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Accountability Towards Citizens: Stakeholder perception from Portuguese Local Government

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Abstract

New Public Management reform puts an all-new perspective on public managers and politician's accountability towards citizens. It tends to shift public administration to an open system making citizens an important stakeholder. Public participation has been reported as frequently used in service delivery and management (mostly budgetary) decisions. Public administration scholars and practitioners analysed, in the last decade, the different ways of citizens participation, their motivation, impact on public management and public officer opinion concerning citizen's co-management (Yang & Callaham, 2007; Handely, Milam, & Howell-Moroney, 2010; Wang, 2001).

This paper proposes to test the relation between the mechanisms to voice citizens, political responsiveness, citizen's political culture and contextual factors. Firstly, we argue that citizens' participation is greater and meaningful according to the level of ethical responsibility displayed by politicians. The second explanation is based on the degree of citizen political culture and argues that in jurisdictions where citizens are more aware of and more motivated to follow public policies, there will be a higher level of public participation. Finally, we argue that there are contextual factors that also play an important role in this accountability process.

Accountability Towards Citizens: Stakeholder perception from Portuguese Local Government

The responsiveness of politicians, in the use of their public powers, has been a topic of interest by academics from the beginning of the study of administrative science. Woodrow Wilson (1887, p. 213) argued that there is no danger in power, if only it be not irresponsible. Although this early call, accountability, responsiveness and civic participation only became a major issue, within the reform agenda, since the last two decades. The fragmentation that occurred in public organizations, the managerial agenda and the latest tendencies of new public service established the citizen as an important stakeholder in the decision making process.

We found a lot of academic work dealing with accountability (Barberis, 1998; Deleon, 1998), civic participation (Carr, 2010; Evans, 2004; Handely, Milam, & Howell-Moroney, 2010; Moynihan, 2003; Oliver, 2000; Tavares & Carr, 2010) and managerial responsiveness (Bryer, 2006; Chi, 1999; Wang, 2001; Yang & Callaham, 2007). Although all this prior work, this paper tries to fill a lacuna since it tries to analyze, as a whole, what has been treated separately to explain the willingness of elected officials to voice citizens. Academics have focused on civic participation and on their motivation to have an active citizenship, but we argue that no matter how much one is willing to have an active participation he can only do so if politicians opt to promote the proper tools of participation. Adapting Mosher (1968) argument, we believe that responsibility comes in two ways: an objective way based on the political actions and a subjective way linked to psychological aspects and politicians' values. That is, accountability can be measured by looking at the efforts that public officials make to have transparency in their management, by the mechanisms that held them accountable to stakeholders and by their moral understanding and ethical standards. Accountability, through the promotion of citizen participation, comes in both ways: one depending on the moral responsiveness of politicians; and the other, directly related with the external environment that will pressure politicians to promote mechanisms of civic participation.

So, in this paper, we argue that the political decisions which open ways of communication and civic participation are based on an individual political motivation, as well as on outsider pressures. We use political responsiveness, citizens' political culture

and contextual factors as a three-way explanation to the institutional changes that allows citizens to play an active role in decision-making process.

We gathered data, for this paper, from a survey conducted among local governments in Portugal. We chose the local level of government since it is the level where civic participation is maximized as well as the political motivation to do so. The number of mechanisms that allows citizen participation is our dependent variable. As independent variables, we use political responsiveness, citizen political culture and contextual factors. Responsiveness to participation values was obtained from a ranking based on respondents' perception on public participation. Citizen political culture was measured using a set of three indicators: electoral participation, education level and civic participation. Local government size and the concentration of mass media were used to measure contextual factors.

This paper is divided in seven sections. In the first we present the bases of accountability and the changes that occurred in public stakeholders' perception. Second we present our explanation of incumbents' decision to voice citizens. Thirdly, we define the different kind and tools of civic participation analyzed in this investigation. Fourth, we systematically state the hypotheses that test our theoretical explanation. The indicators for each hypothesis are presented in the fifth part. Six, we explain our empirical models and results. Finally, we discuss the main conclusion of this investigation.

