

Cherry-picking participation: explaining the fate of proposals from participatory processes

Joan Font (IESA-CSIC)

Graham Smith (University of Westminster)

Carol Galais (UOC)

Pau Alarcón (IESA-CSIC)

Paper presented at the Political Studies Association Conference, Brighton, 21-23 March 2016

Abstract: Do participatory processes have an impact on decision making? Research on new forms of participation has flourished, but one of the key aspects of participatory processes that has been the subject of rare systematic analysis and comparison is the fate of their outputs: their policy proposals. Which specific factors explain whether these proposals are accepted, rejected or transformed? This paper contributes to this gap in our understanding in two ways. First, we identify contextual and proposal related factors that are likely to affect the prospect of proposals being implemented. Second, we test the explanatory power of these factors through multilevel analysis on a diverse set of 571 policy proposals. Our findings offer evidence that both contextual and proposal related variables are important. The design of participatory processes affects the degree of implementation, with participatory budgeting and larger quality processes being most effective. But most significant are proposal level, economic and political factors for explaining outcomes: a proposal's cost, the extent to which it challenges existing policy and the degree of support it has within the municipality all strongly affect the chance of implementation.

1. Introduction

What do we know about the extent to which proposals from participatory processes have had an impact on the decision making of political authorities? This is a critical question for any evaluation of these processes: why promote public engagement if it has no discernible effect on the policy and practices of administrations? The evidence base is scant. We know very little about the factors that ‘determine how and why participation makes a difference’ (Baiocchi *et al*, 2011: 1).

Where large-scale studies exist, the impression is of relatively limited impact. In the UK, Lowndes and her colleagues discovered that ‘only one-third of local authorities felt that public participation had a significant outcome on final decision making’ (Lowndes *et al*, 2001: 452). A similar scenario of infrequent and problematic relationships between participation and final decisions is evident in Dutch interactive policy-making (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000; Tatenhove *et al*, 2010).

It is through case studies of particularly celebrated cases where impact tends to be found. The much quoted case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre is one such example where there is evidence of significant changes in the distribution of municipal budgetary resources (Baiocchi, 2005). While there are examples of the impact of participatory budgeting in other locations, some of the most rigorous comparative evidence points to less effect on policy and practice than might be expected (Boulding and Wampler, 2009). In an analysis of various mini-publics, Goodin and Dryzek (2006) found it extremely difficult to provide concrete examples of impact on decision-making beyond the oft-celebrated British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly (BCCA). A similar picture emerges from Danish consensus conferences (Klüver, 1995; Joss, 1998), deliberative polls

(Goodin and Dryzek, 2006), Swiss participatory planning (Koch, 2013) and Spanish citizen juries (Font and Blanco, 2007). In sum, while there are a small number of important examples of individual cases where impacts are clear and unambiguous, attempts to provide a more inclusive analysis across the field suggest limited and unsystematic effects (Mazeaud et al, 2012). We are left with the general impression that we are a long way short of participation fulfilling its promise of transformation of the political decision making process.

Our aim in this paper is to contribute to filling the gap in knowledge of the factors that explain the variation in fates of proposals across different participatory processes. First, we discuss the relationship between proposals and policy outcomes, identifying the different potential fates of proposals in the policy process and, as a result, defining the dependent variable to be used in our research (section 2). Second, we review a number of the potential explanations of the fate of proposals: factors that may account for why some proposals are more successful than others. Through the discussion of these factors we present our independent variables (section 3). Section 4 develops our research strategy and the way in which we operationalized the variables in a set of 571 proposals that emerged from participatory processes developed in three Spanish regions. Section 5 presents the results of a multilevel analysis conducted to test the significance of the various factors on the implementation of proposals. Finally, section 6 concludes with a final discussion of these preliminary results and some of their potential implications.

2. From proposal to implementation

Many ideas and proposals come out of a participatory process, but not all are formally approved by the sponsoring authority¹. Explaining the different fates of these proposals is our central task. Such proposals may be extraordinarily diverse, in different aspects such as the degree of specificity of the proposals (from paving a section of a road to the promotion of social justice), their number (from one to hundreds resulting from a single process) or the formality of the procedure of approval of proposals within the participatory process (from voting and ranking all proposals to simply collating all the ideas that have emerged within the minutes of the meeting).

Some participatory processes end up in a dead end once participants go home and the participatory momentum subsides. This is the case, for example, with many of the citizens' juries organised by Spanish local government, where lack of oversight by participants and local associations and disinterest on the part of local media and opposition parties have often resulted in lack of action by local authorities (Font and Blanco, 2007). In most of these cases, it is the whole package that is forgotten.

In other cases, some of the proposals are implemented, whereas others are either explicitly rejected or simply abandoned with different types of arguments offered: the proposal openly contradicts previous decisions of the municipality; technical problems appear when the details are examined; or, simply, since the process had ended in a long list of proposals, the local government chooses only a few of them. In sum, whereas some participatory processes employ

¹ Our universe covers participatory processes which at least have some recognition from a local authority. The process has often emerged on the initiative and control of this local administration, but in some cases this initiative may be mostly developed by civil society or other administrations.

what Baoicchi and Ganuza (2014: 36) have called an 'exclusive conveyor belt', with minimum veto points where citizen proposals can be changed, others offer extensive scope for these changes to happen, with cherry-picking of proposals (Smith, 2009: 93) or 'selective listening' (Sintomer *et al*, 2008) by local authorities.

The possible fates of a proposal are more complicated than implemented or not. It is simple to distinguish those proposals that have been rejected (actively or ignored). But there are degrees of adoption by a local authority that may not entail implementation. For example, we may witness formal acceptance of proposals by the committee or official receiving the proposals from the participatory process and then no further action. Or the proposal may appear in a department's policy documentation or work programme – and yet go no further. Thus our first task is to distinguish implementation from both rejection and the different types of adoption short of full implementation.

The degree of adoption of a proposal needs to be complemented by a second factor that is critical in understanding the fate of proposals: whether or not it has been modified by the local authority during the process from proposal to implementation. We can think of modification in at least two ways: the local authority alters the substance of the proposal during the process of implementation; or only partially implements the proposal. In other words we can distinguish between proposals that are rejected, partially implemented or modified and those that are fully implemented².

² From a democratic perspective, non-implementation may not in itself be problematic: there can be sound reasons as to why a public authority decides not to implement proposals. Arguably what is critical democratically is that public authorities are transparent in their actions (Smith, 2009). As such we have also considered whether a public explanation is offered when proposals have either been rejected or modified, but this issue is not covered in this article.

In sum, many proposals reach the local administration desk, but only a certain amount of them are implemented. Is there any logic in this selection process? The next section will discuss the factors that can facilitate or diminish the likelihood that a given proposal will end up being implemented by the municipality.

3. Potential explanatory factors of different implementation levels

We distinguish two basic types of explanations: those related to context and those related to the proposal. Contextual explanations are those that have an effect on any proposal that emerges from a given participatory process, i.e. those explanations that would effect equally each of the proposals from a particular process. Such explanations could relate to the characteristics of the municipality (e.g. local budget) or to the characteristics of the specific participatory device (e.g. quality of the process). In comparison, proposal related explanations are those that are specific to each of the policy proposals, including factors such as their cost or the degree of support within the authority for the proposal³.

a. Contextual factors

It is striking in the literature on democratic innovations that much of the explanatory work on participatory governance focuses on the willingness of public authorities to organise and institutionalise participatory processes rather than the fate of the proposals that emanate from such processes. So, for example, there is a strong line of argument, particularly focused on participatory budgeting, that Left, progressive parties are more likely to establish participatory

³ A similar approach using both contextual and proposal related variables to explain final outcomes appears in Labone and Chase (2009).

processes (Baiochhi, 2005), although as processes diffuse across the world, this ideological underpinning is less obvious (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014). But while there may be ideological explanations for the organisation of participation in the first place, there is no reason to expect such ideological predisposition to the outcomes of a process once it has been established. The contextual factors that explain the impact of participatory proposals are likely to be different in kind. Compared to the literature on the establishment of participatory processes, there is much less analysis that focuses systematically on the explanation of the fate of proposals.

