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**P194: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Local Governments:  
Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

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# Participatory Budgeting in COVID-19 Times: A Perspective from Local Public Administration

## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the daily lives of populations around the world, affected household economies, forced national and subnational governments to manage declining revenues, and transformed patterns of behavior, practices, and processes. In this context of uncertainty, the barriers imposed by the pandemic have somehow affected the implementation of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in several countries. Brazil was a pioneer in the elaboration and adoption of the mechanism in its municipalities, and Portugal is currently the country with the highest rates of PB implementation worldwide. The goal of the paper is to explore the barriers imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic on PB, considering the perspective of Brazilian and Portuguese Local Public Administration. The research applied an online survey using a Likert-type scale to assess the perception of municipalities about the barriers imposed by COVID-19 pandemic on PB. Public administration officials responsible for carrying out PB, in both the municipalities of the state of Paraná (Brazil) and the municipalities of Portugal, indicated that the crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the carrying out of the processes. There is a sign that the pandemic imposed the alteration of PB processes. As for the possible restrictive consequences of the crisis on the implementation of the mechanism in the future, they are apparently not entirely clear, according to the municipalities analyzed in the two countries. The perception of public administration officials from Portuguese municipalities and cities in the state of Paraná (Brazil) about the obstacles imposed on PB by COVID-19 pandemic can contribute to the ongoing debate about the barriers caused by the crisis.

**Keywords** | Participatory Budgeting, Local Governments, Brazil, Portugal, Pandemic COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event. It began as a health emergency generated by a new disease that caused a high number of deaths, followed by a social, economic and financial crisis of global proportions (Anessi-Pessina et al., 2020). The impact of this pandemic has altered the daily lives of populations around the world, affected household economies, forced national and subnational governments to manage declining revenues, and transformed patterns of behavior, practices, and processes (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). In this context of uncertainty, the barriers imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic have somehow affected the implementation of PB in several countries (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020; Cho et al., 2021).

As a process through which citizens decide or contribute to decision-making on public investments, especially at local level (Cabannes, 2009; Santos, 1998); PB is one of the most important innovations in governance and participatory democracy worldwide (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2015). The cities of Porto Alegre, São Paulo, Palmela, Lisbon, New York or Paris are just a few examples of cities that use PB and foster citizen participation in the discussion and decision-making on local public policies. It is currently estimated that there are between 11,690 and 11,825 PB experiences in 71 countries (Dias et al., 2019).

The pioneering approach of the PB occurred in the city of Porto Alegre (capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul) in Brazil, in 1989, followed by national and international repercussions, whether through the development of a complex instrument of dialogue with citizens, or through continuity over time (Avritzer, 2008; Lüchmann, 2014; Sintomer et al., 2012).

Portugal was also influenced by this dynamic, with the pioneering experience taking place in Palmela, in the district of Setúbal, in 2002 (Dias & Allegretti, 2009; Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). In this scope, Lisbon was the first capital of Europe to implement PB, in 2009, (Cabannes, 2009) and Portugal, the first country worldwide to implement the PB at a national level, created by the Portuguese government, in 2017 (Dias et al., 2019).

If Brazil is responsible for the wide dissemination of PB since the 1980s, Portugal is currently the country with the largest number of processes in the world, aspects that make these countries paradigmatic in the expansion of the mechanism (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). The goal of this paper is to explore the barriers imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic on PB, considering the perspective of Brazilian and Portuguese Local Public Administration. The research considers among its assumptions that limitations on carrying out the PB during the pandemic can impose restrictions, change the form, cause the suspension or cancellation of processes, with possible consequences in the period after health crisis. From the assumption presented, the research intends to answer the following questions: Has the COVID-19 pandemic caused a negative impact on the performance of PB processes? Are the possible barriers imposed by COVID-19 perceived with the potential to impact the post-pandemic period?

The COVID-19 pandemic is a recent phenomenon that has caused several changes around the world (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021), including changes in participatory processes. Few authors have so far explored the barriers imposed on PB originating or accentuated by the crisis. In this context, there is a gap to be analyzed regarding the perception of barriers arising from the COVID-19 pandemic in carrying out PB in two countries that are so important for the development of the mechanism, such as Brazil and Portugal. The research intends to contribute theoretically to the broadening of the spectrum of analysis by joining research that addresses the theme of the quality of local democracy. It also intends to contribute empirically from the perspective of Brazilian and Portuguese municipalities by indicating the perception of local governments about the barriers

imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, it intends to provide elements to improve the understanding of the obstacles to mechanism, both for academics and participants in the process.