Accountability and citizen's participation

Until few years ago, Public Administration tended to organize itself within its own boundaries refusing forms of externalization. Based on centralized procedures and formal authority, Public Administration has revealed to be a very closed organization only willing to accept citizen's participation as a mechanism of power legitimacy. In this case, politicians were only accountable to the public, via parliament, for their own decisions and those of their staff and departments (Barberis, 1998). However *status quo* changed. Reform movements introduced market and networking solutions and led Public Administration to adopt major strategies of externalization. The proliferation and multiplication of entities with responsibilities in the provision of public service made accountability a much complex process. Street-level bureaucrats, private agents,

nonprofit organizations and elected officials, all share responsibilities that were not suitable to be controlled, only, by the traditional election scheme (Bertelli & Lynn, 2003).

In a first stage, New Public Management (NPM) reform agenda, driven by a neo-liberal set of doctrines, was based on the introduction of performance management system, fragmentation and competition spirit in public administration. New forms of accountability were needed to deal with managerial reforms (Deleon, 1998; Maesschalck, 2004). The political and hierarchical control gave place to a contractual control and, as a consequence, accountability switched from a political to a more rational orientation. The focus centered on how to control the new agencies and balance their greater autonomy with the necessity to make them accountable for their actions. At the same time, managerial reform introduced the concept of stakeholder in Public Management. That is, the idea of responsiveness of public officials towards a group of people that are affected by their action. Between all the stakeholders, citizens assume a central part in the accountability process. In the beginning acting as customers, evaluating the service provided and offering critical information about their satisfaction and the quality of the service provided by contracted agents

On a second stage, accountability incorporated political responsibility beyond the traditional electoral process. The main function of the State isn't only to make economically efficient decisions but also to voice citizens and gather civic participation to improve quality in decision and acceptance in implementation (Davids, Theron, & Maphunye, 2005). Some academics (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Araújo, 2007) argue against the reductive understanding of citizens as costumers. They argue that the concept of customer is linked to a market relation where both sides are compelled to fulfill the terms of a formal contract. The problem is that, being a market type relation, it is bounded by the length of the contract. Being a citizen is much more than that. It's belonging to a political community where continuous and permanent relations are expected. New Public Service paradigm argues that the search for a better State isn't only achieved with better managerial processes; it's also promoting democratic processes of decision making allowing citizens to play an active role (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). In other words, the idea is to build a new concept of citizenship. And, by that, we mean that an active citizenship behavior can't be restricted to a simple electoral participation, it's

more than that. It's a process where citizen shares responsibilities and takes decisions with public officials. So, nowadays, civic participation is understood as a way to bring performance and accountability to public management (Moynihan, 2003).

Theories of participation

A lot of empirical work has been done by academics in order to determine which factors explain citizens' active participation in their communities. Some works focus to find evidence in order to explain citizens' motivations of voting. Others focus on the citizens' choice to participate in community welfare provision through non-profit organizations. In this paper we argue that citizens' participation is, also, due to political decisions from elected officials. We argue that, the citizen depends also on the political decision to voice citizens, providing specific mechanism of participation. So, we are looking forward to bring together the pressures put, on elected officials, by citizen eager to participate and the willingness of political official to be accountable to their shareholders. Adapting Handley and Howell-Moroney (2010) the main idea of the paper is that communities where political officials feel greater accountability to citizens or feel greater pressure to be accountable will have higher levels of citizen participation.

Several theories have been used to explain political decisions to provide the proper institutional adjustment to allow more civic engagement in government. The political responsiveness argument captures the level of mayors' commitment and willingness towards citizens' participation. One that has higher ethical value to voice citizens is expected to put more efforts in making participatory tools more available (Yang & Callahan, 2007; Demiris, 2006; Handely, Milam, & Howell-Moroney, 2010).

Citizens display different participatory behaviours, depending on their political culture. Some feel more attractiveness to an active citizenship (high political profile). Others, with a low-political profile, don't have the same necessity to play such an active role in public governance. Communities where citizens have more high political profile are expected to have more participatory mechanisms.

