may be due to genuine differences among the municipalities that answered the surveys and their practices, but are more likely related to response order effects (Krosnick and Alwin 1987; Tourangeau and Smith 1996). Indeed, established research states that respondents of self-administered, visual-presented questionnaires are more prone to check off the first response option presented, what is known as the “primacy effect”. On the contrary, when respondents are asked questions orally, such as in face-to-face or telephone interviews, they are more prone to agree with the final option offered, a phenomenon called the “recency effect”. These tendencies and likely biases that run in opposite directions are, however, likely to cancel each other out if we gather together the data collected through different administration modes.

Nevertheless, not all the differences between CASI and CATI surveys will be due to administration modes. As argued before, it is quite normal that some differences will

Graph 1.
Differences between administration modes for phases of the policy process



* Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.05

** Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.01

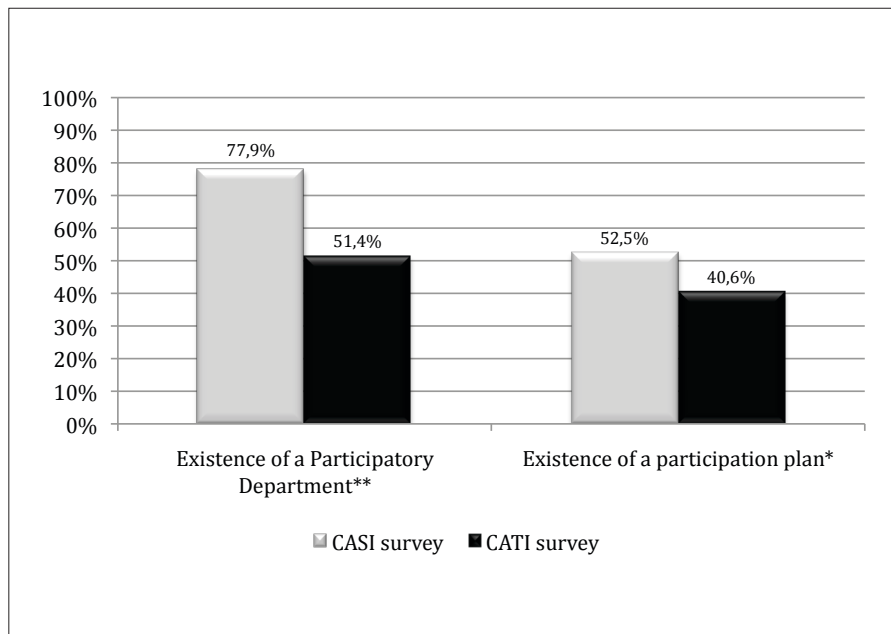
Sources: Font (2001) and Survey E1107 (IESA)

N=432

arise since the municipalities that both surveys cover are not the same. To make a first step towards disentangling the effects of the administration mode and of the composition of both samples, we have conducted a series of regression analyses of the dependent variables justified above. Regarding the relevant controls, we have taken into account city size, since it is one of the most important variables that distinguishes both samples and which is likely to have an effect on the type of participatory processes developed. The variable “inhabitants” takes values between 1 and 5, whose meaning is consistent with the categories displayed in Table 2.

Graph 2 justifies the inclusion of additional controls. As it becomes evident, the municipalities that answered the CASI survey are more likely to have a participation department and a local participation plan. These two variables are likely measuring quite a different level of a city council’s engagement with citizens’ participation and the resources available to deal with it. We will include them in further multivariate analyses as

Graph 2.
Institutional resources by administration mode



*Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.05

**Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.01
N=416 and 415, respectively.

dichotomous variables where 1 denotes having a participation plan or having a participation department⁹.

The results of the regression analysis are displayed in tables 3 (logistic regressions) and 4 (OLS regressions). In both tables, the first column for each of the dependent variables shows the explanatory power of the mode of administration alone, whereas the second column shows the effect of the administration mode once we control for some of the important compositional variables that distinguish both populations.

Table 3.
Explanatory factors of participation characteristics: Logistic regressions

	Government as single organiser				Participation open to everyone				Stability			
	Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Data source: CASI	1.27	**	1.27	**	-.440	*	-.37	-	-.022	-	-.021	-
Inhabitants	-	-	.005	-	-	-	-.122	-	-	-	-.048	-
Participation plan	-	-	.007	-	-	-	.34	-	-	-	.584	**
Participation department	-	-	.1	-	-	-	.16	-	-	-	-.009	-
Constant	-.628	**	-.727	*	0.44	**	.42	-	.517	**	.396	-
R2 Nagelkerke	.111		.112		.015		.032		0		.026	
N	418		418		420		420		425		425	

*<0.05; **<0.01

Sources: Survey E1107 (IESA)

⁹In this latter case, we have also coded as 1 those municipalities that do not have a department under this designation but where another department is in charge of participatory affairs. By doing so we do not penalise small towns.

Table 4.
Explanatory factors of participation characteristics: OLS regressions

	Number of policy phases opened for participation				Number of participants (categories)			
	Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Data source: CASI	.002	-	-0.08	-	-.074	-	-.322	-
Inhabitants	-	-	0.03	-	-	-	.253	**
Participation plan	-	-	0.57	**	-	-	.528	**
Participation department	-	-	0.13	-	-	-	-.079	-
Constant	2.43	**	2.07	**	3.67	**	3.03	**
R ²	0		0.039		0		.053	
N	432		432		418		418	

*<0.05; **<0.01

Sources: Survey E1107 (IESA)

Tables 3 and 4 show different estimation models for the five dependent variables analysed. In three of the five regressions, the coefficient for our main independent variable is not significant. For instance, when data are collected through CASI surveys, the government tends to be the principal organiser of the experience, and this relationship between the administration mode and this trend of participatory experiences does not disappear after controlling for organisational resources or the size of the municipality. The fact that the experience was open to everyone also seems to be affected by the administration mode in the sense that municipalities that administered our CASI survey tend to hold restricted processes. Nevertheless, the difference is not significant once we control for city size and resources.

In summary, the use of a combined mix-mode strategy resulted in a substantially higher response rate which would spare us some biased conclusions regarding the relationship between variables. This is probably a result of combining two different administration modes as the reduction in the bias is related to the size of the municipality since large cities were keener to answer our first CASI survey. Some differences between both databases (especially regarding the role of different actors) are still present when analysing those data and considering the administration mode as an explanatory factor. Nevertheless, in some cases these differences disappear when we control for the impact

of the administration mode on some factors that determine different populations (i.e., size of municipality and organisational resources related to participation). In most cases, the differences are not significant and this becomes an encouraging starting point that reinforces the strategy of merging both datasets.

COMPARING THE RESULTS FROM TWO DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES. SURVEY VERSUS INTERNET SEARCH

Our next step is to compare the survey dataset, where CASI and CATI data have been merged, with data gathered through web mining. From now on, we will not distinguish between administration modes regarding surveys. In this case, the populations of the two datasets (survey vs. internet mining) should be more similar, since we are covering the same 400 municipalities. If differences are found, they should be the result of three main factors. Firstly, not every participatory process makes its way to being published on a website. This is evidenced by the fact that we have collected 432 experiences through the survey¹⁰ and only 125 through the data mining strategy. Moreover, even if some experiences can be tracked through the web, not all of them are equally visible. Some of them may lack the keywords or links that allow search engines to identify and present them among the first results. Second, the coders are very different. In one case, the respondent also plays the role of coder: she must retrieve her memories and subjective perceptions and then attempt to find a correspondence with the categories available in the questionnaire. In contrast, a data mining strategy implies that researchers act as coders or instruct coders about how to translate the information provided by municipal websites into final, meaningful values. Third, the survey allowed for a maximum of two experiences per municipality, whereas the data mining strategy put no limit on this number, thus resulting in a more limited number of municipalities in the latter database¹¹ and a larger number of experiences per municipality¹².

The Internet data content mining process began with a careful search for key terms in the websites of our 400 sampled municipalities. The keywords successively searched

¹⁰ If we give full credence to the survey results, the full number would be much larger since the average number of experiences acknowledged by the municipalities was around four, but we only asked them to report the details of two of them. There is also a potential bias in the selection they made of their two experiences. We therefore developed a complementary survey to analyse this possible effect, but the results are not yet available.

¹¹ A total of 120 municipalities were sampled by survey and around 70 by the data mining strategy. Several experiences in the latter strategy correspond to supra-local processes that cannot be attributed to a single municipality.

¹² 1.3 experiences per municipality in the survey and 1.8 in data mining.

were: *citizen participation, participatory budget, local agenda 21, citizen forum, assembly, survey, local democracy, e-government, e-democracy, strategic plan, and citizen participation department*¹³. Additionally, general web searches (Google) were made using the same keywords combined with the region's name and selecting those processes that corresponded to our 400 municipalities. In each of these searches we searched five Google pages to find information about new participatory experiences or additional information about those already collected. When we could not obtain any new information amid the first five Google results, we stopped and moved to the next concept. Information was also researched on the website of the Andalusian Federation of Municipalities (FAMP, in Spanish), which hosts a database containing a few dozen participatory experiences.

Once an experience was found, we *googled* for additional information about the experience to complete as many fields of our database as possible. If we located an experience but the information available was too limited (less than 20% of the variables), we did not include it in the final database. We then coded the information obtained using the same variables and concepts reflected in the survey, excluding subjective questions as well as a few more questions that were of limited analytical interest.

To proceed with the analysis we will compare the results of both datasets and analyse the differences between them using the same strategy as in section 2. Table 5 shows that, even if the sampling frame for both data gathering procedures (surveys and web content mining) are identical, the final results show very different landscapes for the Andalusian municipalities. Surveys provide a more similar picture to the initial sample design, in which small municipalities were prevalent. On the contrary, Internet data provide very few experiences in small municipalities. A large number of them are found in large cities of more than 50,000 inhabitants. This is probably the result of differences regarding resources, which would have an impact on the efforts devoted to the online diffusion of these experiences¹⁴. This triggers a serious underrepresentation of the experiences emerging from small municipalities.

These enormous differences could point to two radically different realities in all aspects. Nevertheless, the discrepancies among data collection procedures are not found for all the relevant variables in this study. In fact, the other two variables whose real distribution we know for sure are quite similar in both datasets. As Table 6 shows, only one province is significantly overrepresented by web data mining (Cadiz). Regarding the political party of the mayor, we find the exact translation of the actual party shares by city size amid the web mining data. Since the PSOE (social democratic

¹³ Participación ciudadana, presupuestos participativos, agenda 21 local, foro ciudadano, asamblea, encuesta, democracia local, e-gobierno, e-democracia, e-participación, plan estratégico, concejalía participación ciudadana.

¹⁴ Most small municipalities have a website, but they are extremely simple and contain limited information. Most often this information deals more with the locality and its attractiveness rather than with local policy.

Table 5.
Number of inhabitants across data source

	Survey (%)	Internet data mining (%)	Differences
<5,000 inhabitants	41.1	10.5	-30.6*
5,000-10,000 inhabitants	21.1	18.1	-3
10,000-20,000 inhabitants	14.8	14.3	0.5
20,000-50,000 inhabitants	14.6	22.9	8.3*
>50,000 inhabitants	8.6	34.3	-26*
Total	100	100	

*Denotes significant differences between categories based on a two-sided test with a significance level of 0.05 (N=537 (432 surveys; 105 data mining). Experiences involving more than one municipality are excluded (N=20). Source: Font (2001), Survey E1107 (IESA) and Internet data mining Andalusia 2011 (IESA).

Table 6.
Political party of the mayor and province by data source

		Survey (%)	Internet data mining (%)	Differences
Political party	PSOE	68.8	60	-8.8
	PP	12.3	21	8.7*
	IU	13.2	17.1	3.9
	PA	1.6	0	-1.6
	Independent	4.2	1.9	-2.3
	N	432	105 ¹	
Province	Almeria	8.3	6.6	-1.7
	Cadiz	9.0	19.7	10.7*
	Cordoba	12.7	13.1	0.4
	Granada	17.8	13.9	-3.1
	Huelva	7.2	4.1	-3.1
	Jaen	14.4	21.3	6.9
	Malaga	13.4	9.8	-3.6
	Seville	17.1	11.5	-5.6
	N	432	122 ²	

* Denotes significant differences between categories based on a two-sided test with a significance level of 0.05 Sources: Font (2001), Survey E1107 (IESA) and Internet data mining Andalusia 2011 (IESA).

¹ Excludes supra-local experiences, where no single government party can be identified (N=20).

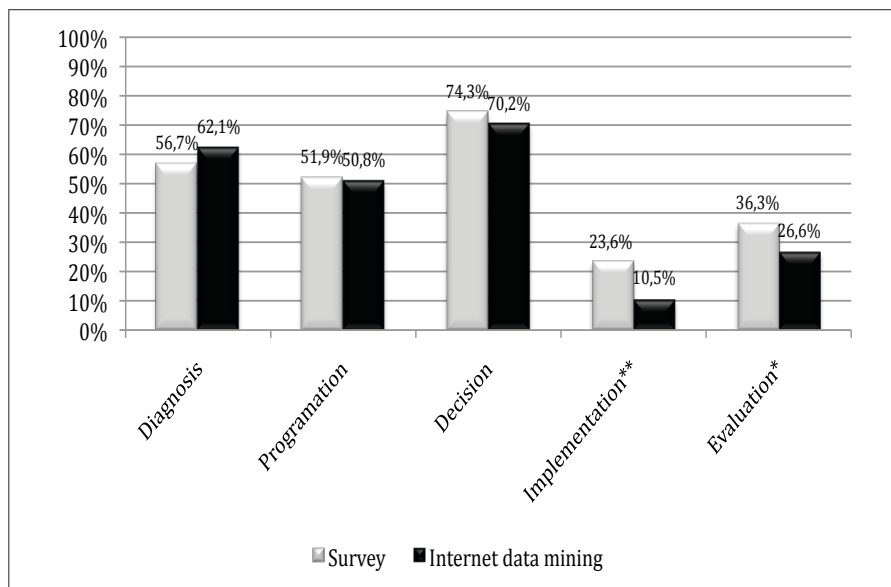
² Excludes experiences that affected more than one province (N=3).

party) prevails in small municipalities, the experiences developed by this centre-left party are more important in the survey-collected database, where small municipalities are also more prevalent. We find exactly the opposite pattern regarding the conservative PP party (Table 6). Thus, even if we could apparently be facing an ideology bias, this is probably due to the underrepresentation of small municipalities when an Internet data mining strategy is adopted.

Graph 3 displays the differences between the two sources regarding the same variable shown in the previous section, namely the policy phases opened to participation. As can be observed, the implementation and evaluation phases are significantly less present among experiences collected through Internet data mining.

This shows again that data sources are potentially relevant and, as a result, we will proceed with the same analytical strategy: to predict the same five dependent variables using the data source as our main independent variable and city size and resources as

Graph 3.
Differences between administration modes for phases of the policy process



*Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.05

**Denotes significant differences between the averages with a significance level of 0.01

Sources: Font (2001), Survey E1107 (IESA) and Internet data mining Andalusia 2011 (IESA) N=557

controls. Tables 7 and 8 show the regression coefficients for these variables. As can be seen, there are substantive differences between Internet-collected experiences and survey data for all our dependent variables. Experiences collected by means of web mining are less prone than survey-collected experiences to crystallise as permanent mechanisms and to open this kind of process to several policy phases. Moreover, they are also more likely to be driven exclusively by local governments. However, they are more inclusive as they are more open to everyone and able to mobilise more participants. Controlling for the number of inhabitants and/or the most important local resources does not make these effects disappear.

Table 7.
Explanatory factors of participation characteristics. Survey vs. Internet mining differences (logistic regressions)

	Government as single organiser				Participation open to everyone				Stability			
	Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Data source: Internet mining [▲]	3.6	**	3.6	**	0.5	*	1.2	**	-1.4	**	-1.2	**
Inhabitants	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-0.1	*	-	-	-0.28	-
Participation plan	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	0.3	-	-	-	0.64	**
Participation department	-	-	-0.05	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	-0.02	-
Constant	-0.18	**	-0.4	-	0.3	**	0.3	-	0.52	**	0.35	-
R2 Nagelkerke	0.29		0.27		0.01		0.06		0.11		0.09	
N	543		523		543		523		550		530	

[▲] The reference category for the variable "Internet mining" is "survey".

*<0.05; **<0.01

Sources: Font (2001), Survey E1107 (IESA) and Internet data mining Andalusia 2011 (IESA)

Table 8.
Explanatory factors of participation characteristics. Survey vs. Internet mining differences (OLS regressions)

	Number of policy phases opened for participation				Number of participants (categories)			
	Only data source		With other variables		Only data source		With other variables	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Data source: Internet mining	-.247	-	-0.6	**	.787	**	.620	*
Inhabitants	-	-	0.05	-			.234	**
Participation plan	-	-	0.49	**			.565	**
Participation department	-	-	0.13	-			-.061	-
Constant	2.4	**	1.97	**	3.644	**	2.92	**
R2	.003		0.06		.023		.075	
N	556		536		490		472	

*<0.05; **<0.01

Sources: Font (2001), Survey E1107 (IESA) and Internet data mining Andalusia 2011 (IESA)

Both the leading role of the local government and the permanent character of a participatory process are probably highly correlated with its likelihood to become noticeable and, as a result, to reach the Internet. Some stable mechanisms, such as participatory budgeting, have been introduced in recent decades and their attractiveness and intensity have produced considerable media and web visibility. On the contrary, other permanent mechanisms that follow the logic of sectoral or territorially-based consultation councils have existed for years and do not attract much media attention. Even when they make their way to municipal websites, the documentation they provide tends to be insufficient to consider them a valid case¹⁵.

¹⁵ Very often only the internal regulation of their composition can be found, but no information on their real dynamics. This pattern is only broken in very large cities like Madrid or Barcelona that offer much richer information on these mechanisms.

The policy phases are very different and this has implications in the coding process. For instance, it would be difficult that two external observers or coders disagree on whether to qualify a particular participatory process as stable or as limited in time. However, the number of policy phases open to citizen participation is not so clear. Coding them becomes difficult even for qualified coders and their contents are difficult to understand for respondents that are not accustomed to thinking about this issue. We cannot claim that we know why these differences arise, but it is clear that these two questions are extremely different and that policy phases are a good candidate to expect a high respondent/coder influence.

Finally, the two aspects where the Internet processes score better (the two dimensions of inclusiveness) probably highlight the filters that help participatory mechanisms to make their way onto the web. The less interesting or spectacular processes, where politicians only try to avoid conflicts or to give legitimacy to sectoral policies through consultation with a limited network of actors would not reach local websites. Alternatively, we could consider that these practices are not interesting enough to give them visibility or to produce a participation section on the local website. However, when a municipality is surveyed, they will look at any practice they have developed to avoid appearing to be a passive administration. In the next section we present further strategies that could be pursued in order to confirm or discard these hypotheses.

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH¹⁶

Throughout the paper we have pointed to several explanations for these differences between data collected by means of surveys and data gathered through internet data mining. How important are each of them? Are there possible research strategies to disentangle their relative weight? Basically, we have pointed to two main reasons why the results could be different: because the universes they reflect are not identical or because the people who have translated the reality into codes have used different criteria. We want to briefly sketch four alternative strategies (two dealing with the different universes and two dealing with the role of the coder) that could contribute to understanding where these differences come from and their methodological and substantive implications. The first one is a strategy based on automated data content mining. In order to overcome the biases introduced by the professional zeal of researchers, several scholars suggest the use of automated tools such as indexing software (Zafarani et al. 2008). These tools automatically harvest all the information from a text or website and count the words and

¹⁶ Some of these strategies have been partially developed and have contributed to checking data mining quality. Others have been developed, but a detailed analysis cannot be presented here due to reasons of space.

semantic roots. It is necessary to subsequently classify this information into meaningful categories, but this avoids missing some information due to fatigue, for instance. *Issue discovery* software, for example, lists the words and lexemes mentioned more than once in a website. Of course for this or any other indexing outcome to be meaningful, it is still necessary that the researcher read and process all the information available, but these tools may help overcome some coding biases.

A second alternative would be to have an in-depth, qualitative look at both raw databases, identify the cases that correspond to the same experiences and compare the coding reached by each of these methods, paying special attention to which kind of variables offer greater differences and why it may happen. In our case, 28 experiences are “repeated” in our primary raw records. That is, they were found through the Internet and also through the survey. Even if this does not constitute a large sample, it may be plausible to perform some tests to identify the variables that show larger discrepancies between the two kinds of coders (survey respondents/researcher).

These two strategies focus on how the coding procedures could have produced different results, whereas our third and fourth alternatives would explore the reasons why certain experiences are more likely to reach the databases using one or another data collection procedure. The third alternative would focus on the potential bias introduced by the survey respondents when they choose their two experiences, since they could have chosen the most interesting ones or those where they were more intensely involved. To explore this possibility, we selected those municipalities that had indicated in the original CASI survey that they had developed more than two experiences, but had only given the details about two of them. In a new telephone survey we asked them to give details about two additional cases, now selected through a more objective criterion: the most recent ones. A comparison with the originally provided experiences will allow us to examine this potential source of bias.

In addition, our fourth strategy could deal with the gatekeeper role of people in charge of local websites and how they can bias which experiences will or will not be published. For example, in comparing both databases we could check whether the processes that have been developed by the mayor and not by a specific sectoral department have a higher probability of reaching the web or whether alternative patterns of selection could be identified.

CONCLUSION

There is no single perfect method for capturing the reality of local participation processes. Using a large *N* strategy to analyse this reality may be fruitful and necessary, but it implies selection and standardisation problems that are not easy to solve.

Surveys addressed to institutions also have problems related to non-response and social desirability. In this case, the use of a mixed administration mode strategy allowed us to achieve a much higher and less biased response rate than the single initial usage

of an Internet survey alone. However, problems related to social desirability and others such as the potential effects of the order of response categories or the difficulty of understanding response categories remain.

The alternative strategy of data mining has various flaws. In this case, the most crucial difference is that only a small part of the participatory experiences that appear in the survey have made their way to the Internet and some of them are so poorly documented that they cannot be studied. As a result, a data mining strategy produces a significantly different picture, where experiences developed in large cities that devote more resources to their websites are largely overrepresented. This problem may be less important in other countries where very small municipalities are less common than in Spain.

In any case, differences between the two strategies are not solely due to the bias introduced by Internet visibility. Both procedures start from different available information (the memories of respondents and the documents they want to consult when they answer versus the official reports that are found on the Internet), but in particular, they are interpreted and coded by different types of individuals that give different meaning to the variables handled in our study.

The use of careful comparisons, double-checking or alternative processes of data researching may help to understand where the differences come from and contribute to making data from different sources more comparable. Nonetheless, they will continue to provide different pictures of reality and we should be aware of the limitations and biases that each of them introduces. Even with these limitations, the picture provided by the data from any of the sources/methods of data collection discussed is more accurate than the one that is provided by the prevalent research design in the literature, namely, selecting a few case studies because they are the most successful available experiences.

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CAROL GALAIS is a postdoctoral fellow at the Université de Montreal. She holds a PhD in political science (2008, UPF) and is a member of the Research group Democracy, Elections and Citizenship at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB).

JOAN FONT is a senior researcher at the IESA/CSIC working on citizen participation in public policies. He was the research director at the major public survey institution (CIS) in 2004-2008. He has been a senior lecturer at the Political Science department of UAB (Barcelona) and a visiting scholar at the EUI (Florence) and UCD (Dublin).

DOLORES SESMA is a research assistant at the Institute for Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC). She completed a Master degree in public policies (2008, UCM) and a Master in Social Science and Health (UB). She is also specialized in data analysis (CIS, 2007).

PAU ALARCÓN holds a predoctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Science and Innovation and is researching at the IESA/CSIC. He holds a Bachelor of Sociology (UCM), a Diploma of Statistics (UMH) and a Master in Contemporary Latin-American Studies (UCM). He has been a visiting researcher at the University of Sydney.

RECEIVED: 04 April 2012

ACCEPTED: 27 June 2012

What Academics Assume

Chapter 5

Where Are the Boundaries of Deliberation and Participation? A Transatlantic Debate

Pau Alarcón

Joan Font

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Where Are the Boundaries of Deliberation and Participation? A Transatlantic Debate

Abstract

This article uses recent empirical results from a comparative Southern European study to show that the participatory practices commonly developed in this area are quite different from some of the common ideas related to deliberation in the English-speaking world. One of the main differences lies in the characteristics of the promoters, since most of them are top-down experiences organized by public authorities. The other main difference lies in the role played by equality concerns, which are quite marginal in most of these processes. In other aspects, like the role of participation professionals or the existence of important inequalities in the participation of different groups of citizens, the experiences developed in this area are not as different from what most of the comparative research has shown.

Keywords

Deliberation, public participation, citizen empowerment, democratic innovations, comparative analysis

Introduction

The contours of socio-political objects are likely to be more controversial than those pertaining to the natural sciences. The precise definition of what is and what is not a social movement, a lobby or a protest event are behind many of the debates and controversies affecting each of these fields. There is no reason to expect that this same type of debate does not affect the public deliberation field. In fact, there are good reasons to think that, at this point, the discussion about what does or does not belong to the public deliberation field is much stronger than in any of the fields mentioned above.

There are three different but connected main reasons to have these expectations. First, the object being discussed is much more recent and we have more limited empirical evidence about it, especially at the comparative level. Second, as a result of the previous point, the academic subfield of public deliberation is also at a very early stage and has not reached a considerable level of institutionalization or even a creation of an agreed language and set of concepts. Third, the reality of deliberative practices around the globe shares a few common patterns that reflect the globalization of ideas and practices (e.g., the influence of deliberative ideals), but it also presents very different regional traditions that produce completely different sets of concepts and controversies.

One of the clearest regional-cultural differences is the one concerning the role attributed to participation and deliberation. The US and the English-speaking world in general are clear examples of a context where movements in this field over the last decades, both at the academic and at the practical level, have been dominated by the deliberative tradition¹. Two recent exceptions are Pateman (2012), pointing at some of the important differences between both traditions, and the “Journal of Public Deliberation” monograph about Participatory Budgeting, which aims to establish a dialogue between both traditions (Wampler and Hatzkarp, 2012). In contrast, in the Southern European context, the deliberative tradition is incorporated into the broader “participatory” movement, where participation is the rallying force and deliberation is one of the more or less important participatory possibilities².

¹ The most important coalition of practitioners is called “National Coalition for Deliberation and Dialogue”, this publication is entitled “Journal of Public Deliberation” and in the purely academic production the domination of the “deliberative” label over the much less frequent “participation” label is quite obvious. This pattern is quite clear in most of the US and in other countries like Australia. In most of Western Europe a more mixed situation appears and this is reflected for example in the name of the section of the “European Consortium for Political Research” called “Democratic Innovations”, whose aim is to combine more deliberative and participative traditions (<http://www.democraticinnovations.net/>).

² In France, the broad coalition of academics, public institutions and other civil society organizations studying deliberative and participatory practices (“Groupement d’Intérêt scientifique”) is called “Participation du public, décision, démocratie participative” (Public Participation, Decision and Participatory Democracy) and it edits a journal called “Participations”. In Italy, the journal that incorporates these topics among their main concerns is called “Partecipazione e conflitto” (Participation and Conflict). Spain does not have a specific journal or an organized community, but the participation frame also dominates the academic and the practitioner domains. To mention just an example, in the academic domain, the most recent

The main goal of this article is to contribute to the comparative debates about which are the boundaries of the public deliberation reality we discuss. In order to contribute to this common understanding we provide evidence showing the dominant characteristics of the deliberative-participative reality³ in Southern Europe, establishing a debate on the basis of some questions that spring from the English-speaking academy, highly relevant on account of its prolific international influence. We claim that, in order to have a truly international dialogue, we should set up a certain general common understanding (to avoid the harder claim that we need a concrete common definition) about what constitutes the reality we are talking about. This understanding should incorporate the diverse empirical realities, conceptualizations and academic traditions of different regional-cultural traditions. To advance in this direction, we will present some traits of the Southern European reality in the field, which is in sharp contrast with the predominant reality in some of the English-speaking countries (as well as in other countries, as Iceland with a high grassroots participatory reality; Finland with a considerable influence of the academy; or Denmark with a more governmental leadership). We could go back to our previous examples of other neighboring political-science subjects to illustrate this argument. Some academic debates have been strongly determined by the literature of one country or region. For example, the debates about lobbies are mainly located in the US, while in other fields, like parties or welfare states, there is a higher influence of the continental European tradition of more structured parties and more interventionist states. In contrast, the field of social movements may be an example of an issue where, despite important differences about what is the prevailing model used to organize social movements in Vancouver, Kerala or Italy, the comparative literature has established a fruitful dialogue between these different continental traditions, as well as models and ideas that travel quite well along different realities (McAdam et al., 1996; Meyer et al., 2002).

In sum, our goal in this article will be to problematize what the content and meaning of deliberative practices are in the specific Southern European context, to enrich the discussion about the boundaries of this research tradition. After a review of some of the existing academic debates and a presentation of the methodology and the sources, we will present and discuss empirical evidence in four sections. First, we will discuss who the promoters of deliberative practices are in the Southern European case, focusing on the roles played by parties, political institutions and civil society in the development of deliberative practices. We will show that, contrary to the tendency in the US, most of the action has been

Spanish political science conference (2013) had two groups devoted to participation (with no paper including the word “deliberation” in its title). Deliberation only appeared in the political theory section. See also section 2 in this article and Font and Galais (2012) for more details about the presence of the deliberative discourse in democratic innovation practices in the Spanish case, and Sintomer (2011) for the relationship between both concepts in the French case.

³ “Public deliberation” would not be the term we would use to refer to the set of practices developed in Southern Europe. However, since we will argue that they play a similar role and act as functional equivalents for both engaged citizens and academic communities, we will call them “deliberative practices” on several occasions.

developed by public institutions, and this is likely to have important effects on the practices developed. The following sections will be precisely devoted to these practices, the crucial role of professional organizers and the types of participants, showing once again sharp contrasts (but also similarities) with the prevailing tendencies in other world areas. Finally, the last section will discuss the substantive policies and the general goals of these practices. Even if some of these processes deal with social welfare issues, this concern is often not central, showing that social inequalities are not their main motivation. These six parts will be the basis for defining a very different set of deliberative practices and call for some discussion about the borders of our common object of interest and the validity of the picture we can draw about them in different world areas.

Thinking the Object: Previous Debates

Through the presentation of the deliberative practices developed in the Southern European context we want to contribute to a certain descriptive and conceptual gerrymandering of the idea of public deliberation. To organize the presentation and discussion of these results, we will establish a dialogue with some academic contributions and especially with several of the interesting assumptions made in this Journal by Lee (2011). We will argue that some of these assumptions, presented as implicitly comparative, are rather a reflection of the reality of some of the English-speaking countries, and in some important points do not fit in with the existing Southern European reality.

The first assumption stated by Lee (2011) that we will question here is that the expansion of public deliberation processes is the result of a grassroots, progressive, bottom-up deliberation movement for political reform, rooted in the participatory democratic movements of the 1960s. These movements were decisive to create the cultural context, the individuals or some of the organizations which are decisive for the promotion of these processes, but their development in the Southern European context has been basically top-down, where bottom-up initiatives play a secondary role at the most.

The second important idea to be discussed in this article is the role played by inequalities in deliberative processes. These potential inequalities may be related to every aspect in the organization, from the role played by organizers, professionals or participants. For example, Bobbio (2010) discusses the existence of symmetrical and asymmetrical models, depending on the different degree of information and expertise of the different types of participants. In his two models of asymmetrical deliberation a clear disparity is present between participants, some of them (experts, activists, politicians) displaying more resolute and less malleable positions and better argumentative skills than ordinary citizens.

Deliberation addressed to citizens in general is linked to important debates regarding pre-existing inequalities in society. This is also the case with respect to civil society organizations, whose composition reflects the social, economic and cultural inequalities of the population. A central concern that appears in perspectives more reluctant towards participation (Fiorina, 1999) as well as in

more sympathetic views (Lee, 2011), is that the widespread promotion of participatory practices could lead to the reproduction of social stratification and inequality. Socio-economic status, the material and social resources available to individual citizens and their place in social networks are central in determining the levels at which different people will engage with an experience (Brady et al., 1995; Lowndes et al., 2006). Apart from structural social inequalities, different attitudinal explanations underpin personal motivation towards being involved in participative mechanisms, especially in a context of general political disengagement (Pratchett & Wilson, 1996; Pratchett, 2004; Navarro & Font, 2013). The desire to deliberate is not universal and, as a result, many participatory processes involve only the most motivated citizens, and even when participants are randomly selected, some decline invitation (Levine et al., 2005). Lee's study in the USA (2011) shows both the presence of these features in participants and points out that the majority of practitioners surveyed did not consider equity and diversity to be a central concern in their field.