In teasing out potential contextual explanatory factors it is helpful to distinguish between those that relate to (1) the characteristics of the municipality and public authority and (2) characteristics of the process design.

In relation to the municipality, there are good reasons to expect that the *organisational culture* of the public authority will have an effect. Cooper and Smith (2012) offer evidence that the organisational cultures of health authorities in the UK and Germany have an impact on the fate of participatory inputs: participation practitioners warmly recounting the pleasure of working with the Department of Health in the UK, contrasting with a far less sympathetic attitude to the views of citizens in the German case. In organisations with a less developed culture towards participation, the public is too often viewed negatively as ‘passive consumers; as a naïve, childlike and clamorous public; and/or as lacking skills, capacities or trust’ (Newman *et al*, 2004: 210). Such organisational culture will impact both on the willingness to organise participatory processes and the seriousness with which authorities take proposals from such processes. A municipality’s history of using participatory processes and the existence of corporately agreed participatory

plans can act as proxies for the extent to which organisational culture embraces public participation.

A second municipal-level variable that may explain the difference in the fate of proposals is the *availability of resources*: those authorities with access to resources are more likely to be responsive to the demands of citizens. The successful story of Porto Alegre's participatory budget and its distinctiveness from many other Brazilian cases has often been attributed to the availability of funding: the city was wealthier than others and the process started with a significant tax rise that provided additional resources (Baiocchi, 2005). More recently, Boulding and Wampler (2009) have explained the limited impacts of participatory budgeting in many other cities by pointing precisely to the lack of funds that many of them had available for these programs. A reasonable proxy for the resources available in a particular municipality is income per capita.

A third municipal-level factor relates to the general claim within democratic theory that *size of the population* matters: participation is easier to organise and more effective at smaller scales (Dahl, 1998: 110; Bryan, 2004). The implication of the argument is that such integration ought to lead to increased implementation and less cherry-picking. Although there is no systematic evidence, it is reasonable to assume that in a smaller municipality it is easier for participants to hold the public authority to account for failure to implement proposals.

The second set of contextual variables in explaining the fate of proposals relates to the design of the participatory process. The first is the broad *type of participatory process*. Participatory processes vary in the extent to which they are empowered; the extent to which they are explicitly

designed to impact on formal decision making processes (Fung, 2006; Smith, 2009). While recognising that the form of participatory budgeting has altered as it has diffused across the world (Baocchi and Ganuza, 2014; Sintomer *et al*, 2008), it is typically based on the distribution of a budget that the authority has already committed to the participatory processes. Compare this to strategic planning processes where the opportunities for participants to suggest proposals with a much larger time frame (to be implemented in a ten year period instead of in a yearly cycle). Again, we might expect that proposals that emerge from permanent rather than temporary participatory processes are more likely to be implemented: institutionalisation should in principle advantage the fate of proposals.

A second process-level factor that we can reasonably expect to affect the impact of proposals is the *quality of the process*. This is not simply an argument that the outputs of a higher quality process are likely to be taken more seriously by officials, but also indicates the extent of commitment by the authority to the process: a higher quality process will require more time and resources. What makes for a higher quality process? We can point to at least three elements that can be seen as proxies for it. The first is the use of facilitation: this indicates a desire to ensure that the variety of voices are heard; facilitators typically aim to ameliorate existing power dynamics to encourage those who are less politically confident to contribute. Second, the provision of high quality information aims at increasing the competence of participants in producing proposals. Third, the employment of external consultants is a recognition that the organisation of participatory processes requires particular specialist skills and training. Each element necessitates investment of resources by the sponsoring authority. Two of these aspects of quality can also be seen as a proxy for more deliberative processes: facilitation and

information (Smith, 2009). This is a contested area in the literature with some suggestions that deliberation is less goal-directed and thus less likely to produce translatable outcomes (Gilman, 2013).

There are good reasons to expect that two further characteristics associated with process design could be related to the degree of implementation. The first is the *number of proposals* that emerge. Where a participatory process produces large numbers of proposals it is arguably more challenging for the municipality to respond to them all – both in terms of the necessary resources and the complexity of the implementation process within authorities – and for participants to hold the authority to account. Equally there is more opportunity to cherry-pick proposals as the number of proposals from a participatory process increases.

The final process-level factor that is likely to have a positive effect on the fate of proposals is the *involvement of other authorities* in the process, particularly those from a higher level, such as regional administrations. Where other authorities are part of the organisation and delivery, horizontal accountability appears, with external institutional actors having often the formal authority to make others accountable (Fung, 2006) regarding the implementation of the proposals born from the participatory process held.

b. Proposal related factors

The second set of potentially important explanatory factors differentiates between proposals that have been produced in the same context. The emphasis of most of the research mentioned in the previous section neglects the fact that the same process may produce proposals that have

quite different fates: some are ignored whereas others are implemented. Which are the factors that help to explain these different outcomes?

Proposals do not appear in a vacuum and as such sit in a relationship with the existing policy and practices of the public authority. It is a reasonable assumption that the willingness to adopt a proposal will be affected by the extent to which it *conforms with or challenges existing commitments*. There is an extensive sceptical literature on public participation that suggests that processes tend to be nothing more than forms of co-option: proposals will be ignored or the design and results of participation will be manipulated by political authorities to suit their own interests (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Fiorino, 1990: 230-31). Such a sceptical perspective does not entail that all proposals will be ignored by public authorities; rather only those that reinforce power holders' preferences will be adopted.

The substantive content of each proposal has *cost* implications: the higher the cost to the municipal authority, the greater the impediment for implementation. In other words, the cheaper the proposal the more likely it is to be adopted. This may be mitigated where other sources of funding are available for the implementation of that specific proposal, for example from a higher level of government. To this end, we need to consider both the cost of proposals and whether external sources of funding were available.

The final proposal-level variable that we consider is the presence or absence of support that a particular proposal garners. While the degree of support from participants and broader civil society may have some effect, it is reasonable to assume that *support within the authority*, will be more critical for the fate of proposals. While there are always complex rationalities and power

constellations within public bodies, the most important actors able to influence a proposal's fate are the governing party and the civil servants responsible for implementation of the particular proposal (Ryan and Smith, 2012).

4. Research design: from theory to operationalization

This section presents the research design, data collection and operationalization strategy to test the ideas developed in the previous sections⁴. To test the explanatory power of the different factors, we require variation in three levels: local context, process design and proposal. This is especially important, since most previous research tends to show variation at only one of the levels, typically examining policy proposals emerging from a small set of fairly homogeneous participatory processes (Barrett *et al*, 2012; Fournier *et al*, 2011; Olken, 2010).

Simultaneously, we need to have a controlled amount of contextual variation, since extremely diverse levels of socio-economic development and very large differences in political and administration rules and routines could create a scenario where alternative explanations would be impossible to control. Trying to balance these two concerns, our choice has been to limit our selection to a single polity with a constant legal framework (Spain) and to introduce contextual variation through the selection of diverse municipalities and regions. Spain represents quite well the Southern European participatory style, in which there is only limited supra local pressure to start any participatory process and where ideological motivations of participatory processes are more important than in other European countries (Font, della Porta and Sintomer, 2014; Talpin,

⁴A more extensive explanation of the details of the research strategy can be found in Font, Pasadas and Smith (2015).

