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Effects of participatory deliberative processes on citizens' civic virtues, skills, and attitudes: the case of the Lisbon Citizens' Council

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Department of Political Science and Public Policies

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I dedicate this study to my loving mother, father, and brother for their unshakable faith and sacrifices. This is my gift to you. Thank you so much.

## **Abstract**

Does participation make citizens better? Doubts still surround one of the central arguments to the theories of participatory and deliberative democracy. This research aims to answer the ever-lasting question by looking into the civic virtues, skills, and attitudes of the citizens who took part in the first participatory deliberative process to be initiated by an elected body in Portugal - the Lisbon Citizens' Council. In order to assess the impact of this democratic innovation, this study resorts to a quasi-experimental research design, comparing two otherwise similar groups.

The results indicate that citizens' external political efficacy, factual knowledge of the issue at stake, and satisfaction with democracy at the national and local levels are heightened as a direct cause of taking part in the process.

**Keywords:** participatory democracy; deliberative democracy; democratic innovation; civic virtues; political attitudes.

## **Resumo**

A participação torna os cidadãos melhores? Ainda existem dúvidas relativamente a um dos argumentos centrais das teorias da democracia participativa e deliberativa. Esta investigação pretende responder à eterna questão, analisando as virtudes cívicas, competências e atitudes dos cidadãos que participaram no primeiro processo participativo e deliberativo a ser iniciado por um órgão eleito em Portugal - o Conselho de Cidadãos de Lisboa. Para avaliar o impacto desta inovação democrática, este estudo recorre a um desenho de pesquisa quase- experimental, comparando dois grupos semelhantes.

Os resultados indicam que a eficácia política externa dos cidadãos, o conhecimento factual do tema em questão e a satisfação com a democracia nos níveis nacional e local são potencializados, como causa direta da sua participação no processo.

**Palavras-chave:** democracia participativa; democracia deliberativa; inovação democrática; virtudes cívicas; atitudes políticas.

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout the centuries, political participation has had various meanings and occupied different roles in democratic theory. From being a central topic to authors such as Rousseau (1762/1981) and De Tocqueville (1835/2000) in the 18th and 19th centuries, it took on a lesser role a few decades later, at the dawn of political science as a discipline. While a rather participation-suspicious theory of democracy was gaining traction, participation opportunities were informally and creatively expanding. In fact, up to this day, they have not stopped multiplying. Voting and other institutional forms of participation are unprecedentedly sharing the stage with different modes of taking part and/or influencing political outcomes, namely demonstrations, boycotts, political consumption, and petition signing, among others from a seemingly never-ending list (Van Deth, 2014). Deliberative and participatory practices, mostly promoted by elected bodies, have also received wide attention from scholars, practitioners, and politicians, and are steadily part of the public debate (Smith, 2009; Curato et al., 2017; OECD, 2020).

However, despite the plethora of channels through which citizens can now express their demands and preferences, both individually and collectively, it is undeniable that disengagement and exclusion from political life are pervasive realities. Both older and more recent democracies are facing scenarios of political disaffection, characterized by distrust and detachment from democratic institutions (Torcal & Montero, 2006). Turnout has been steadily decreasing since the 1990s (Solijonov, 2016) and for many, be they politically excluded, critical citizens (Norris, 2011), or populism supporters, there is a frustrating and sustained gap between themselves, elected representatives, and politics. In their eyes, the promise of democracy has not been fulfilled by its practice. Unsurprisingly, political leaders claiming to incarnate the *volonté générale* (general will) have achieved political gains (Mudde, 2004). Populists leverage citizens' dissatisfaction with the functioning of political institutions (Santana-Pereira & Cancela, 2020) and actual or perceived distance from the political arena, offering what is publicized as *a way in* (Bowler et al., 2017).

Destabilizing as it can be to democracy, the current scenario is nevertheless an opportunity to question what treatment should be given to participation in the theories and practices of democracy. This endeavor started in the 1960s and 1970s by activists and scholars opposing what they labeled the realist theory of democracy. The latter was built around Schumpeter's conception of democracy as, first and foremost, "that institutional method for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 269). Challenging the monopoly of representation and electoral participation in this and other authors' work, the theory of participatory democracy proposed that participation by ordinary citizens should be placed at the center of politics and other structuring spheres of life, particularly the workplace (Macpherson, 1977; Pateman, 1970). Political life should then gravitate towards participation, rather than circumscribing it to an instrumental function. For these democrats, participation played an educative



function that made it an end in itself, benefiting both individuals and their communities as a whole (Mansbridge, 1995).

While at first receiving a great deal of attention, participatory democracy remained largely empirically unexplored (Zittel, 2006) and eventually gave way to other theories that are nowadays more popular such as that of deliberative democracy (Pateman, 2012). A reason for this was perhaps that scholars of the theory were mostly oblivious to the institutional settings that should frame the practice of participatory democracy. This was not the case with deliberative democracy. Starting in the 1970s with Dienel's planning cells or Crosby's citizen juries, deliberative democracy explored and experimented with an array of designs, from consensus conferences, deliberative polls, and citizen juries to citizens' assemblies (Curato et al., 2017). These were meant to promote the exchange of rational arguments and relevant considerations between lay citizens, who are given the time and resources to learn, deliberate, and decide, hopefully, the best solutions for the whole. Inspired by the works of Cohen (1989), Habermas (1996), and Rawls (1993), to name a few, the theory put inclusive and non-competitive communication between ordinary people at the center of politics and public discourse (Dryzek, 2000). Contrasting with aggregative notions of democracy, deliberative democracy offers a different interpretation of representativeness that aims, concomitantly, at the realization of political equality (Fishkin, 2009; Smith, 2009). According to Chambers (2003), "we can say that deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants" (p. 309).

As we live through what has been called a "deliberative wave" (OECD, 2020, p. 16), some have looked for ways of reuniting these and other theories, both conceptually and practically. Participatory deliberative processes fall within the ever-growing set of democratic innovations, defined as formal "institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process" (Smith, 2009, p. 1).

The Lisbon Citizens' Council (henceforth LCC), a municipal initiative with participatory and deliberative elements, launched in January 2022, falls under such category. The first of its kind in the country, the LCC was designed to gather 50 citizens, chosen by a two-step process that included open-to-all registration followed by a sortition. Aided by facilitators and experts, the citizens deliberated over a weekend in May on the topic of climate change. A monitoring and evaluation team<sup>1</sup>, composed of Professor Roberto Falanga (coordinator), Camila Costa (Ph.D. candidate), and myself, was set up with

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS-UL) was commissioned by the Lisbon City Hall to monitor and evaluate the LCC. Using a mixed-methods approach, the team designed and applied the questionnaires used as the data source for this dissertation. We also conducted interviews and focus groups with several actors involved in the making of LCC. Additionally, the team carried out a media analysis and non-participant observation of the two-day event. A report is available at: [https://cidadania.lisboa.pt/fileadmin/cidadania/participacao/conselho\\_cidadaos/relatorio\\_1\\_edicao\\_CCL\\_DRM\\_P.pdf](https://cidadania.lisboa.pt/fileadmin/cidadania/participacao/conselho_cidadaos/relatorio_1_edicao_CCL_DRM_P.pdf)

the aim of accompanying the process and elaborate a report with results and recommendations for the following editions of the LCC. This unprecedented scenario gave me the chance to carry out a quasi-experimental study aimed at answering the following question: What are the effects of the LCC on the civic virtues, skills, and attitudes of the citizens that took part in it? I focused on the issues of internal and external political efficacy, trust in other people's opinion, support for citizens' involvement in political decision-making, self-perceived and factual knowledge, and satisfaction with democracy, at the local and national levels. The pursuit of responses allowed me to contribute to the clarification and assessment of arguments advanced by both theories mentioned above, particularly around dimensions that remain empirically understudied or inconclusive. Additionally, it served the purpose of enlightening whether participatory deliberative processes are suited to respond to some of democracy's most enduring malaises.

This dissertation is structured around four sections. I start by providing a brief outlook on the theories of liberal representative, participatory and deliberative democracy, reflecting on their inputs regarding participation and citizens' civic virtues, skills, and attitudes toward the political system, and then move on to present the hypotheses to be tested. In the next chapter, I lay out the research design, by presenting the main goals, the case under study, and the quasi-experimental methodology adopted. The following section presents the results of this study, namely a series of statistical analyses conducted in order to test the hypotheses. Lastly, in the Conclusion, a summary of findings and a discussion on their relevance for the research on civic virtues, skills, and attitudes in the context of democracy is presented.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Political participation and three theories of democracy**

In this chapter, I outline different conceptions of political participation and the role of citizens in a democracy through the lenses of liberal representative democracy and two theories that oppose it, namely participatory and deliberative democracy. I propose a synthesis between the latter two, which will function as the theoretical framework for the empirical analysis of the LCC. I then review the literature on effects of participation and deliberation and present the hypotheses to be tested.

### **2.1 Realist Democracy**

In the aftermath of World War 2, political sociologists undertook the first wide and cross-national empirical studies on political attitudes and behavior. The results of these inquiries showed underwhelming levels of political interest, knowledge, discussion, and efficacy (Berelson, 1952; Almond & Verba, 1989; Berelson et al., 1971). These findings were deeply contrasting with previous expectations of ordinary citizens' attitudes towards politics and were listed as proof that a new theory of democracy, more in line with the current facts, was in need.

That theory, which some named realist and others elitist, not only described what was politically going on, but it also overlapped, albeit subliminally, with what should or could be happening. Biased towards stability and averse to change, it tended to consider what "has existed for a long time as functional and system-sustaining and, hence, good" (Goldschmidt, 1966, p.6). Accordingly, political participation was not a good in itself, but rather instrumental in the guarantee of a stable, effective, competent, and conciliatory democratic system.

These goals allegedly required that citizens took part in politics but only on specific occasions, namely in elections: the instrument through which the selection of representatives was carried out. Representatives, and not citizens themselves, ought to then govern freely, whilst remaining accountable to the people. This meant that they could be penalized or rewarded for their performance in office whenever electors were called to decide on whom they would trust their sovereign power once again. Ultimately, representation was to be coupled with elite responsiveness. Elected officials could anticipate needs and demands which did not need to be conscious or politically articulated (Schumpeter, 2003; Berelson, 1952; Almond & Verba, 1989). The active citizen was replaced by the potentially active citizen, who would intervene when and if there was need. Crucial to the maintenance of liberal democracy, this was, in Almond and Verba's words, the "democratic myth" (p. 352). If most citizens were to take on a larger share of responsibility in political decision-making, democracy would be distraught.