Finally, the third important debate we address refers to the impact of deliberation. The most extended view is that most public deliberation processes do not directly alter public decisions and actions (Levine et al., 2005). Suspicion may spread about the limited scope of the political process or even about manipulation and co-optation of these arenas by political elites to legitimize their own decisions (Smith, 2009). There are different examples of how these problems can develop. Lowndes et al (2001) found that only one third of local authorities in the UK felt that public participation entailed significant influence on decision-making. Ulbig (2008) argues that giving people a voice is not enough. If this voice is often perceived to have no political influence, the result may be more detrimental than failing to provide any avenue for citizen expression at all (Font and Navarro, 2013). Disappointment with participation is highlighted by NGOs or community groups commonly reporting unsatisfactory participatory experiences, for example, relating to the lack of meaningful involvement with a government aiming to maintain control over processes and the shaping of results (Head, 2007). Alves and Allegretti (2012) have related empowerment with duration of participative mechanisms, pointing out that many Participatory Budgeting programs in Portugal disappear from the local political agenda after a short time: only those processes that entail significant power in the citizens' hands are able to survive the different difficult circumstances that they face in the mid-term.

In regard to the comparative aspiration of this article, our claims face a major obstacle: the realities we discuss do not correspond with those being discussed by Lee (2011) and by much of the US literature. Different definitions of the object being discussed to start with end up almost necessarily in completely different pictures of reality. To be clear about this, in our case, the definition of the universe we have more fully researched is that of any organized activity that attempts to involve citizenry in the discussion or in making decisions about local issues, and it has gained recognition as such from public institutions. This definition means that activities that start from below but are recognized as a

legitimate space for public discussion over collective issues are included⁴. However, as we will show in section 4, most of the activities that fit this definition are in practice promoted and developed by public institutions themselves. It can be easily argued that, departing from this different definition, we must necessarily end up describing a different reality. Nonetheless, we claim that the different reality we describe is not only the product of different definitions made by researchers, but the outcome of quite different realities. Put briefly, the bottom-up deliberative dynamics that are more common in other countries (Lee, 2011) are almost inexistent in the Southern European context. For example, the Spanish “Occupy” movement (15M or “indignados” movement) has been really interesting for many reasons, including their extensive use of deliberative styles in their internal organizational activities⁵. However, these activities focus mostly on internal deliberations and, as such, are only loosely connected to the outside world and to specific policy-making processes. Neither of the two important research traditions existing in Spain⁶, neither the one dealing with social movements and protest events from below (Castells, 2012; Fishman, 2011) nor the one dealing with democratic innovations (Navarro, 2005; Subirats et al., 2001), has mentioned deliberative processes that have a collective goal (beyond the organizational activities of movements themselves) and that are developed without any kind of institutional participation⁷.

Drawing the Landscape: Sources of Information

We will provide empirical evidence using different sources. Our main source is the collection of 552 participatory experiences developed mostly at the local level in three Spanish and two Italian regions. These data have been collected by Internet data mining in the context of a comparative research project⁸.

⁴ For instance, this is the case with the Sectorial Advisory councils for young people’s issues, which in many cases are networks of young people’s associations formed from below, but recognized as the main partner for youth-related policy and debate by local authorities.

⁵ From this point of view, the movement is innovative (Nez, 2012). Even if assembly practices have always existed in very diverse social movements, the emphasis on consensus, in respect to different points of view and on avoiding domination of assemblies by the core group of militants represent a certain break with the most common practices of other alternative movements (Rucht, 2012; Mutz, 2006), where assembly practices had always existed but were often more dominated by adversarial style practices.

⁶ Similar arguments could be applied to the French (Bacqué and Sintomer, 2010; Neveu, 2011) and Italian cases (Bobbio and Giannetti, 2007). For a slightly different version that highlights some differences in the Italian case see Della Porta et al. (2014).

⁷ If these deliberative practices had some kind of institutional recognition, they would be incorporated into the reality we will describe throughout the article. We should only be concerned about missing important pieces of evidence if these practices existed, but did not have this institutional recognition.

⁸ The data collection process is part of the broader MECPALO project. The project focuses on Spain as its central case and, for each of the data collection procedures, it incorporates either France or Italy as mirror cases that allow going beyond the single state approach. Most of the local results presented here will be from Spain or Italy, but the French case shows clear similarities with many of the patterns of these two countries (Talpin, 2011). The project has been developed with financial support from the Spanish Science Department (Grant CSO2009-08968 and Grant CSO2012-31832). For a full description of the data sources and data collection procedures of the local databases see Font et al (2014).

Focusing on the Southern European region allows us to cover an area that encompasses certain homogeneity in political, social, economic and cultural terms. We have chosen three countries that share a great deal in terms of politics and citizen participation in particular. Spain, France and Italy are all characterized by a strong left/right divide, by low levels of political trust and all of them have a significant presence of former communist parties. In all three countries, governments are not very open to citizen participation, nor is legislation especially favorable to it, although all three have strong traditions of radical social movements. Participation devices usually tend to be a “political” matter rather than a mere “managerial” one⁹. The transfer of knowledge between the three countries in the domain of citizen participation has also been significant. These particular political culture and institutional traditions could affect the design and outputs of participation and therefore deserve a specific focus.

We have selected a few regions that have municipalities with active participation policies, but also certain diversity in political and economic terms. Thus, we have rich (Catalonia, Madrid, Tuscany) and poor regions (Andalusia, Apulia) and different degrees of support for participatory policies from the regional governments. Table 1 provides a summary of the most important policies to set the contextual stage where these experiences take place.

The Catalonia dataset was created in 2008, covering the participatory experiences developed during the period 2001-2008. Data was collected from official reports, other databases and Internet searches. The mapping cannot claim to be a representative picture of all the local participation experiences developed in Catalonia, but it is quite diverse in terms of types of municipalities or methodologies used. The Tuscany dataset was created in 2009, covering the period 2000-2008 and using the same research protocol. Data was collected via the Internet, starting from existing collections of experiences. The three remaining datasets (Andalusia, Madrid and Apulia) were set up in 2010, covering all municipalities above 1,000 inhabitants in Apulia and Madrid and a sample including half of Andalusian municipalities. The comparative database of the three regions was made searching for keywords on the council websites of each of the 788 municipalities (adding up the three regions) and general web searches.

⁹ For a full discussion of the similarities and differences among the participatory patterns in the three countries see Sintomer and Del Pino (2014).

Table 1. Main characteristics of each of the regions' participation policy

Region	Regional Legislation	Other regional policies	Regional government structure	Summary
Andalusia Poor region	References to participation in sectorial laws (the elderly, territorial planning)	Small programs at the provincial level; no global regional policy	No participation department. Low-profile participation observatory managed by association of local governments.	Partially active
Catalonia Wealthy region	Neighborhoods Law (2004) makes funding for urban renewal dependent on the existence of participation	Funding for local participation processes (2005-10), 10 million €; other sectorial participation processes; Inter-Department Regional Participation plan	Institutional Relations and Participation Department (2003). Includes high-rank participation office	Very active
Madrid Wealthy region	No regional legislation	No regional policy	No office	Not active
Apulia Poor region	Sectorial Laws (youth, territorial planning, coast protection)	Strategic planning using participation for sectorial policies	No office	Active
Tuscany Wealthy region	Law 69/07 for the promotion of participation in regional and local policies and other sectorial laws (health, environment)	The main form of support is financial: One million € per year to develop Law 69/07 (2008, 2009, 2010)	Authority to promote participation is elected by regional government using a criterion of professional competence	Very active

Source: Compiled by authors based on the regions' websites and secondary evidence.

The product of these strategies is a database with a large N, which is not a perfectly exhaustive or representative collection of all participatory experiences but represents a quite diverse picture of what is the broader reality of participatory processes developed at the subregional level in these countries. With this type of results we try to go beyond the common research trends that tend to focus on “exemplary” institutions, focusing instead on the everyday and more mundane use of engagement techniques (Cooper & Smith, 2012) in the most common and less well-known cases. We cannot claim we have done a detailed mapping of any kind of bottom-up activity that shares these characteristics, but our institutionally recognized participatory processes represent a significant part of the participatory activity existing in (certain regions of) Italy and Spain dealing with public issues.

Complementary to these Internet data mining, we will also use evidence provided by a couple of Spanish surveys to the general population¹⁰: a 2006 survey of the

¹⁰ Both of them have been developed by the public survey research institute (CIS) that carries out surveys for the Spanish public administration. The complete methodological details are available at www.cis.es.

Spanish adult population living in cities of 100,000 to 400,000 inhabitants that includes 3,994 interviews (CIS study 2661); and a 2010 survey of the Spanish adult population consisting of 2,500 interviews (CIS study 2860). Occasionally, we also resort to other secondary evidence to complete our picture: a smaller study based on 58 experiences collected by the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD)¹¹, or information collected by Ramió and Salvador (2007) from interviews addressed to the 42 local administrations with more than 20,000 inhabitants in the Barcelona province.

The Promotion of Deliberative Practices: A Movement from Below?

It is very clear that bottom-up promotion of institutional deliberative practices is not the case in the Southern European context, where this process has mostly been directed by public institutions. In this section we will develop three main arguments. First, we show some general results that point to a clear domination of a top-down dynamic. Second, we discuss the types of Southern European institutions that are pushing more strongly for the development of these participatory practices. Third, we discuss whether this movement is the result of their own motivations or merely a product of pressures from below, paying special attention to the process of institutionalization of these processes at the local level.

In relation to the direction of the origin of participative processes, our mappings of local participatory experiences allow us to analyze who the main promoter of these experiences is: either civil society (*insisted space*, where an advocacy group or private organization is the driving force) or the public administration (*invited space*, where the government invites citizens to participate in a particular decision-making process)¹² (Hendriks & Carson, 2008). The pattern is very clear: Graph 1 shows that the *invited space* cases, where the initiative corresponds only to the government (mainly at the local level) with no kind of formal participation of civil society in its promotion, are an overwhelming majority in all the regions covered. In three of the five regions this percentage is higher than 90%¹³.

Local governments are not isolated promoters of deliberation in public administrations. In the two regions where this information is available (Andalusia and Apulia), around half of the local participatory experiences have been promoted with the contribution of other public administrations (usually provincial or regional). This multilevel involvement is also reflected in relation to the financing of participative processes. In the three regions where data is available

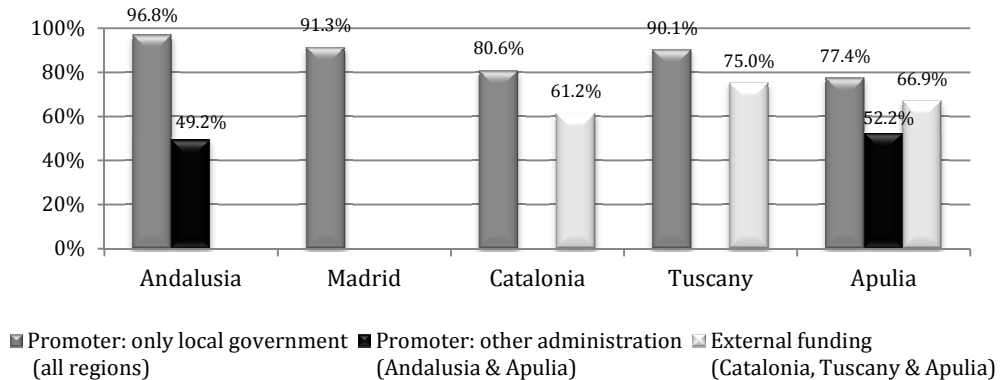
¹¹ <http://www.oidp.net/en/home/>

¹² The possible responses for the item “Initiative of the process” were: “local government only”, “mainly local government”, “mainly civil society” or “civil society only”. In our analysis, *invited spaces* correspond just with the first option: local government as the only driving force. Perhaps this category is underrepresented due to the fact that some indirect collaboration of civil society actors in the promotion of the processes has not been visible during the interviews or the Internet data mining.

¹³ The smaller study made by the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) shows the same picture: the origin of 84% of European processes (27 of 32) lies in government and not civil society (Font et al., 2003).

(Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia), a clear majority of participatory processes has received financial support (usually a part of the total amount) from supralocal public administrations¹⁴. This dual role of public institutions, as promoters and funders of these experiences, gives them an important amount of control of the processes themselves, of their use and potentially of their contents and outcomes, which is quite different from the general situation in the US.

Graph 1. Processes initiated by local Government only and presence of external funding by region



Source: Our database.

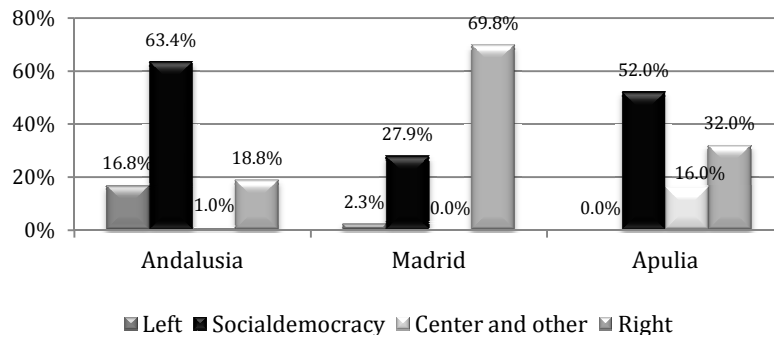
N¹⁵ = 539 (promoter: local government only), 356 (promoter: other administrations) 276 (external funding).

In order to illustrate the progressive nature (or lack thereof) of the promoters of these experiences, Graph 2 shows the political party of the mayors promoting them by region. Basically, the distribution of the graph corresponds to the electoral situation in each of these regions: traditionally, Andalusia has been dominated by the left and Madrid has been dominated by the right wing, while Apulia is more equally balanced. In aggregate terms, 111 experiences have taken place under right-wing governments, 140 under social democracy, 19 under left-wing parties and 17 under centre and other parties. Thus, the main message of these results is that, at this point, participatory processes are not currently a democratic innovation that belongs exclusively to the political left¹⁶.

¹⁴ Detailed results can be found in Font (2011) and Della Porta et al. (2014).

¹⁵ The N of each item can vary, because there is information available for different numbers of regions or different levels of missing values.

¹⁶ A similar conclusion about Participatory Budgeting in Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012). See also Font et al. (2014).

Graph 2. Political party of the mayor at the time of the experience, by region

Source: Our database.
N = 287.

Should it be concluded from this result that the promotion of participatory practices is not related to ideology? It is not; as other authors have shown (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012), these processes were historically introduced by the left, but now they are carried out by different political forces. This trend is partly the result of the existence of a more non-ideological discourse linked to the interest in more effective governing, with public administrations and communities working together in creating innovative institutions (Eversole, 2011; Sintomer et al., 2008). In some ways, the participatory democracy discourse represents a further extension of the basic principles that guide decentralization from national to local levels (Grindle, 2007; Montero & Samuels, 2004), a process that governments of almost all political colors have been supporting in the last decades.

But this common understanding about citizens' participation is also the product of certain institutionalization of deliberative politics that has favored its diffusion and maintenance beyond ideological borders. New right-wing governments have reached public administrations that had already developed a new participatory sector: regulations had been established and experienced professionals hired. In this situation, these new governments have decided to continue with these democratic innovations. Our data cannot fully confirm this pattern, but at least they are consistent with this hypothesis: the left is generating participatory mechanisms in municipalities where there is no prior institutionalization to a greater degree than the right, which has tended more to maintain already existing instruments. Participation departments and plans are key factors in this process of institutionalization, especially in scenarios of right-wing governments. Under right-wing governments, almost two thirds of participatory experiences were developed in municipalities with a participation department (91.5% in the Madrid region) and more than a half in municipalities with a participation plan (83.3% in Madrid). The difference with the lower presence of these departments under left-wing or social-democratic governments is statistically significant.

In any case, why would public administrations of any political ideology start or continue a process that limits their ability to make choices? This opening of participatory processes generates concern about retaining strong state power among many of these institutions (Jessop, 2004; Newman et al., 2004; Taylor,

2007). As a consequence, this is a dual process where governments simultaneously embrace participation and resist it (Beresford, 2002). In fact, this embracement could be more apparent than real through two simultaneous paths. The first possibility is that these institutions only had limited choice, because bottom-up pressure to adapt these mechanisms was very strong. Clearly, it is difficult to establish for certain if a process has been created by institutions simply on their own initiative, or whether they were responding to certain pressures from below and to what degree, but both our set of 19 case studies (Font et al., 2014) as well as other research in the area using different types of methodologies point to a limited role of bottom-up pressure as a crucial explanation of why these experiences were developed in most of the cases (Bacqué & Sintomer, 2010; Font & Galais, 2011).

The second possibility would entail limiting the scope and the agenda of the processes (see section 7) and retaining administrative power over them, so that the outcomes could be at least conditioned. A public administration that opens participatory spaces shows an interest in deliberation. But, at the same time, the creation of *invited spaces* may produce a situation in which civil society engages in these processes from a less influential position, where the public administration retains more power and a cautious attitude towards the democratic innovative arena¹⁷. The following sections will continue to examine this possibility through the analysis of the agents and participants in these democratic practices.

Deliberative Professionals and Their Role

The previous section dealt with those that are politically responsible for organizing local participatory processes. In the next sections we will analyze the role of two different sectors. First, we will discuss the characteristics of those in charge of the technical arrangements of the processes, i.e. local personnel, external consultants and facilitators. Then, in the following section, we will examine who the participants in these arenas are. These analyses will deal with two important debates: the degree of institutionalization and professionalization of these practices and the inequalities that emerge in their practice.

Graph 3 shows the presence of personnel devoted to supporting the public administration in the development of participatory processes. These include facilitators of the meetings¹⁸, experts¹⁹ and external consultants²⁰. In general, the regions with less developed participation policies (Andalusia and Madrid) have a few more experiences where none of them has been used. The use of facilitators is

¹⁷ Font and Galais (2011) have shown that participatory processes in Catalonia (Spain) have more clear democratic qualities when civil society is involved in the promotion and organization of the experiences.

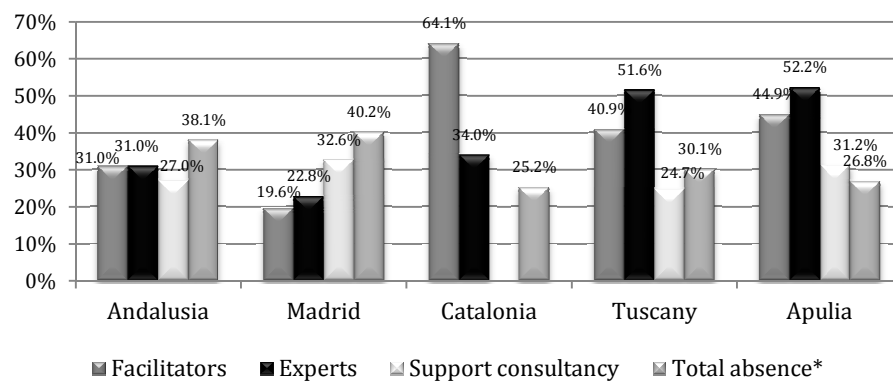
¹⁸ We consider a facilitator anyone providing help to set discussions, whether this person is a citizen playing this role, an external expert or a local employee.

¹⁹ Experts participate to provide technical information about the substantive issues being discussed.

²⁰ External consultants are usually hired by the local administration to contribute to designing the process, organizing the event, evaluating it, etc. In some cases, these external consultants can also play the facilitator role.

a simple measure that corresponds with the degree of maturity of the deliberative trajectory in each region, with a maximum in Catalonia and a minimum in Madrid. On the other hand, these results reveal a general recognition that it is necessary to use specific resources in this field: Madrid compensates for its more moderate use of facilitators and experts using external consultants. In sum, we find an important presence of these actors but, at the same time, almost a third of experiences take place without any of them. This suggests that some participatory processes could have important methodological limitations, to the extent that “facilitators and the organizations that train and support them are critical to most processes” (Levine et al., 2005).

Graph 3. Presence and absence of facilitators, experts and support consultancy, by region



*: Experiences lacking any presence of facilitators, experts or support consultants, except for Catalonia where data on support consultants is not available.

Source: Our database.

N = 552 (facilitators), 552 (experts), 449 (support consultants), 552 (total absence).

However, this is not necessarily the case, because these roles cooperate with another crucial one: personnel from the local council devoted to participatory issues. In the survey addressed to Andalusian local councils we find specific information about the shape of this sector. From the 322 participatory experiences reported, only 12.4% were developed in municipalities without personnel exclusively or partially devoted to participation; 41% of experiences counted only on part-time personnel (in most cases, just one person); the remaining cases had at least one person devoted exclusively to these tasks, with a few cases of medium and large cities having more than 10 people assigned to this policy area.

What is the profile of these personnel? Ramió and Salvador (2007) show that this group of professionals is made up of mostly young, university-educated women, with qualifications in psychology, law, pedagogy, political science and sociology, and journalism²¹. They constitute a motivated group of experienced professionals,

²¹ The picture that Lee (2010) shows for the US also presents a dynamic collective of practitioners, with experience in many fields but more specifically focused on deliberation itself (in accordance with the strongest tradition of deliberative practices): conflict resolution, adoption of new technologies from other fields (particularly the use of online technologies and stakeholder engagement software), social activism, adult education, social work or therapy-related fields.

since almost all of them have been previously linked to another professional occupation at the local level. Furthermore, the study has shown that this collective tends to acquire continuous high-level training through postgraduate degrees or specialist training in participation-related areas²².

While we lack sufficient information to fully understand their role in the development of participatory practices, all the existing evidence points to a crucial role of these local personnel, to the extent that they are the human resources associated with the institutionalization of participative dynamics at the local level. Our research has also shown that their interaction with elected politicians is richer than what their official roles would suggest, with local bureaucrats influencing how formal institutions work in practice, being real promoters of the continuation or development of participatory experiences. As street-level bureaucrats, those who manage participatory institutions use their previous knowledge and skills to play an important role in how these processes develop and how long they last far beyond their formal implementation role (Sintomer & Ganuza, 2011; Font et al., 2014).

The Participants: Is Deliberation Reproducing Social Inequalities?

Even if the technical organizers are important, the central element for any participation process to be developed is the presence of participants. Deliberative innovations have been designed to engage civil society and individual citizens in the political process. Our data allows some discussion on the participants in these processes. Which are the different sectors targeted by these participatory processes?

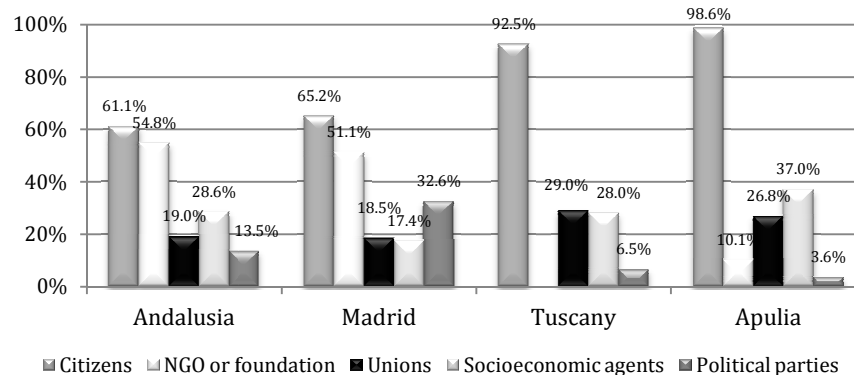
We have information about the different types of participants in 354 experiences carried out in three of our regions (Andalusia, Madrid & Apulia). The different targets are not exclusive; one initiative can address different actors. The data reflect that most of these processes are open spaces, where citizens in general are one of the main targets (65.1% of the cases). Individual citizens are the main target of participatory processes across all regions. This is more clearly apparent if we consider that those processes addressed to a specific social sector (22.3%) are also addressed to individual citizens (with a particular socio-demographic characteristic). At the same time, the data indicate the on-going relevance of one of the traditional engagement institutions –associations– (52.3% of the processes are addressed to association members). The other actors that are also main targets are quite a bit less frequent: 9.4% for other already functioning participatory institutions of the city council, or relevant individuals as experts or leaders (12.6%).

However, these are just the collectives that were the main targets of the experiences, not the real participants. Graph 4 presents the effective participation

²² In fact, the earlier development of participatory practices in the Barcelona area municipalities has been linked to the active training and diffusion activities of the provincial government, as well as to the role played by the postgraduate degree in participatory methodologies offered since the mid-nineties by one of the universities in the area (UAB).

of individual citizens and members of different types of organizations. A brief assessment of the graph tells us that the presence of citizens in participative mechanisms is in fact in accordance with the initial purpose of promoters. But a deeper analysis reveals a slightly different story. Processes addressed to citizens (individuals or those belonging to a particular social sector) were overwhelmingly more numerous than processes addressed to other actors. In practice, especially in the case of the Spanish regions, even if citizens are the main participants in each region, their predominant role declines with respect to the other organizations considered together: organized actors are present in 59.5% of cases in Andalusia, and 59.8% in Madrid. This suggests that the growing movement of public administrations towards involving individual citizens too is still operating in a reality marked by the mediation of associations and other collective actors. This is not the case in the Italian regions, where the dominant role of individual citizens as effective participants is clearer. Assuming that directly involving individual citizens is a process, this higher relevance of an assembly-based participatory model in Italy could be related with its more established tradition of democratic innovations and the larger role played by bottom-up pressures compared with Spain.

Graph 4. Breakdown of participants in participative experiences, by region



Source: Our database.

N = 449 (citizens), 356 (NGO or foundation), 552 (unions), 449 (socioeconomic agents), 449 (political parties).

The 2006 CIS survey allows us to analyze the different characteristics of Spanish citizens who have participated in at least one of a list of six different kinds of participatory mechanisms which correspond with the main participatory possibilities existing in Spain: Agenda 21, Participatory Budgeting, sectorial or neighborhood-based consultation councils, citizen juries or attendance at a local council plenary meeting²³.

²³ Survey 2661 includes 3,994 interviews, in which 405 citizens declared that they had taken part in any of these participatory possibilities. Roughly 66% of the 405 had participated only in local council meetings and the rest had experienced other participatory processes. Excluding participants in local council meetings (the less participatory and deliberative of all these processes) does not change the main conclusions reached in this article. A more exhaustive analysis of this data can be read in Navarro et al (2009).

Table 2 shows the main socio-demographic and political features of the participants. Participatory mechanisms clearly involve a greater presence of men, citizens between 30 and 44 years of age, people belonging to the upper class and people with a secondary or university level of education. In other words, women, youth, the elderly, the lower classes and citizens with basic or no education are relatively less present among the attendants at participatory processes. Even if some of the processes precisely aim to incorporate some of the traditionally more excluded sectors, the existing inequalities are partially reproduced in these mechanisms.

The Spanish CIS survey also shows a clearly differentiated attitudinal profile of participants, who tend to be more left wing, vote in local elections and, in particular, be more involved in associations. Also, participants are more politicized: they discuss politics and local issues more frequently. At the same time, they are more critical both of political institutions and of the real efficacy of participatory mechanisms (Font & Navarro, 2013).

Table 2. Socio-political characteristics of participants and total of the sample (%)

Characteristic	Participants	Total sample
Men	62.6	47.9
30-44 years	40.7	31.6
Upper class	25.6	18.5
Secondary or university education	62.2	50.6
Left wing	45.2	30.9
Vote in local elections	85.1	69.6
Member of associations	35.8	15.8
Often/sometimes discuss politics	61.9	42.5
Often/sometimes discuss local issues	70.6	54.9

Source: CIS 2661.
N = 3,994.

The two elements examined above, who organizes and who participates in these processes, are two central aspects in determining the quality of participatory processes. In these five Southern European regions there is a majority of processes that fit the description of the asymmetrical deliberation type, the worst configuration for Bobbio (2010). The best deliberative setting in his opinion, i.e. keeping separated stakeholders from ordinary citizens and using facilitators, is used only in 11.8% (just citizens as participants and facilitation) and 6.5% (only stakeholders as participants and facilitation) of the experiences. In sum, while certain deliberative features have been introduced into these processes, the conditions that most of them created for a free and equal exchange of opinions and information are quite far from being an ideal setting.

Goals: Why Do We Want Participation?

What do we know about the objectives of participatory processes in the Southern European context? At least three main groups of goals have been considered to be important in comparative research. First, these mechanisms could be an answer to a growing demand for participatory opportunities by citizens. As such, they would become an instrument to fight the high levels of distrust of existing institutions and to establish new ties between citizens and their communities. Second, they could be instruments for policy inputs that would allow more efficient policy-making or, at least, policies that are more similar to those desired by a majority of citizens. Third, these processes could be an instrument for social change. They could contribute to a larger social equality or other positive societal outcomes like a more sustainable planet. Up to which point do these motivations appear among the declared goals or the apparent objectives of Southern European participatory practices?

The IOPD study shows that citizenship building and efficiency were the main goals explicitly pursued (especially in Europe), followed by equality (only among Latin-American experiences)²⁴. This study is a first sign that the goals of these processes may be significantly different in each world area: Participatory Budgeting has travelled from Latin America to Europe but has changed its main objectives dramatically in the transatlantic journey, with the European experiences quite a bit less interested in reducing social inequalities. Lee (2011) pointed at a similar situation in the USA, but this seems to be even more the case in Europe, where none of the IOPD experiences was directly linked to the objective of achieving equality. Also, in the US the problem seems to be rather the limitations for dealing effectively with inequalities, viewed as an important concern by the actors in the field, at least at the discourse level.

The mapping of participation experiences in Catalonia shows a picture of a single region, but provides a more complete picture of different types of mechanisms²⁵. Again, the dominant category is that of experiences whose main objective was to improve participatory opportunities (mentioned in 94.2% of the experiences)²⁶, followed by policy efficiency, which was mentioned in more than half of the experiences. Equality was not even considered as a coding category since the preliminary examination had showed it was virtually absent. On the basis of these data we cannot determine if establishing these objectives is a response to a social demand or an attempt to increase legitimacy by local authorities. But as an approximation, the objective of improving participatory opportunities is quite common among experiences promoted with and without the participation of civil society. In turn, a considerable difference emerges in relation to the objective of policy efficiency: it is present in 57.8% of the experiences promoted without civil society and in 25% of the experiences where civil society was present in the

²⁴ The experiences were classified using the official objectives declared by their promoters. Sometimes there were clear contradictions between the established goals and the mechanisms used to achieve them. For example, while the citizenship development objective involves granting new rights to citizens, more than half of the experiences purportedly pursuing this goal failed to transfer decisive capabilities to participants (Font et al., 2003).

²⁵ The variable discussed here is only available for the Catalan case.

²⁶ Up to three main objectives were coded for each experience.

promotion of the process. This difference suggests that this objective is more exclusive to local authorities and more concerned about improving governability.

Similarly, our regional mappings included information about the instrumental advantages produced by participatory experiences in Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia. The two most highlighted advantages directly related to deliberation are the education of citizens (civic abilities or ability to build consensus, present in 74.3% of the experiences) and the process of taking into account popular perceptions and suggestions (present in 41.0% of the processes) to improve policy-making. Once again, looking at different cases and slightly different types of information we always reach a similar conclusion: civic/educational goals tend to prevail, policy-making is also important, but specific societal changes (beyond the cultural/attitudinal realm) are not expected outcomes of these processes.

Two additional pieces of information provide some additional insights. First, we have information about the policy stages the participatory process aimed to influence. In Catalonia and the Italian regions there is a clear dominance of diagnosis and programming phases, while in Andalusia and Madrid the main phase is decision-making. It would be possible to think that intervention in the initial phases of policy-making (diagnose and programming) may indicate that politicians are the ones who make the final decision, limiting citizen participation and empowerment. This would be a surprising result since we would find more citizen input in those regions with a less developed participatory culture. However, this assertion depends on other factors; for example, citizen participation could focus just on informing decision making but not on making decisions. And the issue that has been the object of citizen participation is also relevant. For instance, using a couple of real examples, participation in diagnosis or programming to discuss the future urban planning criteria of the city would involve more empowerment than a decision to choose the name for a new square.