Beside the citizens' willingness to participate and the degree of accountability displayed by public official, the fact is that contextual factors can motivate

both sides towards more participation. The size of communities and mass media accuracy are, among other, factors that can help to understand the levels of citizen participation.

Political responsiveness

Bryer (2006) explains responsiveness in public administration as a *continuum* based on three ethical perspectives: control-centered; discretionary; and deliberative. The first focuses on a formal responsiveness shaped by bureaucratic rules, norms and structures. The others are more suitable to an administration willing to promote citizen participation in decision-making process as a way to balance both organizational and transparency fragmentation. Responsiveness ethically based on a discretionary perspective is linked to the New Public Management reform and entrepreneur's responsiveness. Flexibility and competitive trends hit public administration in a way that managers were allowed to engage a strategy of empowering customers in a specific organizational strategy of orientation towards identified stakeholders. Deliberative perspective focuses on collaborative responsiveness as the extent to which elected officials seek civic participation and feel motivated to share some degree of their public powers. This responsiveness is the result of an evolutionary process in public administration, starting from a point where citizens had a vague importance moving to a moment where they play an important role as collaborative partner (Vioga, 2002).

Civic engagement in governmental decision-making process depends on the level of responsiveness of political officials. If they feel more accountable to citizens, an effort will be made to schedule public hearing, to hold informal contact, to use participatory budget and to promote citizen inquiries (Handely, Milam, & Howell-Moroney, 2010; Schedler, 1999).

Prior studies have shown that political responsiveness concept has been widely used in academic work to explain willingness of public administration to engage civic participation. Chi (1999) uses responsiveness to test citizens' satisfaction towards government services. For Alford (2002), responsiveness is a way of public officials to build-up a relationship with their customers. This relationship is a selfish strategy for officials to gather information from citizens. Responsiveness toward external

stakeholders was used by Yang and Callaham (2007) to prove a positive relation with civic participation. Handely and Howell-Moroney (2010) found evidence that supports the fact that both responsiveness and the numbers of stakeholders clusters matters for citizens' participation. Nevertheless, all these works use mostly administrative responsiveness and actual civic participation. Few are concerned with political accountability to citizens or with institutional changes that allow more participatory strategies. This is probably due to the fact that public managers play a key role in decision-making process and lack of democratic legitimacy. In this paper we use political responsiveness to fill this gap and also because in the Portuguese case, as we've already mentioned, local government is characterized by a strong presidential system.

Political culture

Several studies have focused on the factors that lead to an active participatory attitude from citizens. Some focuses on the local government size, on the partisan competition, other on the population heterogeneity (ethnicity, religious and qualifications) and social status. Nevertheless, most of this investigation looks at civic participation as a social phenomena to be explained. Again, this is not our objective. We like to keep in mind that we seek to understand the incumbents' decisions to allow mechanisms of civic participation, and we argue that the political culture displayed by citizens can have an effect on the political decision to voice citizens.

Political culture has been traditionally defined as the way that citizens think of the government utility (Elazar, 1984) and as a way to define peoples' perception of the administrative output and their own participation in the political process (Almond & Verba, 1972). Elazar (1984) identified three political cultures. The differences relay on the use acknowledged to government since it is purely a servant of private interests (individualistic), or it's considered to serve the common good (moralistic); and it reaches a paternalistic pattern (traditionalistic). Almond and Verba (1972) typify the well known and mostly use classification of political culture: parochial, subject and participant. Participant political culture is defined as one where citizens have high level of political awareness and are conscience that they can organize themselves as groups to influence the decision-making process.

The main argument is that communities with higher levels of political culture will be more aware of political issues and will display a higher political profile. In consequence, citizens will be more willing to take a piece of the action and will increase pressure on elected officials to be more accountable and to allow greater civic participation.

When we deal with political culture, one of the first ideas that pops up to our head is the electoral process and citizens' active/passive participation. Evans (2004) provides us a full model of voting with determinants at macro, meso and mirco level. However this is not the objective of the paper, we rather focus on the relations between political culture and civic participation. By this participation we mean not only voting, but a larger understanding of the concept, one that emphasises the voluntary participation of citizens on the local government structures using the proper tools made available by the latest.