In addition to this introduction, the paper is structured in four other sections. The next section deals with the theoretical contextualization of the research, addressing the barriers of PB caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the context of the mechanism's development in Brazil and Portugal, bringing together the similarities and differences of each case. The third section deals with the research methodology, characterizing the sample and the survey used to collect data. The fourth section presents and discusses the results obtained through the survey sent to Portuguese municipalities and cities of the state of Paraná in Brazil. The fifth section presents the conclusions and proposes possible approaches for further research on the subject.

## **2. Theoretical contextualization and analysis**

### **2.1. Barriers of PB related to COVID-19 pandemic**

The global crisis caused by COVID-19 has led governments around the world to adopt public administration measures to contain the spread of the disease. The capacity of national health systems has a limit to attend to those infected by the disease, to avoid the possibility of not serving all patients in a given period, many national and local governments have adopted measures so that the number of infected does not exceed the maximum of the capacity supported by the health system (Vidal, 2020). Among the barriers imposed by the crisis are restrictions on circulation and face-to-face meetings, resulting from measures adopted by governments to combat COVID-19 (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020).

Governments have been forced to provide immediate responses for the health sector, in addition to providing support for families, workers and businesses (Bresser-Pereira, 2020). A large portion of the countries affected by COVID-19 will experience high government deficits and debt, putting the budget in a central role in the face of the crisis (Anessi-Pessina et al., 2020; Bresser-Pereira, 2020). A key aspect for carrying out the PB is the availability of resources for its funding (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). Restrictions on face-to-face meetings and reduced revenue are among the reasons used by local governments to suspend, cancel, change the deadline or in-person format of the PB process (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020; Cho et al., 2021; Popławski, 2020). Barriers of PB process arising from the COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed by researchers in Slovakia, France, Poland and Nepal.

In Slovakia, most local governments have chosen to suspend the PB (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). According to Bardovič and Gašparík (2021), among the actions taken by municipalities that decided to suspend the process, was to change the PB cycle to two years. A similar measure was adopted in some Polish municipalities, since the pandemic caused a change in the calendar, allowing more time for adaptations to the new reality (Popławski, 2020). In France, it was verified that some PB processes were postponed for several months, others canceled; in the municipalities where they were carried out, there was a reduction in the number of proposals presented, and

in others there were increases in the initiatives (Cho et al., 2021). In Nepal, it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic played a relevant role in the postponement of the annual PB drafting process (Bhusal, 2020).

In Poland, many local governments waited for central government guidance seeking to postpone PB processes and avoid using a possible online solution (Poplawski, 2020). Even with the evidence of obstacles to adopting technological solutions, the use of online tools was one of the main facilitators of holding PB in Slovakia and Poland (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Popławski, 2020). However, in Nepal none of the surveyed municipalities used digital platform to implement PB. In addition to this aspect, the local governance project does not foresee online participation due to possible resistance from politicians and local government officials (Bhusal, 2020).

The barriers imposed on PB processes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis are justified by many leaders due to social distancing measures and the expansion of financial restrictions (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020; Cho et al., 2021; Popławski, 2020). Meanwhile, other inherent barriers to PB are accentuated by the crisis caused by the pandemic. Research about Nepal identified that there appears to be no mechanism in the PB processes to ensure that the proposals of citizens are expressed and genuinely reflected in decisions; another aspect detected concerns the participation of the population not being perceived as important by local leaders (Bhusal, 2020).

The occurrences, verified in Nepal, about the local government's perception of the importance of the participants is a recurring barrier. Other authors had already pointed to this aspect, demonstrating that the local political power was not in fact interested in citizen' participation and that they adopted the measures they intended, regardless of the population's proposals (Zepic et al., 2017). In Poland it was evidenced that digital exclusion remains an important barrier and mainly affects the elderly (Poplawski, 2020). In summary, Table 1 presents the main barriers caused or accentuated by COVID-19 pandemic, properly identified in recent literature.