2011). At the same time, the Spanish case was the only one where a large and diverse set of participatory processes was available.

Since a fully representative frame of participatory process does not exist and our goal is more to ensure high diversity than full representativeness, our initial sampling frame is a quite diverse collection of participatory processes developed in three Spanish regions (Andalucía, Catalonia and Madrid)⁵.

We have selected a specific time frame, from one local election (2007) to the next (2011), thus combining the possibility that there has been time enough for at least the initial implementation of these proposals (a minimum of three years between the participatory process and the fieldwork), but also that memories and administrative records are recent enough to be tracked (maximum of seven years between process and fieldwork in 2014). Since our goal is to analyse what happens to proposals, we focus only on those participatory processes that actually generate proposals (recommendations for action rather than, for example, complaints). Thus, *the population for our study is participatory processes that generate proposals developed by municipalities within three Spanish regions during the period 2007-2011*⁶.

Our final unit of analysis is proposals. Since it is likely that different proposals emerging from the same participatory process are treated differently by local governments, we need to follow the evolution of each (or a sample) of these proposals to discover whether there are factors associated systematically with their differing fate.

⁵ The details of the original data collection process appear in Font, Della Porta and Sintomer (2014). The three regions selected introduce substantial contextual variation since they include quite different levels of development as well as very different regional participation policies (Sintomer and Del Pino, 2014).

⁶ When checking information about permanent mechanisms (i.e. participatory budgeting) we will select proposals related to the 2010 cycle or the last cycle that ended before that time.

4.1. Sampling participatory processes

To construct the sampling frame we used two datasets with information on participatory processes developed by subnational governments in Spain. On the one hand, we have used a comparative database for Andalusia, Madrid and Catalonia collected by web content mining. We randomly selected 10 cases from each one of the 3 spanish regions represented in the process. The original dataset had an under-representation of small municipalities and to include them we added 10 cases from another Andalusian dataset aimed to capture information on smaller municipalities⁷.

Before selecting the cases and in order to adjust our initial databases to the scope of our research, we have undertaken the following data cleaning operations: elimination of non-eligible cases that were out of the temporal or territorial scope of our research⁸ and elimination of cases lacking relevant information (for example, a minimal description of the process or lack of proposals).

We adopted a stratified sampling design to ensure representation of a diversity of types of participatory processes and socio-political contexts (potentially important independent variables) using a combination of variables: region, municipality size, number of previous participatory processes and process design, simplifying the sheer diversity of participatory forms into four broad types. The first two, participatory budgeting and strategic planning (e.g. Agenda 21,

⁷ Since the Andalusian database was included to ensure coverage of the experience of smaller municipalities, in this dataset we only considered municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants.

⁸ 108 processes were out of the temporal scope of this research (in most cases, developed before 2007) and 28 processes were out of scope because they had been developed by supra-local administrations.

education plans, economy), are common forms of engagement in Spain with very different structures: the former aims to distribute a given budget; the latter contributes to strategic policy development. We then divided the remaining processes into other permanent and other temporary processes.

Whenever choice was possible after applying the stratification criteria, the final selection of cases has been achieved through random selection. The combination of these criteria resulted in the final selection of cases represented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

In order to reach the highest possible response rate among the initially selected cases we adopted a rather strict substitution policy. A little less than one third of the cases considered were excluded⁹, meaning that we reached an excellent response rate of 81.3%¹⁰.

4.2 Policy proposals and fieldwork

Given that certain processes had more than two hundred proposals, it was necessary to find a balance between capturing a diversity of proposals from each process to observe potential cherry-picking and to give too much weight to a single process in the final sample. With this in mind, we limited the number of proposals for which we collected information to 20 per participatory process, for those cases where the total number of proposals were higher. The

⁹ The initially sampled cases were substituted by similar cases only in two cases: either when the fieldwork showed that, contrary to our initial data and expectations, they were not eligible (processes not producing proposals, out of temporal scope, etc.) or when it became clear that we were not going to have enough cooperation to collect most of the information we were interested in (refusals). Lack of collaboration accounts for a little more than half the number of reasons for substitution, but seven out of the nine processes substituted for this reason had been developed in just two municipalities.

¹⁰ The response rate has been calculated by dividing the total number of cases included in the final sample (39) by the total number of eligible cases (48).

selection of proposals was made through systematic random sample¹¹. When the total number of proposals coming out of a single process was less than 20, all of them were selected.

To discover the fate of each selected proposal and collect information on each of the independent variables, we accessed a variety of sources, including: official documents on the participatory process (publicly available or not); interviews with municipal officers, participants, government and opposition politicians and other informants; media reports and personal blogs of participants. The data collection was designed as a sequential process aiming to access as much information from secondary sources as possible, before proceeding with the most costly step of face to face interviewing, which lasted approximately six months (Figure 1). We made a total of 162 interviews with an average of 4.6 per participatory process.

(Figure 1 about here)

The codebook¹² includes the coding procedures for the quantitative information collected, capturing around 100 variables that belong to the three levels of analysis mentioned above: polity (e.g., size of municipality); process design (e.g., type of participatory process); and proposal (e.g., cost of proposals).

The first version of the codebook was tested and improved in a pilot case study. To homogenise the data collection process there were formal team meetings every two weeks (plus more

¹¹ Systematic sampling offered the advantage of respecting to a greater extent the structure of the listings of proposals, assuring a better representation of the different types of proposals established as a consequence of the order presented in the documentation of the process (e.g., by thematic areas). For those cases where the proposals were recorded in different independent documents, we determined the number of proposals to be selected from each document by way of proportional allocation.

¹² A first draft of this codebook was built from the operationalization of the research hypothesis established after the review of the literature. At this point we were ecumenical in the identification of explanatory factors, including variables that have more explanatory power in understanding the establishment of participatory processes (rather than the fate of proposals).

frequent discussions and interactions among the three fieldwork team members) during the fieldwork period to discuss common problems faced and make any necessary decisions to adapt the data collection protocol. In addition, the fieldwork team produced a fieldwork journal for each participatory process¹³.

The variety of sources accessed to retrieve the information as well as their different degree of quality meant that there were important differences in the information collected. For example, some of the information was based on official records, while at other times on more subjective personal assessments. In order to account for these differences, the data includes a set of variables assessing the reliability of the information recorded for the main variables in the codebook¹⁴. In practice, we have created a reliability filter and only 571 (from the original total of 611) observations for which we have sufficiently reliable data will be considered in our analyses.

4.3. Operationalizing the variables

4.3.1. Dependent variable

The dependent variable has been operationalized as a three-category variable that accounts for both the degree of implementation of a proposal and the degree to which it has been modified.

Implementation means there had to be evidence of an action or change in practice or policy.

Decisions on proposals were treated as if they were independent and clearly distinguishable. This

¹³These documents show the different steps that have been followed in the information retrieval process for each participatory process, problems found and the operational decisions that have been taken along the way. Together with the qualitative information registered in the fieldwork forms, they allowed to retrieve information on the process if needed.

¹⁴These variables code the reliability of the information recorded according to the quality of the information source (written source or oral report; number of sources and/or mastery of the key informant) and the degree of agreement or disagreement among different sources as an indicator of objectivity of information.

is fairly realistic in the case of many of the specific policy proposals that come out from local participation processes.