In prior academic work, we didn't found such an empirical testing of the concept of political culture, but rather an epistemological use. We are interested in defining, measuring and test the concept of participative political culture.

Contextual factors

Beside incumbents' political responsiveness and citizens' political culture, we found, on the literature, other relevant factors that explain participation. Contextual factors can drive politicians to be more accountable than they are willing to be. One factor seam to gather some consensus when explaining citizen' participation: size. However, despite the fact that there is a lot of academic works focusing on size and on its explanatory power, the true is that they focus on alternative approaches to it. Some have focus on the size of the local government jurisdiction while other chooses to deal with its bureaucratic size. Oliver (2000) found evidence that population size matters and should be taken in consideration. Later, Carr (2010), Tavares and Carr (2010) found evidence that, more importance than population, density plays an important role in civic participation. Wang (2001) uses the number of full-time employees to find evidence that the larger the local government the greater the participation will be. His explanation is that people are afraid to lose touch with the inside bureaucracy. So, people will tend to

participate more in bigger bureaucratic local government. Again, these academic works deal directly with citizen's decision to become civically active. This is not scope of this paper although we can use the same arguments since more willingness to participation will increase incumbents' pressure to become more accountable and to voice citizens.

Media also play an important role in civic participation process. Some classic work, such as Anderson (1984) and Lindblom (1980), have already explained the key role of mass media in agenda setting and exploring windows of opportunities to build public opinion. For this specific investigation, mass media are an important player since, as argue by Wang (2001), it influences peoples' attention to local government problems making them more aware.

As contextual factors, we argue that bureaucratic and community size as well as their level of concentration puts an additional pressure upon public officials to be more accountable towards citizens. We also argue that local and regional mass media can have an influence on setting up the political agenda making incumbents more vulnerable to public opinion.

Instruments of participation

So far we've highlighted and argue that the multiplicity of entities responsible to deliver public services and the evident fragmentation of responsibilities motivated a necessary update in the institutional accountability system. Citizen participation in decision-making process appears to suite both managerial and political strategies. First, because it serves the purpose of a central attention to the citizen as a stakeholder and secondly, it helps to build a more active citizenship. However citizen's participation, as we've already argued, can only happen if they are given the chance to do so. This is the main objective of this paper, that is, to analyse the factors that drive political official's decisions to provide participatory mechanisms.

Literature had done a systematic effort to categorize different and alternative ways and instruments of participation. Leach and Wingfield (1999), classified instruments of citizen participation into three categories:

1. Traditional – usually citizen participation is done through public meetings and public policy presentation;

2. Focus on customer – survey of customers satisfaction, monitorization of customers needs, complaints' book;
3. Focus on citizens – interactive websites, e-government, specialist meetings, referendums;

For the purpose of this paper, we use an alternative classification. We divided instruments of participation between political and administrative ones. As political instrument we've classified those that are, somehow, connected with political decision-making process of strategy choices for the local government:

- Local referendum – democratic process where citizens are asked to vote in relevant issues. Usually a question is asked and citizens mark whether they agree or not with the situation/bill;
- Public hearing – Public meeting with the purpose to allow citizens to comment on a specific issue;
- Committees – Creation of a group of expertise that will assist politicians in the decision making process. Local officials, choose to call citizens, based on their field of expertise, to give their opinion or to create a solution for a problem faced by the local government;
- Informal meetings/contacts – Casual meetings between citizens and their elected official. This informal situation happens whether in situations where citizens address themselves to the politicians in an attempt to solve their problems or when citizens e-mail their constituents;
- Participatory Budget – Budgetary process where a part of the overall budget is decided by citizens;

As administrative instruments we have those linked with participation regarding an on-going administrative procedure:

- Citizen Office – A specific department created specially to deal with citizens' needs. It's an office that concentrates the communication channels between local government and citizens;
- E-government – Electronic tools that allow citizens to follow the development of their petition through the phases of the administrative process;

- Citizens Complains Book - Administrative book were citizens can register their complains toward civil servant, political officials or the local government itself;

Hypothesis

One contribute of this work is the fact that it focuses on the institutional tools made available by local government to citizens. A lot of prior works focus on civic participation itself, on the numbers of citizens attending public hearings or going to a public meeting. The main objective is to capture and analyse citizens' behaviour *vis-à-vis* civic engagement strategies to allow the use of participatory mechanism. So, in our opinion, there is a lot of interest in analysing political behaviour which promote institutional changes that allow political and administrative forms of participation. We propose that the decision to promote voice to citizens is political and depends on the responsiveness of political officials, citizens' culture and contextual factors.