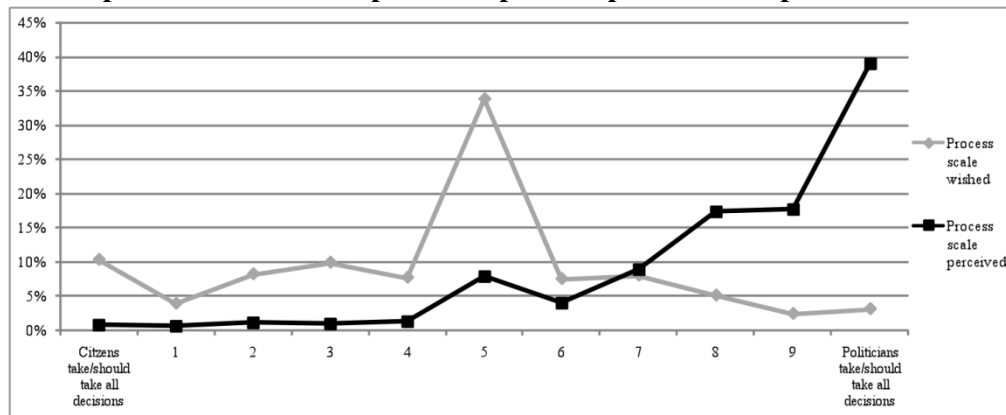
Then, which are the substantive contents of these participatory processes? Considering all regions together, almost half of the experiences are related to urban planning, followed by environmental issues (in part because of the impact of the Agenda 21 program). Other relevant subject areas are economic development and social welfare. However, this agenda of issues, many of which are strategically important for local administrations, is quite different depending on the regions. Here, those regions with a stronger participatory tradition (and with governments where different families of the left participate) often have a new advantage, since they deal more often with matters like urban issues, whereas in other regions like Andalusian municipalities devote more participatory efforts to issues where they often only have limited intervention powers, like social welfare or cultural issues (Font, 2011).

In sum, policies are there as a relevant concern, but the explicit goal of these policies is not necessarily related to equality, but to other concerns of the policy-makers (e.g., it may be more citizen satisfaction or more efficient policies). The evidence provided by these different sources suggests that equality is an absolutely marginal explicit concern, even if policy making is important, and

offering new participatory opportunities and fighting citizen distrust appear as central. Can anything else be said about these two relevant motivations?

Citizen distrust is there for relevant reasons that can be traced to Southern European attitudes and behaviors. In the Spanish case, the “indignados movement” burst onto the political scene in 2011 and pushed new and different questions onto the table, including the demand for “real democracy” and citizen participation. Graph 5 shows the results of the CIS survey that took place just before the first demonstration of this citizen movement started in May 2011²⁷. It shows an important discrepancy very clearly: interviewees perceive a reality where politicians and not citizens are making all the decisions, while most would like a new balance where decisions are made not only by representatives but also directly by citizens themselves. However, a situation where politicians dominate all or almost all decisions is the perceived reality. Empirical research will have to establish whether these processes have been at least a partial cure for these problems (Font & Blanco, 2007), but at the very least we can see that there are reasons for concern, and they constitute a likely basis for action having in mind the goal of reducing this cultural malaise.

²⁷ The question in graph 5 is what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) called “process scale,” referring to who should make decisions, either citizens or politicians. The same discrepancy between the perceived reality and the desired situation (citizens prefer political processes where decisions are taken by them in a higher degree than in the perceived situation) also exists among the US population, but the difference between positions in both scales is even larger in the Spanish case (Font et al., 2012).

Graph 5: Demanded and perceived political processes in Spain

Source: CIS 2860.
N = 2,500.

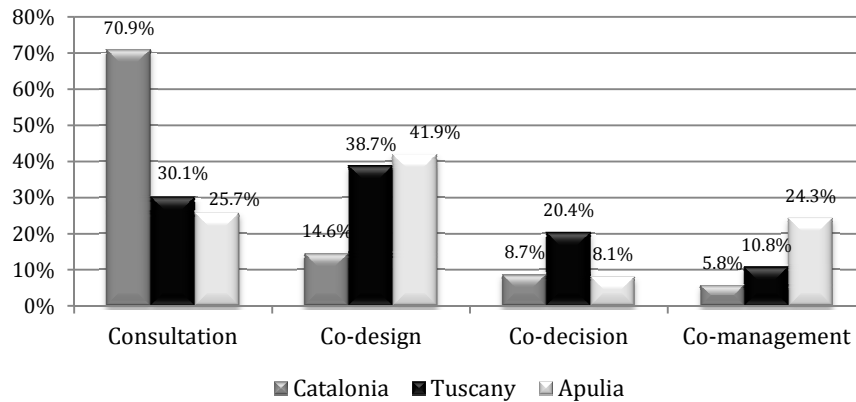
Policies are a second important motivation. However, many of these processes entail a substantial level of citizen discussion, but a quite limited level of real decision-making power. This is more easily assumed in a context where citizen organizations are promoting these processes, but becomes a larger problem when those institutions that are organizing the processes openly ignore their results. In these cases, when participation is perceived as an insubstantial mechanism without impact on public policies, the result may be disillusionment amongst the citizenry (Font & Navarro, 2013).

In graph 6, a proxy index of empowerment is represented in relation to three Southern European regions where this information is available. This variable measures the higher level of citizen influence that each process is intended to have: consultation, design/co-design, decision/co-decision and management/co-management²⁸. In Catalonia more than 70% of experiences are limited to consultation. In the Italian regions, almost 70% of experiences are focused on consultation and design/co-design. Therefore, most experiences in the Southern European regions do not engage citizens in the decision and management process, which still remains under the sole influence of public administration.

As seen in the literature review, this picture suggests that limited empowerment and limited connection to final policy making are the main challenges that participatory processes must confront. This danger appears to be even clearer in Southern European regions, where the risk that lack of empowerment could increase citizens' frustration and sense of powerlessness²⁹.

²⁸ We do not have information about the real degree of implementation of the process proposals, but only about the intended level of political influence that the process was designed to have, coded in these four categories. If a process was intended to have influence in different categories we have only noted the highest one, i.e. the one closer to implementation.

²⁹ The research developed up to now has only limited empirical information about this question. At the time of writing this article we are developing a new project to explore the degree of real impact on policies of participatory processes. See <http://cherrypickingproject.wordpress.com/home/>

Graph 6. Level of intended influence of participatory processes, by region

Source: Our database.
N = 332.

Conclusion

Lee (2011) suggested that some of the assumptions that public deliberation scholars often make should be revised. We have contributed to discuss a few of them, as well as to other debates about the characteristics and qualities of these practices through the analysis of new empirical information from the Southern European context. Our contribution was new in at least two senses. First, it comes from a region whose participatory experiences are much less known by the international community and in which, as we have shown throughout the article, the set of common deliberative practices are quite different from those in other world areas. Second, our empirical basis was quite different from most previous research, since it is based on a quite diverse mapping of local experiences developed in five regions. This strategy has made it possible to overcome the problem of generalizing too many findings from the best and most well-known experiences that are quite far from the more common and modest practices developed in most municipalities daily.

Our findings give credence to the idea that these assumptions need to be rethought to travel outside the English-speaking world. Our data cannot provide definitive answers to all of them, but we have shown that several of them are actually quite far, at least, from the prevailing Southern European reality. Our results clearly confirm one of Lee's assumptions, the heterogeneity of the participatory landscape. Indeed, in this aspect our results provide an even more heterogeneous picture than some of the previous literature, with hundreds of very diverse experiences, using all types of methodologies and covering a very diverse set of issues. In that sense, referring to Participatory Budgeting, Wampler and Hartz-Karp (2012: 1) argued that "[...] there is no standardized set of "best practices" that governments are adopting, but there are a broader set of principles that are adapted by local governments to meet local circumstances". This is clearly the case in the Southern European context, where these "local

circumstances”, either due to political will or to the available resources, seem to place most participatory processes quite far from the famous “best practices”.

In most other aspects we argue that these “assumptions” should be questioned in the Southern European context. In this area, participatory experiences do not start from below: they are mostly commissioned by public authorities that maintain a significant control over their development and that, in many cases, carry out these experiences by themselves, mostly using workers from the administrations. However, some concern about deliberative logics and practices is present in them, and the most traditional picture of a public speech from local authorities followed by a few questions from the audience is not the most common practice anymore: most of these experiences tend to have a facilitator and a significant number of them use experts who provide substantive information and external support to organize the processes. This use of external support should not necessarily be interpreted as a guarantee of further methodological rigor or independence: their presence is more frequent precisely in the region where these experiences are less developed, suggesting that it may be the solution adopted when the local administrations lack sufficiently trained personnel.

This central role of public administrations could be a limitation and entail a potential control of these processes, but apparently it should facilitate the connection between participatory processes and policy-making, which should be easier than in cases where the process is completely promoted and organized from below. However, even if improving policy-making was one of the main motives why these processes were ever promoted, their real influence seems to be rather limited. Our research has not made a full analysis of the final implementation of these processes, but even focusing on their intended objectives, their connection to policy-making seems to be rather limited. At the same time, we have argued that this connection cannot be the only aspect to be considered. First, because the range of issues debated is quite broad. Second, because the trade-off that involves giving a more final say to citizens in those processes where the issue at hand is less central in the local political agenda may be present quite often (Nez, 2010).

Finally, we have also found that a limited concern for using these processes as instruments to build a larger social equity is not exclusive to the US. To begin with, participation in these processes is far from universal. People with more resources and with certain attitudinal and organizational backgrounds, are the ones who more often make their way towards the participatory setting. If equality is not a central concern in the inputs of the process, it is not central among the outputs either: most of them have been organized just to provide more participatory opportunities, and building a more equal society is not a central concern in most of them.

The Southern European area shows signs of homogeneity as well as signs of significant heterogeneity. We cannot make a definitive assessment of how particular this region is in the participatory domain without developing a similar comparative research that covers other world areas systematically, but the dialogue of these findings with the comparative literature points to the existence

of some region-specific traits. For example, the central role played by public administrations in a region with a relatively weak civil society, the larger strength of the participatory over the deliberative tradition or the importance of providing additional participatory opportunities as an important motivation in itself for process organizers. At the same time, the internal diversity of the area has also come up, pointing to the idea that active regional participation policies pay off and have contributed to (and simultaneously mirrored) a more developed participatory culture. Differences have appeared between regions in the same country, but also some of them have emerged between the Italian and the Spanish case.

Overall, this article is a plea to continue an international dialogue about what the boundaries of public deliberation are. Regional realities and traditions are quite strong and influence our way of thinking and our conceptualizations of the issue. If we want to have truly comparative concepts that can incorporate the analysis of different regional realities, we must address these issues and devote particular emphasis to how the participatory and deliberative traditions fit in (or not) with each other, and in which specific aspects matching both traditions becomes particularly stimulating or particularly problematic. Perhaps a broad and not restrictive definition of what an institutionalized participative mechanism is could encompass part of the existing diversity in the participatory and deliberative traditions³⁰. However, up to now, not even the most influential contributions have been able to establish a universally accepted definition of the field³¹. Lacking it means clear advantages (e.g., adapting our universe to our research questions), but also some difficulties to progress, compare and accumulate knowledge.

³⁰ The definition used in our research is “any at least loosely formalised activity that attempts to involve the citizenry in the discussion of or making of decisions about public policies” (Font et al., 2014: 2).

³¹ This is partially due to the existence of competing categories, which partially refer to the same concepts and realities like “democratic innovations” (Smith, 2009), “empowered participatory governance” (Fung, 2004) or “deliberative democracy” (Carson and Hartz-Karp, 2005) to mention just a few of them.

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Colophon

Pau Alarcón currently holds a predoctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain and is researching at the IESA-CSIC. He is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Government and Public Policies of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. His research interests include local participation processes, political attitudes and public policies.

Joan Font is the director of the Institute of Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC) in Córdoba (Spain). He has conducted research about elections, surveys, local participation processes, citizens' juries, deliberative polls and referendums and has published in journals like *European Journal of Political Research*, *Public Administration* and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Conclusions

Conclusions

This research has painted a picture of several issues having to do with the participatory processes in the Southern European region. Each publication has focused on different but interconnected aspects of this object of study: citizens, participatory mechanisms, and academic debates. In the last part of this thesis, the main objective is to develop the multiple implications of the findings, i.e. the content of the arrows (and their size in terms of importance) in Figure 1 of the introduction. The conclusions of this study try to go beyond the mere conceptual debate about what participation is, what quality participation is, etcetera, and to explore beyond classical qualitative studies. The main objective is to contribute to the understanding of what local political participation is like, and suggest or revise some possible explanations and implications.

The exposition of the main conclusions will follow the title of this dissertation. First, we will inquire into what Spanish citizens want in terms of participatory democracy. Second, we will describe what kind of participatory mechanisms is being developed in five Southern European regions. And third, we will establish a debate between these previous findings and some academic assumptions in the field, starting with the implications of the data collection methods. Therefore, most of the dialogue with participatory/deliberative democracy literature will be established in this part. A summary of all these conclusions will be included in a new version of the diagram summarizing the content of the thesis. Finally, some general implications will be pointed out in relation to some possible improvements or further research.

What citizens want

Local institutional political participation is developed at the local level in order to engage common citizens in the policy-making process. But do citizens want to be engaged? What do they think and demand from political participation? In this section we will address three aspects related to these questions. First, what citizens prefer in terms of participatory and/or representative decision making. Second, what characteristics participants have and what evaluations they make of their participatory experience. Finally, we will summarize

how these decision-making preferences and participatory experiences are related to some attitudes and perceptions, like extremism and the perception of consensus.

Let us start with citizens' preferences for a participatory or representative decision-making process. Different surveys provide some information about what people think in relation to participatory and deliberative democracy. For the citizens of the ten countries selected in the ISSP 2004 survey, the 'citizen-oriented decision-making' (belonging to a representative dimension) democratic rights and those 'involving citizens in decisions' (belonging to a participatory dimension) are both well-considered (6.5 and 6.1 in a 0-7 scale) (Annex 1). This suggests that citizens perceive the participation-representation dilemma not as an exclusive dichotomy but as complementary qualities: responsive government and involvement in decision making are considered complementarily important.

In a similar way, according to the normal-type distribution of the 0-10 process scale about citizens' preferences about who should take political decisions (from only citizens to only politicians), most people are moderate. This suggests that citizens in general prefer intermediate positions, where decisions taken directly by citizens and by politicians should coexist, instead of imposing one over the other (Chapter 1). Nevertheless, some citizens place themselves on both ends of the scale, especially on the participatory side—with 10% marking 0 and preferring a model where only citizens make all decisions. So, this distribution does not show a general consensus but entails relevant attitudinal differences. The profile of a citizen who is more favourable to participation is a young person (18-34 years old), with education, left-winger, abstainer or voter of the left, and living in a small-intermediate city (50,000-100,000 inhabitants) (Annex 1).

The demand for more participation is clear when we compare what citizens want and what they perceive is going on. If citizens' preferences in the process scale show a normal-type distribution (with most respondents marking intermediate scores and only a minority of them in both extremes), the perceived reality shows an exponential curve: just 5% of respondents marking 4 or less and around 75% marking 8 or more (see figure 2.1, Chapter 1). So, in fact, there is consensus in the perception of a policy-making process where politicians make all or almost all decisions without the participation of citizens. This means that the preferred political system where participation and representation would coexist is a much more participatory system than the current one.

Even if the support of citizens to a more participatory democracy is relatively ample, the costs involved in actually participating and other factors like the lack of visibility and

information imply that only a minority of the population is actively engaged in these institutional mechanisms¹. The benefits associated with citizen engagement appear when participants are more active, knowledgeable and critical when it comes to evaluating political actors and institutions (Annex 1). The problem is that the 2661 CIS survey (2006) results do not allow us to determine if citizens with these characteristics are now more predisposed to participate or if they became like this through participation. The direction of the causality could also be different depending on each dimension. For example, it could be the case that the most politically active citizens are more likely to be taking part in a participatory mechanism, as they are already politically engaged; but at the same time and in the other direction, as some literature suggests, the participatory experience could be producing more knowledgeable and critical citizens. More in depth and longitudinal research would be necessary to determine the direction of the causality, but at least the current data show that participation is associated with good civic attitudes, so it seems to deserve to be considered as a “good practice”. A qualitative study based on fifty-five interviews and five focus groups developed in five Spanish and French participatory settings found evidence in that direction: meeting certain requirements, participatory democracy has the potential to build a more competent, enlightened and active citizenry (Funes et al., 2014).

The conclusion of this tension could be that some participation causes the rejection of participation. But instead the survey shows that dissatisfied participants are more favourable to citizen involvement in political decision making than satisfied participants. Therefore, dissatisfaction does not imply a rejection of political participation (Annex 1). Again, we cannot establish a causal relationship. Were the most pro-participation citizens more demanding, and consequently they developed a greater criticism? Or is it the case that a relatively negative experience generated dissatisfied participants, but they blame politicians for not being receptive enough and support citizen involvement as a counterbalance? Anyhow, the main point here is that dissatisfied participants are critical with the responsiveness of politicians, but they still believe in citizens’ engagement.

We have seen what citizens want and what participants are like. Now, we will analyze how these preferences and experiences relate to some attitudes and perceptions. This survey provides information about two other related attitudinal dimensions. One is the importance attributed to different issues (politics in Spain in general, abortion, immigration, and the

¹ In the survey used in Font et al (2014), 10% of respondents participated in at least one of a list of six different kinds of participatory processes. 66% of these respondents have participated only in local council meetings, the rest in Agenda 21, participatory budgeting, sectorial- or neighbourhood-based consultation councils or citizen juries.

economy). The other one is the self-perceived extremism of the attitudes toward each of these issues—i.e. respondents choosing 0 or 10 in each attributed-importance scale. Preferences for a more participatory or representative decision-making process have been tested in accordance with these two variables. The importance attributed to the issue is only relevant for the process scale at the Spanish level (i.e. political interest is positively related to the preference for representative democracy), but not for the other specific issues (for example, the degree of importance attributed to abortion is not statistically related to the preferences for a decision-making process in that issue). Meanwhile, extremism in the attitudes shows a more consistent pattern, with extremist people preferring more participatory processes with the only exception of the economy (Annex 2).

Consensus and conflict are two possible contexts where political decisions are taken. The perception of an ideological consensus around their own position (in a left-right scale) means that a left-wing citizen perceives that the majority of society is also left-wing; and the same for right-wing and centrist citizens. This perceived ideological consensus is associated with a preference for less participatory processes in all issues (confirming previous research, like Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; and the corrective actions perspective, Rojas, 2010; while it contradicts the spiral of silence perspective, Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Rather, the perception of consensus around each specific issue (perceiving that most citizens share one's own opinions about abortion rights, immigration or the economy) is not related to different preferences for a more or less participatory decision-making process for that specific issue. In other words, only the perception of ideological consensus is linked to the preferences about how political decisions are taken, and this is the case for all issues (Chapter 2).

On the other hand, conflict aversion (measured by 8 items on the frequency of conversations with people with opposite ideas and aversion in different situations) is scarcely related to preferences for decision-making processes. The higher the aversion, the higher the support to a representative decision-making model for all issues, though these relations are not statistically significant or extremely weak. Therefore, the perception of ideological consensus emerges as more importantly linked to process preferences than other perceived consensuses and conflict aversion. However, conflict aversion is more powerful when it comes to explaining effective political participation (confirming previous findings, for example Ulbig and Funk, 1999; Rosenberg, 1954-1955; Mansbridge, 1980; Verba and Nie, 1972) than preferences (Chapter 2).

This relation between conflict aversion and participation would deserve more research. The fact that it is not strongly related to participatory preferences contradicts

previous studies (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). But, at the same time, it is statistically correlated with actual individual participation. This could be one of the explanations of the gap between what citizens want (a more participatory democracy than the existing one) and what citizens do (not engage in big numbers).

In general, these results suggest that individual factors matter more than external factors when we talk about participation regarding specific issues. Citizens' preferences for decision-making processes are not related to the importance attributed to the issue (except when we talk about Spain in general), nor to the perception of consensus (with the exception of ideological consensus). Instead, the individual extremism of the attitudes towards each issue is more consistently related to the respective preferences for how decisions are made. That could mean that participation is conceived as an end in itself (not depending on the importance of the issue or the level of agreement), and the level of support depends on individual attitudinal features. For example, a person will be in general more prone to support participatory decision making if she has strong attitudes toward an issue and (to a lesser degree) if her conflict aversion is low. These preferences are related to individual characteristics. But the external perceptions (the importance attributed to an issue and the level of agreement with one's own ideas perceived in society) will not direct one's preferences to a participatory or representative decision-making process.

In sum, citizens want a more participatory decision-making process. That could mean more participation and/or better participation; more participatory mechanisms and/or a higher level of empowerment enabled by these tools. Reality is probably a mix of both. The big gap between citizens' will and their perceptions about who makes political decisions suggests that a quantity issue is involved (more participatory mechanisms would be demanded for filling the gap). But also the criticism of participants of the uselessness and lack of real effect of their previous participatory experiences suggests that quality matters as well. Hence, more participation is demanded, but with political implications and not being just symbolic. At the end of the next section we will discuss the possible links between this participatory demand and new electoral candidacies.

And where do these perceptions come from? Citizens build their opinions on the existing reality, from their experiences as a part of a decision-making course made up of institutionalized processes. That is why the next step is to focus on the participatory mechanisms in Southern European regions.

What governments do

In this section we will try to describe and analyse what governments do in terms of participatory democracy in Southern Europe. In this sense, first we present the main conclusions related to three aspects of the local and institutional participation of citizens: the participatory (who), the deliberative (how), and the empowerment (for what) dimensions. After the presentation of the main indicators measuring these dimensions, we relate these findings to the previous section (what citizens want and perceive). Finally, some possible political and electoral implications are suggested and argued.

The participatory dimension points at who is involved in these mechanisms. Our analysis of local participatory institutions in several Southern European regions has shown that these mechanisms can follow three different ideal models: an assembly-based model, where participation is broad and open to everyone; a mini-publics model, where a small amount of participants—usually randomly selected—are more able to deliberate²; and an associational model, where members of organizations or groups—usually invited by a public administration—represent different interests and perspectives. According to this broad definition, the assembly-based model is the more common mechanism in Spain and Italy, followed by the associational model, while the mini-publics model is less common. A mixed model is infrequent in general. Differences by regions are strong, though (Chapter 3).

The actors targeted by the design of participatory mechanisms also point to the existence of the different models from the perspective of public administration. The more frequent focus on citizens as the potential participants is negatively or not correlated at all with the focus on other actors (a specific sector, associations, participatory institution or experts) (Chapter 3). In other words, most participatory mechanisms are designed to attract individual citizens and not other collective actors. Therefore, an associational model focused on specific representatives differentiates itself from the other models where citizens are addressed to as individuals. This relative lack of incorporation of civil society organizations into the design of participatory mechanisms appears from the very beginning of the process. Public administration is the sole promoter of these mechanisms (without the presence of civil society) in almost 86.8% of the cases. In terms of actual participation, citizens are also the main protagonists but closely followed by associations and other civil society organizations (Chapter 3). This attendance corresponds to the preponderance of the assembly-based model, while showing the relevance of associations. Also, another complementary

² Ryan and Smith (2014) broadly discuss which different mechanisms can be defined as mini-publics, using a similar logic.

explanation is that a relevant part of citizens attending these mechanisms are already members of associations (as we observed, in general, participants tend to be politically active citizens).

As a consequence of the prevalence of the assembly-based model, medium-size arenas (with more than twenty-five participants and less than one thousand) are the most widespread ones. These assembly-based experiences are more common in issues like urban planning and participatory budgeting, whereas the associational model is more related to economic development, and the mini-publics model is more linked to more specialized topics, such as new technologies. Other issues like culture or social welfare are not linked to a specific typology (Chapter 3). A logical correspondence seems to emerge. Participatory budgeting is an open process almost by definition, while it could be interesting to make urban planning decisions affecting a city or a neighbourhood through a majority logic. Economic development is a key strategic issue for local governments, and a deliberative scenario with stakeholders and key economic actors seems more advantageous. And more specialized issues, requiring much more time and effort to provide enough information, fit better with a smaller mini-public scenario where random citizens would be able to express and discuss their opinions.

In this regard, the deliberative feature requires the establishment of a scenario where information can flow and debates can evolve properly. In this respect, a third of the experiences have been developed without either provision of information to participants or the presence of experts. The variables directly related to the collection of information show that 44.3% of experiences are carried out without the use of questionnaires, interviews or focus groups. Finally, the development of these experiences also hints at a lack of a deliberative disposition, with 59.6% of them taking place without a facilitator. Considering these three dimensions (information provided and collected and use of facilitation), almost half of the participatory mechanisms are developed with just one or without any of them (Chapter 3). Therefore, this data suggest that an important amount of these mechanisms presents a deficit in deliberative quality. This opens the question of what participatory mechanisms are developed for and what resources are devoted to them. A weak institutional support to these processes could lead to defective and disappointing outputs. Of course this is not the case of all participatory realities, but the general picture suggests that deeper processes should be developed in order to generate a stronger enabling environment for deliberation.

However, as we have seen with the main criticism from participants of the uselessness of participation due to the lack of effects on policies, empowerment emerges as a key factor. In fact, the big gap in the process scale between what is wanted and what is perceived by citizens points directly to the question of who makes political decisions. In a material sense, individuals are “not drawn into the process because they wish to deliberate, but because they wish to get infrastructure for their own neighbourhoods, to improve their lives” (Abers, 2003: 206). In a more general sense, citizens decide to participate because they want to have a say about what should be done and how, not conceiving deliberation as an end in itself. Consequently, if participatory mechanisms do not end up affecting political decision making, suspicions about manipulation and co-optation by political elites will emerge (Smith, 2009).

The indicators available in this study do not exactly measure the level of real empowerment but the formal design of participatory mechanisms, so they may be analysed only as proxies. In that sense, the level of participation's index shows a higher level of planned influence (consulting citizens' preferences, designing political solutions, and decision making or management), but does not go into the quality of participation. Thus, a well-organized consultation developed by a highly permeable local government could lead to a higher impact on policy making than a cosmetic process aimed at making decisions that are disregarded in the end. Still, this indicator gives us an approximate idea of reality, whose distribution is decreasing: 41.0% of consultation, 32.5% of design, and 26.5% of decision. In general terms, if a participatory mechanism is developed as a consultation, at the end local government will decide what (if something) is going to be done. Citizens could perceive the effort of participating as useless. As we climb up the scale, local government is more supposed to adopt citizens' decisions, so the individual effort of being engaged would be associated with a higher benefit. Of course, in any case it will depend on government's willingness, but the objective of participation can play a stimulating or inhibiting role.

Another analysed index related to empowerment is the number of policy stages or phases the participatory mechanism is addressed to (including diagnosis and planning, decision making, and implementation). A majority of experiences (64.6%) is addressed only to one phase. Again, the quality of the participatory mechanism will determine the real empowerment displayed. But if we assume that a process affecting more stages should imply (at least potentially) more empowerment, the panorama is once again restricted.

Citizens' empowerment would be called into question if citizens' decision making is limited only to trivial public matters (Smith, 2009). The participatory mechanisms where

both empowerment-related indicators obtain higher scores address the following issues: culture, public budgeting, political participation, and new technologies. With the exception of public budgeting (where the prevalence of Participatory Budgeting explains these scores), the rest deals with less strategically relevant issues. The other side of the coin is that immigration, urban planning, and economic development are the issues linked to lower empowerment levels.

More in-depth research would be needed, but the broad impression on the basis of these findings is that participatory mechanisms in general lack resources and political implications. Also, the most empowered experiences are addressed to the less strategic issues. If these surmises are true, they would help to explain why the current proliferation of participatory mechanisms is not enough to satisfy the demand of having citizens and politicians share the decision-making process and why participants are critical of their experience.

The comparative analysis by regions is summarized in table 1. Comparatively, the Italian regions are clearly much more devoted to participatory democracy in all indicators. Andalusia and Madrid show the worst indicators, while Catalonia stands in a middle position. These findings suggest that what matters is will, not money. The division does not correspond to economic development (Madrid, Catalonia and Tuscany being the healthier economies). Instead, Andalusia and Madrid are the two less active regions in terms of regional policies promoting participation (Sintomer and Del Pino, 2014). Therefore, the quality of participatory mechanisms appears as an issue related to political resources and decisions, determined by the supra-local institutional participatory framework. For example, if a regional government is providing external financial help for developing strategic planning which includes citizen participation, local governments, whatever their political colour, will be highly interested in developing well-designed participatory mechanisms in order to secure that funding.

Measuring the quality of such a broad object of study as participatory democracy has opened a debate about what dimensions or indicators should be taken into account or emphasized (Font and Galais, 2011). For example, a successful mini-public mechanism could imply a high deliberative quality but a low attendance and a low level of planned influence (i.e. the objective is not to make specific decisions but to consult about a broader orientation); while a successful assembly-based mechanism could imply exactly the opposite. In that regard, we could suppose that the worse or better specific indicators we are measuring are not related just to the quality of the participatory mechanisms but also to the model they

belong to. Nevertheless, the important scarcities that some indicators show and especially the differences by regions suggest that this trade-off between selecting one or another model of participatory mechanisms is not the main issue. In general, the Italian regions show better indicators in all dimensions (the participatory, deliberative and empowerment dimensions), while Andalusia and Madrid present the worst indicators in all of them. This dismisses the surmise of some regions developing more deliberative or more participative mechanisms, suggesting that some regions—the most active ones when it comes to promoting participation— just develop better-designed mechanisms.

Table 1. Relative position of regions in accordance with different indicators

Indicators		Andalusia	Madrid	Catalonia	Tuscany	Apulia
Participation	Open to everyone	--	-	0	++	+
	Number of participants	--	+	0	++	-
Deliberation	Presence of facilitator	-	--	++	0	+
	Information provided	-	--	0	+	++
Empowerment	Level of decision making ¹	-	-	0	+	++
	Number of phases	++	-	--	0	+

Note: regions have been ordered according to their scores for each indicator (++, +, 0, -, --). Differences between regions are statistically significant for all variables at 0.01 level.

¹ Andalusia and Madrid get the same score in this indicator.

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Chapter 3.

How can we understand the relation between these main characteristics of participatory mechanisms and the preferences of citizens dealt with in the previous section? If citizens' demand for a more participatory decision-making model is as strong as the evidence suggests, the growing development of participatory mechanisms at the local level does not seem to be satisfying this claim in general. A relatively important amount of mechanisms shows defects in terms of deliberative tools and, especially, citizens' empowerment. It looks like local governments progressively understood the existence of this societal demand—and maybe also the growing supply has created more demand. The institutionalization of participation—both through participation councils and plans and through the consolidation and extension of participatory mechanisms—is a reality, but these efforts are not enough. Representative democracy is still surpassing participatory mechanisms, or at least that is what citizens perceive. Therefore, participatory democracy, in

order to imply real participation, requires more resources and especially a greater connection with the policy-making process.

If “participation is a nonnegotiable right” (Font et al., 2014: 130), it makes sense that, even if the first boost to develop participatory mechanisms was given by left-wing parties, the current reality is that all the political spectrum is supporting these democratic innovations (Ganuza and Baiocchi, 2014). But we have seen that citizens still consider that the participatory tools are not enough (and/or they do not sufficiently guarantee citizens’ empowerment). The question is if these participatory preferences may lead to new vote orientation and party identifications.

In the Spanish case, in a hypothetical participatory-representative axis (in terms of who makes decisions, citizens or politicians), the distance between citizens’ self-location and the perceived location of the main political parties is considerable. The left-wing IU is perceived as closer to citizens’ preferences than the two main parties, but still substantially far away (see figure 2.6, Chapter 1). This situation opens the possibility of a new party championing the participatory cause and filling that gap, in case that participation could be important enough for citizens in electoral terms.

If the social movements described in the introduction had put on the table the issue of what kind of democracy citizens want, the irruption of Podemos in Spain is likely to be related to these preferences as an electoral expression. Reliable data are not available yet, but a broad array of evidence seems to point in that direction. The discourse and practices of this new party are constantly linked to citizen participation (Font and Alarcón, 2014). The post-electoral study CIS 3028 shows that citizens identified with Podemos are mostly young, with studies, and left-wingers or abstainers (Galindo, 2014). This is almost the same profile of the more participation-oriented citizens we described before.