Value 1 of the dependent variable identifies all the proposals that have been rejected or where there was preliminary evidence of adoption (for example the proposal appeared in a department policy document), but the proposal was never really implemented and had been abandoned by the time the fieldwork was conducted. Value 2 identifies all the proposals that have been partially implemented (in progress at the time of the fieldwork or policies aimed to be permanent which had been implemented but later abandoned), as well as those that were identified as fully implemented but which were modified significantly by the local government. Finally, Value 3 identifies all the proposals that were fully implemented without important changes¹⁵.

4.3.2. Independent variables

Drawing on the earlier discussion of explanatory factors, we use four variables at each level: municipal context, process design and characteristics of proposal. The independent variables are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 about here

Aspects of the organisational culture of the municipality are captured by two variables. The density of participation variable has three categories depending on how many participatory processes had been developed in the municipality previously to that period. It takes the value 1 if there was only one process; 2 if two or three processes; and 3 if four or more. The existence of a participatory plan is a dichotomous variable.

¹⁵They also include 6 proposals that were slightly modified to improve them.

The size of the municipality is measured by the number of inhabitants: a categorical variable that takes values between 1 (less than 5,000 inhabitants) and 5 (more than 50,000 inhabitants).

Finally, the income per capita, as taken from 2013 data is a six-category variable that takes values between 1 (up to 800€ per inhabitant) to 6 (more than 1,200€ per inhabitant).

The process design variables begin with the type of participatory process, coded to capture the differences between participatory budgeting, strategic planning, other permanent processes and other temporary processes. The quality of participation is captured by a four-category index where a process scores a point for the presence of each of the following three features: facilitator, external experts, level of information¹⁶. The number of proposals per process is a simple numerical value from between 1 and 131. The involvement of other administrations is a dichotomous variable¹⁷.

Finally, at the proposal level, whether or not the proposal is challenging to existing policy and practice¹⁸ and the availability of external funding for implementation are captured by dichotomous variables. The implementation cost of each proposal was operationalized according to four values: no cost, low cost (less than 50,000€), intermediate cost (50,000 to 200,000€) and

¹⁶ Information takes a value of 1 when the participants had received written information or received plural oral information.

¹⁷ Two other variables have been very specifically analysed. The first is the region from which the municipalities are selected, since different regions of Spain have their own participatory cultures that could affect implementation. The second is the ideology of the governing party, even if this is more likely to explain the organization of participatory processes rather than the fate of any proposals that emerge. Both of them have no significant effects and their inclusion does not have an effect in the remaining variables explanatory role.

¹⁸ This variable is generally based on the judgments of our interviewees, except if there was strong evidence that they had misunderstood the question. Policies that represent a break with what has been traditionally done in the municipality were considered as “challenging”. For example, among the proposals considered challenging there were more substantive ideas (to develop a new local regulation to prevent noise pollution) and more symbolic ones (to change the way to protest every time there is an episode of violence against women).

high cost (more than 200,000 €)¹⁹. The presence of internal support captures support from both politicians in the governing party and from civil servants responsible for implementation of the proposal. In both cases we created a four category variable from disagreed totally to agreed totally. These were added (Cronbach's alpha 0.7), generating a quite skewed variable potentially overstating the agreement of the local actors. Finally, the index was collapsed into a dichotomous variable, distinguishing those observations in which both politicians and civil servants totally agreed (77.8%) about the implementation of policy proposals from those where there was more ambiguous support or none.

4.4. Analytical strategy: multi-level modelling

Given that our dependent variable was measured at a different level (proposal) than some of our explanations (process and municipality level), we decided to estimate the implementation of proposals using a series of multilevel models. These models allow us to consider dependent and independent variables measured at different levels. Although they are quite computationally demanding and interpretation is not always straightforward, multi-level models yield robust coefficients ensuring that the effect of all proposal-level and contextual-level variables will not be overstated due to the similarities of proposals within a process or a municipality (equivalent to grouping standard errors by contextual-level units). More precisely, we estimate our dependent variable by means of a series of linear multilevel models.

¹⁹

We lack information on this variable for 91 observations. As the type of estimation models we have employed is not compatible with multiple imputation, we have performed a classical imputation, predicting the missing values of the variable "cost of the proposal" using 11 municipality characteristics and 13 variables that characterize the participatory processes. The results do not change if we run the models losing these 91 cases instead of using imputation.

A crucial decision involved choosing between a two-level and a three-level analysis. We selected a two-level model for several reasons. First, although the data are undeniably arranged in three levels (proposals, processes, municipalities) they are not perfectly pyramidal. Put in other words, our data do not comply with the rule of thumb regarding the minimum, safe number of units at each level of the analyses, which should ideally be 30 or higher (Maas and Hox, 2004; 2005). Instead of having 30 times more proposals than processes and 30 times more processes than municipalities, we have 25 municipalities, 39 participatory processes and over 550 proposals: the aforementioned rule of thumb is violated when considering processes nested within municipalities. Finally, a likelihood ratio test comparing identical models with two or three levels yielded no significant differences, suggesting that specifying a third level was not necessary. As a result, we have considered two levels. The first is the level at which the observations are measured, that is, the proposal level. The second, the 'contextual' level, includes characteristics of both processes and municipalities, although we have clustered first level observations using process identifiers. What this means is that municipal phenomena are regarded as aspects of process characteristics²⁰.

5. Results

We begin with a preliminary look at our dependent variable, tracking the outcomes of the 571 proposals. This is followed by the development and discussion of the multilevel model.

²⁰ For instance, in order to explain the fate of a proposal A that emerged from Process B, we analyse the characteristics of the proposal itself (e.g. if this was a "challenging" proposal or not), the process from which the proposal was generated (e.g. were the participants well informed about the alternatives?) and the municipality in which the process was organised (e.g. was it a small town?). In our model, the latter municipality characteristics are attributable to the process (e.g. a well informed process held in a small town).

The fact that most participatory processes generate a significant number of proposals offers plausibility to the idea that some are cherry-picked. A preliminary search of the original population of the 249 participatory processes captured through internet search showed that a large majority of the processes that generated implementable proposals have more than 25 proposals, with some processes having more than 100 or even 200 proposals. The scope for cherry-picking is also clear in the most preliminary look at the proposals' fate: 32 of the 39 processes have fully implemented some of them; only three processes have implemented none of them and only four have implemented all of them²¹.

Figure 2, based only on the sampled cases, summarizes the fate of proposals from participatory processes. The first conclusion is that, even though cherry-picking exists, the outputs of participatory mechanisms have a significant impact on the activities of local authorities: most of the proposals are implemented (66%), just over half of these without major modification. The other side of the story is the lack of feedback from public authorities when a proposal is rejected or substantially modified: in more than half of these cases there is no public explanation from local government. That is, local government seems to be responsive to proposals that emerge from participatory processes, but less accountable or transparent when these proposals are rejected or modified.

Figure 2 about here

Table 3 presents the multi-level linear estimations of the implementation of proposals. In order to compare the relative explanatory effects of these variables, all non-dichotomous variables –

²¹ Full implementation is more likely in processes with a very small number of proposals: the four processes with 100% implementation have a maximum of six proposals.

including the dependent variable – have been recoded so as to range between 0 (its minimum value) and 1 (maximum value). Hence, all coefficients should be interpreted as the effect on the dependent variable when an explanatory factor moves from its minimum to its maximum. The first estimation does not consider any independent variables. This null model aims to show how much variation is due to features and phenomena that characterize the participatory processes, including the municipalities in which they were held. The intraclass correlation – that is, the proportion of the total variance of our implementation indicator accounted for by the clustering – points to 18 per cent of the variation of the phenomenon under investigation being due to second-level phenomena. It is therefore justified to continue with the multilevel analysis as this exceeds the threshold of 5 per cent, usually considered the minimum variation proportion worth a multilevel analysis (Hox, 2010)²².