Our first hypothesis is based on Yang and Callaham (2007) and Handely and Howell-Moroney (2010) investigation. Political responsiveness represents the image, based on ethical value of civic engagement, that politicians have from a shared decision-making process. Political responsiveness represents also the incumbents' feeling of a trustable relation with citizens founded on accountability and transparency. Hence, our hypothesis is:

H₁: The greater the political responsiveness is the more participatory instruments will be available to citizen.

The second sets of hypotheses are based on the political culture argument. Although the political cultural concept is, normally, linked to a citizen determinant of participation, For the purpose of this paper we gave it a different use. Keeping his capacity to explain civic engagement, we argue that the elected officials' perception of this willingness to participate influence their decision to promote the needed institutional change to allow better and wider participation.

Earlier we stated that participative political culture would lead to bigger pressure on official elected to voice citizens. One major contribution of this work may be the empirical use of a participatory culture. As we already said, we couldn't find as much empirical as we hoped. So, we tried to measure participative political culture using three

different indicators. The first deals with voting process. We argue that citizens that care to vote and have a strong motivation to participate on an electoral act have the same motivation to use other means of participation. On the politician side, the level of participation on political election may be a sign of how much their citizens are willing to take a stand. Although there are some exceptions, we believe that there is a good probability that citizens who don't show interest in local government election aren't interested in the everyday life and problems of the community. Hence, we hypothesises that:

H₂: Bigger availability of participatory tools is positively linked to high levels of electoral participation.

We also argue that a participative political culture can be measured by the dispersion of vote through all the parties running for election. We believe that partisan competition will have a positive effect on civic participation. Political parties tend to focus on median voter preferences and to build up a sufficiently abstract agenda in order to maximize their votes and probabilities to win elections (Weimer & Vining, 1999). Doing that some branches of the population are left aside. This is an attractive political market for others parties to establish their electoral bases. Reminding the traditional idea that politicians are agents with selfish-motivation and seek re-election (Niskanen, 1971; Nozick, 1974), partisan competition will increase pressure on elected officials. We believe that politician in office will, in this situation, use all strategies to gain citizens preferences allowing them to participate, than we propose:

H₃: Communities with a wide concentration of votes in the winner party will have less participatory instruments.

One of elements that Almond and Verba (1972) identify to define participatory culture is the capacity of citizens to organize themselves in voluntary networks. Belonging to civic organization, citizens display a high capacity to work close to their community needs and to build up an entrepreneur spirit close to public administration ethics of the common good. We argue that people that have nonmonetary and altruist motivations to create non-governmental organizations will increase pressure on local government in order to allow more participation. So, our hypothesis is that:

H₄: Communities with more non-profit organizations will have more participatory instruments.

Finally, we believe that qualifications influence civic participation. People with more qualifications have more awareness of public affairs and have technical knowledge that allows a better participation. Yang and Callaham (2007) work found evidence that participation was held on due to the perception of government that some issue under debate were so complex to the majority of the citizens.

H₅: Communities with a higher level of qualification will have more participatory instruments.

At least, we consider contextual factors as those leading to willingness voice citizens. Our first argument is that size is an important factor when it comes to civic participation. In some communities, the relative small size of local governments allows population to keep control “on sight”. That is, citizens don’t feel the need of a proper set of participatory tools, since they know official bureaucrats and that they can keep track of their actions. The fact is that organizations grow and become more complex usually the staff follows this path making impossible to citizens to check directly each procedure. So, we argue that when citizens begin to lose track of their bureaucracy, they will put an extra pressure to have more participatory mechanisms. Hence our hypothesis:

H₆: The greater the administrative staff of the local government the more participatory instruments will be available to citizens.

