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Participatory institutions and political ideologies: how and why they matter?

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Abstract: Most of the research about participatory institutions has neglected the analysis of the role played by ideological preferences in their development. Do different political ideologies of governing parties develop different participatory processes? Our starting point is that diverse views on the core values of democracy should lead to different positions concerning the role and expected benefits of citizen participation.

This paper discusses two main questions. First, in case ideology matters, which is the crucial difference? Is this a matter of 'right versus left' or is there a particular party family with special attentiveness to developing participatory institutions? Second, in case any difference exists, how exactly does it translate in the development of participatory institutions? Analyzing data from Spanish municipalities in the period 2003-2010 we show that the party families that had a relevant presence in local administrations in this time frame show more similarities than differences in the participatory activities implemented. However, some relevant differences are found related to the constituencies addressed and mobilized and the type of participatory processes developed.

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1. Introduction

In the last decades, participation organized by public authorities has expanded globally vindicated both for its ability to democratize public policies and for turning the citizen into a consumer who guides administrative reforms. Despite a common rhetoric on the citizens' right to shape public policies, participation can be grounded on divergent political horizons, ranging from a process of democratization and citizen empowerment to a technocratic orientation that frames citizen preferences as inputs that improve the policy-making (Dean, 2017). Thus, there is no clear agreement in previous research about whether participatory innovations represent a political choice mostly developed by left/alternative groups as some well-known cases –from Porto Alegre to Kerala– seem to suggest (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014), or whether they are the result of social or managerial changes that could be adopted by any kind of government, as their support by international organisations indicates (Shah, 2007).

Democracy is far from being an undisputed agreement on values and institutions. Hence, it makes sense to expect different ideological approaches to citizen participation and its institutionalization. However, most of the research on participatory institutions has neglected the systematic analysis of the role played by parties and ideological preferences in their development. Addressing this gap, this paper explores the influence of political ideologies on the choice for participatory institutions. First, in case ideology matters, which is the crucial difference? Is it a matter of 'right versus left' or is there a particular type of left parties that have been particularly active in developing these institutions? Second, in case any difference exists, does it translate in the development of different participatory formats?

The paper begins with a theoretical reflection on the idea of participation in the main democratic traditions. The normative tension between the liberal and the republican models of democracy allows us to analyze the role and scope of political participation in the main party families. Secondly, the paper presents the methodological strategy used and our case of analysis: the Spanish local participatory institutions developed during the period 2003-2010. Thirdly, the analysis shows that the party families that had a relevant presence in local administrations in that period –radical left (IU), social democracy (PSOE), and liberal-Christian democracy (PP)– show more similarities than differences in the participatory activities they developed. However, some differences are found related to the methodologies used and the constituencies mobilized. Finally, the discussion synthesizes the paper's main findings and implications.

2. Theory: state of the art

When addressing the reasons that lead a political actor to promote participatory institutions a first intuitive explanation is the ideological one¹. The underlying idea is that different views on the core values of democracy lead to different positions concerning the role, expected benefits and institutionalization of participation. Here, the *left/right* divide arises as a first approach to the ideological variable. Bobbio (1996) addresses the axiological differences between both positions: while the central value for the left is equality, understood as the removal of social and natural obstacles that generate unfair differences between people, the right holds that an excessive emphasis on equality is detrimental to individual freedom and, therefore, it tolerates those inequalities considered natural or performing a social function. From this contrast, it could be inferred a greater sympathy of left parties for democratic innovations since they aim to correct the power asymmetries of representative democracy by opening spaces for citizen participation.

However, the *left/right* axis lacks accuracy when trying to grasp the complexity of political ideologies. The excessive abstraction of the concepts 'left' and 'right' –spatial categories without a substantive and permanent content– reduces their descriptive properties. There are different lefts and rights which, in turn, evolve throughout time. In this sense, the *left/right* approach allows too different interpretations depending on the historical, political and geographical context (Jahn, 2010; Freire, 2015) or the individual understanding of these terms (Bauer et al, 2017).

In the second place, the *left/right* cleavage reduces all political disputes to a single value dimension. However, the change in Western post-industrial societies has made political conflicts to respond less to socioeconomic and social class disputes (income distribution, state intervention) to give way, by the end of the 20th century, to clashes around cultural issues such as ethnic, religious or gender identity (Farneti, 2012) or the demand for political participation to face the declining trust in liberal institutions (Kitschelt, 2004). These new conflicts, which especially involve the post-war generations, middle class and the more educated sectors of population, are captured by alternative cultural cleavages. Since the *left/right* axis does not adequately grasp this new cleavage its explanatory power declines². Particularly, the different views on

¹ By political ideology we understand here an articulated belief system that provides a critical evaluation of the existing reality from which to develop an action program aimed to achieve an ideal society (Heywood, 2012: 11). Ideology is not the only explanatory factor when promoting participatory institutions. Other strategic and institutional factors (electoral calculations, expanding the voice of social allies, external funding, etc.) may also be relevant. However, given its previous neglect in participation research, government ideology is our focus in this paper.

² For instance, totalitarian ideologies located at opposite ends of the *left/right* axis, nevertheless coincide in rejecting democratic participation by leaving decision-making at the hands of a ruling elite.

citizen participation fit better within the *new/old politics* cleavage (Charalambous & Lamprianou, 2017: 379), also framed as *liberal positions/deference to authority* regarding the governance of social life (Kitschelt, 2004: 14; Freire, 2015: 47).