The second model includes only variables measured at the proposal level. All of them have a significant impact on the implementation of the proposals. Those proposals that enjoy a high degree of internal support from both politicians and civil servants and secure external funding are more easily implemented, with challenging and costly proposals implemented less. After computing average marginal effects for all these variables, we see that the variable exerting the strongest effect is internal support, which causes an average marginal effect of .29 increase in our indicator of implementation compared to proposals without internal support. Going from a no cost proposal to a high cost proposal (more than 200,000€) causes a decrease of the value of the implementation indicator by .24, keeping the rest of the variables at their actual values. A

²² The availability of information on cases allows us to keep 555 observations among the 571 cases of proposals with reliable information.

challenging character of the proposal reduces the implementation value by .16 and external funding increases the value by .15.

The third model introduces the contextual variables related to the participatory processes. Two variables show a clearly significant effect: higher quality participatory processes and participatory budgeting have higher implementation rates. Among these, the greatest effect is caused by the processes' quality of participation. The difference between a very low quality participatory process and a high-quality one is a .19 higher value in the implementation indicator Participatory budgeting increases the implementation value by .14, compared to strategic planning. Having other administrations involved in the process has a negative and non significant effect. The number of proposals made by citizens has a negative coefficient (the more proposals, the less likely they are to be implemented), but the effect is not significant²³.

The inclusion of these process level variables improves the model fit measures, pointing to a substantial improvement in the prediction of the phenomenon under consideration. The intraclass correlation value has substantively diminished, while the pseudo R-squares for the first and second level of the analyses have clearly improved with regards the previous model.

The next three models introduce municipal characteristics, considering first socio-economic factors, then political and finally all together. In sum, none of these factors have significant explanatory power, nor do they cause major changes in the effect of previously introduced variables. Thus the effects we have described at the proposal and process levels are considerably robust.

²³ Non-linear effects should not be completely discarded. Only three processes having a maximum of six proposals each have a 100% of total implementation of proposals.

Table 3 about here

How good is this last model? All model fit measures suggest that the best model is the third one, that is, the one considering only proposals and process characteristics. The two pseudo-r squares show that we are able to explain about 28 per cent of the phenomenon at the proposal level and about 53 per cent of the variation due to contextual variables. Subsequent models that include municipality features do not substantially improve the measures of model fit. The AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) and the BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) suggest that the second or third model are probably the best in predicting the phenomenon under study²⁴. A final clue is provided by the intraclass correlation value, which does not substantially improve from the third estimation. All in all, these estimations suggest that the third column provides the best estimation model to understand the fate of policy proposals, and that most of the variation in the implementation of policy proposals is due to characteristics related to the proposals themselves and to the processes they stem from.

Figure 3 displays the same results obtained from the last model in a graph, with the values corresponding to the coefficients in the tables. The graph gives us a visual impression of the impact of each predictor along with its significance, at 95% Confidence Intervals (value zero that signals non-significant effects). The graph illustrates the strength of proposal-level variables: internal support for the proposal is the strongest predictor of translation into practice. In the opposite direction, proposals challenging current practice are more often abandoned or

²⁴ These measures are often used to compare non-nested models, as they simultaneously consider error and parsimony (Singer and Willett, 2003). The model achieving the lower values of these indicators is usually considered the best (most efficient) one. In this case, the BIC points to the second model, while the AIC points to the third model.

substantially modified than implemented, and the same can be said about costly proposals, which are implemented less than more affordable ones.

The graph also confirms that aspects of process design affect the extent to which proposals are implemented – participatory budgeting and other temporary processes having more positive prospects than strategic plannings. Proposals stemming from high quality participation processes (provision of information, independent consultants and facilitation) have larger implementation degrees.

Figure 3 about here

6. Discussion

There is a suspicion within both academic and practitioner communities that public authorities cherry-pick proposals from participatory processes. If this is the case, then it undermines significantly the democratic value of public participation. But the degree to which this selective listening on the part of public authorities actually happens has been the object of scant systematic attention, especially if we move beyond individual case studies or research focusing in a single type of participatory process or specific set of policies²⁵.

Our paper contributes to fill this gap through the empirical analysis of the fate of nearly 600 policy proposals emerging from 39 different participatory processes and a range of municipalities. The scope for politicians to cherry-pick certainly exists, as most of the processes end with a substantial list of proposals. However, the extent of discretion and selective listening is more limited than we expected, with two-thirds of proposals being implemented, more than half of

²⁵ For environmental policies see for example Drakiewicz, Challies and Newig (2015).

which without significant modification. It is possible that our results may be overstating the level of government compliance with proposals through two different mechanisms. First, there are some extremely poorly designed and organised processes that are not documented and so were not visible when the original datasets were built. As a result, we are likely to have undersampled this set of least successful processes. Second, the important role of local council personnel as informants may have also biased the results in a positive direction, even if we always triangulated their reports with the perspectives of other local informants, excluding the case if they were too different. These caveats aside, most of this result probably is not down to methodological challenges, but relates to the relatively limited nature of many of the proposals: small projects and ideas that can be implemented without facing a tremendous economic or political challenge. Local administrations can afford to be participatory and listen when they face demands that require few resources and are politically unchallenging. This means, that one of the caveats to retain about these results is whether they would hold in a different set of “hard” decisions (Carmines and Stimson, 1980) on more controversial issues, where the level of implementation is likely to be smaller. In fact, this argument is somehow embedded in our logic, since our model already predicts that an universe with a larger proportion of challenging proposals would result in more limited compliance from the authorities.

This picture is not quite as rosy as it seems. First, a substantial part of proposals are rejected or modified and there is a lack of public feedback from administrations on these cases. So, while local government is generally responsive to proposals, there is a lack of accountability when it chooses not to follow recommendations. This is not to say that all public recommendations

should be implemented; rather that local bodies owe their citizenry an account of their decisions not to act, or to modify their proposals.

When we turn to the factors that explain the extent of implementation, it is striking that none of the polity factors analysed have an impact on the fate of proposals. Not only any of the factors analyzed does reach statistical significance, but also their overall contribution to the explanatory power of the model is null. It is important to remember the different nature of our dependent variable compared to most of the literature on participatory processes: we know that several aspects of context matter for their appearance and successful development, but none of them contributes to explain that a larger size of the proposals are implemented.

Evidence of cherry-picking does emerge, however, when we turn to the analysis of process and proposal level factors. The explanatory power of characteristics of process design and especially proposals generates concerns about the nature of the local democratic process.

Democratic theorists have made a strong case that design matters in judging the democratic character and effectiveness of participatory processes (Fung, 2006; Smith, 2009). Our data bears this out. The type of participatory design is particularly important, with participatory budgeting having significant explanatory power, noticeably more effective in realising its recommendations than strategic planning and other forms of participatory organisation. Why might this be?

Participatory budgeting has at least two advantages. The first is it generally operates within the confines of a specific budget that has been designated for the purpose of distribution by participants: local authorities have accepted that these funds should be put at the discretion of local people and so are more likely to follow their decisions. Second, the design of participatory

budgeting often includes institutionalised citizen oversight: selected participants have a role in overseeing the implementation process by local government. Arguably officials are less likely to cherry-pick proposals when they are being watched. Compare this arrangement with strategic planning processes. Often these involve a number of different participatory channels that each generate their own lists of recommendations that are then collated in different ways by the local administration, with more public authority veto points – opportunities for discretion in which proposals to take forward. In addition, some of these exercises work on a larger time frame: proposals are not to be implemented over the next year, but over a longer time span. It may be the case that if we made follow-up exercise 10 years later, the rate of completion of strategic planning proposals would increase and become closer to that other participatory exercises. Future research will be needed to confirm these speculations and fully explore the causal mechanisms that produce differential outcomes across different designs.