Despite claiming objectivity and empirical support, normative assumptions and conclusions were often implicitly laid down by realist theorists. The cornerstone of said set of arguments was Schumpeter's famous work *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, which, as noted by Pateman (1970),

came about before the publication of the empirical studies abovementioned. Schumpeter set out to critique and prove obsolete what he called the “classical doctrine of democracy” (p. 250), which includes authors like Rousseau, James, and John Stuart Mill. Their work was in many aspects more irreconcilable than this assemblage conveyed (Pateman, 1970). Nonetheless, Schumpeter (2003) focused his objections on the topics of rationality, deliberation, common will, and competence.

Positing democracy as a method without intrinsic value in itself, he questioned how rational the method and those who take part in it could be. For the author, when it came to political outcomes, there were multiple instances where not only the best but also the most desired decision is that which is arrived at undemocratically. In fact, “the decision imposed by a non-democratic agency might prove much more acceptable to [the citizens]” (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 255). Democracy may additionally hinder efficiency, causing interminable struggles and deadlocks which are not compatible with the urgency of reality. Furthermore, in an argument against Rousseau’s contractualism, Schumpeter attacked the notion of a “common good” upon which a “common will” is supposedly based. People chose according to individual or group interests and public opinion, with aggregated and internally contradictory positions, was the closest thing to a common will. This agglomeration of individual wills lacked not only “rational unity but rational sanction” (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 253). The author argued that the will of an ordinary person was easily manipulated, much like consumers are influenced by commercial advertising. “If we are to argue that the will of the citizens *per se* is a political factor entitled to respect, it must first exist. That is to say, it must be something more than an indeterminate bundle of vague impulses loosely playing about given slogans and mistaken impressions. Everyone would have to know what he wants to stand for” (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 276). For the late author, people were incapable of forming definite, independent, responsible, and rational wills that could prevent great political errors or even serve their own interests, at least in the long run.

Schumpeter’s rejection of the “classical doctrine of democracy” was supported by what he called the human nature in politics, which, according to him, had been unveiled by social psychology. He feared that the masses suffered from an absence “of moral restraints and civilized modes of thinking and feeling, the sudden eruption of primitive impulses, infantilisms, and criminal propensities” (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 257). In a certain way, it seemed, man was no longer the Aristotelian political animal. On the contrary, politics made animals out of men. Therefore, they ought to stay on the margins of it.

These general beliefs were echoed and strengthened by other important theorists of that period, particularly after WW2, when they seemed to ease worries related to recent authoritarianisms. A paradigmatic argument, advanced by Sartori for instance, sustained that those on the fringes of politics were also more prone to develop authoritarian tendencies and should therefore be kept at bay (Michels, 2011). “Mass participation became entangled with the history of totalitarianism rather than democracy” (Pateman, 1970, p. 2).

At the time, Berelson et al. (1971) stated that the role of “(...) realistic research on contemporary politics has been to temper some of the requirements set by our traditional normative theory for the

typical citizen” (p. 29). Interest, discussion, and motivation were low because the average citizen found it difficult to envision the consequences of their political choices. As such, politics remained far away, and people were mostly indifferent to it in the moments in-between elections. Once the vote was cast, “for most people that [was] the end of it” (Berelson et al., 1971, p. 31). Rather than learning about issues, distinguishing parties and positions, and weighing in on possible consequences of different alternatives, citizens attached emotionally to politics. In other words, they felt strongly and were loyal to one side of the struggle, reacting positively or negatively, depending on whether their faction won or lost. Because of this, emotion in high doses was not only an obstacle to objective reasoning but also to the maintenance of the necessary low salience of politics.

For realist theorists, while individuals’ motivations and competence were put into question, the system was emphasized. Where ordinary citizens fell short, the system stood tall. There was, therefore, a need for the first to remain partially disconnected from politics to guarantee the continuity of the positive characteristics of the system. As Berelson (1952) wrote, a “sizable group of less interested citizens is desirable as a cushion to absorb the intense action of highly motivated partisans” (p. 317). The coexistence of highly politicized citizens with indifferent people was desirable. The rationality-activist model, an alternative designation for the “classical doctrine”, had put too much emphasis on the active participant and the rational choice theory, and forgotten about other roles that people play in their interaction with political institutions, for instance as subjects and members of religious communities (Almond & Verba, 1989). A certain division of political labor was necessary if elites were to be able to govern. Thus, “in the ideal civic culture the activity and involvement of the citizen are balanced by a measure of passivity and non-involvement (Almond & Verba, 1989, p. 362). Far, for instance, from agonistic conceptions of democracy, realist theorists placed the success of the political system on the existence of low levels of conflict, slow changes in economic and social structures, and consensus among the various actors of democracy. Stability was the ultimate goal and the criterion by which the success or failure of democracies was tested.

Skepticism about citizens’ capabilities and the need for their active involvement has not been limited to the mid-20th century. Indeed, recent authors have echoed these ideas. For instance, Achten and Bartels, in *Democracy for Realists* (2017), argue that the active citizen expectation relies on erroneous notions of human cognition and social life. Advancing a theory whereby voters decide based on their social identities, the authors claim that participatory and deliberative theories are highly idealistic and offer few practical results. In fact, they align with Sartori’s (1987) claim that “it is idealism, not realism, that produces disillusionment” (p. 49), and therefore, citizens’ discontent with democracy. Also, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2004) have famously argued that most people would prefer a stealth democracy, one that “frees them from the need to follow politics” (p. 131), and that their wish for more involvement comes from a desperation to counteract corruption among representatives, rather than from a genuine interest in taking part in decision-making. They further state that the impact of people’s

engagement in decision-making is either neutral or negative and that there is a lack of evidence on how such participation can improve the quality and legitimacy of political decisions.

## 2.2 Participatory Democracy

In opposition to realist theorists, in the 1960s and 1970s, a new model of democracy started being advocated by grassroots movements and scholars, mainly from the anglophone world (Kaufman, 1960; Macpherson, 1977; Pateman, 1970). In 1962, the *Students for a Democratic Society* organization characterized America's political system as apathetic rather than "of, by, and for the people" (p. 4). According to what came to be known as the Port Huron Statement, Lincoln's dictate was hampered. Upholding an urgency for change, the students believed that the dominant institutions' complexity and entrenchment posed obstacles to individual flourishing and societal reform, which felt all the more distant as "each individual [saw] apathy in his fellows" (Students for a Democratic Society, 1964, p. 4). They vowed to search for a truly democratic alternative that allowed each person to take part in the determination of his/her life conditions. This alternative was, according to them, participatory democracy.

The term was coined by Arnold Kaufman in an article entitled *Human Nature and Participatory Democracy*. Here, Kaufman (1960) launched a critique on the assumption that political participation was undesirable and in need of being limited and checked. He argued that the combination of pessimistic conceptions of human nature with recent sociological findings had made it hard to properly determine the role that participation should play in democracies.

In answering this call, Carole Pateman's *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970) was a game changer. The author examined earlier works to build a case for a new form of participatory decision-making that ought to be adopted in life's structuring spheres, namely institutional politics, the workplace, and other socializing institutions like the family. For participatory democrats, political theory should not only describe reality but envision coherent and feasible alternative political realities. This normative approach was not omitted but rather assumed.

The works of C.B. Macpherson and Benjamin Barber were also pivotal in the development of the theory. For Macpherson (1977), the critique of liberal representative democracy went hand in hand with a critique of the capitalist socioeconomic model. He argued that there was a "class differential in participation" (p. 94), preventing the poor to articulate and make their political demands effective. For him, the liberal principle of personal development could not be fulfilled in the context of social, economic, and participatory inequalities which hindered the achievement of a substantive democracy.

In the following decade, Benjamin Barber (2003) described liberal democracy as a thin theory that rested on a protective fundament whereby people's interests had to be safeguarded from one another. This perpetual state of nature, or "politics as zookeeping" (p. 20), sidelined our ability to be and act communally. For Barber (2003), liberal democracy was far less democratic than it was liberal, and he

saw the “liberal man (...) as incapable of bearing the weight of his ideals (Barber, 2003, p. 24). Instead, Barber proposed the establishment of a strong democracy based on participation at different levels of decision-making.

According to these and other authors, the most important function of political participation is of educational nature. The argument is that citizens learn the necessary skills to participate by being given meaningful chances to do so and by practicing it quite often – “the more the individuals participate the better able they become to do so” (Pateman, 1970, p. 43). The civic education brought about by participation allowed for human development (Kaufman, 1960). While accounts of what this development means vary, there is an understanding that participation results in individuals with greater senses of competence, interest, motivation, ability to reason, and general knowledge about politics (Barber, 2003; Macpherson, 1977; Nabatchi, 2020; Pateman, 1970). Additionally, citizens are able to consider not only their private interests but the common good. This latter effect is central to the integrative argument for participatory politics, according to which there is a transformation of preferences in favor of the whole community. Finally, this is expected to promote a wider acceptance of the emanating decisions, and therefore, legitimacy (Barber, 2003; Mansbridge, 1995; Michels, 2011; Pateman, 1970).

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the birth of a theory explicitly built around these ideas. But were they something entirely new? As Mansbridge (1995) points out, the idea that participating makes citizens better has been around since the fifth century BCE. Throughout history, there were multiple instances where authors alluded to the benefits of citizens’ involvement with politics. For Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1998), who was not an advocate of democracy (nor oligarchy), humans were *zoon politikón* (*i.e.* political animals). He maintained that the role of the city-state was to ensure that its laws made the citizens good and just, especially in their relation to each other, thus forming a community rather than an alliance of strangers. Thus, it took suited laws and a strong community to orient men in their moral upbringing. Implicit is a notion that politics plays a crucial role in the shaping of community and individual characters. The Greek philosopher also considered that participated decisions were often better than individual-led ones: “for the many, who are not as individuals excellent men, nevertheless can, when they have come together, be better than the few best people, not individually but collectively, just as feasts to which many contribute are better than feasts provided at one person's expense” (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1998, p. 83).

Also, Rousseau’s account of participation, while ingrained in a proposal that can easily be interpreted as illiberal and averse to pluralism, offered important insights. He envisioned a state in which strong interdependence forwarded decisions toward the common will and the achievement of the common good. This juxtaposition meant that reason would point everyone in the same direction, whilst allowing each person to obey only to themselves. Indeed, the participation of all was fundamental to the liberty of each (Rousseau, 1981/1762). Rousseau pointed out the psychological effects of institutional design and its workings on the individual’s character. In his conception of the state of nature, described

in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1776/1755), it is clear that humans have an unexplored potential for civic virtues, rationality, and progress (*perfectibility*) and the right societal framework can foster the development of these attributes.