The possible electoral dimension of participatory preferences (obviously not as the only or main factor, but maybe as an important one) could help to explain the emergence of different new candidacies that incorporate citizens’ participation into their discourses (Alarcón, 2014). Podemos is one example (as well as the broader local candidacies like Ganemos/Guanyem), but it would be possible that in other European electoral arenas this phenomenon is also operating, as in the case of Syriza in Greece³. In that sense, the study of

³ Even some scholars are discussing the possible relation between the Scottish independence referendum process and participatory and deliberative democracy: <http://deliberativehub.wordpress.com/2014/08/14/new-event-scotland-deliberates-online-panel/>. In Catalonia, the prohibition (led by the Spanish government) of the self-determination referendum motivated the Catalan regional government to develop a participatory mechanism in

the participatory dimension and citizen empowerment as a political cleavage would represent a highly interesting research line. Not as a lineal continuity of existing participatory mechanisms (i.e. just developing more of the same), but as a redefinition of what citizen participation means and how much citizen empowerment should be developed through these innovative tools (i.e. both quantity and especially quality).

The extension and relative institutionalization of participation at the local level means that the left-right dimension is no longer an explanatory factor for understanding the drive of participatory mechanisms. But in terms of quality, it is probable that ideology still matters—left-wing governments develop participatory mechanisms with better indicators in terms of both participation and deliberation. Also, the better indicators in the Italian regions could be related to the impact of the new forms of participation nurtured by the traditional left and the new social movements in a strong tradition of citizen participation in the 1970s. The new left-wing candidacies, at least in Spain⁴, championing the participatory cleavage could be reinforcing this link between ideology and democratic innovations. In this way, the possible electoral success of new political candidacies could lead to a new participatory paradigm in the next few years, at different geographical levels. The openness of public policies to citizen participation and social movements could generate a new reconfiguration of the relation between civil society and public institutions.

What academics assume

After reviewing citizens' preferences, participatory mechanisms, and their relations, we will address the understanding that the academy has developed paying attention to some methodological and normative issues. First, we tackle the methodological debates: limitations and advantages of large-N studies. The main attention is focused on the differences introduced by data collection methods (in terms of the quantity of data produced and its characteristics) and some corresponding implications. Second, we establish a debate between the empirical evidence analysed and some academic assumptions that perhaps should be rethought, following a sequential logic: from the definition of the object of study, through the promotion, the design, the participants, and the goals, to the outputs. More precisely, we will

order to allow citizens to express their opinions about what kind of state they prefer, with the participation of 2.3 million people voting.

⁴ Even if Podemos' main spokespersons define the candidacy as neither left-wing nor right-wing but just common sense matters, their proposals, activists and main supporters clearly belong to the social movements and the left. This discursive ambiguity implies that far left-wingers perceive Podemos as far left-wing, while more moderate citizens perceive Podemos as substantially more moderate, but still in the left (Fernández-Albertos, 2014).

deal with the prevalence of deliberation in the definition of citizens' participation, the grassroots promotion of institutional participatory mechanisms, the concerns about deliberative disparities, the reproduction of social inequalities, equality as a central concern, and the limited impact on public decisions.

For a homogenous phenomenon, small-N studies could generate generalizable conclusions. But participatory democracy is a highly diverse and complex issue. In that sense, the methodological approach is determinant for the findings. For their part, large-N studies' weakness is its broad-brush description of reality, which does not allow us to understand the details under strong correlations and causalities. In the case of citizens' preferences, we could identify some relations between different variables, but understanding the underlying causal mechanism (which variable causes the effect on the other one and how) is not possible. In the case of participatory mechanisms the limitations are even clearer. A big database allows us to see a big but very pixelated picture. We may be aware of general tendencies and characteristics, and use proxies to deal with issues such as the quality of deliberation and empowerment—a deeper analysis of which would deserve an in-depth approach.

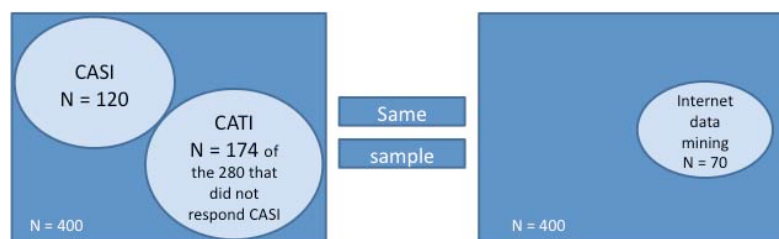
On the other hand, the main advantage of a quantitative perspective is that it will not prevent us from seeing the wood for the trees. As we have seen, the strongest and healthiest trees—the successful and well-known participatory mechanisms—are often planted in the first row, and the weaker and emaciated trees—participatory mechanisms without either resources or citizens' empowerment—are hidden further. In general, the participatory mechanisms described in this study do not fit in with the well-known and most studied successful examples. Therefore, institutional participatory processes like the Participatory Budgeting of Porto Alegre are very present in academic literature, but in the Southern European reality they are more of an exception than a representative example.

The difference between quantitative and qualitative research is clear, but the different approaches within each field also generate different biases. The generation of big databases introduce differences if the data collection process is based on interviews or on Internet data mining. Even interviews produce a different picture of reality depending on the administration mode: Computer Assisted Self Interview—CASI—or Computer Assisted Telephone Interview—CATI—(Chapter 4).

The number of participatory mechanisms that make up each database is the first difference. Figure 1 shows the final sample obtained by each method, applied to the same initial sample of 400 Andalusian municipalities. The available information is much scarcer

using Internet data mining, as soon as the majority of participatory mechanisms are not even present on the net.

Figure 1. Final samples (number of municipalities) obtained by each data collection method



Source: Compiled by author.

But the really important question is if data obtained by different methods produce a different picture of participatory reality. The higher level of participatory institutional resources and political will would explain that CASI self-administration surveys received more feedback in the biggest municipalities, governed by the leftist IU, with a participation plan and, especially, a participation department. A similar mechanism operates for the Internet data mining producing a serious underrepresentation of smaller municipalities, basically because their presence on the websites is much more limited (Chapter 4).

In regard to participatory mechanisms, the differences between the CASI and CATI methods are small when we compare some of the main dependent variables that previous research proves more relevant. Table 2 shows that only experiences where government was the only promoter (without any participation of civil society) are significantly more present in CASI surveys, while the rest of variables do not show significant differences between methods.

Table 2. Significant differences (logistic/OLS regressions controlled by other variables⁵) between modes of data collection in the characteristics of participatory mechanisms

Indicators	Difference CASI-CATI	Difference Survey-Internet
Government as single organizer	**	**
Participation open to everyone	-	**
Stability	-	**
Number of policy phases for participation	-	**
Number of participants	-	*

* < 0.05; ** < 0.01

N between 418 and 432 for the comparison between CASI and CATI and between 490 and 556 for the comparison between survey and Internet mining.

Source: Compiled by author based on Chapter 4.

This suggests that the combination of CASI (much cheaper) and CATI (much more effective in terms of rate response) make sense. The final sample is very similar to the initial sample designed (see table 2, Chapter 4), biases associated to both methods counteract their effects, and the substantive information of participatory mechanisms does not show important differences once we control the relevant variables.

Nevertheless, both survey methods combined do show differences in comparison with the Internet search. The presence on the Internet as a prerequisite for being gathered entails substantial particularities. Some explanations of these differences could be that the leading role of the local government is probably correlated with the capability to have access to the Internet. And it is the same for non-permanent experiences (that have not existed for years and can attract more media attention); the mechanisms open to everyone and more crowded. The coding process could also have some effects on this. For example, it could be the case for the number of policy phases open to citizen participation, which is not very clear and where an external observer could be less benevolent than the personnel of the local council. So it is important to try to identify the potential biases our methodological approaches could be introducing. In our case, the less interesting or spectacular processes are more likely to not surpass the filter of being published on the Internet. To some extent, the main pointed out weakness of most research on participatory democracy (the preponderance of case studies of successful experiences) has been reproduced in this

⁵ Inhabitants, existence of participation plan, existence of participation department.

quantitative approach, although to a much lesser degree. In that sense, we could expect the participatory reality to be even scarcer than the one presented in the previous section.

In sum, not just the general methodological perspective (small-N or large-N) matters, but the particular data collection method also introduces a specific kind of bias. Surveys are linked to non-response and social desirability problems. The combination of different modes of administration produces a much higher and less biased response rate. On the other hand, Internet data mining provides a significantly different picture because of the access to the net filter. The effort of uploading data to the Internet can imply that in some cases participatory mechanisms with less quality or impact are forgotten. That clearly suits the local council websites, where the political interest (or disinterest) of publicising the participatory mechanisms is added. But it could also suit other registers, such as lists developed by supra-local institutions or even in other practitioner and academic-oriented websites, such as Participedia⁶. This does not absolutely mean these sources are not valuable; they represent a highly interesting register of participatory mechanisms. But being aware of these limitations is important in order to weigh the implications properly—these data is probably showing a more successful picture than the real one. The conclusion is that self-questioning and critical analysis is crucial in order to identify what part of reality is actually researched with the designed tools and what part is missed.

Besides these imperfections, the general picture obtained with a large-N strategy provides a broader idea of what kind of participation is carried out. Other more recurrent methodologies selecting a few case studies are also essential, allowing a deeper and more dynamic analysis. But without big participatory mappings—or a multitude of case studies focused on failed experiences, or at least not selected by their success—this growing reality would probably remain eclipsed by the better and most famous experiences. In this way, erroneous conclusions could emerge, if academics assume that the multiplicities of participatory mechanisms are mere replicas of the most successful ones.

These advantages and problems associated with quantitative methodologies are also related to the study of citizens' attitudes, showing once again the necessity of complementing any large-N strategy with more in-depth qualitative research. A case study provides us rich and deep evidence, whereas well-designed quantitative studies generate more superficial but generalizable results. For its part, the survey designed for gathering citizens' preferences towards participatory and representative democracy provides an essential contribution. The process scale accurately measuring the participation-representation axis—the support to the

⁶ <http://participedia.net/>

idea of citizens or politicians making all decisions—emerges as efficient and relevant. Respondents understand this question (as proven by the correlation with another about ten general and specific items measuring support to participatory and representative mechanisms), and the non-response rate is acceptable (Chapter 1). The process scale accurately captures this participation-representation opposition, which is important for voters (Font and Navarro, 2015). The inclusion of at least this scale in further surveys would be highly interesting, especially in order to better understand the unexpected electoral support of the new participatory candidacies and to determine if this participatory-representative axis is related to a new political cleavage.

Also, the items presented by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) about experts and successful entrepreneurs are relevant when measuring technocratic and/or meritocratic governments as a different dimension. The configuration of process preferences, therefore, seems to be a participatory-representative axis representing the main tension (not always exclusive but for some people complementary); meanwhile, the expert-based governance emerges as a differentiated and related dimension (Font and Navarro, 2015). Hence, more research is needed in order to demarcate the support to these decision-making models (representative, participatory and technocratic democracy) and their two-by-two combinations.

As far as academic debates are concerned, this study provides substantial contributions in two senses: the picture of the participatory reality in a region whose participatory mechanisms have been less known by the international community, and an empirical basis which is quite different from most of the previous research. The deliberative and participatory democracy field has been dominated by the English-speaking academy and the impact of some well-known and pioneer mechanisms such as the Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre (Chapter 5). As a result, the realities in English-speaking countries lead to a prevalence of their characteristics in most of the academic assumptions. And the study of successful and striking mechanisms leads to the establishment of specific ideal types of local institutional participation.

Table 3 confronts some academic assumptions (some of which have been questioned recently) with some conclusions emerging from the data analysis in Southern European regions. A first and basic difference emerges, which is probably connected with some others: the deliberative tradition has dominated both at the academic and practical level in the English-speaking world, while in the Southern European context there is a broader participatory tradition, where deliberation is included as one of the participatory

possibilities. The broad definition presented in the introduction refers to any organized activity that attempts to involve citizenry, so the deliberative dimension is not a must.

That definition was developed in order to address a regional participatory reality that would not have fitted in an exclusive deliberative definition. And the typology of participatory mechanisms confirms this configuration of reality. Out of the three different ideal models exposed above, deliberation is an indispensable component of the least frequent mini-public model. Nevertheless, this quality is a likeable but not compulsory candidate for the associational model and a difficult dimension in the more crowded and more recurrent assembly-based model.

Table 3. Comparison between some academic assumptions and the conclusions of the data analysis

Issue	Academic assumptions (English-speaking world)	Data evidence (Southern Europe)
Definition of the object of study	Deliberation prevails (Lee, 2011)	More participation
Promoters	Grassroots, progressive, bottom-up movement? (Lee, 2011)	Processes mostly directed by public institutions, not exclusive of political left
Design	Inequalities in deliberation (Bobbio, 2010)	Important methodological limitations
Participants	Concern for reproduction of social inequalities (Fiorina, 1999; Lee, 2011)	Inequalities partially reproduced by the profile of specific participants
Goals	Equality as a central concern? (Lee, 2011)	Not equality but to provide more participatory opportunities
Outputs	Limited impact on public decisions and actions (Levine et al., 2005)	Real influence seems to be limited

Source: Compiled by author based on Chapter 5.

Regarding promotion, Lee (2011) invites us to re-think the assumption that public deliberation processes are the result of a grassroots, progressive, bottom-up deliberative movement for political reform. As we have seen, that questioning attains its true significance in the Southern European context. A huge majority of the initiative in participatory mechanisms corresponds only to local government, without any collaboration with civil society. The cooperation in their promotion is, in any case, shared with supra-local institutions (Chapter 5). Following the terminology developed by Hendriks and Carson (2008), participatory mechanisms in the Southern European region correspond to an *invited space* and not to an *insisted space*. The fact that promotion and funding corresponds to the

public administration provides a higher initial degree of control of the process itself, a situation quite different from the general context in the US.

Participatory processes were historically introduced by the left, but now these mechanisms do not belong exclusively to these political forces (Ganuza and Baiocchi, 2012). This process operated in a similar way in the US (Lee, 2011). Nevertheless, the strong participatory renewal discourse of new political forces linked to social movements and the left could re-open the connection between democratic innovations and deliberative democracy, at least in Spain. The analysis of the upcoming events, in case some of these new candidacies become governments, will clear up this hypothesis.

Participation is addressed to citizens, but not all citizens are equal. The different skills of participants can easily involve an unequal individual participation. The design of participatory mechanisms may consider trying to reduce its impact. Bobbio (2010) develops a model of deliberative processes in accordance with the symmetrical and asymmetrical characteristics of participants. According to his model, the best deliberative setting (keeping stakeholders separated from ordinary citizens and using facilitators) is only present in 18.3% of the experiences. Most experiences belong to the asymmetrical deliberation type (Chapter 5).

These inequalities could also be compensated for by the incorporation of strong deliberative tools. But, as we have seen, some participatory mechanisms could have important methodological limitations, in terms of the presence of facilitators, experts, and support consultancy. Almost a third of experiences are developed without any of these actors (Chapter 5).

Some scholars (for example, Fiorina, 1999; Lee, 2011) warn about the possibility that the expansion of participatory practices could lead to the reproduction of social stratification and inequality. We have seen that citizens in general are the main target of participatory mechanisms in Southern European regions. But what kind of citizens is actually participating? The 2006 CIS survey shows that women, the youth, the elderly, the lower classes and citizens with basic or no education are less present in participatory mechanisms (Chapter 5). So social inequalities are partially reproduced through citizens' participation. In attitudinal terms, participants tend to be more left-wing, to vote in local elections, to be more involved in associations and more politicized (Font and Navarro, 2013). Therefore, we could also identify somehow the existence of a reproduction of political inequalities, with

abstainers and less politicized and involved citizens more absent in participatory mechanisms.

Focusing on the goals of participatory democracy, Lee's study (2011) shows that equity and diversity are not central concerns for the majority of practitioners, as it would be mostly assumed by the academia. In the Southern European context, citizen building and efficiency are the main goals, and never equality, according to the IOPD study (Chapter 5). The overwhelming main objective in Catalonia⁷ is to improve participatory opportunities, followed by policy efficiency. Equality was virtually absent and was not even considered as a coding category (Chapter 5). Additionally, the two most highlighted advantages related to participation in Catalonia, Tuscany and Apulia are education of citizens and taking into account popular perceptions and suggestions (Chapter 5). Therefore, all the available evidence suggests that equality is an absolutely marginal concern, while most participatory mechanisms are developed with the main objective of just providing more participatory opportunities.

Finally, the last assumption to be addressed points to the view that most public deliberation processes do not directly alter public decisions and actions (Levine et al., 2005). In the three regions mentioned above, policy making appears as a relevant goal (right after providing new participatory opportunities). But the characteristics of the participatory mechanisms in these regions showed that most experiences do not engage citizens in the decision and management process and are mostly limited to consultation (and design in the Italian case). The empowerment proxies and citizens' criticisms (in the Spanish case) suggested that limited empowerment and limited connection to final policy making remain as challenges to be achieved.

In sum, a comparative perspective suggests the existence of some region-specific traits, starting with the general characterization of the object of study. The globalization of participatory mechanisms spread them all over the world, but each region has some specific qualities stamped. The development of a general and inclusive definition would help in order to achieve a common understanding of a global phenomenon with local specifications. This definition should probably understand participation as a main umbrella and deliberation as a non-essential possible dimension, incorporating all mechanisms promoted or recognized by public administrations at any administrative level. The focus should not be on citizens, since some mechanisms are aimed at engaging just stakeholders and/or representatives of different associations and not individual citizens on their own.

⁷ This variable is only available for the Catalan case.

Also, a complete understanding of the relatively recent object of study constituted by participatory democracy requires a critical and dynamic academic perspective that does not take all previous contributions for granted. Most processes seem to be clearly differentiated from the well-known deliberative “best practices”. In the context of a quantitatively growing process, some assumptions need to be re-thought, specially to be able to travel from one region to another.

General conclusions and some implications

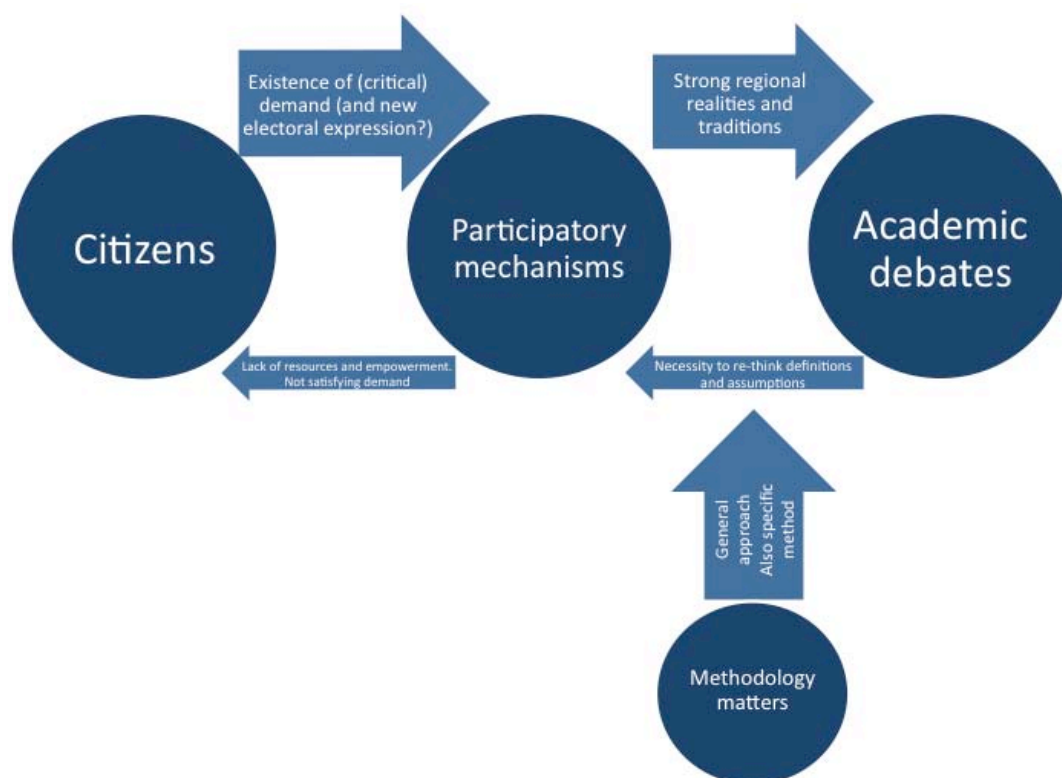
Participatory democracy is a dynamic and troubled reality. Citizens’ preferences, participatory mechanisms and academic understandings interact in a bidirectional way. Figure 2 represents the main conclusions of these interrelations.

Spanish citizens prefer a balance between participatory and representative democracy. But they perceive that in the existing decision-making reality politicians are the only ones who make all decisions. Social movements opened the debate, both in terms of demands (for example, the *indignados* movement) and exemplifying practices (for example, the European Social Forums). The preferences of these citizens for a more participatory democracy may have been shaping a new political cleavage, with new and successful electoral options opting for a new democratic renewal based on citizen engagement.

Notwithstanding their extension and consolidation process, the current participatory mechanisms are not enough for satisfying this demand. Methodological limitations as regards guaranteeing deliberation and especially the limited empowerment could be the reasons why. These weaknesses are important handicaps that can cast a shadow over deliberative and participatory goodness. Developing participatory mechanisms is not enough; the quality and implications of these tools are also fundamental.

Academically, the existence of strong regional realities and traditions regarding participatory mechanisms requires an inclusive common understanding. This means that a general definition comprehending all these realities should be developed, while previous assumptions must be re-thought. The prevalence of case studies (often focusing on the most successful experiences) should be combined with large-N studies that produce a general picture of what kind of participation is being developed. At the same time, these large-N studies can identify general trends and dynamics, which a complementary small-N study would help to fully understand.

Figure 2. Diagram of the conclusions of this thesis



Source: Compiled by author.

Finally, the analysis developed up to this point suggests some implications that could ask for some improvements or would require further research. These implications refer to the relation between citizens' participatory preferences and their attitudes, the role played by associations in participatory democracy, questioning what institutional participatory mechanisms are being developed, and the need for an inclusive design.

We have seen that citizens' preferences for more participation do not correspond with an actual individual engagement. What are the main explanatory factors under this gap between what citizens want and what citizens do? Different potential reasons could be operating in citizens' preferences and attitudes in regard to participatory democracy: values (like the duty to participate); perceived efficiency (with a cost-benefits logic); the experienced socialization and the impact of the current social setting; individual features (psychological, socio-political, and cultural); etcetera. Which ones explain citizens' preferences, which ones are related to individual engagement, and which ones are associated with both would be an interesting research line.

As regards the issue of who participates, data showed that institutional mechanisms mostly focus on engaging individual citizens, but associations are widely present in practice. It is true that engaging normal citizens into participatory processes entails a positive experience. As we have seen, participants are citizens with positive civic attitudes. But civil society is not a mere addition of individuals. Organizations are an important social capital and social networks that should be taken into account, in order to take advantage of the previous experience and accumulated knowledge. Obviously, when a participatory mechanism is open to all citizens, members of all kind of associations will get involved (as is actually happening), as they already have a more participatory-oriented profile. But their role in the participatory mechanism will be different if their participation is as individuals or if the process design incorporates a specific dynamic targeting these social actors. In this way, convening individual citizens but involving them in a participatory mechanism with guest key representatives of civil society organizations could be more enriching. For example, if a participatory mechanism is going to address an urban planning issue, a given public administration could identify the different organizations that have been working on the subject or in the area, from neighbourhood associations and social movements to stakeholders and professional organizations, and establish an arena where their voices will be exposed for opening up deliberation. This could be interesting especially in Spain, where last years have seen huge social movements developing popular proposals. The anti-evictions movement, the “tides” of workers and users of the health service and the education system, the feminist and ecologist movements, etcetera, all have been developing different proposals (often through non-institutional participatory and deliberative processes) that could be very useful if incorporated into an institutionalized debate with political consequences. It would be a way to make the most of an important and alive social capital and it would help to rebuild a badly damaged political trust in representative political institutions.

Another implication points to the necessity of guaranteeing the inclusion of disadvantaged sectors of the population. We have seen that the profile of participants shows a reproduction of social inequalities. The deliberative tools provided by participatory mechanisms are not the most suitable. This suggests that participatory processes need to incorporate stronger mechanisms in order to involve the most excluded social sectors, to guarantee an equal deliberation (understanding that not all participants have the same skills and self-confidence) and to attract all kind of citizens, even those who at first are less prone to participate.

These points lead to questioning what kind of institutional participatory mechanisms is being developed by local governments. We have seen that there is a mismatch between what citizens want and what governments do. The current institutional participatory mechanisms are clearly not enough to satisfy citizens' demands. The question of empowerment is clearly central here. Mass protests like the *indignados* movements and new electoral proposals seem to be setting out a complete amendment to the status quo (which Podemos pejoratively refers to as "the regime"). The discredit of politicians and institutions, the more educated society, and the new technological possibilities could be forming a new political cleavage. Are we facing the emergence of a new democratic paradigm? In that case, what influence may the existing participatory mechanisms have on the new deliberative aspirations?

Discursively, these new actors have been more or less consciously substituting the left-right axis with new political cleavages. The *indignados* movement talked about the clash between those below and those above, the 99% and the 1%. Podemos has popularized the term "caste" to refer to those on top, and establishes a fundamental difference between the old politics (linked to the regime in crisis) and the new politics (the future which is being born). Three general issues—which would deserve further research—resulting from this old-new opposition deserve a comment. First, this new politics is clearly linked to the new information and communication technologies as a new political mobilization arena (for example, just after the European elections, Podemos had more Facebook and Twitter followers than the two main parties together, and the difference has markedly increased since then). This is clearly linked to the fact that the members and activists of these new candidacies and movements are younger, but at the same time the use of these new technologies is transforming organizational dynamics and opening and testing new internal participatory possibilities. Second, the great political distrust of institutions is a clear impediment for the "old politics" to impulse new initiatives and to renew its image, especially if they came from above in a formal and institutional sense. And third, the "new politics" also faces a dilemma regarding its relationship with representative democracy: a part of the new activists—and this was especially clear with the *indignados* movement—do not just focus participation on influencing the institutional decision-making process, but rather like an end in itself generating autonomy and self-management (returning to the process scale, this group is probably linked to the 10% of respondents who wanted a decision-making process where only citizens and not politicians made all decisions).

At the same time, these three aspects could have important consequences on participatory mechanisms, especially if some of these new candidacies win elections and put into practice their promise of opening democracy to the participation of citizens. First, the new technologies could acquire a growing and enormous influence on participatory democracy, transforming the design of some existing mechanisms and maybe making new ones possible. Second, if the “old parties” try to counteract promoting more participatory mechanisms and dynamics, it would be highly interesting to check if they are able to break the existing distrust. And third, what would one of these new candidacies do once in government in case they hold their participatory promise? Promoting more and better participatory mechanisms from an old institutional logic or establishing a qualitatively new relationship between institutions and civil society?

In sum, more and much better institutional participatory mechanisms are necessary, at least at the local level. The deep political crisis some Southern European countries are developing further increases the urgency. If current local governments are unwilling to promote citizens’ participation entailing real and deep empowerment, it is possible that new political forces could champion that demand providing a new participatory paradigm. Social movements raised the participatory flag. Now this demand for a new democratic institutionalism is permeating new electoral programmes whose support seems to be growing.

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What Citizens Want

Annex 1

5



Citizens and Participation

Joan Font, Carol Galais, Magdalena Wojcieszak
and Pau Alarcón

Participation is not possible without some degree of citizen involvement. This means that none of the participation mechanisms analysed in chapter 4 can develop without citizen interest. Citizens are crucial actors who have only played a minor role in the discussion and analysis of this book up until now; thus it is time to focus on them to understand the crucial role they play in the participation riddle. Chapters 5 and 6 will be devoted to understanding how citizens contribute to this story.

We will move from the broader context to the more specific. Chapter 5 starts by focusing on the potential role played by the whole (Southern European) population. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have shown that most participation mechanisms in Southern Europe have been the result of government action. However, they have also shown that it is difficult to ascertain whether these policies are purely the result of independent elite decisions or whether they may emerge as a partial result of societal demands. Do these demands exist and if they do, how important are they? This is the main research question that will be addressed in the first part of this chapter. We will analyse Southern European public opinion (comparing it to other areas of the Western world), trying to understand how important participation is for populations in this region.

The second part of the chapter will shift the focus to a more specific group, those citizens who have participated in these mechanisms. Our approach will be to compare citizens who have actively participated in participatory projects with the rest of the population to understand how similar or different they are in their social and political attitudes.¹ This comparison is especially important to contextualise the following chapter, in which the focus, using qualitative

methodologies, will be on participants in these instruments and potential attitudinal and cultural changes. In this chapter, we will provide a general picture of these active participants based on a survey that, though it does not permit us to develop the rich causal analysis to be found in chapter 6, permits us to build a representative picture that shows how participants have or do not have different attitudes from other citizens.

Thus what both parts of the chapter share is the use of surveys as their main data source,² as well as a focus on the role played by citizens in participatory processes. However, the chapter is also clearly divided because each part focuses on different concerns analysed in this book. Thus the first part continues with the focus on the overall society, presenting the attitudinal context within which the participatory mechanisms previously discussed have developed, while the second part establishes a stronger link with the remaining parts of the book, through an intense dialogue with the world of active participants in these mechanisms that will be more fully developed in chapter 6.

5.1. IS THERE A SOCIETAL DEMAND?

Politics and political participation are complex phenomena. Some scholars and practitioners assume that citizen participation is something inherently good. They often undertake the challenge of involving citizens in policymaking, seeing this involvement as a prerequisite to a series of larger and democratically desired goals, such as expanding citizen civic literacy, designing policies that meet the expectations of the electorate or mobilizing the population for electoral purposes. Other scholars and the majority of politicians endorse more or less explicitly an elitist view and are distrustful of greater citizen participation. Over the last decades of the twentieth century, many researchers of participation assumed that, whatever the problems general participation had in practice, there was widespread citizen demand for more participatory possibilities. The publication *Stealth Democracy* (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002) contributed to undermining the credence of this optimistic assumption, showing that—at least in the United States—the demand for greater participation was far from universal. In fact, according to these authors, this demand was not shared by most Americans, who were content to passively observe the political system without being directly involved. However, this is not to say that most citizens want to “sit back, relax and enjoy the show”, as the saying goes.

In fact, the public view of political involvement is far more complex than acknowledged by both those advocating more direct, participatory decision-making processes and those perceiving the public in various democratic countries as apathetic, disengaged and uninterested. For example, although some citizens simply do not want to be involved in national decision-making, many distinguish between having a say and being directly involved, favouring influence over direct

involvement (Hansard Society 2006). In addition, although general demands for participation seemed to be limited in the past (Marwell and Oliver 1993), some studies have found that many citizens in Western democracies call for more participatory spaces, supporting direct engagement in policymaking through referenda (Anderson and Goodyear-Grant 2010; Bengtsson and Mattila 2009; Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007; Dalton, Bürklin and Drummond 2001) and other more intense participatory mechanisms (Neblo et al. 2011; Jacobs, Cook and Delli Carpini 2009).

Whether participation is seen as a means towards a more enlightened citizenry and a better functioning democracy, or whether it is considered to be an important form of democratic decision-making, it is crucial to know citizens' attitudes towards participation. Knowing what types of political engagement citizens favour and what they think of various forms of democratic governance can offer important insight into the potential for success of different participatory initiatives and the likelihood that citizens will voluntarily and repeatedly engage in these initiatives.

This section addresses these preferences, examining whether there is an actual demand for more participation in public affairs by citizens and whether there are differences in this regard across countries, in particular, between Southern Europe and other Western countries. Fortunately, there has been a growing effort to capture these issues in cross-sectional surveys so that some comparative data is available. We first rely on the *International Social Survey Program* (ISSP) module of 2004 dealing with citizenship, which includes attitudes towards participation and preferences for decision-making processes. We then focus more specifically on the Spanish case, using a recent survey (2011) designed to offer greater insight into these preferences. Updating what we know about citizens' attitudes towards participation is increasingly needed in the current changing economic and sociopolitical climate. Inasmuch as the ongoing crisis has affected—on a global scale—the trust that citizens have in public and political institutions, citizens' democratic preferences have likely been affected as well. Concurrently, various grassroots movements, such as the “Indignados” in Spain or the “Occupy movement” internationally, have shown that citizens desire changes in how politics functions, who has governing power and how policy decisions are made and implemented. Almost simultaneously, Greek and Italian parliaments appointed prime ministers who were seen as “technocrats”, declaring hope in their capacity to lead their governments towards the best possible technical solutions to current problems—with at least controversial results. These recent trends (demands for more participatory forms of decision-making and the incorporation of more expert-based forms of decision-making) share one thing in common—namely, to reduce the role of politicians. However, the two trends go in potentially opposite directions and highlight the importance of gauging citizen preferences for different forms of political decision-making.