The limits of the *left/right* axis recommend going back to democratic theory to find an alternative. Here, the first step is to focus on the foundational divide between the liberal and the republican³ models of democracy (Habermas, 1994; Held, 2006) that gained political momentum during the US constitutional debate in 1787. Initially, liberalism and democracy were different and, to a certain extent, opposed doctrines. While the liberal model –shaped by the thought of Locke, Constant, Montesquieu, or Stuart Mill– seeks to secure the individual rights (negative freedom) from arbitrary interferences, the republican model –developed by authors as Rousseau, Arendt or Pettit– focuses on guaranteeing collective autonomy through the equal participation of citizens in the public realm (positive freedom). In the republican thought, freedom is not only or foremost the absence of interferences on the individual autonomy claimed by liberals but self-governance, that is, the ability to act collectively to decide the laws and social practices that determine the individual opportunities within the political realm (Berlin, 1969). If for liberals like Constant the unlimited accumulation of power – also at the hands of a majority of citizens– leads to tyranny, the danger for republicans like Rousseau (1996: 477-479) comes from material inequality and elite dominance over the people’s general will.

Two views on political participation arise from this divide: mediated versus non-mediated participation. Broadly speaking, the liberal model mainly sees citizen participation as a way to select experts entitled to handle public affairs⁴, being reluctant to substantive forms of civic engagement beyond voting. Direct participation of ill-prepared individuals will undermine efficiency and, at worst, put individual rights at risk (Bessette, 1994: 212-215). Republicanism, on the other hand, denounces the elitism of liberal representation since it alienates the citizens from the public sphere most of the time (Rousseau, 1996: 510-511; Arendt, 1958). This democratic radicalism, adopted in the late 1960s a new formulation through the model of *participatory democracy* (Held, 2006: 209-216; Hilmer, 2010: 45-51). Rooted in the republican model, this proposal sees citizen participation as the solution to the legitimation crisis of capitalist democracies. In this model, drawn in the works of Pateman (1970), or Mansbridge (1980), the citizens’ direct engagement in the social, political and

³ The term *republican* designs here a conceptual model of democracy. An account of the republican thought can be found in Pettit (1997), among others.

⁴ As in the case of republican thought, the liberal tradition encompasses different sensibilities. For instance, Stuart Mill’s liberalism sympathizes with socialist ideas and the virtues of an active citizenry to a much higher extent than liberals like Hayek or Schumpeter. That said, for the purposes of this research we will restrict our analytical focus to the core elements of classical liberalism, based on the axiological primacy of the individual and its private sphere.

economic realms that affect their lives secures political inclusion, self-governance and elite control while also developing civic virtues.

The normative tension between liberal representation and participatory democracy sets the ground to assess the impact of ideology on the choice for participatory institutions. To do so, in the following lines we analyze the ideology of the main party families to see where they stand with regards the *liberal/republican* divide and how it affects their approach to participatory institutions. Despite the contemporary widening of party families in Western Europe (greens, populists), we will focus on the traditional ones that constitute the Spanish universe throughout the period 2003-2010: radical left, social democratic, and liberal and Christian democratic parties.

Radical left parties

This denomination refers to those parties at the left of social democracy –also named ‘New Left’ parties– that made of democratic radicalism a milestone of ideological redefinition after the Fall of the Berlin Wall (Cohen & Fung, 2004). In the early 1990s, the failure of communism and the lack of clear economic alternatives led many anti-capitalist parties to replace their classical appeals to Marxist economics and class struggle in favor of post-materialistic values. Some of these values, as political participation, individual autonomy and self-governance, had been advanced by Green parties before the collapse of communism (Goodin, 1992) but the radical left managed to connect them with a renewed critique of capitalist democracy.

Radical left parties stick to the participatory theories of the 70s prioritizing the republican idea of positive freedom. Thus, citizen participation becomes a dominant value around which other values must be accommodated. Unlike the liberal model, this view does not assume a trade-off between extensive participation and efficiency, since it argues that the positive impact of participation in terms of inclusion, equality, civic virtue and social capital also entails epistemic benefits in decision-making. Therefore, they claim for re-launching democracy on a participatory, anti-elitist and anti-liberal basis (March & Mudde, 2005: 25).

Social democratic parties

All socialist traditions sympathize with the active and associated individual over the isolated one. The social democratic version presents, in addition, a liberal side opposed to the radical collectivism of Marxist interpretations. Therefore, contemporary social democracy faces the challenge of balancing its republican and liberal wings. The first

one —updated with Pettit’s neo-republican proposal⁵— vindicates positive freedom, understood as public intervention to eradicate the economic, social and cultural factors that perpetuate material inequality and the domination of some citizens at the hands of others. On the other hand, the liberal wing aims to preserve the space of civil society against an excessive invasion of public power, which implies a commitment to negative freedom and liberal institutions as private property and market economy (Heywood, 2012: 125-136; Giddens, 1998).