According to Mansbridge (1995), De Tocqueville was the first to establish a direct link between participation and civic and human development, making it central to his eulogy of American democracy. Reporting on New England town meetings in the 1830s, De Tocqueville testified to how these participatory institutions influenced an entire society. He affirmed that “in the township as everywhere, the people are the source of social powers, but nowhere they exercise their power more immediately” (De Tocqueville, 1835/2000, p. 123). Praising decentralization and face-to-face decision-making, De Tocqueville (1835/2000) went as far as to argue that the political advantages of the system surpassed any practical inefficiencies it may have brought about. Hence, participation was seen as more than instrumental. Taking part in decision-making was also conducive to each person’s ownership of collective problems. That each person takes up political and social responsibility for decisions is a key argument for participatory democrats (Pateman, 1970). Lastly, the French thinker believed that without public civic virtues, citizens were disposed of that status and reduced to being subjects.

Whilst holding views that were sometimes contradictory, British philosopher John Stuart Mill advanced important reflections on participation, representation, and civic virtues. He paid close attention to De Tocqueville’s work and in *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861/1948) he emphasized the influence that the character of government could have on citizens’ own characters. Rather than simply adjusting to passivity, institutions could promote humans’ activeness and instincts of self-help. The civic education that participation could instill required, however, that citizens had enough time and opportunities for its practice. In an assertive aphorism, Stuart Mill (1861/1948) says that “the food of feeling is action” (p. 138). He puts it clearly: “The importance of school instruction is doubtlessly great; but it should also be recollected, that what really constitutes education is the formation of habits; and as we do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practicing popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger” (Mill, 1840/1972, p. 10). Moreover, said Stuart Mill (1861/1948), a person who is highly interested and knowledgeable in politics and yet has few opportunities to take part and close to no power in decision-making, “must have a very unusual taste for intellectual exercise in and for itself, who will put himself to the trouble of thought when it is to have no outward effect (p. 137). Civic education through some form of popular government has, according to Stuart Mill, important intellectual, moral and practical consequences for individuals and communities.

Participatory democrats articulated these ideas into a congruent body of thought, that they sustained normatively and empirically. Pateman (1970) specifically focused on the spillover effects of workplace democratization, but also the familial structures, reviewing early findings that taking part increased people’s sense of competence (political efficacy). Others, like Macpherson (1977) and Barber (2003), explored different ways around which participation could be organized, unconvinced by the argument



that complex bureaucratic societies could not support participation at a larger scale. For the first author, pyramidal schemes mixing direct and delegated participation were the way to go (Macpherson, 1977). Barber (2003), on the other hand, presented a wide array of mechanisms that could be used for complementing a “politics of amateurs” (p.152), such as neighborhood assemblies, town meetings, referenda, and initiatives, at different spheres of government. He was skeptical of the power of liberal representative democracies to prevail in the face of authoritarian threats, which would soon be on the rise in Western countries. He wrote: "A democracy that can be defended only by mordant skepticism may find it difficult to combat the zealotry of non-democrats" (Barber, 2003, p.4). A democratic society would be concerned with its educative and communal functions, and not only preoccupied with material efficiency (Pateman, 1970).

Despite their efforts, by the end of the 1980s, interest in participatory democracy had waned down (Elstub, 2018; Pateman, 2012; Zittel, 2006) with the theory leaving a rather scarce empirical track record to support it. While in the 1960s, Kaufman (1960) alerted towards the need for empirical findings, in the 1990s Mansbridge (1995) declared the following:

"Participation does make better citizens. I believe it, but I can't prove it. And neither can anyone else. The kinds of subtle changes in character that come about slowly from active, powerful participation in democratic decisions cannot easily be measured with the blunt instruments of social science. Those who actively participated in democratic governance, however, often feel that the experience has changed them. And those who observe the active participation of others often believe that they see its long-run effects on the citizens' characters." (p. 3)

### **2.3 Deliberative Democracy**

From the 1980s onwards, deliberation became prominent in the field of democratic theory. Coined by Bessette, the theory of deliberative democracy came about as a combination of multiple independent strands – some philosophical, others legal-constitutionalist, and others from social theory and political science (Florida, 2018). Early conceptual discussions were centered around rationality and communication, hence the reference to a talk-centric theory (Brown, 2018; Curato et al., 2017). Over the years, contributions from other fields expanded this understanding to recognize the importance of feelings and different formats of argument-presentation, such as testimonies and storytelling (Bächtiger et al., 2018). According to Bächtiger et al. (2018), a minimal definition of deliberation consists of mutual communication that involves weighing in and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests, regarding matters of common concern.

Deliberative democratic theory has kept a close dialogue with practical innovations and experiments, particularly from the 1990s onwards, when a second empirical turn took place (Curato et

al., 2017; Owen & Smith, 2015). These flourishing practices are usually aggregated under the umbrella term *mini-publics*: fora that gather lay citizens, selected via random (and usually stratified) sampling<sup>2</sup>, for the purpose of learning, deliberating, and deciding, in the form of proposals or recommendations, about a given subject. This process is aided throughout by facilitators and experts, who provide an environment of fair and respectful exchange of reasons and access to balanced information. Citizen assemblies, consensus conferences, deliberative polls, and citizen juries, are among the many designs that have proliferated, particularly in recent years, as noted by the OECD's (2020) reference to a deliberative wave. Importantly, mini-publics attempt to emulate the wider population, functioning as a microcosmos of society<sup>3</sup> (Harris, 2019), trying to ensure the representation of different demographical categories but also sometimes attitudes. Inclusion and diversity are also aimed as they are key to not only effective political equality, but also the scope, depth, and heterogeneity of arguments, and hence the quality of deliberation (Fishkin, 2009). The goal is above all to reach quality decisions, that consider the common good and provide for greater political legitimacy, particularly where polarization grasses. Indeed, deliberation offers a way out of factionalism and tries to summon those who are not necessarily highly politicized and have not, therefore, made up their minds about the issues at stake. This model of democracy opposes the aggregative attributes of mass democracy and promotes the transformation of preferences guided by knowledge and other-regarding views (Dryzek, 2020; Elstub & Escobar, 2019). For some, at the center of good deliberation lies empathy (see Muradova, 2021, for a review).

The idea of a mini-public (*minipopulus*) was first envisioned by Robert Dahl (1989), who predicted that, with telecommunications, it would be possible to have a critical, well-informed, and attentive public that strengthened the democratic bond between citizens and representatives. Dahl expected that, in the future, there would be "the need to narrow the growing gap that separates policy elites from the demos" (p. 337). This did not require that everyone was highly informed and took part in decision-making. Importantly, a mini-public would do more than simply aggregate preferences or put citizens in dialogue with one another: "(...) The function of these technical innovations is not merely to facilitate participation, as some advocates of participatory democracy have proposed. Citizens cannot overcome the limits in their political understanding simply by engaging in discussions with one another; (...) voting without adequate understanding would not ensure that the policies adopted would protect or advance their interests" (Dahl, 1989, p. 339).

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<sup>2</sup> Civic lottery or sortition, used to counteract the expected self-selection of those who are better-off, is a selection method that "(...)can be employed to ensure that randomly selected citizens reflect salient characteristics in the broader population, be it age, gender, ethnicity, and so on. If a citizen chooses not to accept the invitation to participate, then another citizen with similar socio-demographic characteristics is selected – again at random". (Smith, 2009, p. 166)

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that there is not always a degree of self-selection, even where random sampling is used. Indeed, positive response rates among selected citizens tend to be relatively low, with rare exceptions, such as the case of the Australian Citizens' Parliament started in 2009, in which 30% of those selected accepted to participate (Dryzek, 2020).

The idea of counteracting the self-exclusion of those who come from lower social-economic classes, have lower education, or belong to an ethnic minority, for instance, is central to deliberative democracy and aims at surpassing the obstacles to a *de facto* political equality (Fishkin, 2009; Gallego, 2007; Smith, 2009). The point usually made is that everyone gets an equal chance of being selected (through sortition) and that all those groups affected by the decisions may have capacities and opportunities to have a say in the solution, whether this is through direct participation or engagement in the wider public sphere (Elstub, 2018).

Another central goal is the achievement of consensus when possible, or, at least, the clarification of conflicts and a degree of compromise (Bächtiger et al., 2018). As Fishkin points out: “There is a special value in safe public spaces where people can listen to each other without expecting an exchange of expletives. And that is less likely to happen on its own than through conscious institutional design.” (Fishkin, 2009, p. 51). Rousseau’s aversion to factionalism is matched by deliberative democracy, a theory that, despite acknowledging that consensus is not always achievable, tends to regard the co-construction of consensual decisions as the best possible outcome.

The main focus of deliberative democrats is, doubtlessly, on the quality of decisions, as well as on enhanced legitimacy and better representation. However, they are not oblivious to the beneficial effects that participation can have on individuals. While some designate these as side-effects (Grönlund et al., 2010) or by-products (Elster, 1989) they are nevertheless of great importance. Beyond those already mentioned by participatory democrats, deliberative theorists also expect increased trust, respect, empathy, and public-spiritedness as results of participation (Nabatchi, 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

Some argue that the two theories are at odds with each other. For Elster (1989), politics has the goal of consequential decision-making and is, therefore, essentially, instrumental. Pateman (2012) has also underlined incompatibilities. According to the author, deliberative democrats have shown little interest in participatory promotion in the last thirty years. Instead, their focus has been on single institutional fora, aloof from the wider structuring spheres that impact individuals and communities, thus leaving intact the “political meaning of democracy” (p. 10). Participatory democracy, on the contrary, goes beyond what the traditional political institutional arrangements (Pateman, 2012).

This criticism has been, in fact, partially accepted by some deliberative democrats who believe that there has been a disregard for life outside of the mini-publics, namely the relationship with the maxi-public, non-participating citizens, and other non-formal settings. However, they argue, there is potential for extending and amplifying deliberation’s effects (Owen & Smith, 2015; Knobloch et al., 2019). Today, there is a growing consensus that quality deliberation is crucial to the legitimacy of the political system. The theory of deliberative democracy is witnessing a third turn, this time a systemic approach that looks beyond individual sites of deliberation to analyze the interplay of multiple actors and institutions at a macro level (Mansbridge et al., 2012).

Pateman (2012) is furthermore averse to sortition, but participatory democracy has yet to show how to effectively surpass the distortions to political equality already mentioned. A related criticism, this turn

to deliberative democracy, has been laid out by Lafont (2015), who argues that mini-publics hamper wider public deliberation, as they restrict decision-making and deliberation to a very small set of citizens. Mutz (2006) adds that those less inclined to participate will be further silenced in such fora, as most people are typically conflict-averse.