5.1.1. Attitudes towards Democracy and Political Participation across Ten Countries

In order to build a portrait of the vision citizens have of political participation, this section will look at a cross-country survey that taps the topics of participation and citizenship. Comparative survey questions regarding these issues are quite limited, but the ISSP 2004 survey provides information on forty-two countries.³ As this is a large number, we have selected ten countries for the sake of clarity in presenting the results. The initial sampling criteria were sufficient cultural diversity and countries with similar levels of economic development. Additionally, since the stealth democracy thesis suggests that willingness to get involved in politics may, in fact, mask distrust and other disaffected attitudes towards government, our sample should reflect some diversity in attitudes towards political engagement and politicians.

These conditions—keeping the total number of countries within manageable limits, focusing on countries with similar economic levels and guaranteeing sufficient cultural and attitudinal variation—led us to the selection of ten countries within the first third of the ISSP countries ranked by level of development.⁴ We started the sampling by selecting France and Spain, since they are two of the three main countries covered in this book (unfortunately, the ISSP 2004 survey did not include Italy, but it did include another Southern European country, Portugal). In addition, the ISSP survey included the United States and Finland, the two countries for which published evidence on the stealth democracy thesis exists. It was therefore important to test whether any pattern regarding attitudes towards participation also applied to them. The subsequent five countries chosen (Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Ireland) were selected with the aim of balancing the aforementioned countries, offering a portrait of diverse OECD countries in the two dimensions (policy/institutional variation and culture/religion) that we discuss next.

First, it was also important that our sample reflect some policy and institutional variation, and thus we considered countries' welfare state models. The provision of social services and goods can be seen as a proxy for the role that the state plays in citizens' lives (whether it is actively involved and responsive to their needs), which in turn can affect citizens' preferences regarding the political process. Thus the United States can be situated at one extreme of a hypothetical continuum, based on minimal government intervention in the economy and a limited welfare state, while the two Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Finland) would be at the other end of the continuum, followed by the Netherlands and Switzerland. France can be seen as a bridge between those countries and Spain, Ireland and Portugal as states characterised by Catholic values and family- and community-based solidarity (Esping-Andersen 1990).

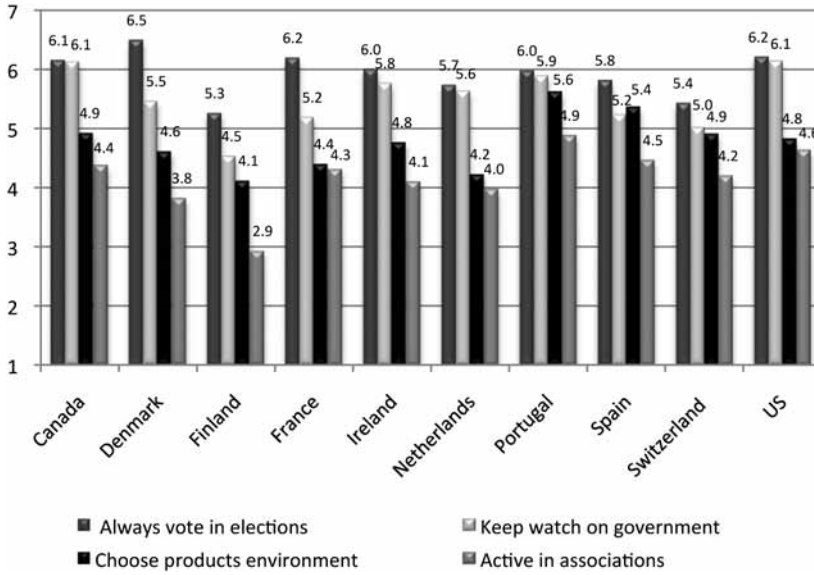
Following Inglehart and Welzel's cultural mapping (2005), our final sample includes three Catholic countries (France, Portugal and Spain), three

English-speaking countries (the United States, Canada and Ireland) and four Protestant countries (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland). In addition, while Portugal and Spain are new democracies, the rest are relatively established. With Italy, France and Greece, these two cases form a group of Southern European countries. Citizens in these countries stand out for their negative evaluations of political institutions along with positive views of other sources of authority, such as the police, the army, the church or business (Montero and Torcal 2006).

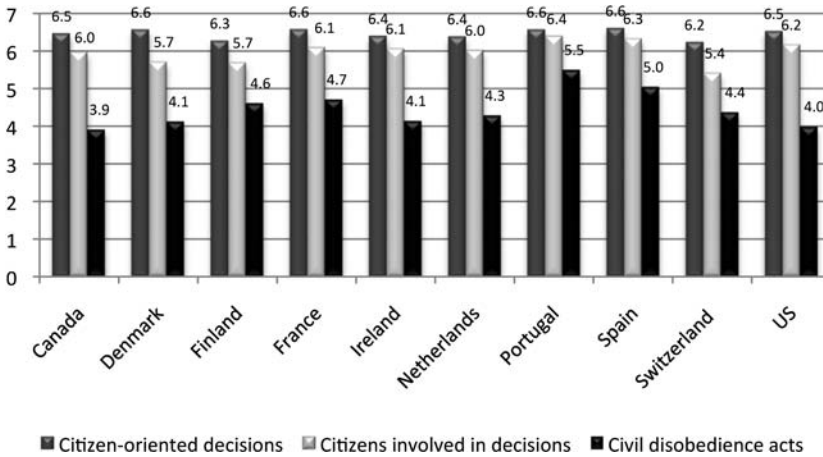
Are the citizens of these countries willing to take part in public affairs? The issue of whether citizens want or should want to participate is to some extent related to theoretical debates about citizenship. For scholars defending civic republican theories or models of participatory democracy for instance, citizenship entails more than a set of rights granted by the state, as they stress the importance of civic engagement and civic duty. Is this sense of duty really present among citizens? Is it a worldwide phenomenon or, on the contrary, is it limited to certain cultural contexts? In order to shed light on these questions, we first present a set of indicators based on Dalton's norms of citizenship. According to Dalton (2007), there are two basic dimensions of citizenship: the dutiful and the engaged. Dutiful attitudes encompass positive predispositions towards authorities—manifested by paying taxes, serving in the military or reporting a crime. Citizen engagement is more demanding; it requires an active attitude and effort to influence public decision-making. For the sake of parsimony, we have selected only four indicators from this latter dimension. They refer to the importance that respondents attach to four activities in order to be considered a “good citizen”. These activities are voting in elections, keeping an eye on government, buying certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons and being active in associations. Graph 5.1 displays the average values given for the importance of each of these indicators. All activities seem to be very important, but voting is seen as most important in all ten countries, since respondents give it a 6 on the 1-to-7 scale on average.⁵

Keeping an eye on the government is the next activity in importance, and the differences among the countries increase in this case. While Canadian and US populations see this activity as almost as important as voting, the Finnish do not feel that watching their government is as necessary to be considered good citizens.⁶ Political consumerism and associational activism are perceived as less crucial activities.

The ISSP 2004 survey also took into account the importance given to a series of democratic rights, measured in a similar way as the indicators just presented.⁷ Graph 5.2 presents the results, showing that “citizen-oriented decision-making” is considered the most important of the three rights asked about, with an average above 6.5. Involving citizens in decisions follows closely and the right of citizens to disobey unjust decisions appears far behind (though still high, with an overall average over the median of the scale). Thus responsive government is more important than involvement in decision-making, although involvement is



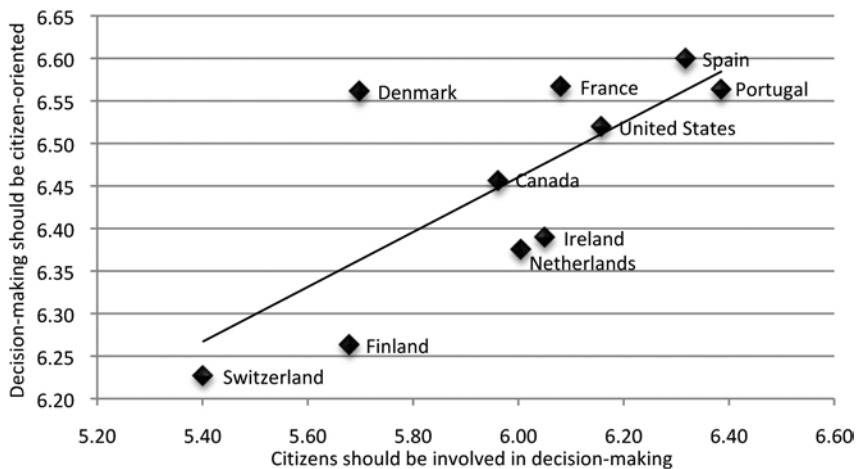
Graph 5.1. Importance of factors to be considered a good citizen (1-7 scale).
Source: ISSP Survey-2004.



Graph 5.2. Importance of rights in democracies (0-7 scale).
Source: ISSP Survey-2004; N = 14,691.

also considered important. In addition, the right to civil disobedience to protest unjust laws is also recognised as important, even though it may be associated with costly or even illegal actions. The importance given to this right is highest in Portugal and Spain and lowest in Canada and the United States. This means that in Southern Europe protests may be an essential feature of democracy, one that may be related to the nondemocratic past of both countries (in their recent history, civil disobedience was a part of the fight for democratic rights). In contrast, in more established democracies, civil disobedience can be seen as challenging the status quo and, as a result, may be perceived as less necessary by many citizens. This result points again to historically related cultural differences regarding the way participation and democracy are seen across countries.

These two indicators regarding the way decisions should be made (citizen oriented and citizen involvement) are particularly interesting, since these are probably the two indicators included in the ISSP 2004 that are closest to the stealth democracy indicators. To see to what extent it is true that citizens want responsive government without personal engagement in politics, graph 5.3 places our ten countries in a scatter plot whose axes are determined by the average importance given to each of these two questions on decision-making processes. Even though the range is quite limited and the importance high (the average for the importance of involvement in decision-making ranges from 5.4 to 6.4 and for the importance of citizen-oriented decision-making ranges from 6.2 to 6.6), the graph displays a direct, positive relationship between the two questions. That is, according to

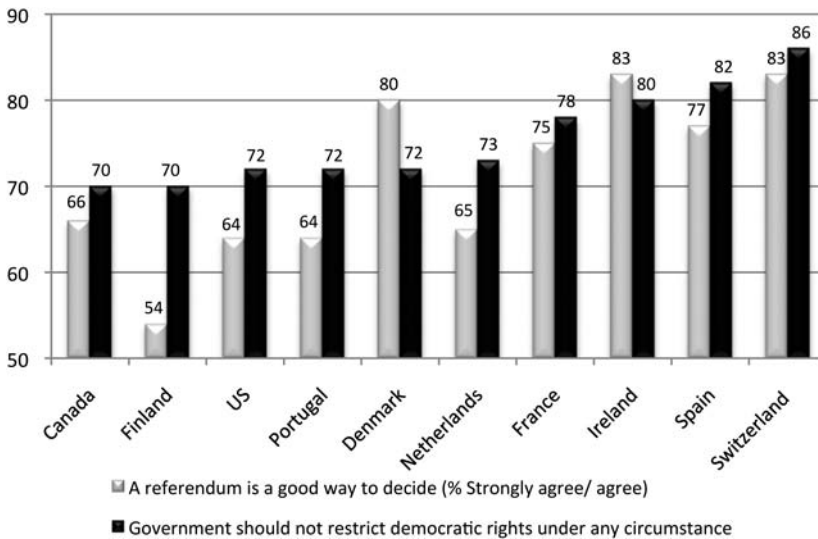


Graph 5.3. Citizen-oriented decision-making and citizen involvement by country averages.

Source: ISSP Survey-2004; N = 14,691.

the survey those countries whose population gives more importance to citizen-oriented decisions are also those more in favour of citizen involvement. The populations in Spain and Portugal assign high importance to both features, while the Swiss and Finnish give them somewhat less importance. The Danish population gives significantly more importance to citizen-oriented decision-making than to citizen involvement. These findings are challenging for the Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) stealth democracy hypothesis, in the sense that a majority of respondents approve of civic engagement and seem to follow a consistent pattern in giving importance to both government responsiveness and citizen involvement. The pattern is not completely consistent across countries, and responsive politics are given greater importance than participation in all the cases, but indications that citizens want their voices to be heard are there and support for both responsive and participatory politics tend to go hand in hand in similar countries.

Regarding the manner in which public decisions are made, the ISSP survey asked people their opinions on referenda and whether or not the government could restrict citizens' rights. These two issues can be seen as opposed in a way. Individuals who favour referenda can be expected to also favour greater direct citizen participation, while those who accept that—under certain circumstances—their rights could be restricted would be more likely to accept delegating decision-making to political elites. Graph 5.4 shows that referenda are highly popular across our sample of countries, with percentages of citizens with positive



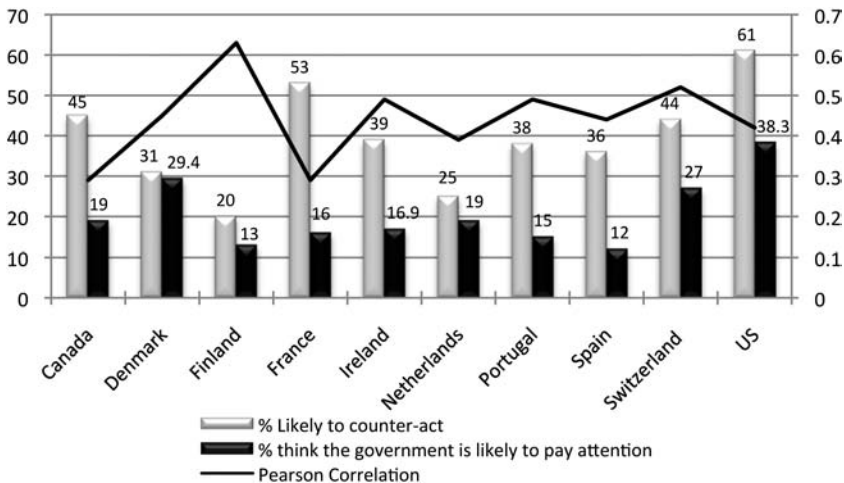
Graph 5.4. Percentage of citizens in favour of referenda and against the restriction of rights.

Source: ISSP Survey-2004; N = 14,691.

attitudes ranging from 54 percent (Finland) to 83 percent (Switzerland, Ireland). It is noteworthy that in Switzerland, where this mechanism is widespread, the population is highly supportive of this form of democratic decision-making.⁸

Negative views about governments restricting democratic rights under certain circumstances are widespread across countries. Even in those countries where the citizenry is less enthusiastic about referenda, such as Finland, the United States, Portugal and the Netherlands, at least 70 percent of respondents agreed that government should never restrict democratic rights. However, there are still differences across countries, with the Swiss (86 percent) and the Spanish (82 percent) most supportive of unconditional democratic rights.

Elaborating more on the issues of protest and conditional citizens' participation, two other ISSP questions dealt with protesting unjust laws and government responsiveness to these actions (graph 5.5).⁹ Differences across countries with regard to the first of these questions are greater than for the issues previously analysed. In the United States, 60 percent of the respondents considered themselves likely to take part in protest actions. France and Canada's citizens were also prone to direct action, though less so. Finland and the Netherlands revealed a tendency towards apathy that can be read either as risk aversion to retaliation from authorities or as confidence in the response of government institutions to rectify in the face of citizen protest. About 36 percent of Spaniards and 38 percent of Portuguese claimed that they are likely to participate in actions against



Graph 5.5. Likelihood of protest and government attention to protest in the event of a perceived unjust law (percentage very/ fairly likely).

Source: ISSP Survey 2004; N = 14,691.

unjust laws. In short, the three Southern European countries are above average in the propensity of their citizens to take such actions, with higher percentages than other European democracies; but the results in these countries are not truly exceptional as they are all below the levels found in the United States, while only France is above Canada and Ireland.

With regard to the perceived responsiveness of governments, the general attitude is pessimistic. The citizens of the United States are the most optimistic, but the belief that the government is very or fairly likely to pay attention is still below 40 percent. The populations with the least faith in their government's response to protest are the Spaniards, Finnish, French, Portuguese and Irish. The black line in the graph shows the intensity of the relationship between the likelihood of protest and governments' perceived responsiveness. The association is strongest in Finland (Pearson's correlation of 0.6), Switzerland, Portugal and Ireland (about 0.5 points in all the three cases). This means that, in these countries, belief that the government will pay attention to protests encourages political action. This association is general but less intense in France and the Netherlands.

Summing up, a significant majority believes that decision-making should be citizen-oriented and that governments should respect democratic rights in all cases. Although casting a ballot is perceived as most central to democracy, political participation is also considered to be important. In most countries, a desire for greater participation in the current institutional design of government exists, and in the next section we will take a further look at this issue through an analysis of Spanish data. (For our purposes, the Spanish case is one of the most interesting because of the recent initiatives taken by politicians and civil servants to introduce participatory devices.) Nevertheless, there are considerable differences across countries, for example, when it comes to support for protest actions, with populations in Southern Europe being more inclined to engage in protest. In the French case, they are also willing to get personally involved in other participatory acts if they see their participation as potentially useful and successful, in other words, if they believe that government will be responsive.

In any case, certain patterns particular to Southern Europe underscore the need to look more deeply into attitudes towards participation and democracy in this region. We thus now proceed to analysing the Spanish case in greater detail, expanding our discussion to a new set of relevant issues related to the type of political processes that citizens want, including more or less participatory components.

5.1.2. Citizen Preferences in Spain: A Deeper Look

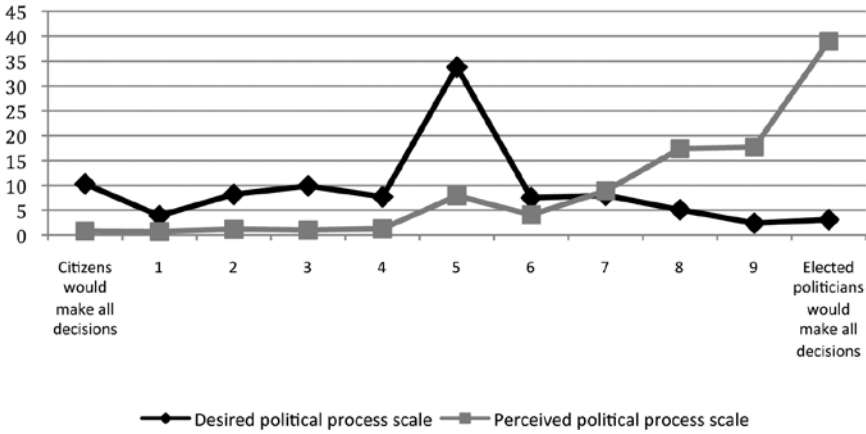
In order to obtain a deeper understanding of citizens' preferences regarding democratic processes (who should make binding decisions and how), we rely on a survey administered to the Spanish adult population (N = 2450) in February 2011. The survey was initially developed to test the stealth democracy (SD) thesis in Spain and also included additional measures of citizen attitudes towards

democratic governance and political decision-making. Thus this survey offers us detailed insight into citizens' preferences for democratic processes, shedding significant light on the specificities of Spain, the concrete processes desired by Spaniards, and the profiles of those citizens who demand greater participation.

On the one hand, citizens in Southern European countries could be expected to favour those forms of political decision-making that do not require substantial involvement from the citizenry. After all, the Southern European citizenship model is characterised by particularly low levels of political trust (Van Deth, Montero and Westholm 2007), relatively low political interest (Martin and Van Deth 2007), low membership in organizations (Morales 2009) and relatively low political participation in general. On the other hand, Southern Europeans do engage in protest activities more than citizens in the other European countries (Van Deth, Montero and Westholm 2007). With regard to Spain in particular, because representative democracy is a relatively recent achievement, and because the risks associated with political action before and under Franco are remembered by older generations and are transmitted through socialization processes, Spaniards might express stronger support for representative institutions and less desire for participatory processes, in accordance with the stealth democracy model. The reasons for avoiding the conflicts that politics involves may be deeply rooted in recent Spanish history and the continued memories of it (Barahona, González and Aguilar 2002; Balcells 2011). However, the 15M movement, which emerged on the Spanish political scene in 2011, has further underscored the demand for more participatory opportunities.

The first part of this chapter has shown that South Europeans are demanding in terms of participatory rights, willing to engage in protest actions if necessary, but particularly sceptical about government responsiveness. To offer more detail on these processes, we first address the question of "what forms of political decision-making Spaniards prefer" and later focus on experiences with political participation as related to these preferences.

To gain initial insight into these preferences, the survey asked respondents to place themselves on a *process scale* between two poles where zero represented a situation in which citizens would make all decisions and ten indicated a situation in which elected politicians would make all decisions (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Spaniards score a mean of 4.45, leaning slightly towards the pole demanding a more active role for the population in politics. At first glance, these preferences do not dramatically differ from those expressed by North Americans in the stealth democracy index: most people choose central positions, with slightly higher percentages preferring the participatory rather than the representative side (graph 5.6). However, if we translate the 1–7 US scale to the 0–10 range used in Spain, the averages are remarkably different (6.3 in the United States vs. 4.7 in Spain). As in the United States, most Spanish citizens perceive a substantial gap between political processes as they actually function and as they would like them to function. That is, the vast majority perceives that it is politicians who disproportionately make all the decisions, but would rather see political processes balanced in terms of the involvement of citizens and representatives.



Graph 5.6. Perceived and desired political processes in Spain.

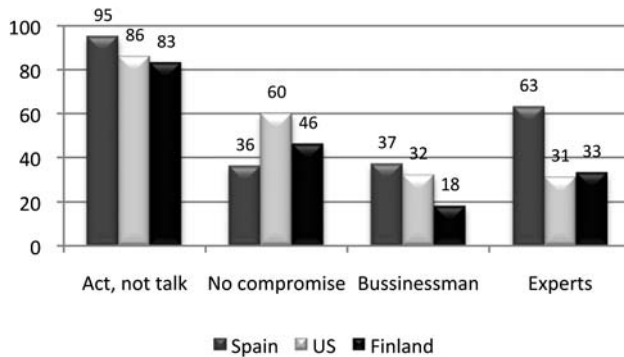
Source: CIS 2860; N = 2,454.

However, this bipolar scale does not capture all the dimensions of citizen attitudes towards political engagement. To offer a more nuanced portrayal, and to test whether the aforementioned relative dissatisfaction with the lack of the responsiveness on the part of government translates into favouring the form of decision-making that reflects stealth democracy, respondents were also asked how much they agreed with four statements included in the original stealth democracy index. These items also indirectly tap into citizen dissatisfaction with government (e.g., “Elected officials would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems”), political cynicism (e.g., “What people call “compromise” in politics is just selling out on one’s principles”) and the perception that it is unelected expert bodies that should have a greater voice in political decision-making, in that “our government” would run better if it was made up of “successful business people” and “non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people” who would be making policy decisions.¹⁰

Notably, only 1 percent of the population strongly disagreed with all the four statements and 40 percent expressed some agreement with at least three statements (compared to 26–27 percent in the United States and Finland, the other two countries where these items were previously tested). As graph 5.7 shows, this high rating is due to the staggering 95 percent of the respondents agreeing that politicians should stop talking and start acting. Additionally, a majority supported greater independent expert involvement in decision-making (62 percent versus 31 percent in Finland and 30 percent in the United States). Only the statement that refers to politicians selling out on their principles received a lower level of support than in the other countries.

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Graph 5.7. Support for Stealth Democracy components in Spain, Finland and the US.
Source: CIS 2860; N = 2,454.

Together these data show that although there is a slight preference for participatory rather than representative forms of decision-making, citizen support for statements that are not very consistent with a participatory model is somewhat higher in Spain than in the United States.

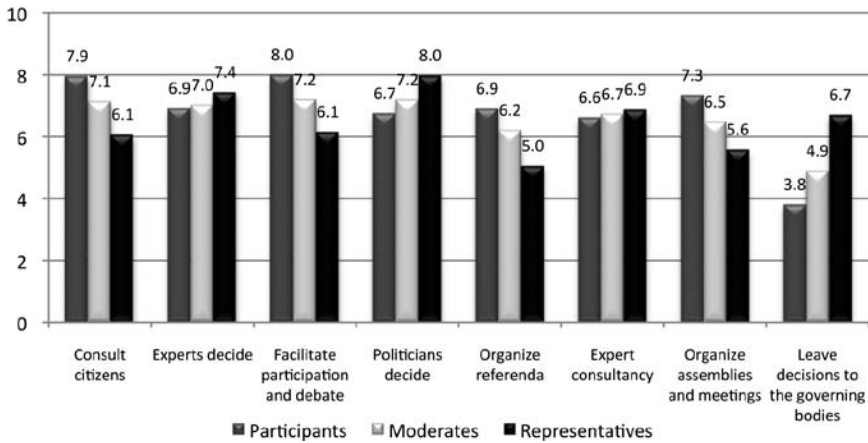
As we saw in the first part of this chapter, those citizens who want responsive government are also those who assign importance to direct and personal engagement in the decision-making process (e.g., would oppose expert democracy). Hence, to offer a comprehensive portrayal of citizen preferences, we included additional items that tap four different models of decision-making processes: assembly democracy, expert democracy, representative democracy and consultations with citizens.¹¹

What was the support for these specific mechanisms among the Spanish population in 2011, when the economic crisis was already shaking European democracies and immediately before the emergence of the “Indignados” movement? The general governing principles obtain a very similar level of support, potentially indicating that Spanish citizens are not very clear on their preferences. In contrast, the specific mechanisms obtain lower public support in general, and there is also greater variability in their level of support. The decision-making process using experts is perceived as slightly more acceptable, and such specific mechanisms as referendums or decisions made by representatives polarise the population (as reflected by higher standard deviations).

In addition, unlike what might be expected from the findings presented in the first part of the chapter, in which participatory-inclined citizens seemed to favour more opportunities for citizens to get involved, the Spanish public does

not perceive the four models as antagonistic or mutually exclusive, with the correlations between most of the items being either positive or at least close to zero, except for the final question about elected representatives.¹² The fact that three very different models have positive correlations among them and the only exception appears with elected representatives suggests that part of the support for any of the remaining models lies precisely in the common criticism of the functioning of representative democracy.

In order to illustrate these relationships more clearly, the support for each of these specific mechanisms was correlated with the process scale, resulting in three categorizations: advocates of a participatory model (responses 0–3 on the process scale), moderates (responses 4–6) and supporters of representative models (responses 7–10). As shown in graph 5.8, this allows us to see some of the patterns described previously. Consistent with the findings analysed in the previous section, those Spaniards who most support each of the participatory mechanisms also give greater support to involvement of the general public in decision-making processes. Only the final question, asking about decisions made by elected representatives, strongly differentiates those who situate themselves on the opposite poles of the process scale. In turn, the item on the expert role in political decision-making is less strongly correlated with the scale, indicating that support for this specific style of decision-making (i.e., more expert-based decision-making) is “independent” from the dichotomy between citizen participation and political representation.



Graph 5.8. Attitudes towards several decision-making processes by process scale self-identification (0-10 scale grouped in 3 categories).

Source: CIS 2860; N = 2,454.

In the first part of the chapter, we also saw that individuals who perceive their governments as responsive to the demands of the citizenry are more likely to engage in protest actions and that confidence in such responsiveness was particularly low in Spain. To address these issues in the more recent data, we analyse whether overall preferences regarding political decision-making depend on citizens' satisfaction with their participatory experience. It could be the case that dissatisfaction leads to increased desire for more citizen involvement in politics (with the hope of changing the situation). Alternatively, it could have a demobilizing effect (if citizens see no possibilities for change). Participatory experiences that result in disappointment, particularly when individuals perceive their engagement as pointless (e.g., the government was not responsive), could lead to withdrawal from political decision-making or to favour political processes that do not involve direct citizen participation. The first part of the chapter showed that perceptions of government responsiveness are related to the likelihood of personal involvement in protest. Here, we focus on the ways in which satisfaction with participation influences citizens' process preferences.

Respondents were first asked whether they participated in any of eight political activities during the past twelve months. Consistent with the Southern European model and with the results from the first part of the chapter, protesting or attending demonstrations was the most frequently mentioned activity (undertaken by 43 percent) and one-fourth of Spaniards attended a political meeting or a rally. In addition, 41 percent donated or collected money for a social or political cause; 31 percent collaborated with a group or association; 26 percent engaged in boycotting; 24 percent tried to convince others about political views, 23 percent attended a political meeting or consultation organised by their municipality and 17 percent contacted or intended to contact a politician or public official. Those respondents who did participate in at least one of the aforementioned actions (1,546 people, 62 percent of the total respondents) were asked about both their perceived negative aspects (e.g., participation had no effect, was confrontational and was a waste of time) and positive ones (e.g., issue importance, positive interactions with others and feeling good about oneself). In general, positive evaluations dominated. Notably, regarding the negative experiences, perception that participation did not have any policy effect and was useless was the most often mentioned (14 percent), greatly exceeding such responses as it was confrontational or a waste of time (both below 6 percent).

To examine the effect of satisfaction with participation on preferred political processes, we created three groups: individuals dissatisfied with the participatory experience (values 0–6; 18 percent), those somewhat satisfied (values 7–9; 40 percent), and those whose participatory experience was fully satisfying (values 10–12; 40 percent).¹³ Importantly, those who were *dissatisfied* with their past participatory experience actually preferred increased citizen involvement in political decision-making processes more than the rest. This result suggests that dissatisfaction does not necessarily translate into a rejection of political participation, nor

does it cause individuals to favour greater representation. Rather, certain dissatisfaction may lead citizens to desire different means of participation.

In order to offer more detailed insight into the examined issues, we also asked: Who are the individuals who prefer to “sit back, relax, and enjoy the show”, yielding the decision-making power to experts or representatives? In order to explore the social and political profiles of those who support the aforementioned proposals, we selected three different indicators: the process scale, the stealth democracy index as originally built by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) and the responses to the question posed earlier regarding support for referenda, which was the most polarizing mechanism.

Those who support more participatory mechanisms are younger (eighteen to thirty-four), live in small- to medium-size towns (fifty thousand to one hundred thousand), are ideologically on the left and vote for the left-wing party (Izquierda Unida) that endorse more participatory mechanisms (i.e., more direct citizen involvement in decision-making). In contrast, the social sectors least enthusiastic about participatory processes are found among those on the right side of the political spectrum, the elderly, and those with no or little education. In fact, education emerges as the most important factor, with university graduates (along with voters of the Izquierda Unida and those living in medium-sized towns) being the social sector that is most favourable and positive towards citizen participation and individuals with lower education levels being highly favourable towards nonparticipatory forms of governance and decision-making (table 5.1).

5.1.3. Conclusion

Participation is a nonnegotiable right. Most citizens think that governments should allow and protect participation, as well as involve citizens in decision-making to some extent. At the same time, participation is so costly and demanding that not all the citizenry is ready and willing to engage in participatory activities in general or in institutionally led participatory processes in particular. Although electoral turnout is declining in many countries, voting remains the most popular activity, perceived as highly important by citizens in all the countries analysed in the first section of this chapter. Beyond being the least costly, it might also be perceived as the most effective form of participation, one which has influence on the formation of a new government. The link between political participation and its utility is also evident when considering civil protest, undertaken when citizens perceive that their government is unresponsive to their demands. Only in a few countries (France being one of them) is this relationship slightly less strong, showing a leaning toward expressive—even angry—and slightly less “utilitarian” participation.