The social democratic mixed soul, liberal and republican, places citizen participation as a complementary strategy aimed at improving the bond between representatives and their constituents. In the social democratic view, citizen engagement is desirable because it contributes to re-politicizing society and increases responsiveness to social demands as well as the legitimacy of decisions but, differently from radical left parties, without rejecting representative institutions (Verge, 2007: 167-168; Charalambous & Lamprinou, 2017: 383). Hence, although the social democratic ideology has assumed some post-materialistic issues the main difference with radical left parties in terms of participation relies on the intensity with which the latter defend participatory mechanisms, as compared with a more secondary role (consultative, informative) in the social democratic agenda (Font & Blanco, 2005: 7).

Center-right: liberal and Christian democratic parties⁶

The ‘center-right’ concept encompasses at least three families: liberals, Christian democrats and conservatives (Mair & Mudde, 1998: 221-222; Jahn, 2010). The Christian doctrine on social justice encourages Christian democratic parties to accept a certain state intervention. Therefore, in recent decades, these parties have rejected extreme individualism and placed themselves to the left of their liberal counterparts on economic and social issues (Von Beyme, 1985). Despite these differences, both liberal and Christian democratic parties encourage private initiative in those sectors in which civil society can provide better services than state monopolies (Michels, 2008: 485; Heywood, 2012: 83, 213). Also, both of them argue that political disaffection is not due so much to the lack of participatory channels as to governmental inefficiency in the implementation of public policies (Verge, 2007: 160). Thus, in their view, good governance would consist in a better performance of the representative system and voting should be the main channel for citizen participation and holding public authorities accountable.

⁵ Pettit (1997) conceives non-domination as an intermediate situation between the non-interference of classical liberalism and the positive freedom of the republican tradition.

⁶ Since both party families were represented in Spain by the People’s Party (PP) during our research’s frame time (2003-2010) we group them for analytical reasons.

Nevertheless, as far as the primacy of political representation remains unchallenged both ideologies can support participatory institutions. Halfway between liberal individualism and socialist statism, Christian democrats favor associationism and civil society participation and liberal parties have also supported participatory initiatives based on community proposals (Tamano, 2020). Hence, both party families could find their own way of moderately jumping into the ‘participatory wave’.

Hypotheses

The previous overview allows us to grasp ideological differences —between social democratic and radical left parties, for instance— than could remain unobserved if just looking at the *left/right* economic axis. Thus, radical left enthusiastically embraces participatory views of democracy as an ideological core; while liberal and Christian democratic parties tend to support representative formulas, with social democratic parties standing somewhere in between. From here, a first hypothesis unfolds:

HYPOTHESIS 1: the closer to the democratic radicalism of the republican thought, the greater the tendency to grant a high impact (more decision-making capacity) to participatory institutions.

Accordingly, the radical left parties within our universe should be the most prone to implement participatory processes with a more decisive character, i.e, closer to the higher positions of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder. Part of previous research supports this idea. The work of Baiocchi & Ganuza (2014) represents one of the first serious attempts to address this issue applied to participatory budgeting. Their conclusion is that the left was responsible for the creation and promotion of this participatory mechanism, but this practice was then adopted by other conservative governments keeping its communicative part and leaving aside its empowerment one. Nez & Talpin (2010) use a different strategy and discuss the set of participatory budgeting processes existing in France in 2005, highlighting the role played in the initial period by communist local governments. Other studies incorporate party ideology as a secondary variable. For example, Jäske (2017: 69) uses party as one of the variables to be considered and finds that ‘a larger proportion of Social Democrats in the local council also fuels the use of referendums’. However, this strand of research is either based on a small N approach or it just incorporates party ideology as a secondary variable among others. Research that captures a) what parties do in government b) using a relatively large N strategy and c) with the relationship between party ideology and creation of participatory institutions as their central focus is quite rare.

Another strand of research captures a related but different question: the preferences for participatory institutions of party elites and/or voters. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse

(2002) show a very modest positive correlation in the US between right-wing orientations and support for a 'stealth democracy' model among voters. This relationship would be stronger in other European countries (Webb, 2013). Regarding party elites, in their study on Spanish mayors, Vallbé & Iglesias (2018) find a direct relation between leftist ideology and greater sympathy for participatory democracy and, in turn, a more favorable attitude to implement referendums or participatory budgeting. In contrast, right-wing mayors are prone to maintain the status quo of representative democracy also in the French case (Heinelt, 2013). These results are in line with the framing of citizen participation in party manifestoes in Spain (Verge, 2007) and Netherlands (Michels, 2008).

However, the ideological differences would not necessarily translate into *how much participation* should be promoted, but rather in *what kind of participation* is desirable. Here the deliberative model of democracy (Habermas, 1994) introduces complexity within the *liberal/republican* divide. Although both participatory and deliberative democracy models arise from the republican claim for positive freedom, each one diagnoses different deficiencies in liberal representation –lack of participation in the first case and lack of deliberation in the second– and, consequently, they diverge on the right course of action (Hilmer, 2010; Vitale, 2006). Thus, assembly-based mechanisms or those that promote extensive and direct participation would respond to a different rationale from that of citizen juries or deliberative polls, more focused on the reflective exchange of informed viewpoints at the cost of reducing participation (Dzur & Hendriks, 2018; Rico Motos, 2019). In essence, achieving a good deliberation may come at cost to extensive participation and vice versa (Cohen & Fung, 2004: 27).