Despite the differences separating both theories, they do share a lot of premises and expected results, and authors like Barber (2003) or Mansbridge (1983) are open to the conjunction. Central to both theories is the belief that political equality transcends universal suffrage, which for a lot of people remains an unrealized formal right. It furthermore looks like they can both benefit from each other. For one, it seems like deliberative democracy tends to adapt to any institution by introducing its rules and processes while participatory democracy tries to change institutions but disregards the needed changes to their internal workings. While deliberative democracy could be more participatory, participatory democracy could benefit from a more sophisticated outlook on public reasoning. As pointed out by Karpowitz & Mendelberg (2018), deliberation tries to solve the problem of cognitive and affective biases that mere aggregation does not attend to. For Elstub (2018) it is clear that “the conception of democracy is stronger when participatory and deliberative democracy are combined into ‘participatory deliberative democracy’” (p. 8). The work on democratic innovations offers a syncretic approach that is not reduced to a single theory, thus extending the frontiers of democratic concerns encapsulated in the analysis. As Smith (2019) states there is a “growing interest in hybridisation: the combination of more than one type of democratic innovation to strengthen the democratic qualities of the overall participatory process (Smith, 2019, p. 575).

In the last two decades, studies on the consequences of mini-publics have proliferated (Jacquet & Van der Does, 2021). And yet, many questions remain either unaddressed or unequivocally answered. Does participation make citizens better? Does it positively influence their perception of themselves, other citizens, and their relationship with the political system? In the following subsection, I detail the research that has tried to provide answers.

## **2.4 Effects of participation in citizens’ civic virtues, skills, and attitudes**

### **2.4.1 Political Efficacy**

Political efficacy has been studied since the 1950s and has frequently been associated with democracies’ stability, diffuse support for the political system, and citizens’ loyalty to it (Almond & Verba, 1989). The concept is typically divided into internal and external dimensions. According to Finkel (1985), “internal efficacy represents a sense of being capable of acting effectively in the political realm”, while external efficacy concerns “the belief that the authorities or regime is responsive to attempted influence” (Finkel, 1985, p. 893). As such, one pertains to the subjective competence to politically act and influence, while the other refers to an individual’s perception of the attention and importance attributed

to their claims/opinions/interests by the actors and/or the political system. In sum, perceptions of capabilities and responsiveness are the two fundamental elements in the concept of political efficacy.

For participatory democrats, a sense of empowerment should come from the exercise of participation - as one learns, one becomes more confident in his/her abilities. For Pateman (1970), internal efficacy is the best measure at our disposal to assess the empirical presence or absence of the educative benefits of participation (Mansbridge, 1995).

As is the case with other attitudes, such as interest in politics, political efficacy was initially developed to explain political participation and is usually studied as a predictor rather than a dependent variable (Balch, 1974). Attempts at explaining the phenomenon are commonly based on individual sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and education (Anderson, 2010).

Higher levels of political efficacy have been repeatedly linked to higher electoral participation (Balch, 1974; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). But some empirical findings attest to what theorists have long suggested: the relationship is reciprocal. Thus, political participation is not only a consequence but is also expected to promote higher degrees of internal political efficacy, particularly if this participation is successful (Valentino et al., 2009). Despite advances, this interaction is far from being completely understood.

Finkel (1985) does not find that voting and campaigning increase internal efficacy and suggests that the nature of participation may play an important role. He thinks it is possible that “more time-consuming and involving behaviors such as communal action or protest will lead to stronger effects on the individual's sense of internal efficacy” (Finkel, 1985, p.909). This aligns with the expectations of democratic theorists for whom participation's educative effects would not happen unless citizens disposed of time and a sheer number of opportunities to politically engage with each other and form habits. De Tocqueville asserts that Americans' civic virtues and knowledge do not stem from books, but rather from practice: “It is from participating in legislation that the American learns to know the laws, from governing that he instructs himself in the forms of government. The great work of society is accomplished daily before his eyes and so to speak in his hands” (De Tocqueville, 1835/2000, p. 311). Additionally, small-scale and face-to-face participatory settings are preferred to achieve this (Pincock, 2012).

Mini-publics are, by design, not only rich in knowledge, but they also demand intense involvement from citizens who are invited to take part and co-create solutions, instead of passively casting votes on others' propositions. Results regarding the relationship between deliberation in mini-publics and internal efficacy have been mixed. Grönlund et al. (2010) find that participation in their deliberative experiment on nuclear energy increased participants' belief that politics is too complicated for them. Morrell's experiment (2005), on the other hand, indicates that, while not immediately influencing general internal efficacy, deliberation results in greater efficacy relative to the specific situation in which participants took part. Nabatchi (2020) has found partial confirmation for an increase in internal efficacy and Hansen and Andersen (2004) have reached identical conclusions to Morrell's in a study of the Danish

Deliberative Poll on the euro currency. Despite having eventually faded, Boulianne (2018) found an increase in internal efficacy that lasted at least six months after the initial measurement. Finally, according to Fishkin (2009), deliberative polls routinely show increases in citizens' confidence to engage politically.

As theoretical arguments and some empirical findings pull in this direction, I hypothesize that participation in the LCC increases citizens' levels of internal political efficacy (H1).

In turn, the interaction between participation and external political efficacy has been more precise from the get-go. Finkel (1985) found that the former reinforced the external efficacy of citizens, by strengthening their "feelings that the government is responsive" (p.894). Deliberative events, particularly those that are initiated by political bodies, offer a chance for citizens to influence policy-making and gain rather uncommon access to authorities (Boulianne, 2018). For this reason, real-life mini-publics should perform better than lab deliberation experiments. Boulianne (2018) finds an increase in external political efficacy, immediately after the deliberation event, and six months later at the time when the citizen's report, also the topic of climate change, was delivered to the public by the participants. Researching the *AmericaSpeaks* 21st Century Town Meeting, Nabatchi (2020) also finds support for this idea, and deliberative polls have pointed in the same direction (Fishkin, 2009). Knobloch and Gastil (2015) have found through the analysis of survey data that participants in two different mini-publics reported higher levels of external efficacy, in the majority of the items assessed. Having this in mind, it is expected that participation in the LCC increases citizens' levels of external political efficacy (H2).

#### **2.4.2 Trust in other people's opinion**

Interpersonal trust is seen as a key component of political culture and democratic stability, as suggested by Almond & Verba (1989). It has been associated with higher levels of internal political efficacy and propensity towards political participation and collective action (see Sullivan & Transue, 1999, for a review).

As a talk-centric theory, deliberative democracy postulates that the exchange of reasons or relevant considerations is at the heart of effective deliberation and decision-making (Chambers, 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2018). Citizens are encouraged to put forward arguments that are based on stronger claims than mere self-interest, at least if they expect them to be heard and convincing. As Elster (1989) stated, "in a political debate it is pragmatically impossible to argue that a given solution should be chosen just because it is good for oneself" (p. 113). Hence, participants are expected to adopt other-regarding views and a tacit agreement on values tends to occur (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2007), allowing for the transformation and ordering of preferences and their translation into policies and recommendations. Deliberation is based on the promotion of mutual understanding, mutual respect, sincerity (albeit not absolute), and common-interest-oriented solutions (Bächtiger et al., 2018). Empathy has been shown to

be crucial for good and effective deliberation (Muradova, 2021). For long, it has also been argued that participation in deliberative contexts raises public spiritedness and empirical findings have vouched for that (Fishkin, 2009; Wang et al., 2020).

Contrary to trust in political institutions (*e.g.* Boulianne, 2018), trust between citizens is largely understudied. It seems plausible that in a successful deliberative context, participants form ties, become more reliant, and ascribe trust to others, as they see citizens from different backgrounds engaging in tolerant, rational, and fruitful dialogue. Some studies have found an increase in generalized interpersonal trust following a mini-public. This was the case in the Estonian Citizen Assembly (Karlsson et al., 2015). Grönlund et al. (2010) have also found a positive, albeit small positive effect on interpersonal trust.

In the case of the LCC, I test generalized trust in other people's opinion as this seems to be fundamental for effective deliberation, reducing polarization, and enhancing public debate. As such, I expect that participation in the LCC increases citizens' trust in other people's opinion (H3).

#### **2.4.3 Support for citizen's involvement in political decision-making**

Contradicting previous studies' conclusions that a stealth democracy was citizens' preferred scenario (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2004), Neblo et al. (2010) found that there is a widespread desire among American citizens to be more involved in politics, particularly through deliberation. This is especially true in the case of those who are dissatisfied and divorced from traditional partisan politics, and who want an alternative to politics as usual. Studying citizen assemblies in Ireland, Walsh and Elkink (2021) report that "support for, and likelihood of participation in CAs is driven by citizens who are engaged and dissatisfied" (p. 662). The engaged and the enraged can coexist and mutually reinforce themselves. As such, pre-existing civic skills but also a longing for political reform that gives more voice to the people are propelling these attitudes.

Nonetheless, theorists point out that the exercise of participation can be regarded as an acquired taste, boosted by its practice. Moreover, as mentioned above, studies demonstrated that trust in others is enhanced in the context of deliberation. As such, a deliberative experience that runs by its principles and is successful should enhance people's support for greater citizen involvement in decision-making. Therefore, as a result of taking part in the LCC, I expect an increase in participants' support for citizens' involvement in political decision-making (H4).

#### **2.4.4 Self-perceived and factual knowledge**

A key argument of deliberative theory is that mini-publics can significantly contribute to high-quality informed decision-making by lay citizens. Political learning is expected to come about because of the interaction of participants with experts and witnesses, the provision of factual and balanced information in multiple formats and, importantly, citizens' interactions with each other. In the case of knowledge,

these theorists put forward a more sophisticated and compelling argument than that of participatory democracy as the opportunity to decide may not be enough to elicit knowledge acquisition and/or preferences transformation. While there is some support for the claim that mass democracy instruments, such as elections or referenda, promote political learning (Mendelsohn & Cutler, 2000), it seems that smaller and facilitated deliberation on specific issues is better at motivating citizens to seek out information, understand competing views and consider the public good (Fishkin, 2009). For some authors, an informed *demos* is not merely a condition for responsible citizen participation or a stepstone towards higher output legitimacy, but a more efficient way of reaching the best/right decisions (Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2016; Estlund & Landemore, 2018).

In any case, deliberation seems to offer a solution to a disenchanted scenario of generalized low political knowledge and high inattentiveness to political issues and events. As summarized by Karpowitz & Mendelberg (2018) “decades of political science research (...) has shown that citizens do not think much about politics most of the time, that they have, on average, very low levels of political knowledge” (p. 539). Promisingly, Esterling et al. (2011) found that the mere opportunity to deliberate with a Congress member induced motivated learning among citizens with different levels of previous political knowledge.