A second process design variable that shows significance is the quality of participation. Again this confirms the expectation that where authorities have invested resources to ensure a high quality process – through the use of facilitators, consultants and background information – then they are more likely to attend to the recommendations that emerge. The causal mechanism would take a certain path dependency look: once efforts, energies and political investment is made in a participatory setting, its final policy outcomes will also be positively affected by the path taken and the will to achieve final returns from a serious exercise. These conditions are also potential indicators for the deliberative capacity of a process, offering a tentative finding that deliberation may be related to implementation. This contrasts with earlier suggestions that posit a trade-off between deliberation and political impact (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006; Smith *et al*, 2015),

suggesting the need for future research on the real existence of this trade-off and its causal mechanisms.

The strongest explanatory power of our variables rests on proposal-level explanations. And here we find results that reinforce the argument that participation can be a mechanism of co-option; that results of participation will be manipulated by political authorities to suit their own interests (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Fiorino, 1990: 230-31). Quite simply, local authorities are more likely to implement proposals that (in descending order of the probability of impact) have strong internal support from both the governing party and civil servants, are not challenging to the administrations' current policies and practices, bring additional funding from other authorities and are less costly. The public will get its way if its recommendations corresponds to the preferences of the administration – and are not too expensive. From a rational choice perspective this is simple logic. But from a democratic perspective it is less compelling. Local administrations clearly listen selectively to inexpensive demands that do not conflict with their preferences and priorities, including proposals that may have been developed by the administration even if the participatory demand had not existed. The dynamics of cherry-picking are clear.

Future data collection processes that introduce larger contextual diversity (including results in other countries and economic contexts) would be needed to confirm whether the same levels of implementation are found and whether the factors affecting the fate of proposals in different environments are similar. Comparative research has pointed to the Spanish participatory context as bearing strong resemblances to the rest of Southern Europe (Talpin, 2011), but differences

with the Anglo-American and Scandinavian traditions may be larger (Alarcón and Font, 2014) and cross-national comparison would show whether national-level characteristics come into play.

Our findings have important implications for ongoing debates in the field of democratic innovations. First, the systematic empirical assessment of the degree of implementation of a diverse set of proposals questions the commonly held impression that most of these processes are democratically crafted but have no impact on policy and practice. The considerable attention received by processes more focussed on democratic processes than in policy impact in the academic world may be partly responsible of this result. Most of the real world events where academics are less involved involve more participatory inequalities and more limited deliberation, but their main goal is precisely to produce policy suggestions. In case this was the correct interpretation, this finding would be another advantage of the chosen research strategy addressed to capture the large diversity of participatory settings, instead of those with a larger democratic attractive.

This evidence needs to be tempered, however, with our second broad finding: even if substantial implementation prevails, cherry-picking exists and it tends to follow a quite rational pattern, becoming an additional power resource in the hands of local authorities. This finding should also inform our assessments of the potential and pitfalls of local participatory processes.

References

Alarcón, Pau and Font, Joan. 2014. "Where Are the Boundaries of Deliberation and Participation? A Transatlantic Debate", *Journal of Public Deliberation*, Vol. 10: Iss. 2, Article 11.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo. 2005. *Militants and citizens. The politics of participatory democracy in Porto Alegre*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo; Heller, Patrick and Silva, Marcello. 2011. *Bootstrapping democracy: transforming local governance and civil society in Brazil*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo and Ganuza, Ernesto (2014): "Participatory budgeting as if emancipation mattered", *Politics & Society*, 42 (1): 29-50.

Barrett, Gregory; Wyman, Miriam and Schattan, Vera. 2012. "Assessing the policy impacts of DCE". Comparing engagement in the health policy processes of Brazil and Canada", in Tina Nabatchi, John Gastil, Michael Weisner and Matt Leighninger (eds.): *Democracy in motion. Evaluating the practice and impact of deliberative civic engagement*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Boulding, Carew and Wampler, Brain. 2009. "Voice, votes and resources: evaluating the effect of participatory democracy on well-being", *World Development*, 38 (1): 125-135.

Bryan, Frank. 2004. *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Carmines, Edward G. and Stimson, James A. 1980. "The Two Faces of Issue Voting", *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1): 78-91.

Cooke, Bill and Kothari, Uma (eds.). 2001. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.

Cooper, Emmeline and Smith, Graham. 2012. "Organizing Deliberation: The Perspectives of Professional Participation Practitioners in Britain and Germany", *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 8 (1). Article 3.

Dahl, Robert. 1998. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Drakiewicz, Anna; Challies, Edward and Newig, Jens. 2015. "Public participation and local environmental planning: Testing factors affecting decision quality and implementation from four case studies in Germany", *Land Use Policy*, 46: 211-222.

Fiorino, Daniel J. 1990. "Citizen Participation and Environmental Risk: A Survey of Institutional Mechanisms", *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 15: 226-243.

Font, Joan and Blanco, Ismael. 2007. "Procedural legitimacy and political trust: the case of citizen juries in Spain", *European Journal of Political Research*, 46: 557-589.

Font, Joan; Della Porta, Donatella and Sintomer, Yves (eds.). 2014. *Participatory democracy in Southern Europe: causes, characteristics and consequences*. London; New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Fournier, Patrick et al. 2011. *When citizens decide. Lessons from Citizens Assemblies on electoral reforms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fung, Archon. 2006. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance", *Public Administration Review*, December, 66-75.

Gilman, Hollie Russon. 2013. "Transformative deliberations: participatory budgeting in the United States", *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 8, 2, Article 11.

Goodin, Robert E. and Dryzek, John S. 2006. "Deliberative Impact: The Macro-political Uptake of Mini-Publics", *Politics and Society*, 34: 1-26.

Hox, Joop J. 2010. *Multilevel analysis: Techniques and applications*. New York: Routledge.

Joss, Simon. 1998. "Danish Consensus Conferences as a Model of Participatory Technology Assessment: An Impact Study of Consensus Conferences on Danish Parliament and Danish Public Debate", *Science and Public Policy*, 25: 2-22.

Klijn, Erik-Hans and Koppenjan, Joop F.M. 2000. "Politicians and interactive decision making: institutional spoilsports or playmakers", *Public Administration*, 78 (2): 365-387.

Koch, Philippe. 2013. "Bringing power back in: collective and distributive forms of power in public participation", *Urban Studies*, 50: 2976-2999.

Klüver, Lars. 1995. "Consensus conferences at the Danish Board of Technology", in Simon Joss and John Durant (eds.): *Public Participation in Science: the role of consensus conferences in Europe*. London: Science Museum.

Labone, Julien and Chase, Robert. 2009. "Who is at the wheel when communities drive development? Evidence from the Philippines", *World Development*, 37 (1): 219-231.

Lowndes, Vivien; Pratchett, Lawrence and Stoker, Gerry. 2001. "Trends in Public Participation: Part 2 - Citizens' Perspectives", *Public Administration*, 79: 445-455.

Maas, Cora J.M. and Hox, Joop J. 2004. "Robustness issues in multilevel regression analysis", *Statistica Neerlandica*, 58 (2): 127-137.

Maas, Cora J. M. and Hox, Joop J. 2005. "Sufficient sample sizes for multilevel modeling", *Methodology*, 1 (3): 86-92.

Mazeaud, Alice; Sa Vilas, Marie-Hélène and Berthomé, Guy-el-Karim. 2012. "Penser les effets de la participation sur l'action publique à partir de ses impensés", *Participations*, 1 : 6-29.