On the other hand, bigger communities can make citizens alienated from collective problems and less willing to have a political high profile. This is not an opposite hypothesis from the earlier since we target to measure a different effect. In the last one we sought to control the administrative size of the local government, that doesn’t necessarily mean that we have a larger city, that’s why we need to get a proper indicator to gauge administrative size. In this case the argument is that living in bigger communities people are less familiar with their neighbours and less interested in local affairs. So we hypothesize that:

H₇: Communities with bigger population are likely to have less participatory instruments.

Recent work by Carr (2010) and Tavares and Carr (2010) stated that more than the size of the population, it is its concentration that can explain more civic

participation. The main idea is that population concentration creates denser social networks that stimulate participation in a way that undermines the hinder effect of city size. Hence we hypothesize that:

H₈: Communities with higher population density are likely to have more participatory instruments.

In our last hypothesis we argue that the existence of larger media will induce higher levels of awareness of local affairs. As we know, media plays a decisive role building up political agenda and seize windows of opportunities. We argue that more local newspapers and radios will promote local network. So, our hypotheses are:

H₉: Communities more politically aware have more participatory instruments.

H_{9,1}: Communities with more local newspapers are more political aware;

H_{9,2}: Communities with more local radios are more political aware;

The hypotheses introduced need to be fulfilled with indicators in order to be empirically tested. In the next section we will turn to data and methods employed in this analysis.

Data and Method

Presenting our hypotheses, we propose several determinants that drive elected officials' decisions to ensure political and administrative tools of participation. The study analyses the allocation of participatory tools in Portugal. We conducted an electronic survey addressed to the all 278 elected officials of continental Portuguese municipalities. We received 84 responses, but we only consider 73 as valid, due incomplete inquiries, corresponding to a 26.3% response rate.

Our dependent variable is a scale of participatory tools made available to citizens by incumbents. So, our proxy for the willingness to voice citizens is the number of different tools, administrative and political, that elected officials make available to their community. For each administrative and political tool of participation, we've created a dummy variable. The respondents received a summed score of their responses. High scores represented higher levels of administrative or political tools of participation, and lower scores represented the opposite. We also build an overall scale summing up both administrative and political scores.

The model specification includes several indicators for the three suggested explanatory factors: political responsiveness; political culture and; contextual factors.

Following procedures by Handely and Howell-Moroney (2010), we assess the level of political responsiveness using a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (4). Respondents were asked to rank several statements according to their level of agreement. Then we establish an index of political responsiveness based on the sum of the answers. We expect a positive effect between the score recorded on political responsiveness and participation.

Political culture is assessed by a set of four different variables: electoral participation; votes’ concentration; non-profit organizations and; level of qualification. Electoral participation is a well-known concept that measures the degree in which people with the ability to vote opt to participate in the electoral act. For the purpose of this investigation we use 2008 local government election data from the national commission of election, to capture the level of electoral participation. We expect a positive relation between electoral participation and civic participation. The concentration of the votes is calculated through the proportion of votes of the wings party/coalition. We expect that bigger concentration of votes in the winner will induce a lower willingness to voice citizens. Again data was collected from the national commission of election to capture the level of electoral abstention. The size of nonprofit sector in each community was already used in previous investigation (Tavares & Rodrigues, 2011), and it’s measured by the number of nonprofit firms in each jurisdiction registered in 2010 with the Social Security Financial Management Office of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. We measure the qualification of a community by its potential and accurate critical mass. We do this by measuring the proportion of population that have an undergraduate (or more) degree and by the number of people living in the local government jurisdiction. We expect to find a positive relation between this factors and the willingness of local government to promote civic participation. All these variables are collected from the National Bureau of Statistics (INE, 2009).