Knowledge is one of the most studied consequences of deliberation (Jacquet & Van der Does, 2021). Factual learning on the issue at hand has been extensively sustained by empirical findings. Fishkin and his Deliberative Polls have consistently reported knowledge gains, which are accompanied by opinion change (Fishkin, 2009; Luskin et al., 2002). Similar results have been reached by Grönlund et al. (2010), and Hansen and Andersen (2004), to name a few. Positive effects on this matter have further been found in online deliberation events (Strandberg & Grönlund, 2012). There is an ongoing discussion in the literature on whether knowledge gains are a result of the consultation of provided briefing materials or rather in-group and plenary interactions. Indeed, it is standard to offer accessible and accurate briefing materials to participants and almost half of the processes analyzed by the OECD provide them before the first meeting takes place (OECD, 2020). This did not occur at the LCC and instead, only the presentations of four invited speakers were digitally available to the citizens<sup>4</sup>, alongside two previously published municipal booklets which were indirectly related to the topic of deliberation.

While most studies resort to factual questions for knowledge assessment (Michels, 2011), beliefs play an important part in explaining participation, as political knowledge tends to translate into internal efficacy (Reichert, 2016). Moreover, according to Neblo et al. (2010), the main reason why people refused deliberation was the belief that they lack the necessary knowledge for it.

While diving into a subject, particularly a complex one like climate change (Devaney et al., 2020), could shake people’s confidence in their knowledge, I believe the positive weight of the collective

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<sup>4</sup> It is not clear the extent to which the presentations were consulted by the citizens, as not all of them used technological devices during the weekend.



learning experience should prevail. Hence, as a result of taking part in the LCC, participants' self-perceived and factual knowledge levels are expected to increase (H5 and H6).

#### **2.4.5 Satisfaction with democracy**

For participatory democrats and their predecessors, like Stuart Mill, political participation could be a source of joy in itself (1861/1977). But could it also increase satisfaction with how democracy works?

Satisfaction with democracy, rather than relating to the principles of democracy, pertains to the perception of the actual functioning of the regime (Magalhães, 2016). The dimension has been explained mainly through the outputs of the system, particularly economic performance. But inputs, related to the democratic processes themselves, such as perceived accountability, responsiveness, and corruption, also influence satisfaction (Torcal, 2014). Understandably, satisfaction with democracy has been found to correlate with external efficacy (OECD, 2021).

According to Grönlund and Setälä (2007), albeit being a minority position, satisfaction with democracy can also “be regarded as a measurement of the fulfillment of citizens' normative expectations” (p. 404).

Among disaffected citizens, dissatisfied democrats, *i.e.* those who are firm believers in democracy but are frustrated with its workings, represent a larger proportion. They are also people likely to support more chances of political participation, including more time-consuming models such as deliberation (Webb, 2013). Citizens less likely to engage with traditional partisan politics have also shown a higher interest in deliberation (Neblo et al., 2010). Thus, it seems that rather than opposing democracy, these groups may want a different version of it, one that gives more importance to the political participation of citizens.

It is then adequate to expect that, as the system opens new venues for citizen participation, which are often demanded by dissatisfied citizens, the levels of satisfaction of the latter increase. This should happen at the local level, where the participatory deliberative process, in this case the LCC, was launched and where decisions should bear the most impact. However, because Lisbon is the capital city and the national political epicenter as well, a spillover effect can be expected. With that in mind, I predict that participating in the LCC leads to an increase in citizens' satisfaction with democracy at both the local (H7) and national (H8) levels.

### 3. Goals and Methods

This study aims to investigate the potentialities of participation, in the context of participatory deliberative processes, for the strengthening and enhancement of citizens' capabilities and dispositions. To answer my research question, *i.e.* "What are the effects of the LCC on the civic virtues, skills, and attitudes of the citizens that took part in it?", I formulated eight hypotheses concerning the attitudinal effects of taking part in the LCC when it comes to the participants' levels of internal and external political efficacy, support for the involvement of citizens in political decision-making, self-perceived and factual knowledge on the issue under deliberation, trust in other people's opinion, and satisfaction with democracy, at both the local and national levels. These dependent variables were measured before participants took part in the LCC and afterwards. At the same time, a control group of non-participating citizens with similar characteristics was assessed in order to more accurately verify whether any changes are a direct cause of the LCC or not.

By studying the abovementioned dimensions, I will be able to answer if and how the educative, integrative, and democratizing functions of political participation, as advanced by the theories of participatory and deliberative democracy, are realized in the context of a hybrid participatory deliberative process.

#### 3.1 The Case Under Study: The Lisbon Citizens' Council, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

The LCC was the first participatory deliberative experience, using sortition and facilitation, to be organized by an elected political body in Portugal. The initiative, which took place in the country's capital, was part of the current local government's political program, having been officially launched on January 27, 2022, National Day of Participation. The idea was to put together a group of 50 citizens, chosen by draw, that would learn, deliberate, and make propositions on the most relevant issues in Lisbon, in a 2-day event, expected to occur at least once a year.

This first edition of the LCC took place on the weekend of 14 and 15 of May 2022, at the City Hall. Importantly, this edition was open to anyone that lived and/or worked and/or studied in Lisbon. This broad conception of citizenship meets the fact that, according to recent data, around 8.86% of the LMA (Lisbon's Metropolitan Area) residents are not Portuguese nationals (INE, 2021a). Moreover, an ever-growing number of people who work and study in the city of Lisbon do not live there but are rather residents of the wider LMA.

Unlike the majority of mini-publics, the LCC required citizens to show their prior interest in the event by registering, either online or in person<sup>5</sup>. Open-to-all forums, whilst more democratic in appearance, tend to attract those who are better off educationally and economically, often already

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<sup>5</sup> In-person registrations were available at *Lojas Lisboa* and 10 out of the 24 Lisbon Parish Councils.

efficacious and interested in politics, thus potentially reproducing social inequalities (Elstub & Escobar, 2019; Fishkin, 2009; Smith, 2009). The topic under deliberation, climate change, was not revealed until after the signing up stage was closed so as not to attract those with specific interests or backgrounds in the subject.

In an attempt to counteract participatory distortions, the dissemination campaign that spanned from January to May, aimed at reaching the highest number of people and attracting the greatest number of registrations. *Mupis* were massively distributed around town and the initiative received wide press coverage. Social media ads were often posted, some of which targeted areas and age brackets with a lower number of registrations<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the organizing consortium carried out 4 in-person dissemination sessions that took place in 3 Secondary Schools and one Senior University. Strategies such as the abovementioned can contribute to the attainment of a more heterogenous pool of enrolled.

Participants were not offered compensation to attend the LCC, which can also be a deterrent factor to the involvement of those with fewer resources (Fourniau, 2019). Nonetheless, meals were free to all, and reimbursement of transportation expenses was available upon request.

In total, 2351 people registered to take part in the first LCC. *Fórum dos Cidadãos* was mandated by the City Hall to conduct the sortition. The draw, which was streamed online, took into account the following strata: gender, date of birth, parish of residence and/or work and/or study; professional status; and education level. The data was pseudonymized. Two samples were created with 50 effective participants and 50 alternates. 15 citizens from the first sample ended up not being available, citing other commitments and/or health problems and were replaced by alternates.

The session began with a hosting speech by the Mayor, Mr. Carlos Moedas, who encouraged the participants to share their ideas and co-design concrete solutions. The Mayor reassured them there would be a follow-up of the results of the deliberation and these would be seriously taken into account by the City Hall. Participating citizens were also informed that by the end of the weekend they should choose amongst themselves seven participants to serve as ambassadors and meet with the City Hall in the upcoming months, in a joint effort to implement the proposals.

The question that oriented this participatory deliberative process was the following: “What should we do in order for Lisbon to face climate change?” After a few ice-breaking dynamics led by the facilitation team, a set of orienting principles were agreed upon by the citizens (*e.g.* respecting differences; having the common good in mind; listening to others).

The first morning was directed toward learning. Citizens listened to four presentations (of 15 minutes each), delivered by one Municipal Officer, one University Professor, and two businesspeople. They had the chance to ask questions and interact with each other and the experts.

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<sup>6</sup> Paid media was used to reach young people (<25 years old) and those in the parishes that were attracting fewer registrations.

During the first afternoon, the deliberation began in seven rotating small groups, following the World Café methodology<sup>7</sup>. Citizens were intensely engaging with each other and exchanging their experiences and knowledge. Throughout the two days, there were also requests from citizens for further and more specific information on the issue at hand, which was not always provided by the supporting team that was present. By the end of Saturday, citizens had identified the seven most important subtopics that ought to be addressed and the deliberation progressed around those issues the next morning. In the afternoon of the second day, each group presented their proposals and a method was suggested by the facilitation team to get to a decision on the three to five proposals that were to be presented to the Mayor. This moment was controversial as members disagreed on the fairness of the various options being considered. In the end, all seven proposals were presented to the Mayor, other City Hall members, as well as the press.

It should be noted that three citizens dropped out of the process in disagreement with the dynamics promoted by the facilitation team, and another person joined only on the second day. In the end, 39 citizens took part in the LCC, interruptedly from the beginning to the end. The overall level of satisfaction with the session was high, with 60% of the participants stating that they were very or totally satisfied with how the process underwent.

While the LCC constitutes the first participatory deliberative institutional experience in Portugal, the country is not unknown to participatory processes, in particular Participatory Budgets (PB). This democratic innovation translates into the allocation of the local public budget to citizen initiatives that can be voted on to promote collective goods (Smith, 2009; Falanga et al., 2021). Since Porto Alegre, in 1989, participatory budgeting has been extensively used in Brazil – where over 400 municipalities have implemented it – and worldwide. The first Portuguese PB was implemented in 2002 and since then its use has been expanding. In fact, the first European capital city to implement a PB at the municipal level was Lisbon (Falanga & Lüchmann, 2020). Interestingly, last year's Lisbon Participatory Budget (PB), framed within the European Green Deal, focused on proposals that were oriented toward the environment, green structure, and energy (Falanga et al., 2021). Falanga & Lüchmann (2020) explain that citizen disaffection for representative democracy and a crisis of trust has motivated this rise in use of PBs.

Lisbon is also the birthplace of civil society-led deliberative democratic innovations in the country. The use and institutionalization of mini-publics, and citizens' assemblies, in particular, has been advocated in Portugal by *Fórum dos Cidadãos*, a partner in the LCC. The civic organisation, born in 2016, includes practitioners and activists that strive for wider participation and deliberation by lay citizens as orienting principles to political decision-making.

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<sup>7</sup> Designed to accommodate large groups of people, the World Café methodology promotes small and intimate conversations between people from groups of ever-changing composition, in evolving rounds of dialogue. The methodology is based on the assumptions of collective wisdom and is often used in deliberation processes (Brown, 2002; We the Citizens, 2015).