While there are no profound differences among the countries discussed in the first section of this chapter, Southern European citizens appear to have greater distrust of authorities and protest more readily than others. This could be a result of their recent nondemocratic histories, as could their negative views of political

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Table 5.1. Process Scale Score, Stealth Democracy Index and Support for Further Referenda Usage among Different Social Sectors

		Process Scale (0–10)	SD Index (0–3)	Support for Referenda (0–10)
Gender	Female	4.48	2.20	6.28
	Male	4.42	2.26	6.13
	F	0.36	3.04	1.73
Age	18–34	4.14*	2.23	6.22
	35–64	4.45*	2.22	6.24
	65+	4.95*	2.28	6.05
	F	14.55*	0.67	0.77
Education	No education	4.89*	2.45*	5.81
	Elementary	4.45*	2.33*	6.31
	High School	4.21*	2.20*	6.22
	University	4.68*	2.07*	6.05
	F	4.93*	12.25*	1.82
Income	Very Low	4.27	2.30	6.33
	Low	4.40	2.21	6.26
	Medium	4.52	2.23	6.19
	High	4.85	2.14	5.85
	F	2.23	1.96	1.57
Voted	PSOE	4.62*	2.23*	6.11*
	PP	4.72*	2.31*	6.15*
	IU	4.42*	1.94*	7.15*
	Others or invalid	4.22*	2.16*	6.47*
	Did not vote	4.10*	2.21*	6.21*
	Refused	4.42*	2.24*	5.90*
	F	3.59*	3.40*	3.65*
Ideology	Left	4.16*	2.13*	6.36
	Center	4.62*	2.27*	6.14
	Right	4.68*	2.31*	6.20
	Don't know/Refused	4.31*	2.25*	6.13
	F	5.74*	4.95*	0.98
Size of Locality	< 10,000	4.53	2.31*	6.35
	10,000–50,000	4.53	2.22*	5.84
	50,001–100,000	4.03	2.37*	6.76
	100,001–400,000	4.45	2.21*	6.12
	> 400,000	4.52	2.09*	6.27
	F	2.32	5.97*	1.73

*: Sign. 0.05

Source: CIS 2860.

actors and institutions and their positive views of other forms of authority. A general trend regarding participation and political responsiveness is that in countries where citizen-oriented decision-making is considered important, citizens also value their involvement in the decision-making process. Both attitudes are consistent, showing that citizens have a coherent set of values from which they construct their participatory attitudes (Bengtsson 2012). Citizens value both having responsive governments and granting decision-making power to citizens; however, the former is seen as more important by respondents in all countries. In short, the desire for greater participation and responsive government sharply contrasts with perceptions of the actual functioning of democracy.

The more in-depth analysis of the Spanish case has not revealed Spain to be an exceptional case. Spanish society has been traditionally portrayed as nonparticipatory, with the population having limited interest in public affairs, a turnout below European averages and low membership in social and political organizations, with protest being the only exception where Spaniards would participate clearly above usual European standards, a contrasting image that has become even more pronounced after the eruption of the 15M movement. The results analysed in this chapter reveal a more participatory side of Spanish society, with demands that citizen voices be heard in the decision-making process: Spanish citizens, similarly to their US counterparts, slightly prefer participation to politician-driven decision-making. The appearance of this apparent demand for greater participation may, in part, be simply the result of the ease with which respondents can state they desire greater participation when answering survey questions and might not reflect real interest if actual participatory opportunities existed. However, the survey response patterns are quite reasonable and show a participatory demand that is not completely exceptional in comparative terms (Bowler, Donovan and Karp 2007; Jacobs, Cook and Delli Carpini 2009). Yet, when we look closer, there are reasons to think that part of this expressed desire for political involvement is more an adverse reaction towards politicians. Spanish citizens hold a more negative view than even US citizens of professional politicians and their working style and also support in high percentages greater involvement of experts in decision-making (Font et al. 2012).

This section contributes (as this book does more generally) to one of the central questions of democratic theory: How essential is citizen participation to effective democracy? Some theorists believe not at all. Because modern societies are large, complex and administrations adopt bureaucratic forms, governance requires time, knowledge and technical expertise that ordinary citizens do not have (Dahl 1989; Schumpeter 1943). However, most versions of democratic theory presuppose engaged citizens who monitor their leaders and often take political matters into their own hands (Catt 1999; Fishkin 1991). Thus, for many, citizen participation is a central condition of democracy.

This chapter addressed these differences, finding that Europeans in the countries examined view political participation as something necessary and positive,

although for many it was not necessarily their main priority. As such, participation in institutional mechanisms will be considered positively by a large majority but will be something that is mostly undertaken by only the most motivated and informed citizens, as the second part of this chapter will show.

5.2. POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

The aim of the previous section was to see if there is a societal demand for participation. In this section, we will focus on a different question: whether personal experience in participatory processes has any effect on participants' attitudes and behaviours. The effects of taking part in participatory processes are relevant because they tell us about the socialization potential of these experiences. To what extent are they able to change former attitudes towards participation?

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to know whether social and political attitudes differ between participants and nonparticipants, although the existence of differences may not answer the question of causality: Were differences in the attitudes of participants from nonparticipants one of the reasons why they participated or were their attitudes an effect of their participation? We do not know. Nevertheless, a scenario in which participants' attitudes are not at all different from those of nonparticipants would make the idea that participation is an important agent of attitude change less likely.

Analysing the social composition of participants in these instruments is relevant in itself. The importance accorded to the idea of effective equal participation changes from one democratic theorist to another, but most of the crucial contributions to the field have continued to incorporate, in one way or another, the idea of equality as a central criterion for evaluating participatory mechanisms (Fung and Wright 2003; Smith 2009).¹⁴ Precisely because they involve normally higher costs than voting, they may easily result in less extensive and very often more biased representation. If this is the case, then the promises of deliberation and enlarged participation would be achieved at the expense of more unequal participation. Even if this unequal participation did not occur, the importance of how arguments are framed and presented, as well as the social distribution of sophistication and language skills, would still lead to a risk of domination by certain participants, and the outcomes would likely reflect previously existing inequalities (Przeworski 1998). Up to which point do these differences appear in the attitudes of participants?

Since this analysis represents an initial contribution to the discussion of a question that will be more fully addressed in chapter 6, we will follow the same logic to be used in that chapter in two important aspects. First, we will discuss the same sets of attitudes as in the next chapter: cognitive (acquisition or enlargement of knowledge about political objects or processes), evaluative (evaluations of actors,

institutions, processes or policies), expressive (individual personal feelings such as self-esteem, personal satisfaction or collective social identities) and practical (skills or behaviours related to political activity, such as speaking in public or organising collective action or new political behaviours or forms of political activity) attitudes.

Secondly, we will distinguish not only between participants and nonparticipants but also between two groups of participants based on their previous social involvement, since we want to know whether attitudinal change depends on the level of previous political socialization. As this distinction will be crucial in chapter 6, we distinguish here between citizens belonging to political associations and the rest of the population.¹⁵

The data used are from survey 2661 of the Spanish CIS (see appendix 4). This survey allows us to analyse these questions and go beyond the most common strategy of looking at groups formed only by participants (Fishkin 1997; Ganuza and Francés 2012a). As far as we know, this is the only survey of a representative sample of the population that includes a sufficient number of participants in these mechanisms,¹⁶ allowing us to make this crucial comparison between participants and nonparticipants.

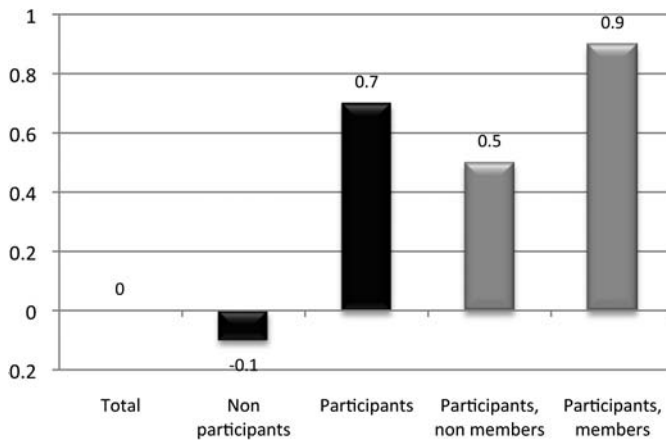
The distribution of our main independent variable (participation) will be quite skewed, because the number of nonparticipants is much higher than the number of participants.¹⁷ We will consider those citizens who have participated in at least one of a list of six different kinds of participatory processes to be participants: Agenda 21, participatory budgeting, sectorial- or neighbourhood-based consultation councils, citizen juries and citizens having attended a local council plenary meeting.¹⁸ Participation in any of these processes will be our main independent variable, the crucial difference that will distinguish the different groups we will compare.

The following sections will deal one by one with each of the four main types of attitudes we have identified. For each of these attitudinal dimensions, we first make a simple graphical comparison (for participants and nonparticipants, distinguishing members and nonmembers of political associations). Secondly, we carry out a regression analysis for each attitude to check if the differences observed between participants and nonparticipants still exist after controlling for the many compositional differences these two groups have. In other words, we want to see if participants are more knowledgeable (to take just one example) than nonparticipants once we control for the most relevant sociodemographic variables in regression analysis.¹⁹

5.2.1. Cognitive Attitudes: More Knowledgeable Participants

Do participants know more about politics? Even though the survey does not include particularly rich measures of cognitive aspects, we were able to construct an index from combining the results of three questions: a knowledge question

asking whether citizens are familiar with the fact that they are allowed to attend local council meetings (47 percent of all people interviewed knew that they could), another knowledge question that many people were able to answer correctly (the name of the mayor of their municipality, 80 percent correct) and a third question asking respondents to place themselves on a classic left-right scale, 70 percent doing so. The index uses factor analysis that combines the results on the three questions.²⁰ The average knowledge score among participants was 0.7 and -0.01 among nonparticipants (graph 5.9).



Graph 5.9. Personal experience in participatory processes and knowledge (factor scores).

Source: CIS survey 2661; N = 3,994.

In this and the next graphics, the two columns on the right distinguish among the two groups of participants: those who are members of political associations and those who are not. Knowledge is much higher for members. Clearly, a significant part of this difference has a straightforward explanation: the same characteristics that help explain how people acquire political knowledge are also crucial in explaining why they have participated in a local participation mechanism. Introducing control variables in a regression model allows us to capture the independent relationship that institutional participation and political knowledge have, once we hold the other personal characteristics constant.

The story that the regression analysis tells is not surprising (table 5.2). First, once we introduce controls, participation continues to make a significant difference. That is, if we took two women aged thirty with similar levels of education

and other social characteristics, it would be quite likely that the one who had participated in a participatory budgeting process would have a much higher level of knowledge on our scale than the one who had not. Secondly, the difference between members of political associations and nonmembers is also significant.²¹ Verifying that this difference is not specifically related to members of associations having participated in participatory processes, we found that the difference exists among both those who have been participants and traditionally less active citizens. In short, cognitive variables and participation in institutional mechanisms are statistically related and this result holds, even after controlling for alternative explanations and for both groups of participants (members and nonmembers of political associations).

Table 5.2. Personal Participation Experience and Cognitive Variables (b Coefficients and Significance, OLS Regression)

	Knowledge Score (-1 to 1)	
	Nonmembers	Members
Personal Experience	.47***	.45***
Gender	+***	+*
Less than 30	._***	._***
More than 65	n.s.	+***
Work	n.s.	n.s.
Education	+***	+***
Religion	+***	n.s.
Left	+***	+***
Final R2	.23	.22
Explanatory Power Increase ^(a)	0.02	0.04
N	3,355	630

Note: To highlight the most important result, the tables show only the coefficients of our main independent variable (personal experience). For the remaining variables, we include only signs of the coefficients and their significance.

***: Sign. 0.01; *: Sign. 0.1

a: Absolute difference between the explanatory power (R square in case of linear regressions or Nagelkerke in case of logarithmic regression) of the model, including and not including the personal experience variable.

Source: CIS 2661.

5.2.2. Evaluative Attitudes: Less Satisfied and More Critical Participants

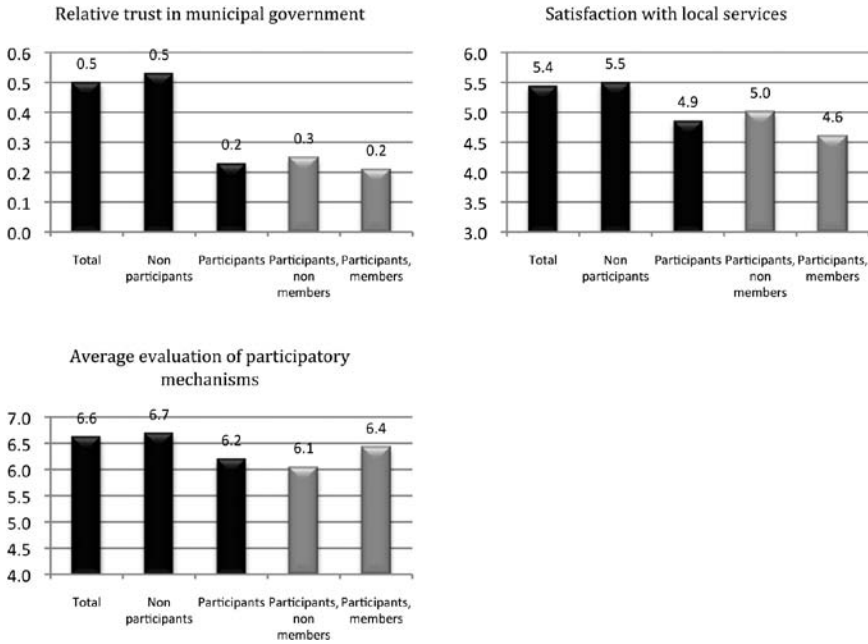
What is the relationship between participation in local mechanisms and the second set of attitudes, those evaluating political objects? Are the participants in these mechanisms citizens whose desires and proposals for local governments are more likely to be accommodated, as many critics of these participatory mechanisms fear? Or are they only extreme voices that oppose any policy proposal, as policymakers and some academics (Fiorina 1999) often complain? Are the “critical citizens” that Norris (1999) portrayed especially present among these participants? To answer this set of questions, we consider three different kinds of evaluations. First, we use a political trust variable measuring the degree to which trust in the municipal government is higher than trust in other institutions.²² Second, we use a variable which captures citizen evaluations of local public services.²³ Third, we use an explicit evaluation of the performance of the local participatory mechanisms.²⁴ The three variables together represent quite a diverse set of evaluations, ranging from processes to outputs, and all of them dealing with the institution that organises participatory policies—the local government.

Relative trust in the municipal government is lower among participants than nonparticipants (0.23 and 0.53). In addition, participants are more critical of local services and in their evaluation of participatory mechanisms (graph 5.10). These results are consistent with previous research that shows that nonparticipants in deliberative processes have higher levels of public and political trust than participants (Baek, Wojcieszak and Delli Caprini 2010), and that participants are more critical of the performance of public participation processes (Font and Navarro 2013).

What happens when we introduce controls for other sociodemographic variables? Contrary to what happened with the cognitive variable, the signs of all the regression coefficients for the personal experience variables have now changed to negative.

This result shows that if differences between participants and nonparticipants exist, they point to less positive attitudes of participants. The participatory experience is not significantly related to relative trust in the municipal government (i.e., we cannot prove that the coefficient is clearly distinguishable from zero). However, the influence of personal experience is significant (but not extremely strong) for the two specific evaluations (services and processes). This clear impact appears for both members and nonmembers of associations, but in the case of the evaluation of local services it is much higher for association members (as seen both in the *b* coefficient and in the increase of the explanatory power of the model—table 5.3).

Again, we cannot know from this data how causality is operating here: whether citizens decide to engage in local participation because they are critical and dissatisfied or whether they become more critical after the experience (they do not tell us which came first). In any case, it is important to note that the effect is contrary



Graph 5.10. Personal experience in participatory processes and evaluative questions. A. Relative trust in municipal government. B. Satisfaction with local services. C. Average evaluation of participatory mechanisms. Source: CIS 2661; N = 3,994.

to the one found in the previous section for cognitive variables: participants are not more satisfied than other citizens, even after making use of the participatory opportunities provided by local government. If these opportunities produce any change, it is not a population of more satisfied and less critical citizens.

5.2.3. Expressive Attitudes: Small Differences

What is the nature of the relation between participation and expressive attitudes? Are participants more concentrated among “good citizens” particularly attached to their communities or particularly trusting towards their fellow citizens? Do they feel more positively about their community than other citizens, either as a cause or as a consequence of their participation? To answer these questions, we have captured this set of attitudes that we refer to as “expressive” through three specific variables: attitude towards living in the municipality (like it very much);²⁵ trust in the other residents of the municipality;²⁶ and relationship with local politics (frequency of talking or discussing local politics with other people

Table 5.3. Personal Participation Experience and Evaluative Variables (b Coefficients and Significance, OLS Regressions

	Relative Trust in Municipal Government ^(a)		Satisfaction with Local Services ^(b)		Average Evaluation of Participatory Mechanisms ^(b)	
	Non-members	Members	Non-members	Members	Non-members	Members
Personal Experience	-0.22	-0.21	-0.42 ***	-0.91***	-0.56***	-0.56***
Gender	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-.**	-.*	n.s.
Less than 30	-.*	+*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
More than 65	+**	n.s.	+***	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Work	n.s.	-.**	-.**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Education	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-.*
Religion	n.s.	+*	+**	n.s.	-.**	n.s.
Left	-.***	-.***	-.**	-.**	n.s.	+**
Final R2	0.03	0.08	0.03	0.08	0.01	0.06
Explanatory Power Increase ^(b)	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02
N	3,023	593	3,308	627	1,866	437

***: Sign. 0.01; **: Sign. 0.05; *: Sign. 0.1

a: Range -10 to 10.

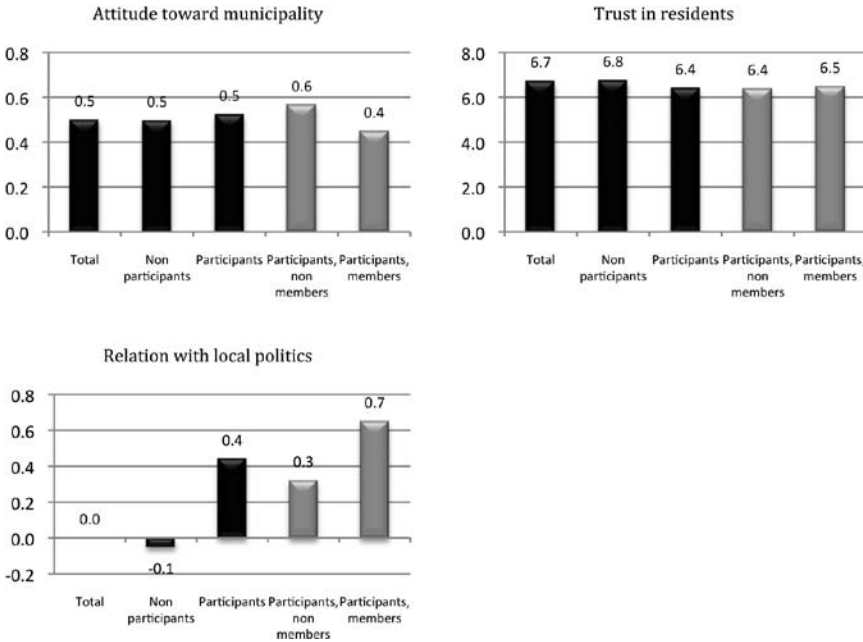
b: Range 0 to 10 (see note in table 5.2).

Source: CIS 2661.

and the perception of citizens' ability to influence decisions in the city council).²⁷ These variables capture different dimensions of the attachment that citizens have towards their communities in more political or emotional terms.

The three variables chosen reflect quite different patterns: participants and nonparticipants are very similar in their attitude towards living in their municipality, participants are much more positive towards local political life, but their level of trust in their fellow citizens is slightly lower (graph 5.11).

Results do not change much once we move to regression analysis and introduce sociodemographic controls. Personal experience in participation has a positive effect on attitude towards the community, but only among those who are not members of political associations, and on the relationship with local politics, in that case among both members and nonmembers. In contrast, the relationship



Graph 5.11. Personal experience in participatory processes (members and non-members) and the expressive dimension. A. Attitude toward municipality. B. Trust in residents. C. Relation with local politics. Source: CIS survey 2661; N = 3,994.

is negative for trust in other residents (participation is linked with less trust), but again this is only significant for nonmembers. However, the increase in the explanatory power of all the models is very limited in all cases. These results suggest that the impact of personal experience with local participation mechanisms on expressive attitudes is neither strong nor consistent across attitudes (table 5.4).

5.2.4. Practices: Participants Are Politically More Active

What kind of relationship exists between personal experience in these processes and political participation in other environments? A central claim of supporters of participatory processes is that they constitute “schools of democracy” and contribute to create better and more active citizens (Talpin 2011). However, many of their critics argue that participants in these processes are specifically those individuals that already use all other participatory strategies, so that these processes do not generate more equitable participatory opportunities but only more room for the participation of a small group of highly mobilised political activists

Table 5.4. Personal Participation Experience and Expressive Variables (*b* Coefficients and Significance)

	Attitude toward Municipality ^(a)		Trust in Residents ^(b)		Relation with Local Politics ^(c)	
	Non-members	Members	Non-members	Members	Non-members	Members
Personal Experience	0.36***	-0.23 n.s.	-0.31**	-0.29 n.s.	0.27***	0.23***
Gender	n.s.	-.***	n.s.	n.s.	+**	n.s.
Less than 30	n.s.	-.***	n.s.	n.s.	-.***	-.***
More than 65	+***	n.s.	+***	n.s.	-.***	n.s.
Work	n.s.	-.*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Education	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-.***	+***	+***
Religion	n.s.	n.s.	+***	+**	-.***	-.*
Left	-.**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	+***	+*
Final R2 /Nagelkerke	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.07	0.20	0.14
Explanatory Power Increase ^(d)	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
N	3,194	762	3,090	600	3,126	609

***: Sign. 0.01; **: Sign. 0.05; *: Sign. 0.1

a: Logistic regression.

b: 0 to 10, linear regression.

c: -1.79 to 1.51, linear regression.

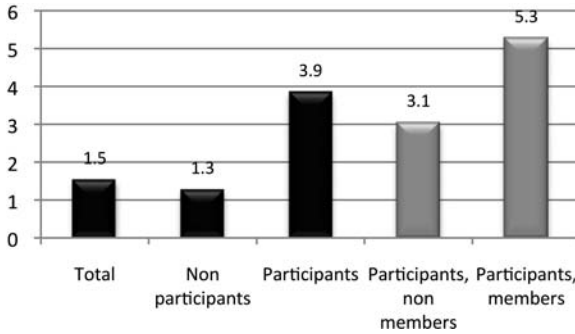
d: See note in table 5.2.

Source: CIS survey 2661.

(Mansbridge 1983; Przeworski 1998). To analyse this relationship, we have built an additive participation index (0–17) based on counting participation in a list of potential political activities: if people talk or discuss politics,²⁸ have participated in ten different political activities at the local level in the last twelve months,²⁹ have visited a municipal office or the city council with a political purpose,³⁰ or have done any of two different kinds of political activities organised by associations in the last twelve months.³¹

Two-thirds of the population has not participated in any of these activities. Among the 38.3 percent who have been active, an overwhelming majority has participated in just one of these activities (29.9 percent). As usual, a small group

(8.4 percent) of “gladiators” (Milbrath and Goel 1977) have been most active and participated in two or more of these activities. For the overall sample, the average is 1.5 participatory activities, while among those with personal experience in local participation instruments the average is much higher (3.9 activities) (graph 5.12).



Graph 5.12. Participation levels (0-17) according to personal experience in participatory processes (members and non-members).
Source: CIS survey 2661; N = 3,994.

When we move to the next analytical step, the regression analysis confirms the strength of this relationship. Participants in local mechanisms tend to be more politically active, particularly if they are members of an association (table 5.5). In both cases, the coefficient that captures this relationship is quite high and statistically significant. In addition, the overall explanatory capacity of the regression model shows the highest increase we have seen in this section (0.12 in table 5.5, compared to results ranging from 0.01 to 0.04 in the previous tables) in the regression corresponding to the associational members. This result means that, among this population, their personal experience in these mechanisms is closely correlated with their participatory activity, even when we control for other important factors.

5.2.5. The Attitudinal Characteristics of Participants

The goal of this section has been to explore the systematic relationship between personal experience in participatory processes and a wide set of attitudes and behaviours related to their attitudes towards participation as displayed in section 5.2. Some previous research has analysed diverse kinds of individual effects in a single participatory process or in a small number of them (Fishkin 1997;

Table 5.5. Personal Participation Experience and Practical Variables (*b* Coefficients and Significance, OLS Regression)

	Political Participation ^(a)	
	Nonmembers	Members
Personal Experience	1.75***	2.59***
Gender	n.s.	n.s.
Less than 30	-.**	n.s.
More than 65	-.***	-.*
Work	+**	n.s.
Education	+***	+***
Religion	-.***	n.s.
Left	+***	+***
Final R2	0.17	0.24
Explanatory Power Increase ^(a)	0.07	0.12
N	3,344	629

***: Sign. 0.01; **: Sign. 0.05; *: Sign. 0.1

a: Range 0 to 17 (see note in table 5.2).

Source: CIS 2661.

Talpin 2011), and other research has analysed change in one specific attitude in a large and representative sample of the population that included several kinds of participatory processes (Font and Navarro 2013). However, we are not aware of previous research that has done both of these things simultaneously, as is the case here, allowing us to answer different questions.

The relationship that personal experience in participation processes has with political attitudes is far from being homogeneous. On the one hand, this experience is positively correlated with two of the families of attitudes analysed here: political behaviour and political knowledge are both much higher among participants. The selected set of expressive attitudes (emotional links with the community, its political life and fellow citizens) presents more mixed results, with positive and negative correlations, all of them quite small in any case. Finally, evaluative attitudes represent the other side of the picture, where participants are different but in the opposite manner far from the normative expectations of some advocates of participation and from where local administrators would like them to be (see discussion in the following paragraph): participants hold more negative opinions and are more critical of local services and in the evaluation of local participation processes.

The strongest relationships appear in cognitive attitudes and behaviours, precisely the two aspects in which the opposite causal direction (participation in local mechanisms because of higher knowledge and previous political involvement) is most likely. In fact, research on participation in these processes has assumed that previous knowledge and participation were important factors explaining some of the participatory inequalities observed in many participatory experiences (Mansbridge 1983; Navarro and Font 2013).

These results suggest that if attitudinal effects on participants exist, they are modest; this is more likely to be revealed when an approach such as ours is used: going beyond single cases of best practices and, instead, considering the potential effects of many kinds of participatory processes, regardless of their methodologies and democratic qualities. Chapter 3 has shown that participatory mechanisms vary on dimensions that probably decisively affect these relationships. A long participatory process, one which entails a high level of citizen empowerment or that addresses important issues, would probably have greater impact than a briefer or more limited process, and this is something we will consider in chapter 6.

If we are looking for strong attitudinal effects, the best news from our analysis is that whatever the strength of the effects, they do not appear to be concentrated in a single sector of the population that participates in the institutional mechanisms we studied. Both the core group of traditional participants (members of political associations) and other participants reveal similar relationships between their attitudes and their participatory experiences.³²

Overall, these results suggest that what would be the perfect citizen for policy-makers (knowledgeable, active, satisfied and with a strong sense of community), will not be the generalised outcome of participatory processes. One positive element, if these effects from participation exist, is that they may reach different publics, with high or low levels of previous involvement. However, the effects would tend to be modest and to affect attitudes in different directions.

Participatory processes will be filled with informed and active citizens but also with more critical citizens, who hold more negative opinions of political actors, processes and policies. If these characteristics are the result or not of their participation is something that the data analysed in this section cannot answer, but the approach followed in the next chapter may decisively contribute to providing (partial) answers to it.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS: ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION

In this chapter, we have explored the attitudinal dimension of participation, more precisely looking at whether citizens want and ask for participation and whether their involvement in participatory experiences changes their cognitive, evaluative and affective orientations. The first section of the chapter explored the demand

side of participation. We concluded that citizens are very supportive of participation as a right that should be protected and guaranteed, and also as a way to limit politicians' power. For many, this opportunity to participate is also the best possible avenue to guarantee an even more important right: governmental decision-making that is responsive to citizens' demands.

This support for participation does not necessarily mean that all citizens are willing to take part in decision-making processes. Not all the citizenry is ready and willing to engage in participatory activities. To some extent, this is also related to the perceived effectiveness of some of these processes, as in most countries where participation has been analysed there is a link between the expected effect on authorities and the probability of involvement in a particular kind of participation (including protest). In addition, we have seen that the most prevalent negative view of participation (found among those who sometimes participate) is precisely the lack of adequate government responsiveness to citizens' demands. This frustration with democracy is not the only explanation for limited participation, as lack of interest and opportunity costs also play a role (Van Deth, Montero and Westholm 2007), but it does highlight the link between citizens' willingness to participate and government responsiveness.

In general, we have found that there is a certain link between willingness for political involvement and distrust of government. The Spanish results show a clear demand for more participatory processes but also reveal that this is very closely associated with a rejection of traditional politics. Just as previous research on the United States and Finland has also indicated (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Bengtsson and Mattila 2009), the Spanish case suggests that part of this demand is really based on the desire for an enlarged role for the citizenry, although some segment of the population also supports other alternative processes (e.g., expert government) that would reduce the role of professional politicians without providing further opportunities for citizen participation. Hence, we can conclude, at least in the Southern European context, that participatory experiences will potentially be welcomed by a majority but that there is no great societal demand for them. As chapter 4 has shown with the Spanish case, the growth in the number of participatory processes is mostly a result of elite decisions, and this expansion is only loosely related to strong societal pressures.

There are, however, a number of potentially important reasons for supporting more citizenship participation, one of them being its possible relationship with certain desirable attitudes among citizens, for instance, affective boundaries with their local community, a higher level of political sophistication or knowledge and a more positive evaluation of political actors and institutions.³³ The second section of this chapter addressed these plausible consequences of participation, comparing citizens who have not participated in any institutional participatory experiences in Spain with those who have. The data we have looked at up until now do not allow us to untangle the causal chain that would permit us to answer the question of whether these desirable attitudes lead people to participate or, on

the contrary, are a consequence of participation. But they do, at least, suggest that a relationship exists.

In this respect, we found that participants and nonparticipants are remarkably different regarding cognitive attitudes and behaviours. Participants are more active, knowledgeable and critical than the rest of the population. In particular, political knowledge appears as a basic likely prerequisite for participation, and, thus, participatory experiences are not likely to have a generalised effect on participants once controlling for their previous attributes. Thus, in several respects, participants may be close to what many politicians and some political scientists consider the ideal citizen. This is not the case in regard to their evaluation of political actors and policies, as participants have been shown to be more critical than nonparticipants, revealing another interesting conclusion: greater knowledge of the political process does not necessarily lead to larger acceptance of the process but appears to lead to more critical attitudes. In this case, if Norris (1999) was right and critical citizens are desirable for democracy, participatory processes would be filled by ideal citizens. Very often the institutional organisers would prefer participants to have less critical profiles, as the actual profile of participants leads to intense debates (Bobbio 2010) and conflict. However, the results show the prevalence of this type of participants is precisely the most likely scenario, at least in the Spanish case.

These conclusions are the product of analysing a new type of data, which incorporates and mixes participants in diverse types of participatory processes. The limited number of participants in each specific type of participatory process makes it difficult to investigate the effects of the various types of institutional designs of participatory mechanisms (Font and Navarro 2013). For example, it is possible that some participatory processes (those that are long-lasting, empowering and well designed) may actually result in important attitudinal changes among participants. This will be precisely one of the main objects of analysis of chapter 6.

NOTES

1. The similarities and differences in the social profiles of these two groups (participants versus the rest of the population) have been thoroughly discussed in previous research. See Mansbridge (1983) for an initial discussion of the idea, Hampton (1999) for a traditional application of the idea to the specific case of public hearings and Smith (2009) for a recent review of the argument.

2. See chapter 1 for the methodological discussion of the role of surveys and the other instruments used throughout the book to analyse reality. Surveys, as well as the other techniques used, have their limits in providing us a picture of reality (Bourdieu 1993), but their use plays a central role in answering the research question addressed here: the perception citizens have of politics and participation and the diversity of their political involvement. The general ISSP survey provides a broad comparative picture but includes more limited

information about the issues researched here, whereas the more focused CIS survey allows for a deeper discussion of attitudes.

3. **The ISSP is one the most rigorous and well-known international comparative surveys.** The degree of homogeneity in the sample design and fieldwork characteristics does not reach the level of integration on the *European Social Survey* but goes far beyond other comparative surveys. Of course, no comparative survey can fully guarantee that citizens in different countries extract exactly the same meanings from the questions, even with good translations.