Finally, contextual factors are gauge by the local government size and the level of public awareness. The size of the local government was assessed in three different ways to fit the purposed hypothesis. Administrative size of each jurisdiction was measure using

the ratio between the numbers of local government employees for 1,000 habitants; data was collected from the National Bureau of Statistics (INE, 2009). The same source was used to determine the population of each municipality. In these cases we expect to find opposite behaviors. While the bureaucratic size is getting bigger we expect more participation, and, as we defined in our hypothesis, bigger population will drag down a more active citizenship due to the social alienation process. The indicators to gauge levels of awareness from citizens towards local affairs were extracted from the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of radios and local newspapers of the jurisdiction. Then, we build-up an index based on the sum of the answers. In this case we expect a positive relation to participation.

We use the number of parishes and the ideology as control variables. The number of parishes is a count variable based on the number of parishes that belong to a municipality. We expect to measure the effect of the administrative fragmentation in a local government, on the willingness to voice citizens. We also found relevant to measure the ideology of political officials and, as so, we use a dummy variable to test a relation between left/right wing municipalities and the number of participatory tools. Left wing was coded with “0” and right wing with “1”. All Variables and indicators are summarized in table 1 with their descriptive statistics.

[Table 1 here]

Our dependent variable, the number of tools of participation in each jurisdiction, is a count variable which requires the use of poisson regression. This is the appropriate estimation technique to treat event counts, when we can assume the assumption that the conditional mean of the distribution equals the conditional variance (equidispersion). We tested our models for overdispersion and the goodness-of-fit χ^2 test allows us not to reject the null hypothesis that the data is Poisson distributed. The poisson regression results are presented in Table 2. Coefficients are reported as incidence-rate ratios that represent an advantage in interpretation over standard poisson coefficients, since they do not depend on the level of the variable of interest or all other variables included in the model. A unit change in a given independent variable X_k changes the output count by a factor of $exp(\beta_k)$.

Empirical Findings

[Table 2 here]

The overall results confirm a strong relation between the level of political responsiveness and the willingness to voice citizens. High scores on the way that elected officials think about civic participation increases the participatory tools available to citizens. Contextual factors show strong explanation to the objective of this paper. Administrative size and local newspaper receive strong support, though in the first results aren't consistent with the hypotheses suggested. However, we didn't find such strong evidence when analyzing political culture. In this case, results show a lack of consistency and, sometimes, reject the purposed hypotheses.

The first set of results, using the scale of political participatory tools made available to citizens by incumbents as a dependent variable, found support from all arguments earlier presented. As already said, political responsiveness determines the use of more political tools of participation; again we've found strong evidence of it. Political culture argument is supported by the results of the qualification level. Jurisdictions with a more educated population put pressure on elected officials to make municipalities more open to citizen participation. Size argument received some support. In fact, jurisdictions with bigger population discourage citizens to have higher political commitment. As so, there isn't such pressure to consider its participation since people haven't strong social links with each other. The number of local newspaper has similar effect. Keeping people more informed about public problems will increase their awareness of political decision and, therefore, their pressure on incumbents to be heard in decision-making process. Nevertheless, some findings have a different behavior that what was expected. Electoral participation doesn't support our hypotheses and reveal that higher participation in election decrease the willingness of elected officials to make available more participatory tools. This fact can be explained as an effort made by the municipalities that have less electoral participation, in promoting mechanisms of participation and, doing so, they fight back abstention. Another drawback is the negative association found with higher number of local radios. The other happens when measuring size through administrative staff. Instead of controlling it increases bureaucracy claiming more participatory tools, and

citizen, in jurisdiction with more staff, feel more alienated and loose the mood to claim participation tools.

Results show evidence that the numbers of parishes have a positive relation with the decision to voice citizens. As noted on other academics works (Tavares & Carr, 2010; Tavares & Rodrigues, 2011) internal fragmentation makes people more demanding of participation.

The second set of results, using the scale of administrative participatory tools made available to citizens by incumbents as a dependent variable, received less overall support. Evidence allows us again to argue that the political responsiveness has an important role in making more participatory mechanisms available.

On the other hand, results, in this case, don't support our argument of size and lack of statistical significance in our political culture and political awareness argument. Using administrative staff and population to measure size, results indicate a negative relation, which invalidate our hypothesis.