*Fórum dos Cidadãos* has promoted six deliberative sessions across the country since 2017. Topics included migrations, access to science, and communication between citizens and representatives, among others. Citizen proposals stemming from these gatherings have been presented to Portugal's President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, and other members of governmental and institutional bodies. Before collaborating with the LCC, the organisation had already prepared a deliberative session in partnership with the municipality of Oeiras. Currently, *Fórum dos Cidadãos* has an ongoing project with high schools and their students named *DeliberaEscola*.

### **3.2 The Experiment: Rationale and Procedure**

Recently on the rise, experimental research designs allow for the establishment of causal connections which are considered the “gold standard of modern empirical political science” (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 166). The key features of these designs include 1) the creation of at least two groups – an experimental/treated group and a control/untreated group, whose treatment assignment is random, 2) the application of pre-test and post-test measures that assess the presence/absence of the experimental effect, and lastly 3) the researcher’s control over the environment of the experiment (Johnson et al., 2015). Whenever random assignment of treatments is not (fully) achieved, a quasi-experiment can be conducted instead. Quasi-experiments in a field setting offer stronger external validity, in comparison to artificial lab experiments, since they constitute real-life interactions with real institutions (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2011).

However, the internal validity of these studies requires that other procedures support them and effectively deal with threats<sup>8</sup>. The danger comes mostly from self-selection. In the case of mini-publics, this translates into the decision or availability of participants to attend the event. As Harris (2019) points out, “Whatever method chosen, there is always an element of self-selection to the extent that there is no compulsion to attend” (p. 49). Counteracting self-selection, other measures are adopted to ensure that no “initial differences between groups may come to mimic treatment effects, thus confounding population differences between the treatment and control groups with possible effects of the treatment and so creating what is called a selection problem” (Cook & Wong, 2008, p. 136).

The most common non-equivalent comparison group design is called difference-in-differences and consists of a comparison between treated and untreated groups, through the application of a pre-test and a post-test. The approach aims to ensure that participants exposed to different conditions are otherwise similar to each other. The group that receives no treatment, *i.e.* the control group, serves as a causal

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<sup>8</sup> A threat to validity can be defined as any “plausible alternative interpretations to the hypothesis that the independent and dependent variables are causally related” (Cook & Wong, 2008, p.136). These should be ruled out to avoid a spurious treatment-effect relationship.

counterfactual to what would have occurred to the participants in the absence of the independent variable.

With this in mind, a quasi-field-experiment offers a great balance between a researcher's control of variables and dialogue with actual political settings. Ever since the empirical turn, in the 1990s, research in deliberative democracy has frequently resorted to experiments and quasi-experiments. It should be noted, however, that very few experiments on mini-publics have achieved the level of control that the experimental design requires (Setälä & Herne, 2014). Thus, the majority of empirical findings in this field are reached through quasi-experiments (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2011), which was the method applied to study the LCC.

The present quasi-experiment was composed of three distinct moments: pre-test, exposure to the stimulus (the LCC described above itself, for the experimental group) and post-test. In what regards materials aimed at measuring dependent and other variables, data on the sociodemographic variables were collected by the municipal services through the registration form, both online and in person. Moreover, two questionnaires,<sup>9</sup> to be applied before the start and after the end of the LCC's activities, were designed. The dimensions assessed in these questionnaires were talked over with the City Hall, whose perspective our team considered whilst preserving autonomy in the evaluation tools design. These dimensions comprise, amongst other things, all the dependent variables in the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. The specific question wordings are displayed in footnotes to the descriptive analysis offered in the next section.

Participating citizens were invited to answer a printed questionnaire on Saturday morning, before the learning stage of the LCC began, and a similar one right after the presentation of proposals to the Mayor, on Sunday afternoon. In total, 39 answers were collected, constituting the treatment group. On the other hand, invitations to answer an online version of the questionnaires containing the same questions were sent out to 100 citizens, including those who were selected but could not attend, and those who were not selected to take part in this edition of the LCC but had signed up. Considering the increased difficulty of reaching out to respondents online, these citizens were given 48 hours before the start of the LCC (pre-test) and 48 hours after its end (post-test) to provide their answers. In total, 18 citizens answered both pre-test and post-test questionnaires, constituting the control group<sup>10</sup>.

### **3.2.1 Participants**

In total, the group of participants in this study was composed of 30 women (52.6%), 25 men (43.9%) and two non-binary persons. In the LMA, women are 52.9% of residents, while men represent

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<sup>9</sup> Because the research team did not have access to the speakers' presentations beforehand, we decided to include, in the post-test, and in addition to the other questions, two factual knowledge questions of differing difficulty, stemming from the contents presented.

<sup>10</sup> Pre-test and post-test questionnaires are available upon request.

47.1% (Pordata, 2021a). This means that participants in the study were similar to the general population in terms of gender.

Participants' average age was 55 years old, with a median of 58 years old (SD = 15.7). 33.3% of the participants were 65 years old or older, which means this was a slightly older sample than what is found in the general LMA population, where approximately 21.7% people fall within that age bracket (Pordata, 2021b). Respondents in the study lived and/or worked and/or studied in 22 of the 24 parishes in Lisbon and were, thus, geographically evenly distributed.

Out of the total number of participants, 31.6% were retired<sup>11</sup>, 26.3% were dependent employees, 12.3% declared they were self-employed, 10.5% were students, 8.8% were unemployed, 3.5% declared being a managing partner and 7% selected the option "other [professional situation]". According to Pordata, in 2021, 57.7% of the inactive population in the LMA was retired, whilst 21.4% were students (Pordata, 2021c). In the sample, 75% of those who were inactive were also retired, and the remaining 25% were students. Accordingly, the majority of individuals in both the participants' group and in the general population were retired. Amongst the employed population in the LMA, 86.1% were dependent employees, whereas 9.3% were independent employees, and 3.9% were employers (Pordata, 2021d). In the sample, 53.6% were dependent employees, 25% were working independently, and 7.1% were employers. As such, there was a greater proportion of independent workers in comparison to the general population of the area. Lastly, according to INE, in 2021, the average unemployment rate in the LMA was 6.75%, a close figure to that which was found in the participants of the study (INE, 2021b).

In terms of education, 30 participants (53.6%) held Higher Education degrees, 20 (35.7%) had completed Secondary/Vocational School and 6 (10.7%) had attended Basic Education. The data contrasts with the lower education degrees found in the general population. In the LMA, 27.3% have completed Secondary School and only 31.8% hold High Education degrees. On the other hand, 38.7% have finished Basic Education (Pordata, 2021e). This finding is consistent with the literature that points out to a prevalence of participants with higher education levels in open participation forums (Smith, 2009).

Fisher's Exact Test indicates that there were no statistically significant differences between the treatment (participating citizens) and control (non-participating citizens) groups ( $p = 0.796 > 0.05$ ) in terms of gender composition. The same applies to the variables parish ( $p = 0.618 > 0.05$ ) and education ( $t(54) = -0.321, p > 0.05$ ). This means that both groups under comparison were similar in these three aspects. The proportions of the variable professional situation were statistically different between the two groups ( $p = 0.02 < 0.05$ ), meaning that the groups are not similar in this regard. Additionally, there were significant differences between the means of the treatment and control groups regarding age ( $t(54.712) = -4.579, p < 0.05$ ). In fact, there was a prevalence of retired (61%) and thus older people

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<sup>11</sup> The "retired" category was not included in the original registration form. I was created *a posteriori* based on the responses provided to the open-ended question "Which", that followed the option "Other [professional situation]". This ensured a more detailed analysis of the group.

(M=65) people in the control group, in comparison to the treatment group, where 49% participants were still working and were slightly younger (M=50).

Despite the differences reported, the two groups were similar from a sociodemographic point of view, in terms of gender, place of residence/work/study, and education and, therefore, provide the necessary conditions for the counterfactual analysis.

Let us now shift to information on participant's civic virtues, skills, and attitudes before the LCC. Regarding internal political efficacy<sup>12</sup>, respondents declared during the pre-test that they were very confident to participate in politics, with an average of 3.91 and a median of 4. This result contrasts to that which is found in the general population of Portugal. According to the ESS, in 2018, only 7% of the Portuguese stated that were very or totally confident in their ability to participate in politics (M=1.86). In turn, participants' levels of external political efficacy<sup>13</sup> proved to be rather low, with a mean of 2.42. The median (2) of this variable indicates that citizens considered that the political system in Portugal "little" allows ordinary people to influence politics. The evidence goes in line with what was found in European Social Survey (2018) or the general Portuguese population, where the mean and median level of respondents' external efficacy was 2<sup>14</sup>.

More than half of the respondents from both groups (60.7%) said they were familiar with the participation model of the LCC and 35,7% stated that they had already taken part in at least another participatory process promoted by the City Hall. The Participatory Budget was the most popular among them. The median of participants considered that participatory processes in Lisbon contribute "reasonably" (3) to decision-making (M=2.86). Additionally, they "very much" agreed that the majority of political decisions should involve citizens more (M=4.59), with a median of 5. While there is not a similar measure to compare with, in 2019, the majority of residents in the LMA (56.2%) believed that "the most important political decisions should be made by the people instead of politicians" (Lobo et al., 2019). Unlike ours<sup>15</sup>, this question was of dichotomous nature but still reveals a great deal of support for people's involvement in decision-making.

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<sup>12</sup> In the questionnaires, internal political efficacy was assessed by the following 5-point Likert scale question, which constitutes an adaptation of the second question from the European Social Survey Round 8 (2016): "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent you feel confident in your ability to participate in politics." Set of possible answers: Not at all confident (1); A little confident (2); Reasonably confident (3); Very confident (4); Totally confident (5).

<sup>13</sup> As for external political efficacy, I measured it through a 5-point Likert scale question, which is also an adaption of the second question from the European Social Survey Round 8 (2016): "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent would you say that the political system in Portugal allows people like you to have an influence on politics." Set of possible answers: Not at all (1); A little (2); Reasonably (3); A lot (4); Totally (5).

<sup>14</sup> The question asked was identical to ours and used a 5-point scale as well.

<sup>15</sup> I measured the support for citizen's involvement in political decision-making through the following 5-point Likert scale question: Regarding the following statement, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, your degree of agreement: The majority of political decisions should involve citizens more". Due to an error in the printed version of the "pre" questionnaires applied to the participating citizens, which we could not amend in time, the scales of this dimension had to be reformulated as follows. Previous scale: I totally disagree (1); I partially disagree (2); I don't agree nor disagree (3); I partially agree (4); I totally agree (5). Corrected scale: I totally



Regarding trust<sup>16</sup>, participants declared that they trusted and relied on other people's opinion "a lot", with a median of 4 and a mean of 3.63. While a direct comparison is not available, the European Values Study (Ramos & Magalhães, 2021) shows that, in 2020, Portugal was one of the European countries with the lowest levels of interpersonal trust.