Therefore, the ideological dispute would also take place within participatory institutions, since the choice for a certain type of participatory instrument would entail the prioritization of some values associated with participation over others. For instance, implementing participatory budgeting would mean opting for a mechanism committed to an extensive and horizontal participation, which is closer to the ideal of citizen empowerment in the republican model. On the contrary, *minipublics* place special emphasis on selecting a sample of citizens who can acquire specialized knowledge from which to deliberate on the question raised, even if that means reducing the extent of participation.

The relationship of government ideology and the choice of a more extensive form of participation has emerged in previous research. For example, left-wing mayors would support binding referenda and participatory budgeting, while right-wing mayors (more prone to an accountability view of democracy) would tend to support the direct

election of the mayor (Vallbé & Iglesias, 2018)⁷. Also, in the last decade, the momentum of citizens' assemblies based on lottery and deliberation has received a significant boost from conservative parties in Ireland and France, whereas in previous decades the choice for deliberative practices appeared to be more associated to social-democratic governments (Del Pino & Colino, 2008).

Participatory budgeting is a clear case of an extensive participation institution. In the vast majority of European countries they were promoted by left-wing parties. In Spain, Italy and France, mostly left-wing local authorities introduced participatory budgeting (Sintomer et al., 2008). In Spain, they were introduced by leftist parties and only very slowly would conservative parties promote them. By 2010, 76% of the processes implemented in Spain depended on PSOE and IU, with PP raising 14% of the experiences (Ganuza & Frances, 2012). However, there were some exceptions, such as Germany, with both conservative and liberal local governments taking up the idea. In Italy, the introduction of the participatory budgeting was carried out by left-wing parties in the early 2000s. However, in the subsequent wave, as of 2009, the ideology of the municipalities was no longer decisive (Allegretti & Stortone, 2014). An explanation could be that only when an instrument has proven its effectiveness and does not imply key changes in the logic of governing, ideology ceases to be relevant and it can be promoted by all parties⁸.

From this discussion a second hypothesis arises:

HYPOTHESIS 2: the closer to the democratic radicalism of republican thought, the greater the tendency to promote mechanisms based on extensive and direct participation.

It could be the case that government ideology would not correlate with the use of participatory institutions because other intervening variables would be playing a more important role. Types of governments (majority or coalition), electoral concerns or the possibility of using these institutions to expand the voice of social allies are only some of the explanations that previous research has considered (Navarro, 2004; Font &

⁷ As previously stated, a simple dichotomy *left/right* is too simplistic. Populist radical right-parties have been also associated with direct democracy options (Barney & Laycock, 1999; Gherghina & Pilet, 2021). In the case of conservative politicians, a few of them (De Gaulle, Fraga or Cameron) have also shown some inclination towards referenda but, to our knowledge, there is no general pattern reported in previous research, so that they would be exceptions based on personal preferences, more than the rule.

⁸ This would be the case of participatory budgeting, an instrument created by a radical left party that becomes universal once it is stripped of its most transformative features (Baiocchi & Ganuza 2014). Also, Ramírez & Welp (2011) claim that the left would have lost the 'monopoly' of participatory democracy, since an increasing number of parties from the center to the right have activated several participatory institutions.

Blanco, 2005). Also, the development of participatory institutions could be explained by factors completely unrelated to partisan preferences: social and political changes in our societies would make participatory innovations a necessary tool which almost any government will sooner or later incorporate. In this case, the explanation of why participatory institutions develop would lie somewhere else, either as part of a general trend or as a result of other factors such as personal characteristics of policy makers, participatory traditions, external funding, pressures coming from a dense network of participation practitioners, etc. Among these alternative explanations, contextual variables that describe the characteristics of each polity like municipality size (Borge et al., 2009) should be considered.

3. Methodology: data and context

Local participatory institutions in Spain

A few Spanish municipalities were early comers and started organizing participatory institutions in the mid-eighties. However, these practices did not become relatively common until the last years of the 20th Century (Navarro, 2004). Many of the first cases were developed in large cities, quite often led by progressive governments, but once they became more common practice, they extended also to smaller municipalities and to diverse political leanings (Ganuza & Francés, 2012). Compared to other Anglo-Saxon countries where many of these institutions had been mostly promoted from below, in the Southern European context even if some of the pressure and inspiration came from social movements, their institutionalization was clearly led by municipalities (Sintomer & Del Pino, 2014), providing them with a strong top-down style.

Spain is a favorable context to expect finding some of these relationships, at least for two reasons. First, compared to Anglo-Saxon countries, its participatory institutions are more predominantly top-down, which makes easier to explore the role played by government ideologies. Second, compared again to Central and Northern European cases, the Southern European ones have shown a higher degree of politicization.

The period analyzed here (2003-2010) is chosen for two reasons. First, a practical one: it is the only one for which there is extensive information about the participatory institutions developed by a large set of municipalities. Second, even if exploring the more recent party system may also be interesting, the period analyzed here represents better the quasi two-party system that characterized the first three decades of democracy, with two dominant large parties at center-right (PP) and center-left (PSOE), plus a smaller left coalition (IU) and a reduced presence of independent

candidates, except in small towns⁹. These parties allow us to cover different main ideological families in this period: United Left (IU) as a radical or 'New left' party; the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) as representative of social democracy; and the People's Party (PP), grouping together liberals, Christian democrats and conservatives. In this case, even if PP encompasses ideas and elites across the center-right spectrum, the Christian democratic and liberal are, in that order, the dominant ones, according to the party's statutes and international affiliations.