4. All the countries selected belong to the OECD and had between 25,000 and 43,000 dollars per capita between 2010 and 2011, according to the International Monetary Fund database.

5. One being “not at all important” and seven being “very important”.

6. This does not necessarily mean that US or Canadian citizens are more “civic” than Finish citizens, as one could well argue that because the Finish government is seen as less distant from its citizens than, for example, the US government, the necessity of keeping watch on it is subjectively less crucial for concerned citizens.

7. The exact wording in this respect was as follows: “There are different opinions about people’s rights in a democracy. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important is it: that politicians take into account the views of citizens before making decisions, that people be given more opportunities to participate in public decision-making, that citizens may engage in acts of civil disobedience when they oppose government actions”.

8. In Switzerland, there is not typically a high level of participation in referenda; however, this is also true for elections, and, altogether, an average Swiss citizen has the opportunity to vote more frequently than an average citizen in the European Union. Precisely because of their actually existing instruments to participate, graph 5.3 shows that their demand for further opportunities is more limited than in other countries. In two other cases, the results may be due to specific contextual effects. The year the survey was conducted, the Danish government was planning to hold a referendum about the abolition of the Euro opt-out (thus to adopt the common currency). Ireland signed the Lisbon treaty in October 2004 and a referendum to ratify the treaty was expected in the coming years. Though these referenda were postponed (in the case of Denmark) or cancelled (in the case of Ireland), they may have stirred interest during the period the ISSP survey took place. Context may have also played a certain role in France, where a referendum on ratification of the Lisbon treaty was held in 2005.

9. The exact wordings of the questions were as follows: “Suppose a law were being considered by (the government of your country) that you considered to be unjust or harmful. If such a case arose, how likely is it that you, acting alone or together with others, would be able to try to do something about it?” and “If you made such an effort, how likely is that (the government of your country) would give serious attention to your demands?” Graph 5.5 displays the percentages of citizens who answered “very likely” or “fairly likely” to each of these two questions.

10. Respondents were asked to select on a scale from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 4 (“Strongly Agree”) how much they agreed with these statements.

11. For each, we asked two batteries of questions. The first gauged support for more general principles, with respondents evaluating—on a scale from 1 (“It’s the worst way of decision-making”) to 10 (“It’s the best way of decision-making”)—(1) frequently consulting

citizens about their opinions, (2) facilitating citizen participation in debate and political decision-making, (3) leaving the decision-making to those who are expert in a subject and (4) electing politicians who will make the decisions. The second battery asked the respondents to—on the same scale—evaluate the specific mechanisms through which the four models can be implemented: (1) frequent referenda, (2) assemblies and public meetings to make collective decisions, (3) expert consultancy when taking political decisions and (4) leaving it to the politicians to make decisions.

12. A more extensive presentation of these results appears in Font et al. (2012).

13. The questions that received a positive response (e.g., “always” or “often” for three questions framed positively) were assigned a value of 2, the responses “sometimes” received a value of 1, and negative responses received a 0.

14. As a result, some of the most clearly academically driven experiences, like deliberative opinion polls, have incorporated random selection of participants, trying to guarantee effective egalitarian participation (Fishkin 1991).

15. Involvement in political associations is taken as an indicator of traditional involvement in local politics and events, since previous research has shown that this sector is by far the most active in Spanish local political life (Navarro 2012).

16. Participants are a small minority in general and within the Spanish population in particular. In most surveys, any comparison with nonparticipants may yield insignificant results because there are not enough cases. For statistical tests to reveal significant differences, the number of participants must be sufficient, a condition which this survey satisfies.

17. The universe of the survey, formed by medium-sized cities where these instruments have been more fully diffused, produces a sample of 405 participants (10 percent of all the respondents). Among this group, approximately 66 percent have participated only in local council meetings and the rest in other participatory processes. If we excluded participants in the council meetings, many of the coefficients were very similar, but in some cases they did not reach statistical significance. The number of participants is even smaller when we distinguish between traditional participants (association members) and newly recruited participants (nonmembers): only 8 percent of nonmembers have ever participated in any of these instruments. More exhaustive analysis of this data appears in Navarro, Cuesta and Font (2009) and Font and Navarro (2013).

18. In the case of local council meetings, respondents were only asked whether they had ever attended one. For the remaining options, they were first asked whether they had heard about each of them and those that answered positively were asked whether they had ever participated in any of them.

19. We use the following as control variables: gender, being under thirty years of age or older than sixty-five, working status (yes/no), education (four original categories converted into a 0–1 variable), a dummy variable indicating self-identification as Catholic and another dummy indicating self-identification as left-wing (placement 1–4 in a 1–10 scale versus any other answer).

20. We did a factor analysis with the three questions that showed that they belong to a single factor and saved the factor scores produced, to be used as the single factor capturing the three knowledge-related variables.

21. The coefficients for the personal experience variable are not particularly different for members and nonmembers. In addition, the explanatory power of the model does not increase much for one group or the other when we introduce the personal experience vari-

able into the model. That is, the contribution of personal experience with participation to the level of knowledge that citizens have is similar among members and nonmembers.

22. The variable measures trust (0–10) in local government, minus the average trust in regional and national government. Thus we do not measure absolute trust, which is related to many other factors, but rather whether this trust is higher or lower for the institution responsible for the development of the participatory processes.

23. **The scale measures the satisfaction from zero (very dissatisfied) to ten (very satisfied).**

24. Our index has been constructed by calculating the average of the evaluations of the effectiveness of five different participatory processes: agenda 21, participatory budgeting, sectorial- and neighbourhood-based consultation councils and citizen juries (from 0 to 10, with 58 percent of valid cases that have evaluated at least one process).

25. Response categories were “like very much” versus “quite a bit”, “not so much” or “not at all”.

26. The scale measures trust from zero (no trust) to ten (total trust).

27. We completed a factor analysis with both variables, which shows that they belong to a single factor (results not shown but available from authors). The factor analysis results produced a new variable (that combines the two original ones) that we use in the following analysis.

28. **We have added the “often” and “sometimes” response categories as positive responses.**

29. Contact with a town councillor or mayor, with a government employee to make a complaint or talk about a problem, with an association, with local media, with a political party; participation in a demonstration or protest, donation of money to an organization, present a demand at the city council, participation in a forum or focus group through the Internet, sign a petition.

30. **We have considered as political purposes to attend an assembly, consultation council or political meeting or to protest or present a demand.**

31. Responses of “often” or “occasionally” to attendance at a meeting or assembly; or participation in a demonstration or protest organized by associations. The overall index is the simple addition of these seventeen dichotomized variables. The Cronbach’s alpha, the measure that captures the reliability of this index is 0.768, which is high enough to be considered an appropriate index.

32. Only two attitudes have overtly different effects in the two groups. In these two cases, the relationship only exists among participants who are not members of political associations, and the attitudes are both in the expressive dimension. Is it possible that this group of participants responds more emotionally in their participation and that this facilitates changes in this field, while members of political associations have more instrumental and rational attitudes that provoke broader changes in attitude in other dimensions? The results suggest that this could be the case (two changes are similar but larger for the core participants), but only more qualitative and focussed research will be able to answer this question.

33. There are other reasons more related to policymaking and administration renewal that are equally or even more important, but as explained in chapter 1, we do not cover them in this book.

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List of Contributors

Pau Alarcón currently holds a predoctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain and is researching at the IESA-CSIC. He is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Government and Public Policies of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. His research interests include local participation processes, political attitudes and public policies.

Joan Font is senior researcher at the Institute of Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC) in Córdoba (Spain). He has conducted research about elections, surveys, local participation processes, citizens' juries, deliberative polls and referendums, and he has published in journals like *European Journal of Political Research*, *Public Administration* and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Paloma Fontcuberta is a social researcher. She has been working for more than twenty years covering many different fields, including citizen and political surveys. She has worked for private companies and also public institutions like the Spanish National Research Council (IPP-CSIC).

María J. Funes is professor of sociology. She has conducted a great deal of research and participates as a member of several groups that focus on different kinds of participation: social movements, associations or processes arranged from institutions like citizens' juries or participative budgeting. In addition, she works in the theoretical approach to the study of collective action. She has published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Franco Angelli, ed.), *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, *REIS* and *RIS*, among others.

What Citizens Want

Annex 2

4. El papel de la intensidad de las actitudes y de la participación

Magdalena Wojcieszak y Pau Alarcón

A partir de este momento, el enfoque de nuestro texto cambia y abandonamos la presentación de las preferencias ciudadanas sobre los procesos políticos para pasar a tratar de explicarlas o, por lo menos, de entender algunas de las actitudes y características de las personas a las que van asociadas. Para ello, tanto este capítulo como los siguientes adoptarán una perspectiva similar: empezarán presentando algunos de los factores explicativos potencialmente importantes y su distribución entre la población española, para pasar después a examinar su relación con el tipo de procesos políticos deseados.

A la hora de explicar las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos, *Stealth Democracy* centra la atención principalmente en la aversión al conflicto, sin examinar el papel que pueden estar jugando otros factores individuales. En este capítulo incorporamos dos factores olvidados en el modelo de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse, referentes tanto a la actitud como a la conducta (la intensidad de las actitudes políticas y la experiencia participativa), mientras que el siguiente profundiza en aquellos elementos que estos autores consideran centrales (percepción de consenso y aversión al conflicto).

¿Qué implicaciones tienen la intensidad de las actitudes y las experiencias participativas de la ciudadanía? Los estudios de opinión pública siempre han distinguido entre la extensión (o direccionalidad) y la fuerza de las actitudes. Por ejemplo, en el tema del aborto, la extensión de las actitudes haría referencia a cuantas personas son partidarias de restringir o permitir el aborto. Sin embargo, ante algunos temas las actitudes son débiles: mucha gente puede ser crítica con la existencia de centrales térmicas, pero pocas personas le conceden a este tema suficiente importancia y viven ese conflicto con tanta intensidad como para dedicar un gran esfuerzo en la defensa de aquellas ideas en las que creen. En un proceso electoral o en una encuesta cuentan solo la extensión de las actitudes (el voto al PP vale lo mismo para quien siente pasión por Rajoy que para quien eligió la papeleta al azar), pero a la hora de entender quién acude a una manifestación, la fuerza de las actitudes puede ser muy importante. La ciudadanía que considera un tema de máxima importancia personal y que tiene actitudes extremas sobre el mismo, ¿prefiere procesos participativos en mayor medida que quienes no le otorgan mucha importancia al tema y muestran moderación en sus opiniones?

Pero, además, aquí también examinamos esta relación desde una óptica complementaria. Tras analizar las actitudes de la ciudadanía en relación a la participación, nos fijaremos en sus prácticas. ¿Es posible que la gente —incluso quienes muestran preferencias hacia procesos representativos en los que no tienen que involucrarse personalmente— participe en diversas actividades políticas? ¿Prefieren procesos diferentes quienes son más participativos que quienes lo son menos? Estas relaciones podrían no resultar tan obvias o directas. Que una persona participativa desee procesos políticos más participativos puede depender, por ejemplo, de si su actividad política es más o menos disruptiva (es decir, disconforme o no con la situación actual), del grado de implicación experimentada o de su nivel de satisfacción con esa involucración. Al mismo tiempo, una clara opción por fórmulas representativas por parte de una persona muy activa podría indicar la

voluntad de distinguir ámbitos, con ciudadanos que tratan de influir a través de sus actividades y políticos que deben ser los responsables de tomar las decisiones finales.

Por tanto, ¿las actitudes de la ciudadanía y sus experiencias participativas influyen en la estructuración de sus preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones? Y si es así, ¿de qué forma lo hacen? Respondiendo a estas preguntas podremos comprender mejor qué tipo de personas prefieren procesos políticos más o menos participativos y cómo se relacionan estas preferencias con algunas variables clave referentes a las actitudes y la participación. En esta línea, analizamos la importancia y el extremismo de las actitudes³⁸, así como los comportamientos políticos, tres factores pertinentes que pueden estar influyendo en la estructuración de las preferencias políticas.

A nivel conceptual, este capítulo considera a la ciudadanía como *issue publics* (Converse, 1964), examinando si el estar involucrado personalmente en un tema afecta a las preferencias hacia procesos participativos o representativos. A nivel metodológico, damos un paso adicional, comprobando si los *issue publics* se identifican mejor por la importancia o por el extremismo de las actitudes. Asimismo, también analizamos si esas preferencias guardan relación con la actividad participativa de la ciudadanía, con el asociacionismo, la intensidad de la participación y la valoración de esa experiencia.

Primero presentamos las variables independientes referentes al extremismo de las actitudes y a la participación política. A continuación examinamos si efectivamente están asociadas al tipo de procesos políticos deseados y, si es así, de qué forma lo hacen.

4.1. Issue publics definidos por sus actitudes

Como hemos comentado en el capítulo 3, un tema que se echa de menos en *Stealth Democracy* (2002) nos remite a la diferenciación entre temas. Por un lado, como ya hemos visto, los temas políticos tienen distinta naturaleza, del mismo modo que también es diferente la forma en que el público se acerca a los mismos. Por eso, cuando nos referimos a los temas más «privados» o fáciles de comprender, la gente prefiere que sea la ciudadanía corriente quien se involucre en los procesos de toma de decisión. Sin embargo, para tomar decisiones sobre temas más complicados o «públicos», como la economía, la ciudadanía prefiere procesos más representativos.

Además, como sugiere la teoría de los *issue publics*, algunas personas están más afectadas o interesadas en temas concretos, al tiempo que no muestran preocupación alguna respecto a la política en general. En algunos estudios, los *issue publics* se identifican a partir de datos demográficos (Page y Shapiro, 1992; Price y Zaller, 1993), considerando que las mujeres están

³⁸ Como mencionamos antes, usamos el término «extremismo» sin connotaciones evaluativas o normativas. Se trata del término comúnmente utilizado en la literatura sobre los componentes de actitudes fuertes (como la importancia, intensidad o certeza, entre otros) (véanse Krosnick *et al.*, 1993; Visser *et al.*, 2003, 2004, 2006; Wojcieszak, 2012).

supuestamente más involucradas en las cuestiones de género o los afroamericanos más atentos a las políticas raciales. Pero, como hemos visto, esta no es necesariamente la pauta entre las preferencias de la ciudadanía española hacia los procesos políticos (las mujeres no están más interesadas en procesos participativos sobre el aborto, por ejemplo).

El enfoque más directo, sin embargo, consiste en identificar a los *issue publics* como aquellos para los cuales un tema es personalmente importante, ya que la importancia de las actitudes se ha constatado como una *proxy* fiable para los *issue publics* (Kim, 2009; Krosnick y Berent, 1993; Price *et al.*, 2006). ¿Prefiere la ciudadanía con actitudes que considera personalmente importantes y extremas procesos más participativos en lugar de representativos cuando se trata de «su tema»? Aquí defendemos que efectivamente sucede así y que la importancia y el extremismo tendrán una mayor influencia que las características socio-demográficas.

Diversos estudios muestran que los *issue publics* (definidos por la importancia que otorgan a cada uno de los temas), seleccionan información sobre aquello que les resulta personalmente importante, como propuestas específicas de candidatos políticos (Boninger *et al.*, 1995), el aborto, la discriminación positiva o la seguridad nacional, entre otros (Kim, 2009). Esta selectividad, a su vez, aumenta el extremismo de las actitudes, el conocimiento político sobre el tema y la consistencia de su voto (Kim, 2009). Además, la investigación sobre participación política sugiere que las actitudes hacia problemáticas percibidas como personalmente importantes tienen un mayor impacto en la decisión de voto (McGraw, Lodge y Stroh, 1990) y se expresan políticamente con mayor frecuencia (Krosnick y Telhami, 1995; Verba, Scholzman y Brady, 1995). Por ejemplo, la implicación personal en un problema juega un papel crucial para explicar la participación en torno a políticas controvertidas —como, por ejemplo, la investigación con células madre—, tanto para formas participativas tradicionales como para una hipotética reunión informal sobre el tema (Becker *et al.*, 2010; Goidel y Nisbet, 2006). Estas ideas pueden extenderse al estudio de las preferencias de la ciudadanía sobre cómo debería funcionar el sistema democrático. Más concretamente, quienes consideran que un tema es más importante deberían preferir procesos más participativos.

Aquí damos un paso adicional prestando atención al extremismo de la actitud, cuestión que se ha convertido en un foco de debate público y académico dada su relevancia práctica. La ciudadanía extrema tiende a polarizarse (Taber y Lodge, 2006; Wojcieszak, 2011a) y a participar en política (Wojcieszak, 2011b). Y yendo más allá, el conflicto que caracteriza la contienda política y que resulta desagradable para las personas más moderadas puede ser irrelevante para la ciudadanía con opiniones fuertes (Kaplowitz *et al.*, 1983; Krassa, 1988; Lasorsa, 1991; Noelle-Neumann, 1993) y —en lugar de desmovilizar políticamente— puede devenir en un factor de movilización (Horner *et al.*, 1998; Moy, Domke y Stamm, 2001; Scheufele y Eveland, 2001; Wojcieszak, 2011b).

En conjunto, la ciudadanía con opiniones consideradas como personalmente importantes y con actitudes extremas debería preferir una democracia participativa, ya sea en general o sobre temas específicos. En la primera parte de este capítulo no solamente analizamos si se cumplen estas predicciones,

sino también yuxtaponemos la importancia y el extremismo de la actitud, analizando cuál afecta en mayor grado a las preferencias sobre el proceso y —como tal— cuál define los *issue publics* con mayor precisión. Primero presentamos la distribución de la importancia de las actitudes, después del extremismo y al final analizamos sus relaciones con las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos.

4.2. *Issue publics* y actitudes frente a distintos temas

Para examinar si quienes consideran que un tema es más importante son quienes prefieren procesos más participativos, el cuestionario incluía una pregunta sobre qué importancia se le concede a cada uno de los temas (con las opciones desde 0 «No le importa nada» hasta 10 «Le parece de máxima importancia»), que hemos analizado en relación con las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos³⁹.

En general, como muestra el gráfico 4.1, los temas económicos son de máxima importancia (media de 4,22 en una escala de 1 a 5)⁴⁰. En contraste, la política en general es lo que menos importa (media de 2,52)⁴¹. Y aunque la ciudadanía también le concede una importancia considerablemente menor al aborto y la inmigración, las medias siguen estando por encima de la mediana (3,14 y 3,45 respectivamente). Así pues, no todos los temas importan lo mismo y, además, el interés por la política en general es sensiblemente inferior a la importancia manifestada hacia los tres temas concretos propuestos.

Además de la escala clásica de autoubicación ideológica (donde el 0 significa extrema izquierda y el 10 extrema derecha, media 4,43)⁴², también se preguntaba por el posicionamiento en una escala similar respecto a los tres temas anteriores, donde 0 significa que se está totalmente en contra y 10 totalmente a favor de que las mujeres puedan abortar libremente y sin restricciones (media 5,95)⁴³, de que los inmigrantes puedan decidir libremente si quieren venir a vivir a España (media 3,71)⁴⁴ y de que la economía funcione libremente sin que el Estado la regule (media 3,75)⁴⁵. Estas preguntas produjeron unas tasas de no respuesta más altas en el caso de la importancia concedida, especialmente para la ideología (18 por ciento) y la economía (16,5 por ciento).

³⁹ Se trata de la pregunta 3 del cuestionario (véase el anexo). Esta pregunta produjo una escasa tasa de no respuesta (en todas las frases del 4 por ciento o inferior).

⁴⁰ El gráfico 4.1 define las medias de esta importancia (donde situamos el círculo), así como el intervalo de confianza con una probabilidad del 95 por ciento donde se sitúa esa media para el conjunto de la sociedad española (las dos líneas horizontales que lo enmarcan arriba y abajo). Si, por ejemplo, la línea inferior de la inmigración es más alta que la línea superior del aborto significa que hay certeza estadística de que la ciudadanía concede más importancia a su actitud sobre la inmigración que a la del aborto.

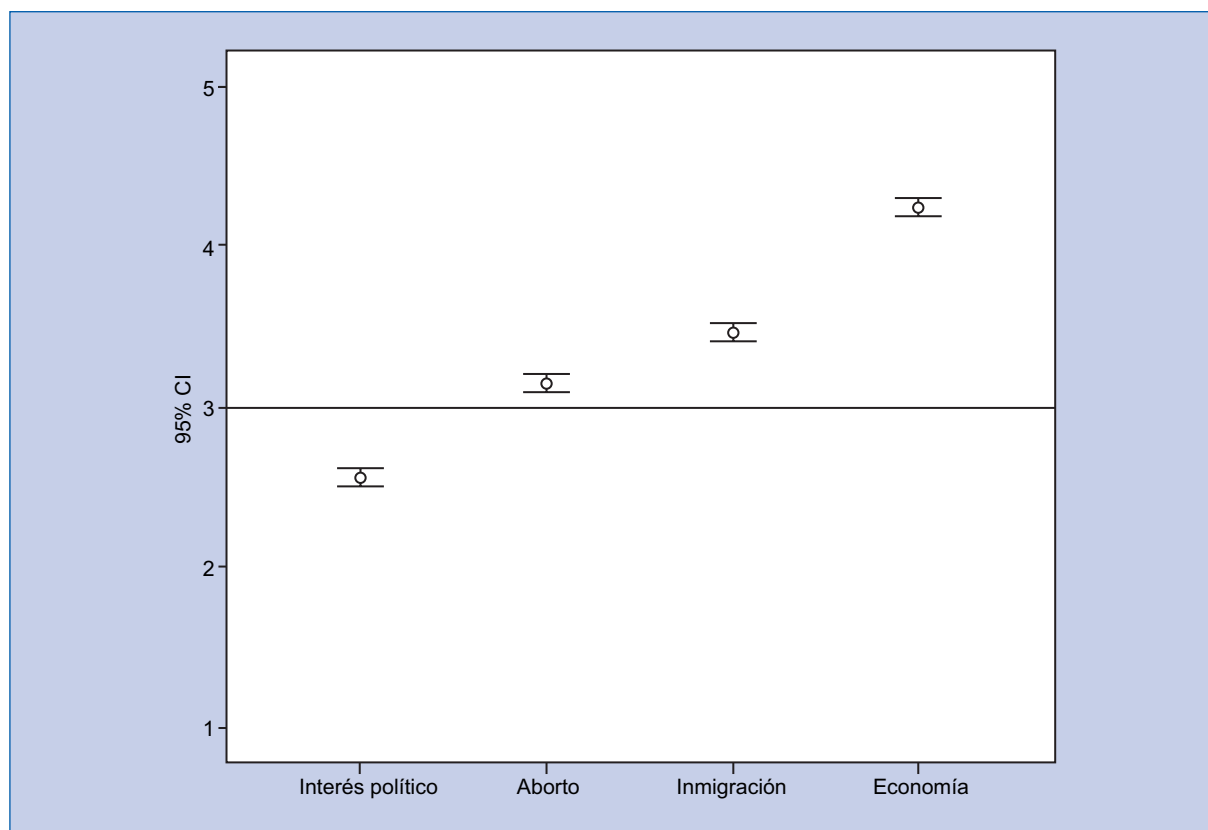
⁴¹ Parte de la diferencia podría deberse al diferente formato de la pregunta. Véase la nota 31.

⁴² Pregunta 38 del cuestionario anexo.

⁴³ Pregunta 32 del cuestionario.

⁴⁴ Pregunta 33 del cuestionario.

⁴⁵ Pregunta 34 del cuestionario.

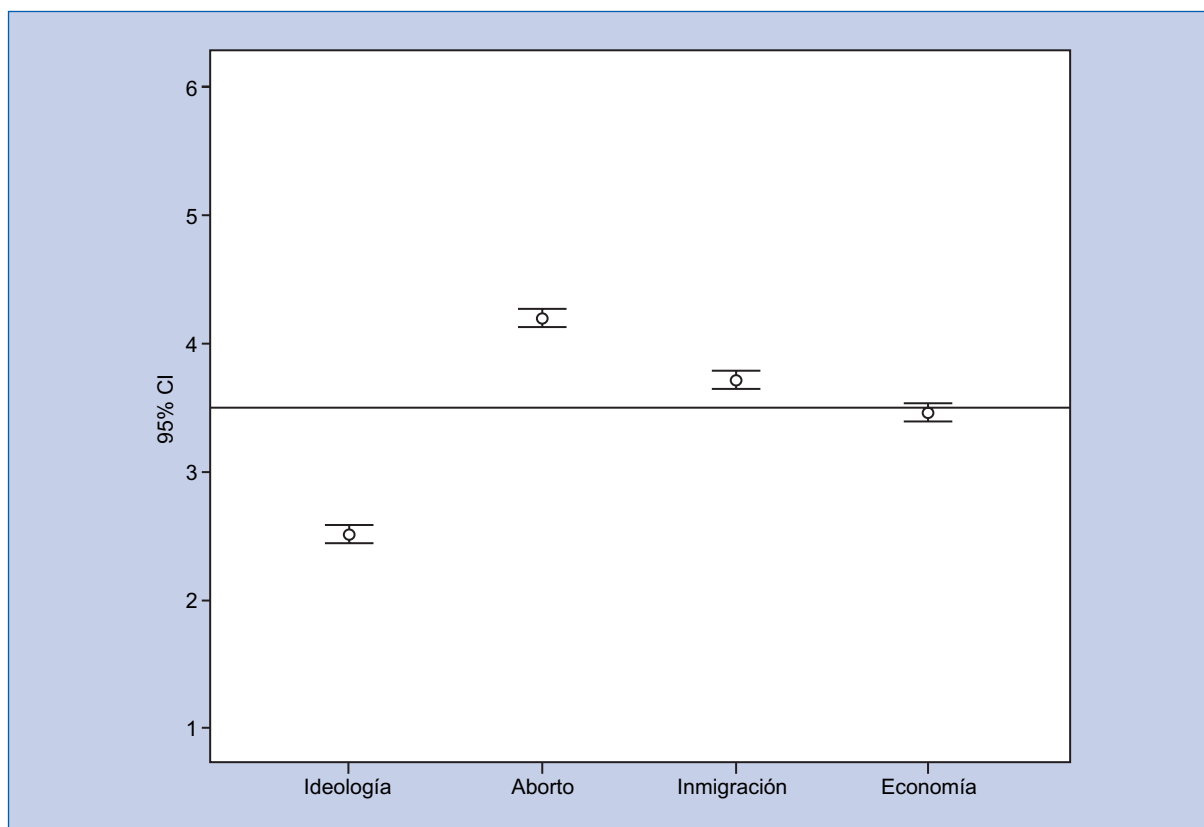
Gráfico 4.1. Medias de la importancia de las actitudes (interés político general y por diferentes temas)

Nota: Todas las escalas están recodificadas y van de 1 a 5, donde 1 indica que las actitudes no son nada importantes y 5 indica que son de máxima importancia.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

El extremismo se ha conceptualizado como una actitud que se ubica tanto en el extremo positivo como en el negativo de un continuo cuyo punto medio se caracteriza por actitudes moderadas (Abelson, 1995). Por lo tanto, calculamos el extremismo «doblando» las escalas de tal forma que una puntuación alta se corresponde con las personas extremistas y una puntuación baja con las personas moderadas. Es decir, para medir el extremismo nos da igual que alguien esté muy a favor o muy en contra de la inmigración (elige el 0 o el 10 en la escala) y por tanto les consideramos «equivalentes» y les damos el máximo valor en cuanto a extremismo.

Como muestra el gráfico 4.2, la ciudadanía española tiene actitudes más extremas sobre el aborto (media de 4,20) y más moderadas sobre su ideología (media de 2,52). Las actitudes respecto a la inmigración y la economía están más cercanas al extremismo (medias de 3,79 y 3,45 respectivamente). Pero la pregunta que más nos interesa aquí es saber si la importancia y el extremismo se relacionan con las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos. Si existen *issue publics*, la ciudadanía para la cual la política y los tres temas son importantes y quienes tienen actitudes más extremas deberían querer involucrarse personalmente en la toma de decisiones sobre esos temas y, consecuentemente, optar por procesos más participativos.

Gráfico 4.2. Distribuciones de las medias de extremismo de las actitudes

Nota: La escala va de 1 a 6, donde 1 indica actitudes moderadas y 6, actitudes más extremas.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Para analizar esta cuestión, primero hemos agrupado las respuestas referentes a la importancia de cada tema y el extremismo en dos grupos para cada variable: las personas que le conceden poca importancia a cada tema y que tienen actitudes moderadas (valores por debajo de la media) y quienes le concedieron mucha importancia a cada tema y cuentan con actitudes más extremas (valores por encima de la media). A continuación hemos analizado las medias de las preferencias para cada uno de estos dos grupos. De este modo podemos abordar la pregunta clave: ¿son diferentes estos grupos en cuanto a su apoyo hacia procesos más participativos o representativos?

Como muestra la primera parte de la tabla 4.1, aparte del interés por la política en general (donde a quienes les interesa la política prefieren una democracia *representativa* en España), la pauta es coherente con la teoría de los *issue publics*. Así, la ciudadanía a la cual le importa mucho el tema del aborto prefiere que las decisiones sobre este tema se tomen con una implicación directa en mayor grado que a quienes no les parece muy importante este tema. Aquellos más interesados en la inmigración también tienden a preferir procesos más participativos sobre este asunto y —aunque los temas económicos sean más complejos y especializados— a quienes la economía les importa mucho prefieren en mayor medida que sea el público corriente quien tome las decisiones en este ámbito, y no los políticos.

La tabla 4.1 también sugiere que la ciudadanía con actitudes más extremas prefiere procesos más participativos que la más moderada cuando se trata de políticas generales en España, el aborto y la inmigración. Las preferencias relacionadas con la economía representan una excepción, puesto que la ciudadanía con posiciones más extremas en este tema opta por procesos más representativos que la más moderada⁴⁶. Las preferencias claramente dependen de la importancia y el extremismo de las actitudes, pero aún más claramente de esta segunda. Por ello, los *issue publics* pueden definirse mejor a partir del extremismo de las opiniones respecto a algunos temas que por la importancia que se le concede a los mismos.

Tabla 4.1. Apoyo medio a la escala de procesos para los diferentes temas según la importancia de los temas y el extremismo de las actitudes

Importancia	España	Aborto	Inmigración	Economía
Baja	4,32	3,87	5,21	5,73
Alta	4,58	3,59	4,95	5,42
Diferencia Baja - Alta	-0,26	0,28	0,26	0,31
F	6,249	5,24	4,99	6,92
Extremismo	España	Aborto	Inmigración	Economía
Bajo	4,62	4,03	5,23	5,35
Alto	4,31	3,38	4,95	5,63
Diferencia Bajo - Alto	0,31	0,69	0,28	0,77
F	7,05	29,88	5,70	5,53

En negrilla diferencias significativas para $p < 0,05$.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Para determinar si estos patrones persisten una vez que controlamos los efectos por las características individuales y también para analizar directamente si el extremismo realmente influye en las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos en mayor medida que la importancia de las actitudes, hemos construido cuatro modelos de regresión para predecir las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos en España y sobre los tres temas. Además de los factores mencionados (el género, la edad y la educación, entre otros), hemos incluido el interés hacia la política y los temas analizados y el extremismo de los posicionamientos sobre esos asuntos. Los resulta-

⁴⁶ Este resultado se debe al efecto del ítem original, donde el 17 por ciento de los encuestados estaban «totalmente en contra» de políticas de libre mercado y solo el 3 por ciento se mostraba «totalmente a favor».

dos⁴⁷ apuntan a que el interés político está relacionado con el deseo de que sean los políticos quienes tomen las decisiones. En cambio, concederle importancia al aborto, a la inmigración y a la economía no influye en las preferencias hacia procesos participativos o representativos referentes a estos temas.

En cuanto al extremismo, el patrón es más consistente en relación a los *issue publics*: las personas ideológicamente extremas, así como aquellas con puntos de vista extremos sobre el aborto y la inmigración, prefieren una democracia participativa en mayor medida que las moderadas, incluso teniendo en cuenta otras variables como la educación, los ingresos subjetivos o la importancia de las actitudes. En cambio, el hecho de tener opiniones extremas sobre economía no está relacionado con las preferencias.

Estos resultados sugieren que quienes consideran que los temas analizados son personalmente importantes no tienen preferencias distintas a quienes le conceden poca importancia a los mismos. En cambio, el extremismo de las actitudes sí importa. La ciudadanía con puntos de vista extremos prefiere la participación ciudadana en la toma de decisiones políticas en mayor medida que la delegación de las decisiones a los políticos.