Newman, Janet; Barnes, Marian; Sullivan, Helen and Knops, Andrew. 2004. "Public Participation and Collaborative Governance", *Journal of Social Policy*, 33: 203-223.

Olken, Benjamin. 2010. "Direct democracy and local public goods: evidence from a field experiment in Indonesia", *American Political Science Review*, 104 (2): 243-267.

Ryan, Matt and Smith, Graham. 2012. "Towards a Comparative Analysis of Democratic Innovations: Lessons from a small-N fs-QCA of Participatory Budgeting", *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 70, Extra 2: 89-120.

Singer, Judith D. and Willett, John B. 2003. *Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sintomer, Yves; Herzberg, Carsten and Röcke, Anja. 2008. "Participatory Budgeting in Europe:

Potentials and Challenges”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32 (1): 164-178.

Sintomer, Yves and Del Pino, Eloisa. 2014. “The national and regional contexts of participatory experiences”, in Joan Font, Donatella Della Porta and Yves Sintomer (eds.): *Participatory democracy in Southern Europe: causes, characteristics and consequences*, London; New York: Rowman and Littlefield, p 21-36.

Smith, Graham. 2009. *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Graham; Richards, Robert and Gastil, John. 2015. “The Potential of Participedia as a Crowdsourcing Tool for Comparative Analysis of Democratic Innovations”, *Policy & Internet*, 7(2): 243-262.

Tatenhove, Jan Van; Edelenbos, Jurian and Klok, Pieter-Jan. 2010. “Power and interactive policy-making: a comparative study of power and influence in 8 interactive projects in the Netherlands”, *Public Administration*, 88 (3): 609-626.

Table 1. Accomplished sample composition

	Participatory Processes		Policy Proposals	
	N	%	n	%
Nº of experiences				
Three or more	24	61.5%	398	65.1%
Less than three	13	33.3%	192	31.4%
No info	2	5.2%	21	3.5%
Process Design				
Participatory budget	8	20.5%	158	25.9%
Strategic planning	14	35.9%	269	44.0%
Other permanent	8	20.5%	88	14.4%
Other temporary	9	23.1%	96	15.7%
Municipality Size				
Less than 5,000 inh.	3	7.7%	49	8.0%
5,000 to 10,000 inh.	8	20.5%	129	21.1%
10,001 to 20,000 inh.	6	15.4%	87	14.2%
20,001 to 50,000 inh.	6	15.4%	101	16.5%
More than 50,000 inh.	16	41.0%	245	40.1%

Source: Cherry-picking Project Datafile

Table 2. The explanatory factors of policy proposals' success

Types of factors	Variables	Operationalization: response categories	Mean / Standard deviation
Social and political local factors	Organisational culture	1 (only one experience) to 3 (five or more)	2.10 (0.725)
	Participation plan	1 (yes), 0 (no)	0.60 (0.491)
	Resources available: Local budget	1 (up to 800€/inhabitant) to 6 (more than 1,200€)	3.73 (1.741)
	Size of municipality	1 (less than 5,000 inhabitants) to 5 (more than 50,000)	3.62 (1.371)
Contextual factors	Type of participatory process	1 (Participatory budgeting); 2 (strategic planning); 3 (other permanent processes); 4 (other temporary processes)	-
Process design	Quality of participation	0 to 3. Number of criteria fulfilled among the following: presence of facilitators or external consultants in the discussion, presence of independent experts providing information; high quality information	1.94 (0.802)
	Number of proposals per process	Numerical. Values between 1 and 131	53.24 (35.144)
	Other administrations involved	1 (yes), 0 (no)	0.52 (0.500)
	Challenging or not challenging	0 (not challenging); 1 (challenging)	0.41 (0.492)
Policy related factors	Implementation cost	0 to 4 (section 4 for details)	1.40 (1.088)
	Availability of external funding for implementation	1 (yes), 0 (no)	0.34 (0.474)
	Degree of support in local institution	1 (both politicians and local public servants clearly support it); 0 (none or only one of them clearly support it)	0.90 (0.304)

Source: own elaboration

Table 3. Multilevel estimation of the implementation of proposals

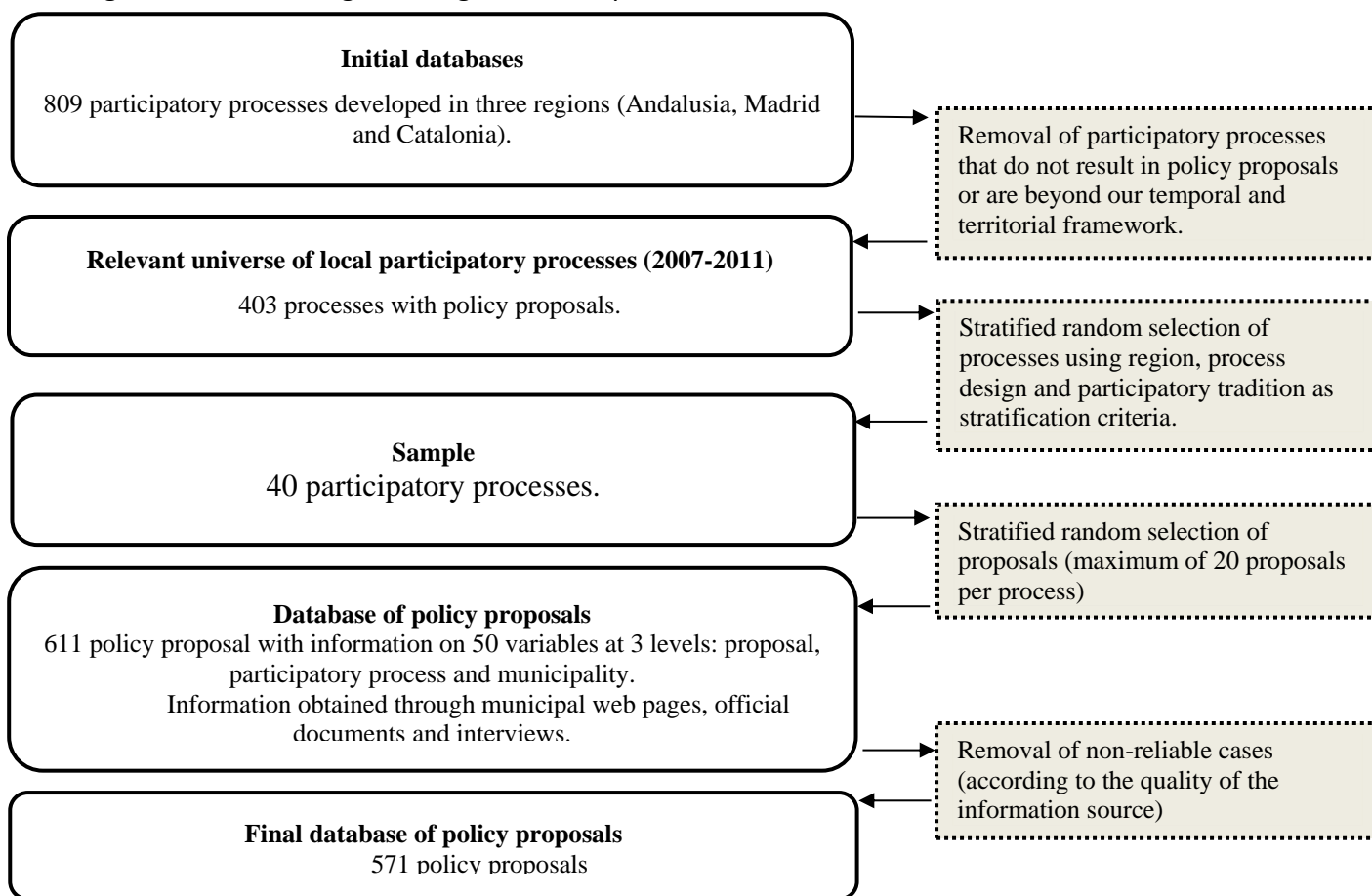
	Null model	Policy factors	Process factors	Municipality factors: Sociodemo	Municipality factors: Participatory culture	Municipality factors: all
Characteristics of the proposals						
Challenging	-.162 ^{***} (.033)	-.158 ^{***} (.032)	-.158 ^{***} (.032)	-.157 ^{***} (.032)	-.158 ^{***} (.032)	-.162 ^{***} (.033)
Cost	-.241 ^{***} (.058)	-.262 ^{***} (.058)	-.260 ^{***} (.059)	-.259 ^{***} (.059)	-.256 ^{***} (.059)	-.241 ^{***} (.058)
External funding	.154 ^{***} (.038)	.164 ^{***} (.038)	.166 ^{***} (.038)	.165 ^{***} (.038)	.167 ^{***} (.038)	.154 ^{***} (.038)
Internal support	.288 ^{***} (.035)	.287 ^{***} (.034)	.286 ^{***} (.034)	.287 ^{***} (.035)	.287 ^{***} (.035)	.288 ^{***} (.035)
Characteristics of the participatory process						
Quality of participation index			.185 [*] (.085)	.187 [*] (.085)	.184 [*] (.085)	.187 [*] (.085)
Type: participatory budgeting a			.135 [*] (.054)	.158 ^{**} (.061)	.143 [*] (.056)	.170 ^{**} (.063)
Type: other permanent processes			.079 (.075)	.086 (.075)	.084 (.075)	.093 (.075)
Type: other temporary processes			.111 (.066)	.123 (.067)	.118 (.067)	.134 (.069)
Number of proposals per process			-.116 (.085)	-.136 (.089)	-.116 (.086)	-.138 (.088)
Other administrations involved			-.084 (.046)	-.073 (.049)	-.083 (.046)	-.074 (.049)
Municipal context						
Magnitude (inhabitants)				.020 (.064)		.008 (.070)
Income per capita				-.055 (.069)		-.063 (.070)
Municipal density of participation					-.015 (.060)	-.023 (.060)
Participation plan					.023 (.048)	.030 (.052)
N	555	540	540	540	540	540
N2	40	39	39	39	39	39
Var-L1	.030	.015	.007	.007	.007	.007
Var-R	.141	.116	.115	.115	.115	.115
ICC-L1	.177	.112	.058	.057	.057	.055
-2LL	-269.96	-202.16	-194.24	-193.9	-194.12	-193.71
df	0	4	1	12	12	14
AIC	545.92	418.32	414.47	417.8	418.23	421.43
BIC	558.88	448.36	47.26	482.17	482.61	494.39
sb_rsqr_11		.236	.282	.284	.283	.285
sb_rsqr_12		.378	.527	.529	.530	.534