Data collection

To test our hypotheses we use one quite extensive dataset including 287 municipalities from two Spanish regions (Andalucía and Madrid). These are the two largest and most populated regions of Spain if we exclude those areas with strong presence of regional parties and represent two quite different realities (Madrid, richer, urban and politically more conservative and Andalucía poorer, more rural and electorally more progressive). The dataset includes 717 participatory institutions, which are the basic unit of analysis. The dataset includes characteristics of each of these participatory institutions (participants, issues, methodologies, etc), as well as some traits of the municipalities (inhabitants, party of the mayor, etc). Spanish local governments include a local council formed by elected councilors who elect a Mayor. While most of the crucial decisions must be approved by the Council, the Mayor has a reinforced executive capacity. Participatory institutions could be developed by any local department, but the most central ones are quite often developed either by the participation department or by the mayor's office itself (Navarro, 2004).

The data was originally collected combining two different methodologies. The first one was web scraping during 2010, aiming to cover municipalities larger than 1,000 inhabitants. In Madrid the search included all municipalities above that size. In Andalusia, since a very large number of them existed, we stratified them by size and included almost half of them (400 out of 770 municipalities). Since the reality of the large set of Andalusia small municipalities might not be adequately represented with this first strategy (in 2010 many of them still had not a well-developed web page), we surveyed these same municipalities, with a combined CAWI-CATI mode of administration¹⁰. Both data collections strategies aimed at capturing participatory institutions created in the 2003-2010 period. In web scraping we captured each

⁹ In some regions there were also very important regionalist and nationalist parties, but this is not the case in the two areas analyzed in this paper.

¹⁰ More details about the data collection process can be found at Font et al (2014, Annex 1 and 2). A few cases in the original dataset were supra local institutions that have been excluded from the data used here.

institution for which we found information (ranging from 1 to 10 in each municipality, median 6, except in the deviant case of Madrid city which had 34 cases). In the survey, we asked for the number of institutions developed and collected details about two of them. When the participatory institution had a year cycle or had been repeated more than once, only the most recent one having complete information was collected.

The dataset includes 92 participatory institutions from Madrid, 108 captured through web-scraping in Andalucía and 517 captured through the Andalucía survey. Thus, the results do not represent a full census of all the participatory institutions existing at that time, but represent a quite extensive catalogue of them, including all their diversity, from the point of view of types of municipalities (excluding only the smallest ones where participation is often not formalized) and, most importantly, of quality and ambition of the processes¹¹. Also, while Andalucía and Madrid do not represent the whole reality of Spain they are the two largest regions that do not have relevant regional parties and as such, are a good representation of those parts of the country where territorial tensions were not central, with one region more dominated by an urban-metropolitan configuration (Madrid) and the other including a large presence of small and medium municipalities (Andalucía). Graph 1 shows the distribution of the processes according to city size.

(Graph 1 about here)

The same definition of participatory institutions was used in both data collection procedures. However, the names provided for some of the survey collected institutions showed that respondents (most often, local employees of the participation department) used in practice a broader definition including social events where no public policies were being discussed. To prevent that these cases were too present in our universe we excluded from the analyses the 136 cases that combined two characteristics: belonged to the “other” category in the typology of participatory processes (see below) and were temporary (versus permanent) institutions. Thus, the final data used includes 581 cases.

Operationalization, variables and analytical strategy

Our main goal is to analyze the relationship between party ideology (captured through the party of the Mayor)¹² and the type of participatory institutions developed.

¹¹ A more extensive discussion of the data, its limits and its ability to represent the full reality of participatory institutions can be found in Galais et al (2012).

¹² The four response categories correspond to the parties mentioned above: PP as representative of the center-right families in Spain; PSOE as representative of the social democratic left; IU as representative of the radical or ‘New left’ parties; and others.

We organized our dependent variables in two main groups, related with who participates and how participation is developed¹³. Details about the categories and distribution of each of the variables appear in Table 1.

(Table 1 about here)

- *Who*: we selected one variable capturing the ability to mobilize a larger population (number of participants) and two addressing types of participants (process addressed mostly to associations value 1 and other categories as value 0; process open to anyone wishing to participate as value 1 and other situations as value 0).

- *How*: each of the participatory institutions was coded through a typology of the main types of participatory processes, including six categories: participatory budgeting, strategic planning, consultations, advisory councils, deliberative events, and others¹⁴. The analysis presented¹⁵ is based in the first three categories (recoded to dummies), since these are the ones that have a sufficient number of cases and which show some relationship with the party variable at the bivariate level.

For each of these variables we use a similar analytical strategy. We conduct a regression analysis (linear for the only continuous dependent variable, logistic for the remaining dummy variables), where party of the mayor is the main independent variable, using PSOE (as the largest response category, 58% of the cases) as reference category. For each of the dependent variables we run a first very simple model using only this variable. The second model for each of the variables introduces relevant control variables that capture potential differences in the datasets and their data

¹³ We also explored a third area, the contents of participation (issues or policy areas). Except for one policy area (local budget) which is quite redundant with one of the variables covered here (use of participatory budgeting) the other ones did not present significant differences.