Table 1: Barriers caused or accentuated by COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>Main barriers arising from or accentuated by COVID-19 pandemic</b>		<b>Countries</b>
1.	Restrictions on face-to-face meetings.	Slovakia, France, Poland and Nepal
2.	Budgetary restrictions due to the crisis.	Slovakia, France, Poland and Nepal
3.	Absence of an online platform.	Nepal
4.	Restrictions to the use of online technologies to carry out the PB process	Poland, Nepal
5.	Technology access restrictions.	Poland, Nepal
6.	Citizen participation is perceived as not being relevant.	Nepal

Source: Own elaboration

The COVID-19 pandemic alone should not be held responsible for placing citizens on the periphery of public policy decisions. Difficulties related to institutional design, planning, imbalance of power

and the absence of an online platform contributed to limiting the public space for the population (Bhusal, 2020). According to Bardovič and Gašparík (2021), the use of innovative methods through technological solutions can be considered effective in the participatory process in an online environment, an aspect that suggests a possibility of use beyond the pandemic period. To Poplawski (2020) most Polish cities do not intend to change regulations to permanently adapt PB processes to the online format, intending to return to face-to-face format after the pandemic.

## **2.2. PB in Brazil and Portugal**

Brazil and Portugal have similarities and differences regarding the expansion environment of PB processes. Both countries alternated from dictatorial regime to democracy. Portugal in the mid-1970s and Brazil in the mid-1980s, both of which provided for in their new National Constitutions instruments to promote citizen participation in politics (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019).

The city of Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande Sul, stood out in Brazil due to the organizational capacity of civil society and the degree of use of the legal framework provided by the new Federal Constitution (Avritzer, 2006). In this environment, the first PB in Brazil was started in 1988 through a coalition of left-wing parties called "Frente Popular", composed by "Partido dos Trabalhadores" and the former Brazilian Communist Party, now denominated "Partido Popular Socialista" (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). Although the "Partido dos Trabalhadores" is responsible for most cases of PB in absolute numbers, between 1989 and 2012, the mechanism was adopted by 256 municipalities from different political parties across the ideological spectrum, for at least one administration (Bezerra, 2017).

Porto Alegre's PB introduced regional and thematic assemblies, the Participatory Budget Council (COP), and deliberation on the constitution of the participatory process by the participants themselves (Avritzer, 2006). The OP's pioneering experience aimed to allocate a portion of public resources to the neediest sectors of society (Baiocchi, 2001).

The highest incidence of PB processes in Brazilian municipalities occurred between 2000 and 2004, followed by a continuous decrease until 2012 (Spada, 2012). There is a decrease in PB processes in Brazil that is more intensely perceived after the 2016 elections (Dias et al., 2019). Falanga and Lüchmann (2019) suggest that there is a slow decline in the number of PB processes in the country, due to the reduced participation of "Partido dos Trabalhadores" in the government of municipalities after 2016, while at the same time they perceive the adoption of the mechanism by other left and right-wing parties.

In the early 1990s, Brazilian municipalities had greater capacity to make investments and execute the proposals defined in the participatory process, even if through increased indebtedness without long-term support (Bezerra, 2017). For the author (2017), and among the reasons for the decline in the number of PB processes in Brazil, are the set of subsequent norms that aimed at the fiscal and financial balance of municipalities, such as the Fiscal Responsibility Law (LRF) of 2000, and social policy legislation that established links between revenue and expenditure, which

guaranteed resources for the social area, but reduced discretion and limited the possibility of spending. According to the World Atlas of Participatory Budgets, based on data from the year 2016, Brazil had 435 PB processes in local governments (Dias et al., 2019).

The end of dictatorial period (1933-1974) in Portugal, marked by Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, and social pressure for the promotion of a democratic regime fostered the definition of the national Constitution of 1976 (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). The transformations resulting from the transition to democracy were fundamental for the expansion of participatory spaces established in the legal-institutional framework presented in the country's Constitution (Gurgel, 2013).

Portugal's sociopolitical environment, from the perspective of citizens' discontent with representative democracy, explains the dissemination of PB as a way of bringing the population and elected representatives closer together (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). The expansion of participatory processes in Portugal was substantially influenced by Porto Alegre's PB, which was widely disseminated at the World Social Forums held in Latin America in the 1990s (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021).