On a scale of 1 to 5, citizens self-rated their knowledge<sup>17</sup> on the topic of climate change as 3.38. Finally, regarding satisfaction with democracy, in Portugal and Lisbon<sup>18</sup>, the mean scores awarded by participating and non-participating citizens did not differ substantially, those being 3.68 and 3.66, respectively. In the general population, satisfaction with how democracy works in the country tends to be a slightly lower, according to the European Social Survey Round 9 (2018) (M= 5.1/10) and the Portuguese Electoral Study (M=3.2/5) (Lobo et al., 2019).

I tested for differences in-between the two groups to see whether they were identical before the start of the LCC. That was not the case when it came to previous partaking in other participation processes,  $\chi^2(1, N=56) = 6.994, p = 0.015 < 0.05$ . In fact, a higher percentage of participants that attended the LCC had already taken part in other participatory processes (47.4% in the treatment group against 11.1% in the control group), suggesting a new self-selection effect, even after voluntary enrollment. In spite of this, I found that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in most dimensions, namely: knowledge of the LCC participation model,  $\chi^2(1, N=56) = 0.002, p = 1 > 0.05$ ; internal efficacy,  $t(55) = 1.121, p > 0.05$ ; external efficacy,  $t(55) = 0.189, p > 0.05$ ; perception of the contribution of participatory processes to decision making,  $t(54) = -0.816, p > 0.05$ ; agreement with the idea of greater citizen involvement in decision-making,  $t(54) = -0.368, p > 0.05$ ; satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Portugal, satisfaction with Lisbon's democratic life (U=257.5,  $p > 0.05$ );  $t(52) = -1.50, p > 0.05$ ; trust in the opinion of others,  $t(54) = 0.915, p > 0.05$  and perception of knowledge about climate change  $t(54) = 1.047, p > 0.05$ . With this in mind, I concluded that the two groups were sufficiently identical and hence suited for comparison.

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disagree / I don't agree (1); I don't agree nor disagree (2); I agree a little (3); I partially/reasonably agree (4); I very much agree (4,5); I totally agree (5).

<sup>16</sup> I measured this dimension through the following 5-point Likert scale question: "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, if in your day-to-day life you usually trust and rely on other people's opinion". Set of possible answers: Not at all (1); A little (2); Reasonably (3); A lot (4); Totally (5).

<sup>17</sup> As for the level of self-perceived knowledge, the following 5-point Likert scale question was put: "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how you rate your degree of knowledge about climate change, the proposed theme for this session of the Citizens' Council." Set of possible answers: I don't know the subject (1); I know little about the subject (2); I partially know the subject (3); I know a lot about the subject (4); I fully know the subject (5).

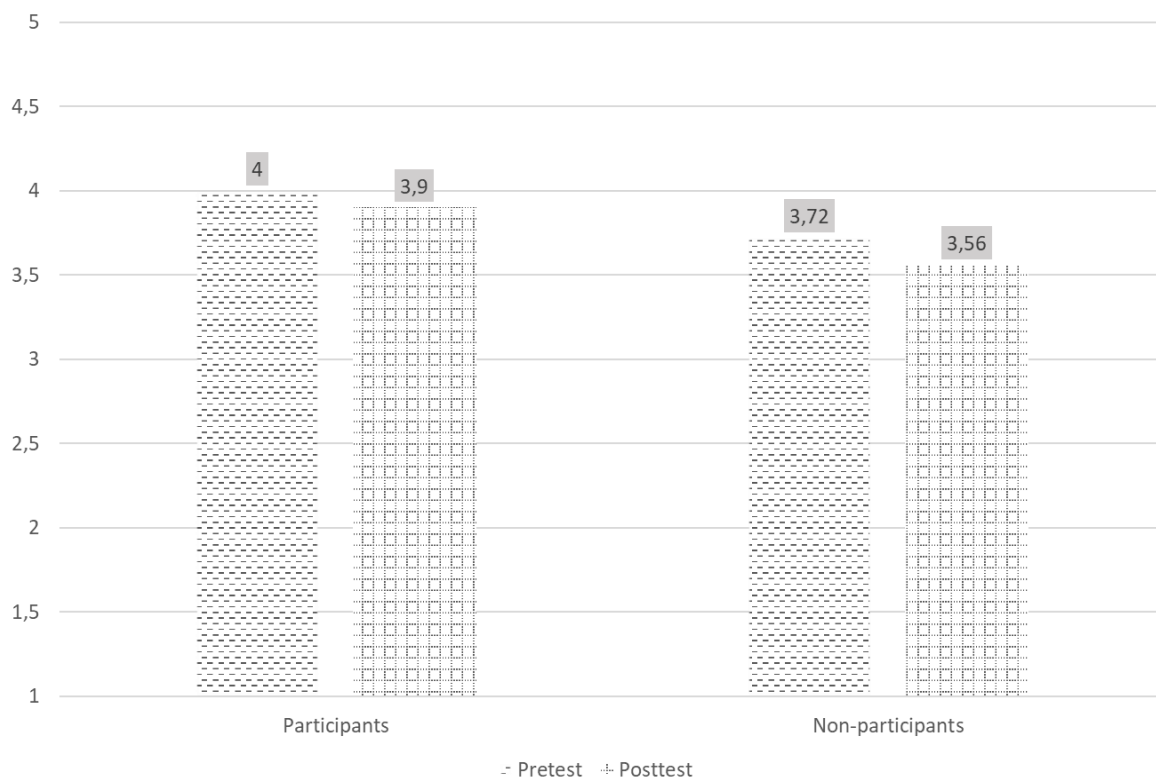
<sup>18</sup> The questions used to assess these dimensions were the following: "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your level of satisfaction with democratic life in Lisbon" and "Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Portugal". Due to an error in the printed version of the "pre" questionnaires applied to the participating citizens, which we could not amend in time, the scales of these two dimensions had to be reformulated as follows. Previous scale: Totally dissatisfied (1); Partially dissatisfied (2); Not satisfied nor dissatisfied (3); Partially satisfied (4); Totally satisfied (5). Corrected scale: Totally dissatisfied / Not satisfied at all (1); Partially dissatisfied (2); Not satisfied nor dissatisfied (3); Little satisfied (3.5); Partially/reasonably satisfied (4); Very satisfied (4.5); Totally satisfied (5).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In this chapter, I present the statistical tests performed to either confirm or reject the hypotheses. I also frame the findings concerning the effects of taking part in the LCC in citizens' civic virtues, skills, and attitudes within the relevant literature.

The first hypothesis (H1) expected an increase in internal political efficacy as a result of taking part in the LCC. As seen in Figure 4.1, participating citizens reported similar high levels of internal political efficacy at the first ( $M=4$ ,  $SD=0.858$ ) and second ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=0.940$ ) points in time. Non-participating citizens, on the other hand, reported slightly lower values after the LCC took place. I ran t-tests for paired samples to assess whether these changes were significant and both in the case of participant ( $t(38) = 0.726$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), as well as non-participating citizens ( $t(17) = 1.374$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), they were not<sup>19</sup>. As such, H1 was not confirmed.

**Figure 4.1 – Mean levels of internal political efficacy of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



The reason behind this may have been that, from the start, the group was already internally very efficacious, most likely due to self-selection. In other words, this may have been due to something similar to a roof effect. Attempts at recruiting less engaged groups of citizens, as previously described,

<sup>19</sup> Moreover the t-test for independent samples revealed no statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants after the LCC,  $t(55) = 1.258$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

appear to not have sufficed, and the margins for increase in internal political efficacy were very slim. We can, nonetheless, conclude that taking part in the process and being exposed to learning, deliberating, and deciding with unknown peers who were themselves quite confident in their own ability to take part in politics did not decrease citizens' internal political efficacy.

Interestingly, after the LCC, there was a non-significant yet slight decrease of internal political efficacy, among those who were either not selected or could not take part in the LCC. This raises the question of the effects of deliberative and participatory processes on those who do not take part in them, which naturally constitute the majority. The issue is particularly relevant in processes that resort to sortition and must then exclude citizens to avoid self-selection distortions. Is there a negative effect on non-participating citizens? This is an understudied topic (Jacquet & van der Does, 2021) and of utmost importance if we want to explore the potentialities of democratic innovations at a bigger scale.

Additionally, while the t-tests did not report statistically significant differences between the two groups, both before ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=0.895$ ) and after ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=0.984$ ) the LCC, non-participating citizens reported, on average, lower levels of internal political efficacy than their counterparts. We know from Jacquet's research (2017), that in mini-publics where there is no registration but only sortition as a selection method, four out of the six reasons behind the refusal to participate have to do with internal political inefficacy, public meeting avoidance, a perception of the mini-public's lack of impact on the political system, and conflict of schedule. While citizens that were selected but chose not to attend the event did invoke conflicts of schedule, it remains to be seen if and how the other three explanations also play a part in the case of those who are willing to deliberate but end up deciding to not show up.