Standard errors in parentheses. Method: Maximum Likelihood. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Constant omitted. All non-dichomous variables are standardized so as to range between 0 and 1.

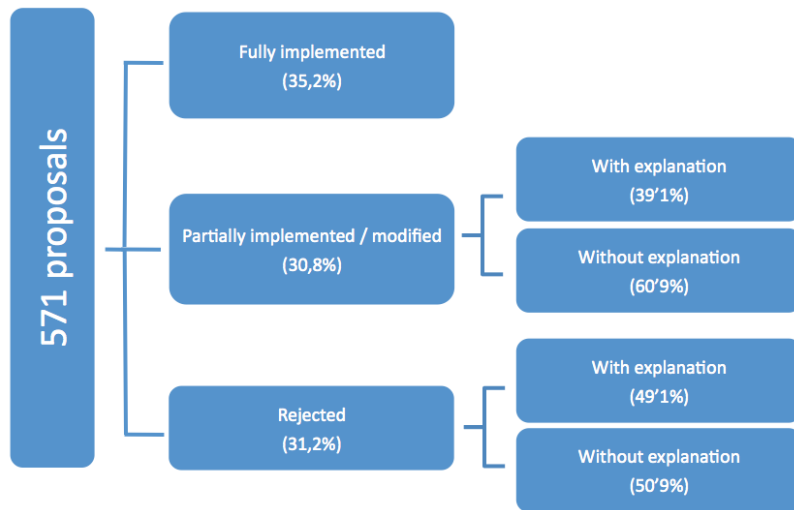
N (first-level number of observations), N2 (second-level number of observations), Var-L1 (variance of the intercept), Var-R (residual variance), -Deviance (-2 log likelihood), df (degrees of freedom), AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), BIC (Schwarz's Bayesian Information Criterion).^aReference category for "Type" of process: strategic planning

Figure 1. Methodological design: main steps



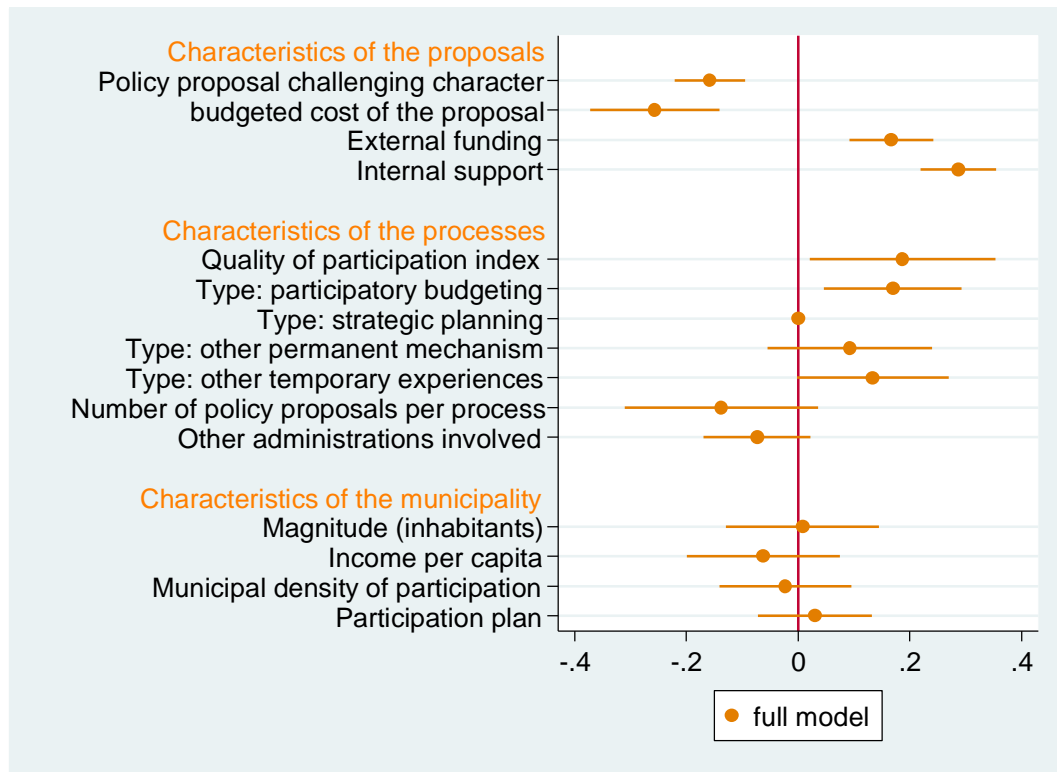
Source: own elaboration

Figure 2. Percentage of policy proposals being implemented, modified and explained



Source: Own elaboration. N = 571

Figure 3: OLS Coefficients of Independent Variables (model 6)



Source: Own elaboration. N = 540.