Initially, most PB experiences in Portugal were of a consultative nature, such as the implementation of the first process by the Communist Party in 2002, in the small municipality of Palmela, near Lisbon (Dias & Allegretti, 2009; Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019). The second generation of PB in the country is characterized by the expansion of deliberative processes, in which citizens provide proposals and vote on projects (Dias & Allegretti, 2009). This second stage of PB in Portugal focuses on regaining citizens' trust and has adhesion from both left and right-wing parties (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019).

The diffusion of PB in Portugal, which began in 2000s, continued its expansion after the financial and socio-political crisis of 2008 (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). According to the same authors (2021), the country has one of the highest rates of local PBs in the world and implemented the first on a national scale in 2017. It stands out as an innovation in the country, the fact that PB processes are implemented at the three levels of government: national (the Youth PB and the School PB), regional (Azores and Madeira) and local (municipalities and parishes) (Dias et al., 2019). According to information from the World Atlas of Participatory Budgets (Dias et al., 2019), Portugal has 1686 PB processes in various institutions, among which 124 are in local governments.

Among the differences that mark the dissemination of PB between the two countries are the reduction in the number of municipalities that adopt the mechanism in Brazil (Bezerra, 2017) and the expansion in Portugal (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). Another feature refers to the mechanism's goals, in Brazil, the search for the expansion of social justice through the inclusion of the poorest at the center of the participatory process was one of the main motivators, while in Portugal PBs

represent a way to improve the relationship between voters and elected officials, to regain the trust of citizens (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Sample**

To answer the research questions about the perception of the possible negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the performance of OP processes and the possible effects of the restrictions imposed by the crisis over the next few years, online survey was sent to the public administration officials responsible for carrying out the mechanism in Brazilian and Portuguese municipalities.

It is important to highlight that Brazil is a country of continental dimensions. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the country has a territorial area of 8.510.345.538 km<sup>2</sup>, an estimated population (2020) of 211.755.692 people and a GDP per capita (2018) of approximately 7 thousand euros (IBGE, 2021). According to the Institute (2021), the municipality is a political-administrative unit in which the seat is called the city, the country has 5.570 municipalities distributed in 26 states and the federal district.

And Portugal, according to the Portuguese government (Portugal, 2021), has an area of 92.152 Km<sup>2</sup> divided into 18 districts on the mainland and 2 Autonomous Regions (Azores and Madeira). According to the Contemporary Portugal Database (PORDATA, 2021), the country has an estimated population (2019) of 10.286.3 million people, GDP per capita (2018) of approximately 19 thousand euros and has 308 municipalities, 278 in mainland Portugal, 11 in Madeira and 19 in the Azores.

Considering the territorial and population size and the number of local governments in the two countries, in Brazil, the state of Paraná was selected, which has, according to the IBGE (2021), a territorial area of 199.298.982 km<sup>2</sup>, divided into 399 municipalities and an estimated population of 11.516.840 people (2020), proportionally compatible with Portugal. According to the Brazilian Network for Participatory Budgeting, in 2014 Paraná had 13 cities that used the OP (RBOP, 2016).

In the state of Paraná, this research initially consulted the municipalities if they had implemented any PB process in some period. The consultation was carried out online in the electronic portals of the 399 municipalities through Federal Law No. 12.527/2011, known as the "General Law on Access to Public Information". In response to the consultation, 14 municipalities responded that they had realized PB in some period.

In Portugal, consultations were made on the Portal Eletrônico Portugal Participa<sup>1</sup>, from which 149 municipalities were identified that carry out or have carried out at some point the PB process.

From the identification of the municipalities of Paraná and Portuguese that implemented, at least once, the PB process, it was possible to send the survey by e-mail to local governments, between

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<sup>1</sup> Portugal Electronic Portal Participates: <http://www.portugalparticipa.pt/>



October 4th, 2020, and June 18th, 2021. In Paraná, 8 municipalities answered the questionnaire and in Portugal 78 responses were obtained.

The survey respondents are 46,5% male and 53,5% female. As for the position, 34,9% are political positions and 65.1% are technical positions. Regarding the age profile, the age of the research respondents ranged from 26 to 61 years. Concerning the number of years of experience with PB processes ranged from 1 to 15 years.