¹⁴ The comparative meaning of most of these categories is quite straightforward and not different from other European realities. The only likely exception is the category “consultations” (43 cases). It refers to cases where individual citizens (or children, not excluding organized groups participating as well) were allowed to vote. These cases include a quite diverse set of experiences, from 16 consultations in Madrid neighborhoods’, a few assembly based processes town-meeting style in smaller municipalities, several child consultations, a couple of very minor issue referenda (name of the theater or choosing the local flag) and a few (8) questionnaires on diverse local issues. All of them allow some kind of individual voice, but the number of effective participants is normally quite limited (almost half of them having less than 500 participants).

¹⁵ The same regression analyses were conducted with the remaining three categories of the dependent variable (Annex 2). None of the party variables were close to being significant, often probably due to the small number of cases. No significant relationship appears on the small and heterogeneous category of Spanish deliberative events, even if at the comparative level some interesting patterns appear (Ramis et al, 2022).

collection procedures: region, number of inhabitants and data collection strategy (MoA variable, see details for each of them in Table 1). When it is analytically meaningful we introduce a third model that incorporates two dummy variables through which party influence could be acting in the long term: whether the municipality has a participation department (approximately half of the sample) and a Participation Plan (in less than 40% of the cases, used as a proxy for the degree of institutionalization and development of participatory institutions in the municipality). Only for one dependent variable (number of participants) we introduce an additional explanatory variable that has a large potential role: whether the process is open to the participation of any citizen or not.

4. Results

The bivariate analysis of most characteristics of local participatory institutions in Spain shows more similarities than differences across parties. Graph 2 represents two of the partial exceptions to this pattern: even if all parties use different types of participation, participatory budgeting is more associated with the leftist IU, strategic planning is quite clearly the dominant type of institution used by social-democratic PSOE and consultations are more often used by conservative PP, whereas the use of advisory councils or deliberative institutions show very small differences.

Graph 2 around here

Since these basic relationships could be the result of several confounding variables, we develop the regression analyses that show these relationships when controlling for some potentially important variables. Table 2 shows these results for the variables related to who participates. Regarding the number of participants, once controls are introduced we only find a larger participation in IU municipalities. Part of it is due to their most common usage of processes open to any participant (which shows a strong and clearly significant coefficient), but even in the most complete model (M3), the IU coefficient continues to be barely significant. A similar negative coefficient also appears for municipalities governed by other parties. When processes open to any participant are moved from being a control variable (M1-M3) to being the dependent variable (M6-M8), only having a IU mayor continues to be the only significant positive explanatory variable.

Table 2 around here

The explanatory variables are more diverse when we focus on the how related variables (Table 3). IU continues to be clearly related to the promotion on participatory budgeting as a specific type of participatory institution. The relationship is also clear

for PP and consultations and continues to be strong even when all controls are introduced. Strategic planning, on the other hand, as Graph 2 showed, is a participatory institution especially used by social democrats: all other parties have negative coefficients at some point, even if for PP this becomes non-significant once controls are introduced¹⁶.

Table 3 around here

Even if some of the party related coefficients are significant, it is important to highlight that their substantive effects are relatively small. If we take for example one of the models with a relatively high R2 (M3 in Table 2), the average participatory process organized in a municipality governed by PSOE (reference category) would have around 17 participants, whereas a similar process in a municipality governed by leftist IU would increase to 27 citizens¹⁷.

5. Discussion

Our analysis shows that the relationship between parties and ideologies and the use of different types of participatory institutions is weak, but exists. Three political parties belonging to quite different ideological families (radical left, social democracy and liberal-Christian democracy) develop participatory institutions that are not so different one from another. When differences appear, they are not dramatically strong, showing a certain degree of policy convergence among them, as it has happened in other policy areas (Bennett, 1991). Spanish local participation policies fit in trends clearly identified in other countries, where the generalized adoption favored by the promotion from international organizations like the World Bank has gone beyond traditional ideological borders (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Ramírez & Welp, 2011; Shah, 2007).

However, some of the differences hypothesized showed up in our results. Even after controlling for several potentially confounding variables, parties closer to the democratic radicalism of the republican tradition practiced more often intense participatory institutions, as well as institutions aiming at a more extensive audience.

¹⁶ Even if we control for effects of region and mode of administration, the large coefficients these variables present in this case (in contrast to others) deserve a cautious interpretation of this result.

¹⁷ To further control for the potential effect of city size we reproduced all analyses in a dichotomized universe (municipalities with less or more than 10.000 inhabitants, Annex 1). There are no important changes in the major party related variables. Only two party related changes that affect significant coefficients appear. First, in the case of strategic planning the coefficient is more significant for the party family that more intensely competes with the socialists in each city size (others in small municipalities, radical left and conservatives in large cities). Second, the radical left relationship with open processes and number of participants changes from barely significant to non-significant due to the small number of cases in each cell (the direction of the relationship remains stable).

These parties seem to conceive democratic innovations as a step towards the “strong democracy” envisioned in the participatory model, in which citizen participation becomes the milestone for democratic reform (Barber, 1984). This is especially clear for the leftist coalition IU, whose coefficients were often significant: they were able to mobilize more participants, aimed at larger audiences using more often procedures open to any participant and developed extensively specific extensive procedures with decision-making capacity like participatory budgeting. In this sense, the Spanish radical left sticks to the idea of positive freedom, privileging participatory mechanisms that directly translate the will of citizens into policy decisions. The republican trust on the citizens’ skills and virtues encourages these parties to support an unrestricted and non-mediated participation.