Ideology, however, indicates that left wing municipalities are more willing to provide citizens with administrative tools of participation.

Conclusion

A lot of academic work has been made to analyse civic participation. Some of them deal with electoral participation, other with wider forms of participation. We argue that participation is only possible when elected officials create the appropriate tools, both political and administrative, to voice citizens.

Yang and Callaham (2007) and Handely and Howell-Moroney (2010) argue that political responsiveness of local managers can provide an explanation to the use of participatory mechanisms. The authors argue that there is a positive relation. The more managers see themselves accountable to citizens the more they are willing to voice them. Due to the Portuguese local government presidential system, we chose to direct our analysis to the president of the local government instead of the manager.

In addition to the political responsiveness, that has its foundation on the moral structures of the decision maker, we choose complement it by bringing in external pressures that can act on elected officials' decision to voice citizens. These external

factors are the political culture of citizens, their awareness of political process and the size of the local government.

We found evidence that some external pressures are positively related to more participatory mechanisms: level of population's education; mass media coverage. However political responsiveness is the argument that received the strongest support to explain the motivations of elected officials to create more participatory mechanisms.

So, we can argue that, although external factors have some influence in elected official decision to provide tools of participation, the final call depends on subjective factors based on ethical values of each political agent.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Dependent</i>				
Political Participation Scale	3.260274	1.343993	1	6
Administrative Participation Scale	2.219178	1.216171	0	4
Overall Participation Scale	5.479452	2.095694	1	10
<i>Independent</i>				
Political Responsiveness	10.57534	4.521301	0	19
Electoral Participation	63.25777	7.772204	46.88	78.67
Votes Concentration	52.91133	8.446488	34.09	76.56
Nonprofit Organizations (log)	2.428252	.9735617	.69	4.60
Level of qualification	83.4001	45.42788	0	223.46
Administrative Staff (per 1000)	16.15056	10.47413	0	48.24
Population (log)	9.861151	1.14964	7.8	12.19
Population Density	345.0807	1092.172	6.6	7597.17
Local Newspaper	1.794521	1.64957	0	17
Local Radio	.7260274	.6924248	0	2
Parishes	14.87671	14.17053	2	68
Ideology	.4383562	.4996193	0	1

Table 2. Poisson Regression Analysis

	Political Participation	Administrative Participation	Overall Participation
Independent variables	IRR (RSE)	IRR (RSE)	IRR (RSE)
Political Responsiveness	1.035079*** (.0138312)	1.037641* (.0227166)	1.035823** (.0148115)
Electoral Participation	.9764724** (.0092194)	.9971485 (.0117016)	.9850555* (.0085521)
Votes Concentration	1.004182 (.0048799)	1.00412 (.0059982)	1.004178 (.0039632)
Nonprofit Organizations (log)	.9223985 (.0800669)	.8310374 (.1080959)	.8869326 (.0754502)
Level of qualification	1.002432*** (.0008464)	.9991355 (.0013735)	1.001086 (.0008112)
Administrative Staff (per 1000)	.9837827*** (.0053207)	.9855827* (.0084088)	.9846588*** (.0049236)
Population (log)	.7940684** (.0748063)	.9940365 (.1424893)	.8705737 (.0779957)
Population Density	.9999925 (.0000304)	.9999125* (.0000508)	.9999657 (.0000233)
Local Newspaper	1.087783** (.0392322)	1.053811 (.0503107)	1.07196 ** (.0322783)
Local Radio	.796091** (.0760904)	1.100865 (.1247447)	.913892 (.0701085)
Parishes	1.008489** (.0040386)	1.004844 (.0057936)	1.006977* (.0041002)
Ideology	1.07502 (.0908156)	.8056773* (.0949719)	.9508305 (.0757457)
Observations	73	73	73
Wald chi2	64.40	23.60	29.32
Prob>chi2	.0000	.0231	.0035
Pseudo R ²	.0579	.0511	.0639
Goodness-of-fit	28.74185	49.40398	44.55328
Prob>chi2	.9998	.8337	.9320

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; two-tailed tests. Robust standard errors in parentheses.