### **3.2. Survey**

The online survey used in the research were structured by a Likert-type scale and developed from the few works available in the literature review on the subject involving barriers of PB triggered by COVID-19 pandemic. Among the several scales available to measure perception or attitudes, one of the most common in research is the Likert scale. Elaborated by educator and psychologist Rensis Likert, in 1932, through his thesis, the researcher constructed a survey using a five-point scale that resulted in a research scale to measure attitudes more efficiently than other methods (Bermudes et al., 2016). Likert scales should be used whenever the researcher seeks to obtain answers that can be compared to each other (Alreck & Settle, 1995).

The survey questions used a Likert-type scale, providing the respondents with four statements: (1) the covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions to implementation of PB in your municipality in 2020; (2) the covid-19 pandemic changed the structure and the way of functioning of PB process in your municipality in 2020; (3) the covid-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of PB process in your municipality in 2020; and (4) possible restrictions to implementation of PB in the municipality resulting from covid-19 pandemic may impact the process in the forthcoming years.

The statements were accompanied by the following options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly Agree (4), and Do not know (5). The "Do not know" option was adopted so that respondents could indicate when they do not have the knowledge to evaluate the item.

Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which indicates the internal reliability of a data collection instrument (Kline, 1999). The acceptable value of Cronbach's Alpha must be greater than 0.7 (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2009). The scale reliability adopted in this research revealed a value equal to 0.896.

## **4. Results**

When analyzing the perception of research respondents in Brazilian municipalities of state of Paraná (see Table 2), 62.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that COVID-19 pandemic imposed restrictions to implementation of PB in 2020 and 75% agreed or strongly agreed that COVID-19 pandemic changed the structure and the way of functioning of PB process.

Regarding the cancellation of PB processes resulting from the consequences of the pandemic COVID-19, in Paraná, the answers were balanced between the 50% of the survey respondents

who disagreed or totally disagreed and the other 50% who agreed or totally agreed about the statement. As for the answers of the survey collaborators in the Brazilian municipalities regarding the item that addressed restrictions to the PB in the post-pandemic period, 50% disagreed or totally disagreed, 37.5% agreed or totally agreed with the statement, and another 12.5% did not know the answer.

Table 2: Relative frequency and absolute frequency per item on the perception of barriers of PB caused by COVID-19 pandemic, Brazil municipalities.

Barriers	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Do not know		Median	Mode
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f		
(1) The covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions to implementation of PB in your municipality in 2020	25.0%	2	12.5%	1	25.0%	2	37.5%	3	0.0%	0	3.00	4
(2) The covid-19 pandemic changed the structure and the way of functioning of PB process in your municipality in 2020	12.5%	1	12.5%	1	37.5%	3	37.5%	3	0.0%	0	3.00	3
(3) The covid-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of PB process in your municipality in 2020	37.5%	3	12.5%	1	12.5%	1	37.5%	3	0.0%	0	2.50	1
(4) Possible restrictions to implementation of PB in the municipality resulting from covid-19 pandemic may impact the process in the forthcoming years	25.0%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%	2	12.5%	1	12.5%	1	2.50	1

Source: Own elaboration

In Portugal the perception of the research collaborators indicates that 66.7% agreed or totally agreed with the statement that the pandemic COVID-19 brought restrictions to the realization of PB in the year 2020. And 56.4% agreed or totally agreed about the changes caused in the

structure and operation of the PB process caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, another 24.4% indicated that they did not know.

The survey collaborators in the Portuguese municipalities reacted as follows when answering about the barrier that deals with the cancellation of PB processes: 38.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and others indicated a perceptibly higher perception, 39.7%, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Regarding the item that addressed restrictions on PB in the post pandemic period: 43.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed and another 43.6% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 2: Relative frequency and absolute frequency per item on the perception of barriers of PB caused by COVID-19 pandemic, Portuguese municipalities.

Barriers	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Do not know		Median	Mode
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f		
(1) The covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions to implementation of PB in your municipality in 2020	10.3%	8	7.7%	6	23.1%	18	43.6%	34	15.4%	12	4.00	4
(2) The covid-19 pandemic changed the structure and the way of functioning of PB process in your municipality in 2020	10.3%	8	9.0%	7	17.9%	14	38.5%	30	24.4%	19	4.00	4
(3) The covid-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of PB process in your municipality in 2020	30.8%	24	7.7%	6	9.0%	7	30.8%	24	21.8%	17	4.00	1
(4) Possible restrictions to implementation of PB in the municipality resulting from covid-19 pandemic may impact the process in the forthcoming years	28.2%	22	14.1%	11	28.2%	22	15.4%	12	14.1%	11	3.00	1

Source: Own elaboration

The Public administration officials responsible for carrying out PB, both in the state of Paraná (Brazil) and in Portugal, agreed that COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on implementation of PB processes, considering the imposition of restrictions on the mechanism. However, there is no majority perception about the cancellation of the processes during the pandemic or about the impacts after the crisis.