4.3. La actividad participativa y las preferencias sobre procesos políticos

A continuación nos centraremos en la actividad participativa, tanto en general como en referencia a los tres temas concretos ya tratados. En esa línea nos surgen las siguientes preguntas: ¿qué tipo de procesos prefiere la ciudadana según su implicación asociativa y participativa? ¿Hay diferencias según el tema de la participación? ¿Y según la satisfacción o insatisfacción con la participación realizada? En su obra, Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) señalan que la desafección con el proceso (desear procesos más participativos y percibir que en realidad son los políticos quienes toman las decisiones) puede hacer que la gente se involucre en mayor medida en la política (con la esperanza de lograr cambios) pero también puede tener el efecto contrario desmovilizador (si perciben el proceso tan defectuoso que no hay oportunidad). Sin embargo, no fijan la atención en la posibilidad de una relación causal que funcione en dirección contraria: cómo la realidad participativa influye en esas preferencias.

Por un lado, la literatura apunta a que la participación asociativa aumenta la capacidad de deliberación, acción pública y autogobierno (Cohen y Rogers, 1992; Hirst, 1994; Van Deth, 1997), lo que podría traducirse en una mayor preferencia por procesos donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones. Pero, por el otro lado, también hay evidencia que señala que la participación en asociaciones fomenta sentimientos positivos hacia otras instituciones políticas, como el aumento de la confianza política (Hirst, 1992 y 1994; Cohen y Rogers, 1992), lo que podría traducirse en un

⁴⁷ No se incluyen las tablas por razones de espacio pero se encuentran a disposición del lector que las solicite.

mayor apoyo a los procesos donde sean los políticos quienes tomen las decisiones. De hecho, algunos estudios muestran que las personas que *no* han participado en ningún tipo de deliberación pública tienen niveles de confianza pública y política más altos que aquellas que lo hicieron en línea o cara-a-cara con otros ciudadanos (Baek, Wojcieszak y Delli Carpini, 2011). Paradójicamente, pues, la desconfianza política podría ser beneficiosa para la dinámica democrática, al alentar la comunicación entre la ciudadanía, aumentar la vigilancia sobre el proceso político y movilizar para la acción (Warren, 1999).

Además del asociacionismo en sí, a la hora de analizar los efectos de la participación cabe esperar que diferentes grados de participación conlleven diferentes efectos sobre las actitudes políticas (Anduiza y Bosch, 2004). La participación política, al implicar una relación con otras personas, puede favorecer actitudes de solidaridad, empatía, tolerancia, interés y confianza interpersonal. En este sentido podría estar aumentando las preferencias hacia un proceso donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones. Sin embargo, la experiencia participativa también puede conllevar desilusión o actitudes intolerantes, exclusiones y enfrentamientos, lo que operaría en una dirección opuesta en cuanto a esas preferencias. Por este motivo, cabría esperar que el nivel de satisfacción con la participación realizada tenga un efecto en las preferencias sobre los procesos políticos. Para tener en cuenta todos estos matices, en este apartado vamos a analizar el asociacionismo, el tema concreto en que se participa, el nivel de participación y la satisfacción con la misma, así como el grado en que sirven para explicar las preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones.

Finalmente, como estas variables miden de forma directa la participación real de la ciudadanía, también nos permitirán comprobar la coherencia del índice propuesto por Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) para medir el apoyo a la democracia sigilosa. Si este índice refleja, como defienden, el apoyo a un modelo de toma de decisiones donde la ciudadanía prefiere no estar involucrada, lo esperable sería que las personas más participativas, que ya están de hecho involucradas de una u otra forma en la contienda política, obtuvieran puntuaciones bajas en la escala, es decir, que no mostrasen apoyo a este tipo de democracia sigilosa. Pero si, tal y como hemos apuntado (capítulo 2), este índice está mezclando otras cuestiones, el resultado podría ser diferente.

4.4. El asociacionismo y la participación como explicaciones de las preferencias sobre procesos

En primer lugar nos centraremos en el asociacionismo de la ciudadanía y en qué tipo de organizaciones lo hace⁴⁸. Para ello, el cuestionario incluía la pregunta de si la persona entrevistada pertenece o ha pertenecido a alguna asociación, a la que un 34,7 por ciento respondió de forma

⁴⁸ Véase la pregunta 29 del cuestionario en el anexo.

afirmativa. En la serie histórica de Morales y Mota (2006) podemos observar que, tras el leve crecimiento y caída del asociacionismo en los años ochenta y noventa, hubo un fuerte crecimiento a finales de los noventa (que pasó de un 30 a un 40 por ciento), para después estabilizarse en los primeros años del milenio. La cifra que arroja el cuestionario que estamos utilizando en este estudio muestra una tasa de asociacionismo algo menor a la de 2002, pero que no entra en contradicción con los datos anteriores⁴⁹.

En cuanto a la tipología de las asociaciones, hemos creado una clasificación basada en la desarrollada en Morales y Mota (2006) y Navarro y Juaristi (2006). Se trata de una versión simplificada de la misma con tres categorías, construidas a partir de las funciones externas de las asociaciones: las que ofrecen servicios a socios (actividades socioculturales), las que ofrecen servicios de bienestar a socios y no socios y finalmente las asociaciones de tipo político.

Así pues, a partir de una pregunta multirrespuesta realizada a quien contestó que pertenecía a alguna asociación (851 personas), comprobamos que la gran mayoría (el 71,6 por ciento) forma parte de asociaciones deportivas, culturales o de ocio, una cuarta parte se encuadra en organizaciones de bienestar social o ayuda a personas necesitadas y un 17,5 por ciento se vincula a cualquier tipo de asociación política. Un tercio de quienes están o estuvieron asociados pertenecieron a otro tipo de asociaciones, como las sindicales, vecinales, de padres y madres. Esta tipología nos permitirá comprobar si el carácter de la asociación también juega un papel en nuestro objeto de estudio.

Pero no solo importa el tipo de asociación sino la intensidad de la actividad y su valoración. Para comprobar su incidencia, vamos a utilizar dos variables que miden estos aspectos. En relación al nivel de participación y la forma que adopta, el cuestionario incluía una pregunta donde había que señalar si se realizó durante los últimos 12 meses, con anterioridad o nunca cada una de las ocho formas de participación que muestra la tabla 4.2⁵⁰. Teniendo en cuenta los problemas de la comparación de los datos de diferentes años, tanto en la forma de las preguntas como sobre todo en el período al que hacen referencia (véanse las notas en la tabla 4.2), podemos comprobar que los datos del cuestionario de 2011 encajan con los anteriores, si bien en 2011 ha aumentado en casi todas sus variantes, especialmente en la forma de boicot y de asistencia a reuniones.

Con el objetivo de comprobar el efecto que el nivel de participación tiene sobre la configuración de las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos, en base a los ítems anteriores hemos construido un indicador inspirado en la tipología clásica de Barnes y Kaase (1979). Sin embargo, en nuestro caso no nos fijamos en la forma (convencional o no) de la participación, sino más bien

⁴⁹ No es posible hacer una comparación estricta entre las cifras dado que los formatos de las preguntas utilizadas son sensiblemente diferentes (Morales, 2002).

⁵⁰ Véase la pregunta 30 del anexo.

en su intensidad, estableciendo una tipología simplificada a partir de la propuesta de Morales y Mota (2006). En nuestro índice, la realización de cada una de estas actividades en los últimos 12 meses o con anterioridad puntúa 1, mientras que no haberlo realizado nunca puntúa 0. Mediante los resultados de este índice hemos categorizado a la ciudadanía como pasiva (puntúa 0; 37 por ciento); participativa (puntúa entre 1 y 4; 41 por ciento) y activista (puntúa entre 5 y 8; 20 por ciento).

Tabla 4.2. Porcentaje de personas que realizaron diversas formas de participación en España^a

	2000	2001	2006		2011
			Últimos 12 meses	Con anterioridad	
Asistir a una manifestación ^b	37,0	12,9	17,4	43,7	42,8
Boicotear o dejar de comprar productos ^c		6,0	14,2	13,7	25,7
Contactar o intentar contactar con político o funcionario público ^d	13,0	23,5	6,2	7,8	16,6
Donar o recaudar dinero para alguna causa ^e	-	34,5	26,2	34,4	40,8
Asistir a una reunión política o mitin	-	5,9	7,1	19,2	24,7
Intentar convencer sobre opiniones políticas	-	-	-	-	24,4
Asistir a reunión política o consulta organizada por el municipio	-	-	-	-	23,1
Colaborar con un grupo o asociación ^f	-	22,5	-	-	30,9

^a Se preguntaba si cada actividad había tenido lugar: en bastantes ocasiones o alguna vez (2000); en los últimos doce meses (2001); en los últimos doce meses o con anterioridad (2011).

^b En 2011, 2006 y 2001 se preguntaba «Asistir a/participar en una manifestación»; en 2000 «Asistir a una manifestación autorizada».

^c En 2011 y 2006 se preguntaba «Boicotear o dejar de comprar ciertos productos por razones políticas, éticas o para favorecer el medio ambiente»; en 2001 «Boicotear ciertos productos».

^d En 2011 se preguntaba «Contactar o intentar contactar con un/a político/a o funcionario/a público/a para expresarle sus opiniones»; en 2006 «Contactar o intentar contactar con un político para expresarle sus opiniones»; en 2001 es la suma de «Ponerse en contacto con un político» y «Ponerse en contacto con un funcionario estatal, autonómico o local»; en 2000 «Hacer una visita a cargos públicos o a representantes políticos».

^e En 2011 y 2006 se preguntaba «Donar o recaudar dinero para alguna causa»; en 2001 es la suma de «Donar dinero» y «Recaudar dinero para alguna causa».

^f En 2011 se preguntaba como «Colaborar con un grupo o asociación»; en 2001 es la suma de «Colaborar con un grupo o plataforma de acción ciudadana» y «Colaborar con alguna otra asociación u organización».

Fuentes: Estudios CIS 2384 (año 2000), 2450 (año 2001), 2632 (año 2006) y 2860 (año 2011).

En cuanto a los temas que movilizan a la ciudadanía, encontramos que, entre quienes participaron en al menos una de las experiencias participativas (1.546 personas), un 32,6 por ciento participó en alguna actividad relacionada con la situación económica del país, un 16,8 por ciento en rela-

ción a la inmigración y un 10,5 por ciento respecto al aborto⁵¹. Los comparación con los datos del estudio CIS 2632 (2006) nos muestran que ha aumentado considerablemente la participación respecto a la inmigración (en 2006 fue del 4,1 por ciento) y ligeramente respecto a la realidad económica (en 2006 era del 36,3 por ciento⁵²)⁵³. ¿El hecho de haber participado políticamente en relación a un tema concreto implicará una mayor preferencia hacia procesos políticos donde la ciudadanía intervenga directamente en ese mismo ámbito? Más adelante lo comprobaremos.

Por último, también hemos señalado que una valoración positiva o negativa de la participación conlleva un determinado efecto en las actitudes políticas. En este sentido, el cuestionario incluía una novedosa batería de preguntas dirigidas a quienes contestaron que realizaron en los últimos doce meses o con anterioridad cualquiera de las formas de participación mencionadas (1.546 personas)⁵⁴. En esta batería se incluían seis opciones de respuesta (tres en positivo y tres en negativo) que se corresponden con los costes y beneficios de la participación que han sido más frecuentemente analizados en la literatura⁵⁵. Las tres frases en positivo hacían referencia a beneficios instrumentales en un caso y expresivos en los otros dos: 1) el beneficio asociado a los resultados en forma de decisiones o políticas públicas; 2) el beneficio asociado al placer y/o la necesidad moral de participar (auto-reconocimiento); y 3) el beneficio asociado al reconocimiento y la interacción con la otra gente. Por otro lado, los tres tipos de frase negativa se referían a tres razones también muy habituales para no participar: 1) la sospecha de que no iba a tener ningún efecto; 2) los conflictos inherentes a la vida política y la aversión al conflicto de la que hablamos en el capítulo 5; y 3) los costes habituales de la participación, por ejemplo en forma de tiempo y costes de oportunidad.

La distribución de estas respuestas se encuentra reflejada en el gráfico 4.3, donde se observa que predominan claramente las valoraciones positivas respecto a la participación vivida⁵⁶. Entre las negativas, destaca el 14 por ciento que consideró con mucha frecuencia que su participación no serviría para nada, porcentaje muy superior al de quienes con frecuencia se molestaron por conflictos con otras personas participantes o sintieron que perdían el tiempo (ambos inferiores al 6 por ciento). En cuanto a los elementos positivos, más de la mitad consideraron con mucha frecuencia que el tema fue muy importante y se sintieron bien consigo mismas y con el resto de participantes.

⁵¹ Véase la pregunta 30a en el cuestionario.

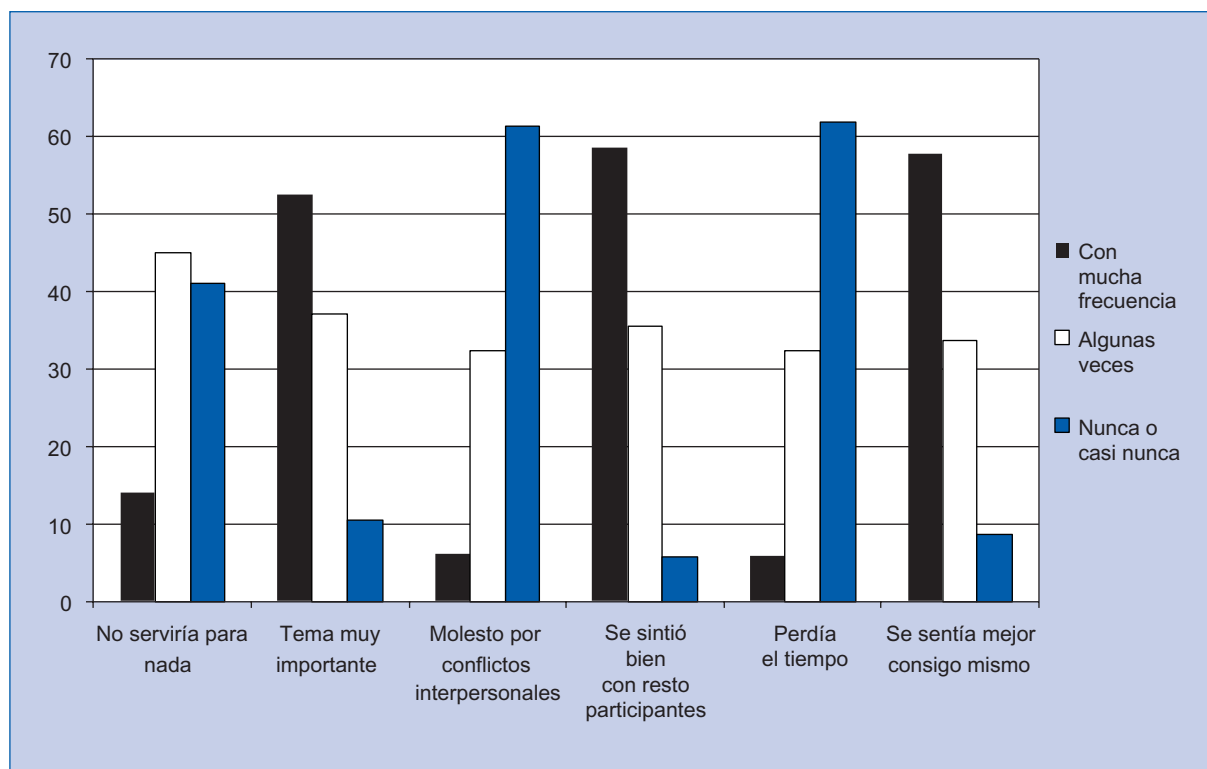
⁵² Hay que tener en cuenta que la pregunta del estudio 2632 era menos general que la actual, ya que se refería a «Temas laborales (reforma del mercado laboral, desempleo, etc.)».

⁵³ En relación al aborto, la participación también parece haber aumentado, pero no disponemos de datos debido a que en el cuestionario de 2006 no se incluyó como categoría de respuesta debido a la ausencia de movilizaciones significativas sobre esta temática.

⁵⁴ Véase la pregunta 30b del cuestionario.

⁵⁵ Desde una perspectiva de elección racional véase Olson (1965). Una perspectiva que enfatiza mucho más los beneficios sociales de la participación aparece en Schlozman, Lehman, Verba y Brady. Una buena síntesis del debate se encuentra en Anduiza y Bosch (2004).

⁵⁶ Al tratarse de una pregunta filtrada, las respuestas engloban del 59,6 por ciento del total de la muestra (N=1.462) al 60,4 por ciento (N=1.481).

Gráfico 4.3. Valoración de la participación realizada en los últimos doce meses o con anterioridad

N = 1.480, 1.481, 1.473, 1.462, 1.474, 1.470.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Para poder operacionalizar el efecto de la satisfacción con la participación sobre las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos, hemos construido un indicador a partir de los ítems anteriores. Aquellas preguntas donde se responde de la forma más favorable puntúan 2, cuando se contesta «algunas veces» puntúa 1 y 0 cuando se contesta de la manera más negativa. A partir de este índice obtenemos tres tipologías: las personas menos satisfechas con su experiencia participativa (valores entre 0 y 6; 17,7 por ciento), las satisfechas (valores entre 7 y 9; 40,1 por ciento) y las más entusiastas (valores entre 10 y 12; 40,2 por ciento). En el próximo apartado veremos si estas valoraciones influyen en cómo quiere la ciudadanía que se tomen las decisiones.

4.5. ¿La experiencia participativa articula las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos?

Una vez presentadas las variables que miden diversos aspectos de la realidad participativa, podemos abordar la pregunta de en qué medida influyen en las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos. Para abordar esta cuestión, hemos calculado las correlaciones entre las variables relacionadas con la participación (pertenencia a asociación, tipo de asociación, nivel de participación, tema de la participación y nivel de satisfacción con la participación) y las escalas que miden las

preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones. Los datos muestran unos patrones de correlación muy débiles, que indican que todas esas variables no juegan un papel determinante a la hora de estructurar las preferencias sobre los procesos políticos.

Teniendo en cuenta esta debilidad de la asociación, los datos muestran que quienes pertenecen o han pertenecido a algún tipo de asociación, las personas más participativas y las más críticas con la participación (las más insatisfechas), prefieren en mayor medida que la ciudadanía tome las decisiones en España y sobre todo en su municipio, donde esa correlación es estadísticamente significativa. Esta significatividad podría estar indicando que estas variables tienen más relación con los procesos a nivel local, pero la correlación es tan baja que no podemos realizar esta afirmación con propiedad⁵⁷.

La tabla 4.3 muestra de forma más detallada las preferencias sobre los procesos políticos en España según estas variables. En general podemos comprobar que existe una relación lógica aunque débil entre la participación política y las preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones en España. Quienes pertenecen a una asociación prefieren en mayor grado procesos donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones. Entre estos, cuando se trata de asociaciones políticas, la puntuación en la escala de procesos tiende a ser mayor (prefieren procesos menos participativos). En cuanto al nivel de participación, las personas participativas y las activistas prefieren que la ciudadanía tome las decisiones en mayor grado que las más pasivas. Finalmente, de las personas que participaron en alguna actividad, quienes se han sentido más insatisfechas prefieren procesos donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones en un grado superior al del resto. Quizá este hecho tiene que ver con que la insatisfacción no expresa tanto un rechazo a la participación, sino en realidad una postura más crítica, ya que, como vimos, los indicadores más altos de insatisfacción hacían referencia a la utilidad y la temática de la participación (es decir, opinan que la participación debería ser diferente, no que debería desaparecer).

Antes de cerrar este apartado, cabe retomar algunas cuestiones que se han planteado en los dos primeros capítulos referentes al modelo de democracia sigilosa. El índice propuesto por Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) pretende medir el grado de apoyo a un proceso democrático donde la ciudadanía no necesite participar. Las diversas variables sobre participación que hemos analizado aquí nos permiten una aproximación a las prácticas participativas desde diferentes indicadores, lo que nos posibilita testar la pertinencia del índice de apoyo a la democracia sigilosa desde esa perspectiva. ¿Tendrá sentido que la gente participativa exprese actitudes favorables hacia una democracia sigilosa? Y en todo caso, ¿hasta qué punto se da esa relación?

⁵⁷ Siguiendo con nuestras discusiones acerca de las diferencias temáticas respecto a los procesos políticos, ¿hay alguna asociación entre la participación relacionada específicamente con el aborto, la inmigración y la economía y las preferencias hacia la toma de decisiones sobre esos tres temas? Aunque no está incluido en la tabla, la temática de la participación no presenta una relación estadísticamente significativa con las preferencias sobre los procesos en ninguno de los tres temas (aborto, inmigración y economía). Tampoco el tipo de asociación sirve para explicar las preferencias hacia los procesos de toma de decisiones.

Tabla 4.3. Apoyo medio a la escala de procesos en España según diferentes variables sobre participación

<i>Pertenencia a asociación</i>	No	4,51
	Sí	4,33
	No – Sí	0,18
	F	2,78
<i>Tipo de asociación*</i>	Deportivas/ culturales/ocio	4,23
	F	3,20
	Bienestar social/ayuda	4,30
	F	1,24
	Políticas	4,48
	F	1,54
<i>Nivel de participación</i>	Pasivos	4,59
	Participativos	4,36
	Activistas	4,38
	Pasivos - Activistas	0,21
	F	2,18
<i>Tema de participación*</i>	Aborto	4,07
	F	2,04
	Inmigración	4,12
	F	2,62
	Economía	4,12
	F	6,06
<i>Nivel de satisfacción</i>	Insatisfechos	4,09
	Satisfechos	4,40
	Entusiastas	4,40
	Insatisfechos - Entusiastas	-0,31
	F	1,61

En negrilla diferencias significativas para $p < 0,05$.

* Respecto al tipo de asociación y al tema de la participación, al tratarse de preguntas multirrespuesta, las diferencias de media se han calculado por separado, entre quienes participaron en cada uno de los tipos de asociaciones o temas y quienes no.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

La tabla 4.4 nos muestra una contradicción importante en los planteamientos de Hibbing y Theiss-Morse en relación a su índice. Si este índice mide, como proponen, las preferencias hacia un determinado modelo de toma de decisiones, cabe esperar que las personas más y menos participativas puntúen de forma diferente. No tendría sentido que quienes muestran un apoyo hacia procesos de toma de decisión que no les involucren estén de hecho involucrados en la participación. Sin embargo, las correlaciones entre las variables que hemos ido viendo en este apartado con las puntuaciones del índice de democracia sigilosa son mucho más bajas de lo que cabría esperar (todas menores que 0,13), pese a que todas son estadísticamente significa-

tivas. Aunque operan en el sentido más coherente en varios casos (quienes están asociados y participan más puntúan menos en el índice), estas relaciones nos reafirman en nuestra sospecha de que este índice en realidad está mezclando diferentes elementos que van más allá de lo que plantean sus autores.

Tabla 4.4. Correlaciones entre las variables sobre participación y el índice 0-3 de democracia sigilosa

	Asociados	Tipo de asociación	Nivel de participación	Temática de la participación	Satisfacción con la participación
Índice democracia sigilosa	-0,08**	-0,10*	-0,09**	-0,13**	-0,05**

Las variables marcadas con un asterisco son significativas para $p < 0,05$; con dos asteriscos para $p < 0,01$.

N = 1.695, 606, 1.657, 463, 1.125.

Fuente: CIS 2860.

Para poder calibrar el alcance de esta aparente contradicción necesitamos focalizar un poco más la mirada. Para ello, hemos indagado en la distribución del índice de democracia sigilosa que construyeron Hibbing y Theiss-Morse entre aquellas personas más participativas. Así, aunque la tabla anterior mostraba que lo hacen en menor medida que el resto, la inmensa mayoría de las personas asociadas y activistas sigue situándose en los dos valores más altos de esta escala (más del 80 por ciento en ambos casos). A la luz de estos datos adquiere mucho sentido la pregunta que nos hacíamos sobre qué mide exactamente este índice, puesto que no parece muy coherente que precisamente aquellas personas más participativas prefieran modelos políticos donde no tengan que participar.

4.6. Conclusiones

En este capítulo hemos profundizado en el argumento planteado en el anterior: las preferencias sobre cómo quiere la ciudadanía que se tomen las decisiones varían en función de los temas, pero también de las actitudes y comportamientos de cada persona. También hemos conceptualizado a la ciudadanía como *issue publics*, comprobando si quienes consideran que un asunto es importante prefieren procesos participativos en mayor medida que quienes no se sienten personalmente involucrados en esa problemática. Asimismo, hemos dado un paso más, incorporando en el análisis el extremismo de las actitudes y comprobando si los *issue publics* están mejor definidos por la importancia o el extremismo.

En primer lugar, cabe concluir que las preferencias sobre cómo debería funcionar el proceso de toma de decisiones están relacionadas tanto con las actitudes hacia temas concretos como con el extremismo de las mismas. Por lo tanto, los estudios de comunicación o ciencias políticas deberían diferenciar sistemáticamente entre *issues*, puesto que la ciudadanía de hecho ya lo

está haciendo. Es decir, los cuestionarios deberían incluir ítems que pregunten sobre actitudes, cogniciones y comportamientos referentes a temas específicos.

En segundo lugar, cuando se trata de las preferencias hacia los procesos políticos en España, los *issue publics* pueden definirse con mayor precisión en base al extremismo de las actitudes que a partir de la importancia otorgada a tales actitudes. La ciudadanía que está especialmente preocupada por la política, el aborto, la inmigración o la economía *no* apoya una mayor participación ciudadana en estos asuntos. En realidad, los más interesados en la política prefieren que los políticos se encarguen de la toma de decisiones. Por el contrario, quienes tienen puntos de vista extremos sobre los temas analizados sí prefieren que sea la ciudadanía quien tome las decisiones.

En el nivel práctico, este hallazgo sugiere que la relevancia política del extremismo de las actitudes va más allá de la polarización sociopolítica y se extiende también a las preferencias democráticas de la ciudadanía y, en consecuencia, debería medirse con mayor frecuencia en las encuestas de opinión pública.

En cuanto a la experiencia participativa de la ciudadanía, hemos utilizado diversas variables (desde el asociacionismo a diversas formas de participación) que han mostrado que las personas políticamente activas prefieren en mayor medida procesos políticos donde la ciudadanía tome las decisiones. La batería de preguntas para medir la satisfacción con la participación ha arrojado información relevante, mostrando que la insatisfacción con la misma no implica siempre una desafección con la participación sino más bien la configuración de una perspectiva crítica con la misma, sobre todo referente a su capacidad de incidencia real. En futuros estudios podría resultar muy productivo profundizar en el uso de esta batería para explicar dinámicas de movilización o desmovilización.

Finalmente, también hemos reafirmado nuestras críticas hacia la validez del índice propuesto por Hibbing y Theiss-Morse (2002) para medir el apoyo a la democracia sigilosa. En definitiva, la realidad participativa y las preferencias en ese ámbito se muestran como un fenómeno complejo y dinámico donde se implican e interrelacionan multitud de variables, que requieren diversas herramientas de análisis para su comprensión, entre las cuales este índice resulta, al menos para el caso español, no pertinente.

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Abstract

Abstract

The implementation of democratic innovations for involving citizens in the decision-making process has spread globally over the last decades. Local participatory mechanisms have become well-known due to some successful experiences such as the Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre. Academically, researchers have broadly studied these innovations, mainly through case studies of successful experiences.

Participatory mechanisms at the local level are the object of study in this dissertation, addressed from a threefold perspective. We will describe and analyse what citizens want in terms of participatory democracy, what local governments do (i.e. what kind of participatory mechanisms is being developed), and what academics assume about these democratic innovations. The main goal of this research is to help to understand the participatory reality beyond the theoretical debate and case study analysis, focusing on Southern Europe.

The citizens' preferences toward decision-making processes focus on the Spanish context. Through survey data analysis, we will analyse citizens' preferences in terms of who makes the decisions, either citizens or politicians. These preferences will also be related to different attitudes: previous participatory experiences, the intensity of the attitudes toward different issues, the perception that one's own ideas are part of a general consensus, and conflict aversion.

In terms of participatory mechanisms, we will discuss what these innovations are like from a large-N perspective using a participatory mapping of five Southern European regions. The analysis will focus on different qualities paying attention to citizens' participation, deliberation, and empowerment.

Finally, after demarcating these participatory preferences and mechanisms, we will establish a debate between the empirical data and some academic debates and assumptions. The methodological debate about what kind of participatory mechanisms is collected through different large-N strategies will be addressed. Also, in a dialogue with some debates in the English-speaking academy, we will address the debate about the definition of the object of study (the tension between participatory and deliberative democracy), the characteristics of the actors promoting these innovations, the role of participatory professionals or the reproduction of the already existing inequalities among participants. We will check if the

Southern European region presents some participatory specificities in comparison with the regions that have been more studied by the academy.

Lastly, some implications will be pointed at, for example in relation to the current Spanish political context. The *indignados* movement opened a broad debate about the decision-making process, defending a “real democracy”. New successful candidacies like Podemos and Ganemos/Guanyem have incorporated participatory democracy into their discourses, proposals and practices. We will address the question of what the relation between this new socio-political context and the citizens’ preferences and participatory mechanisms analysed in this dissertation could be.

Resum

La implementació d'innovacions democràtiques incorporant a la ciutadania en el procés de presa de decisions s'ha estès globalment durant les darreres dècades. Els mecanismes de participació local han esdevingut molt coneguts a partir d'algunes experiències d'èxit com els Pressupostos Participatius de Porto Alegre. Acadèmicament, les i els investigadors han estudiat àmpliament aquestes innovacions, principalment mitjançant estudis de cas d'experiències d'èxit.

Els mecanismes de participació en l'àmbit local són l'objecte d'estudi d'aquesta tesi, abordats des d'una perspectiva triple. Descriurem i analitzarem què vol la ciutadania en termes de democràcia participativa, què fan els governs locals (és a dir, quin tipus de mecanismes participatius s'estan desenvolupant), i què s'assumeix des de l'acadèmia sobre aquestes innovacions democràtiques. L'objectiu global d'aquesta recerca és contribuir a la comprensió de la realitat participativa més enllà del debat teòric i l'anàlisi dels estudis de cas, centrant l'atenció al Sud d'Europa.

Les preferències ciutadanes sobre els processos de presa de decisions s'emmarquen al context espanyol. Mitjançant l'estudi de dades d'enquesta, analitzarem les preferències ciutadanes pel que fa a qui pren les decisions, si la ciutadania o els polítics. Aquestes preferències es relacionaran alhora amb diverses actituds: l'experiència participativa prèvia, la intensitat de les actituds envers diferents temes, la percepció que les idees pròpies formen part d'un consens general i l'aversion al conflicte.

Respecte als mecanismes participatius, indagarem en com són aquestes innovacions des d'una perspectiva de N gran a partir d'un mapatge participatiu de cinc regions del Sud d'Europa. L'anàlisi se centrarà en diferents qualitats referents a la participació ciutadana, la deliberació i l'apoderament.

Finalment, després de demarcar aquestes preferències i mecanismes participatius, entaularem un debat entre l'evidència empírica i alguns debats i assumpcions acadèmiques. Adreçarem el debat metodològic sobre quin tipus de mecanismes participatius es recull mitjançant diferents estratègies de N gran. Així mateix, en diàleg amb alguns debats de l'acadèmia anglosaxona, abordarem el debat sobre la definició de l'objecte d'estudi (la tensió entre la democràcia participativa i deliberativa), les característiques dels actors que

promouen les innovacions, el rol dels professionals de la participació o la reproducció de les desigualtats preexistents entre els i les participants. Comprovarem si la regió del Sud d'Europa presenta algunes especificitats participatives en comparació amb les regions que han estat més estudiades des de l'acadèmia.

Per últim farem referència a algunes implicacions, per exemple en relació al context polític espanyol actual. El moviment 15M va obrir un ampli debat envers el procés de presa de decisions, defensant una "democràcia real". Noves candidatures d'èxit com Podemos i Ganemos/Guanyem han incorporat la democràcia participativa als seus discursos, propostes i pràctiques. Abordarem la qüestió de quina relació pot haver-hi entre aquest context sociopolític i les preferències ciutadanes i mecanismes participatius analitzats en aquesta tesi.