The results corresponding to other parties do not always fit so clearly with our hypotheses. In the case of PSOE, their more common choice of strategic planning (Models 6-9 in Table 3) could correspond to the aim of balancing citizen’s voice with a significant role for representatives through the use of a participatory formula that combines citizen input with an enlarged role for experts and which gives considerable cherry-picking possibilities to political representatives (Font *et al.*, 2018: 630). This finding chimes with the social democracy’s inner tension between its liberal and republican wings, which leads these parties to place citizen participation as a complement to democratic representation. On the other hand, the most common use of consultations by PP could be interpreted as contradicting our Hypothesis 2. This result requires further research, but it is likely to be related to the type of processes captured in this category, where small scale consultations about non central policy issues dominate (see footnote 14). In a scenario where all parties choose to use participation, this type of limited consultations is coherent with a more reluctant vision of its meaning. In any case, we should not disregard other interpretations: in a scenario where center-right parties decide to adopt participatory practices and where they perceive that most civil society groups are left-leaning, they could be strategically oriented to give voice to individual citizens, perceived as less hostile audiences (Navarro, 2004).

Beyond the short-term correlation between party ideology and the choice of participatory institutions, our results have also explored, with mixed success, the idea of mid and long-term effects through the institutionalization of participatory practices. In fact, previous research suggests that short and long term effects could be quite different, with left (republican) parties being more prone to adopt participatory institutions, but center-right parties accepting or even adopting them once they have proven not to be threatening for traditional power structures (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Wampler & Goldfrank, 2022). Our results suggest a causal mechanism through which the expected differences in Hypothesis 1 remain, in spite of a tendency to policy convergence: the mid and long term effects of the creation of participatory institutions

(mostly by left parties, creating participation departments in Model 6 of Table 3; or open processes in Model 3 of Table 2). These permanent institutions facilitate in the mid-term the creation of other participation outputs (consultations and large mobilization in these two cases).

Our results represent a significant contribution to knowledge about the relationship between ideology and participatory institutions due to the limited previous systematic research in a large and diverse universe. Our data adds nuances to clarify previous apparently contradictory findings by providing a scenario that shows considerable similarities among parties, but also differences in styles and intensity in some particular choices. The data suggest that some previous research claiming a clear relationship (Bräutigam, 2004; Goldfrank, 2007), may be the result not only of differences in time and context, but may be also related to case selection criteria (choice of cases that prove the ideological hypothesis) (Spada & Ryan, 2017).

The limits of our results are also quite clear. First, several of our measures could be enhanced, meaning that some of our null results may be underestimating real ideological differences. Second, our data did not allow analyzing whether some parties had been more active than others creating more participatory institutions. However, previous research based on a similar universe suggests that this approach leads to finding results showing more important party differences (ANON). Third, the possibility that a similar participatory offer exists, but with quite different emphasis (on how often participatory institutions are used or how central are the issues discussed), resulting in outcomes that represent quite different steps of the Arnstein's (1969) participation ladder cannot be discarded. In particular, more fine-grained analysis using qualitative evidence that allowed capturing the qualities and outcomes of participatory institutions would be most welcomed. Fourth, larger datasets allowing the analysis of more homogeneous realities (e.g., single types of participatory institutions, including those with small numbers in our universe like referenda or minipublics or the reality of different city sizes) would also help to capture potentially more complex realities. Finally, it could also be the case that the increase of electoral support of green, populist and other types of challenger parties (all or most of them apparently favorable to a strong voice of the people) in the most recent period could increase these differences. Also, a more extensive use of deliberative practices (OECD, 2020) or a changing pattern in the uses of participatory budgeting (Wampler & Goldfrank, 2022) make it necessary to reply these analyses to check the external validity of these claims beyond our universe, with research in other countries and periods. The higher degree of politicization of these policies in Southern Europe, compared to other European regions (Sintomer & Del Pino, 2014) seems to suggest that differences may be even smaller in other Central and Northern European countries (with exceptions, like Jäske 2017), but different patterns could appear in

other areas like Eastern Europe (where this issue has been hardly covered) or Latin America, which appears to show a somewhat larger relationship.