These results are in line with the literature review. Other recent papers indicated that changes on PB processes during the COVID-19 pandemic were diversified between suspension, cancellation, and continuity with reduction and even expansion of investments. Changing the PB calendar for a longer period, allowing more time to adapt to the changes imposed by the crisis, was one of the measures promoted by municipalities that opted to suspend the processes (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020; Popławski, 2020). In France, in addition to the postponement of PB processes, there were cancellations and cases of municipalities that carried out the process with reduction and others with the expansion of proposals (Cho et al., 2021).

Although some authors indicate that changes in PB processes during COVID-19 pandemic may be positive, such as the use of technological solutions in Slovakia (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021), apparently the implementation of changes in post-pandemic period will depend on decisions of local leaders and participants in each municipality. In Poland, for example, most cities do not intend to change regulations to permanently adapt PB processes to the online format, the aim is to return to face-to-face format soon after the pandemic.

## **5. Conclusion**

PB is one of the most established democratic innovations worldwide (Dias et al., 2019; Falanga & Lüchmann, 2019; Sintomer et al., 2012). Brazil was a pioneer in the elaboration and adoption of the mechanism in its municipalities and Portugal is currently the country with the highest rates of PB implementation worldwide (Dias et al., 2019; Falanga et al., 2020). In this context, this paper discussed, first, the barriers imposed or accentuated by COVID-19 pandemic on PB in other countries. Second, the paper addressed the similarities and differences in the dissemination of PB processes in Brazil and Portugal. Among differences is the reduction of processes in the latter in Brazilian municipalities and the expansion in Portuguese ones. Then the perceptions of Local Public Administration in Portuguese municipalities and cities in the state of Paraná (Brazil) about barriers of PB caused by COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed.

The results seem to confirm that COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted PB processes according to surveys respondents in Brazilian and Portuguese municipalities. Half of the municipalities respondents in Brazil indicated that barriers imposed by pandemic will not have consequences in the post-crisis period. In Portugal, most respondents agreed, significantly more than those who disagreed, with the possibility of the occurrence of barriers to PB caused by the pandemic in the post-crisis period.

The consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on future of PB are apparently not entirely clear to municipalities respondents in both countries. The literature indicates that government indebtedness triggered by government's response to pandemic may generate some restriction on implementation of PB processes. In addition to restrictions on face-to-face meetings, the reduction in budget resources is among the reasons used by local governments to impose some type of barrier to PB process (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bhusal, 2020; Cho et al., 2021; Popławski, 2020). Many countries affected by COVID-19 will experience high government deficits and debt, indicating that budgeting will play a central role during and after the crisis. (Anessi-Pessina et al., 2020; Bresser-Pereira, 2020).

The research collaborators indicated that the pandemic has led changes in the form and structure of the PB. Although in Portugal 24.4% did not know the answer to this statement. Previous research reinforces that these alterations in the structure and format of conducting PB during the pandemic may be promising from the perspective of expanding the use of technological solutions in the online format (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). However, the changes may emphasize a barrier regarding digital exclusion especially in the elderly group (Popławski, 2020).

The research was limited to verifying the perception of Local Public Administration in the state of Paraná (Brazil) and in Portuguese municipalities about the restrictions, changes, and cancellations of PB processes during COVID-19 pandemic and the possible restrictive consequences of the crisis on the mechanism in the coming years. Through the results of this research together with the literature review about the possible consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on PB it was detected the need for other works, beyond the perspective of Local Public Administration, to analyze the worsening of government debt and the deepening of other barriers prior to crisis, such as the digital exclusion that mainly affects the elderly. Besides these aspects, the reduction in the number of occurrences of PB processes in Brazil is an important phenomenon to be better understood. The perception of public administration officials in Portuguese municipalities and cities in the state of Paraná (Brazil) about the barriers imposed on PB by COVID-19 pandemic can contribute to the ongoing debate about the barriers caused by the crisis.

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