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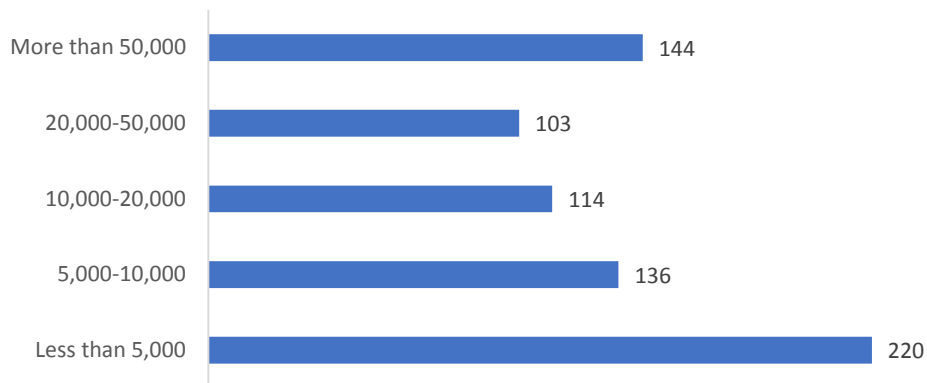
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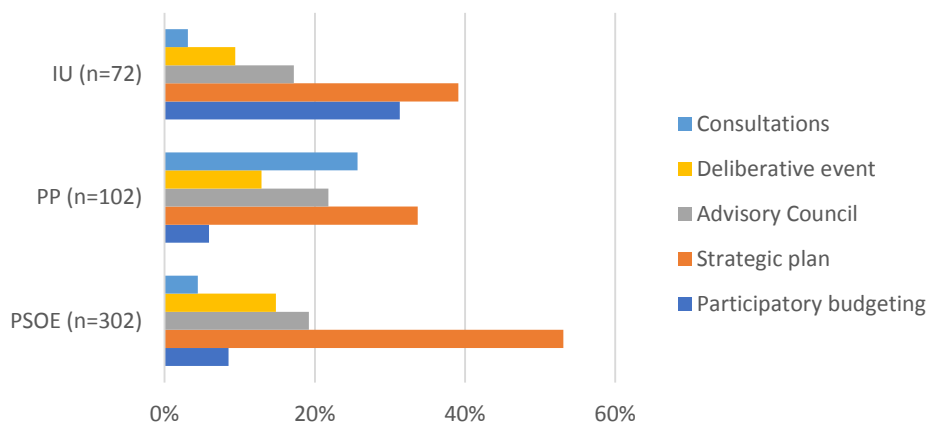
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Graph 1. Experiences by number of inhabitants of the municipality



Source: Mecpalo dataset

Graph 2. Distribution of participatory institutions developed by each party family



Source: Mecpalo dataset

Table 1. Variables used: categories and descriptive statistics

Variable <i>Reference category in regression</i>		Min	Max	Average/ Proportion Yes (when dummy)	SD	Response categories
Independent	Political party PSOE (centre-left)	1	4			Categorical: 1 PP; 2 PSOE; 3 IU; 4 Other
	Region	1	2			Categorical: 1 Andalusia; 2 Madrid
	Inhabitants	1	5	2.86	1.52	1: less than 5.000; 2: 5.000-10.000; 3: 10.000-20.000; 4: 20.000-50.000; 5: more than 50.000
	Mode of administration	1	2			Categorical: 1 survey; 2 data mining
	Participation Department	0	1	.56		Categorical 0 No; 1 yes
	Participation Plan	0	1	.45		Categorical 0 No; 1 yes
Dependent: who	Number of participants	1	8	3.97	1.97	1: Less than 10; 2 10-24; 3 25-29; 4 50-99; 5 100-299; 6 300-499; 7 500-1000; 8 more than 1.000
	Addressed to associations	0	1	.23		1 Addressed to associations; 0 Not addressed to associations
	Open to anyone	0	1	.48		1 Open to anyone; 0 other
Dependent: how	Participatory budgeting	0	1	.28		1 Participatory budgeting; 0 other
	Consultation	0	1	.35		1. Consultation; 0 other
	Strategic Planning	0	1	.34		1 Strategic planning; 0 other

Table 2. Regression analysis of Who variables¹⁸

	<i>Number of participants</i>			<i>Addressed to associations</i>		<i>Open to anyone</i>		
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>PP</i>	.16**	ns	ns	.82***	ns	ns	ns	Ns
<i>Left</i>	.12*	.13**	.10*	ns	ns	.51*	.49*	.48*
<i>Other</i>	ns	ns	-.10*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
<i>Region</i>		ns	ns		ns		ns	ns
<i>Inhabitant</i>		.19***	.22***		.29***		ns	ns
<i>s</i>								
<i>MoA</i>		ns	ns		.85**		ns	ns
<i>Part Dep</i>			ns					ns
<i>Part Plan</i>			ns					ns
<i>Open</i>			.31***					
<i>(Pseudo)</i>								
<i>R2</i>	0.04	0.09	0.18	0.03	0.18	0.02	0.02	0.03
<i>n</i>	446	446	446	581	581	581	581	581

Note: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < 0.05

¹⁸ Number of participants is a linear regression. The other dependent variables are logistic regressions.

Table 3. Regression analysis of How variables (logistic regressions)

	<i>Participatory budgeting</i>			<i>Consultation</i>			<i>Strategic Planning</i>		
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>PP (Cons)</i>	ns	ns	ns	2.09***	1.46***	1.47** *	-.52*	ns	ns
<i>Left</i>	1.49***	1.61***	1.60** *	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.58*	-.58*
<i>Other</i>	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-1.66**	-1.47*	-1.47*
<i>Region</i>		ns	ns		ns	ns		-1.71***	-1.66***
<i>Inhabitants</i>		.37**	.32*		ns	ns		ns	ns
<i>MoA</i>		ns	ns		ns	ns		1.87***	1.85***
<i>Part Dep</i>			ns			1.25*			ns
<i>Part Plan</i>			ns			ns			ns
<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0.08	0.14	0.15	0.17	0.28	0.3	0.04	0.17	0.18
<i>n</i>	581	581	581	581	581	581	581	581	581