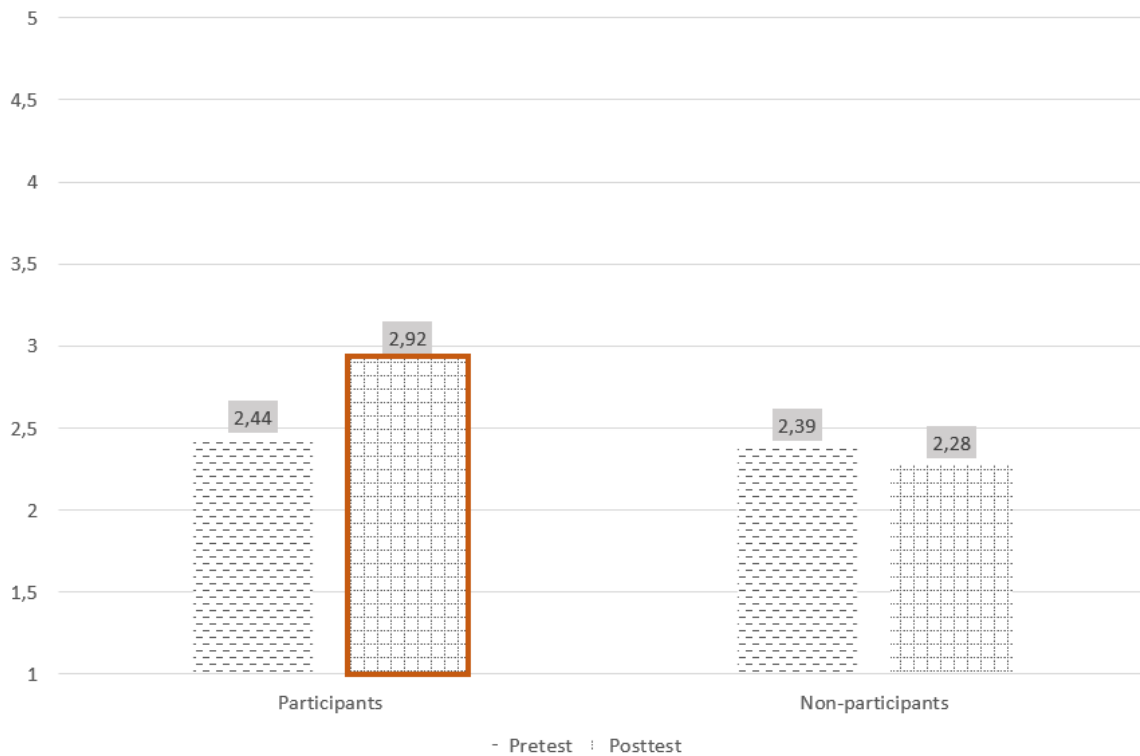
The second hypothesis (H2) predicted an increase in external political efficacy as a result of participating in the LCC. As shown in Figure 4.2, there was an increase of 0.48 points in participating citizens' perception of responsiveness. While the median answer reported in the pre-test corresponded to feeling that the political system in Portugal allowed ordinary people to have "a little" (2) influence on politics, in the post-test participating citizens' median perception improved by 1 point (3 = "reasonably").

I conducted t-tests for paired samples and found that this increase was statistically significant:  $t(38) = -3.561$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . On the other hand, there were no statistical significant differences between non-participating citizens' external efficacy levels before and after the LCC,  $t(17) = 0.622$ ,  $p > 0.05$ <sup>20</sup>. As such, H2 was confirmed: participating citizens' levels of external political efficacy increased as a result of taking part in the LCC. The presence of the Mayor and the explicit statement that citizens' proposals would be taken into consideration to reflect future public policies might have incited this heightened perception of responsiveness.

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<sup>20</sup> Also, a t-test for independent samples revealed statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants, after the LCC:  $t(55) = 2.711$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

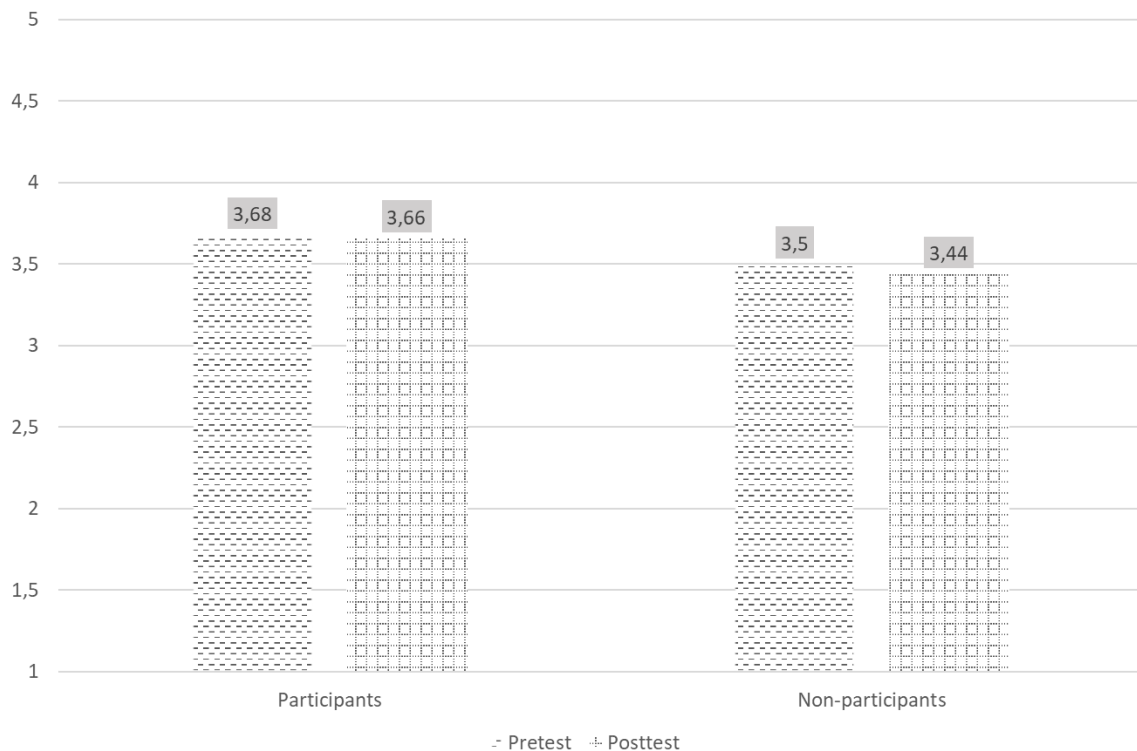
**Figure 4.2 – Mean levels of external political efficacy of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



H3 referred to the expectation that taking part in the LCC would increase citizens' trust in other people's opinion. As seen in Figure 4.3, participating citizens reported a medium-high level of trust in other citizens' opinions ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=0.739$ ) before the LCC. The post-test assessment revealed that this did not change in the aftermath of the process ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=0.745$ ). The same can be said of non-participating citizens before ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=0.618$ ) and after ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=0.511$ ). The t-tests for paired samples confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences in participating ( $t(37) = 0.255$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), as well as non-participating citizens' levels of trust ( $t(17) = 0.566$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) before and after the LCC<sup>21</sup>. Hence, I did not find support for H3.

<sup>21</sup> In addition, the t-test for independent samples revealed no statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants, after the LCC,  $t(55) = 1.015$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

**Figure 4.3 – Mean levels of trust in other people’s opinion of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



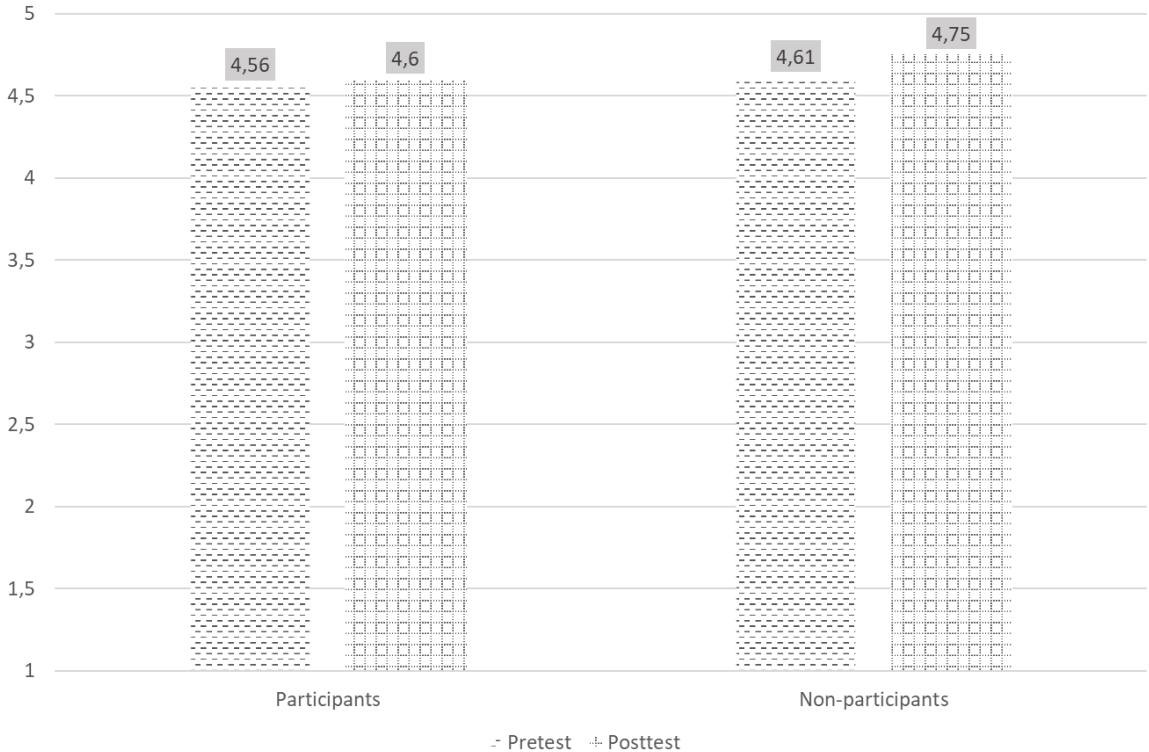
While participating citizens’ levels of trust in others’ opinions proved to be sufficient for effective deliberation and the co-creation of policy proposals, this dimension was not positively or negatively impacted by the LCC. As previously stated, there is currently a lack of research on the issue of interpersonal trust in these contexts. Nonetheless, more time-consuming deliberative and participatory processes should positively impact trust. Just as opinion change is more likely to occur in opinion heterogeneous groups (Suiter et al., 2014), we could presume that changes in trust, including trust in others’ opinions, are more likely to occur in more diverse groups. Groups which are more diverse, both in sociodemographic as well as attitudinal terms, are richer in viewpoints, which is a broader concept than mere opinion, and elicit perspective-taking, *i.e.* “actively imagining others’ experiences, perspectives and feelings” (Muradova, 2021, p. 647). As seen before, a degree of self-selection inscribed in the model of the LCC resulted in a more homogenous group of participating citizens.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) posited that participants in the LCC would increase their support for citizens’ involvement in political decision-making. Figure 4.4 shows that, amongst them, pre-test (M=4.56, SD=0.640) and post-test (M=4.60, SD= 0.680) levels of support remained unaltered –  $t(38) = -0.281, p > 0.05$  – and extremely high. Non-participating citizens’ support was also high from the start (M=4.61, SD=0.323) and slightly increased after the LCC (M=4.75, SD=0.309), but this difference proved to be statistically non-significant:  $t(17) = -1.761, p > 0.05$ <sup>22</sup>. As in the case of internal political

<sup>22</sup> Also, a t-test for independent samples revealed no statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants, after the LCC,  $t(55) = -0.875, p > 0.05$ .

efficacy, and likely due to a self-selection effect, the group of participating citizens was already very supportive of ordinary people’s involvement in political decision-making. As such, the room for increase was rather slim and H4 was not confirmed.

**Figure 4.4 – Mean levels of support for citizens’ involvement in political decision-making of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



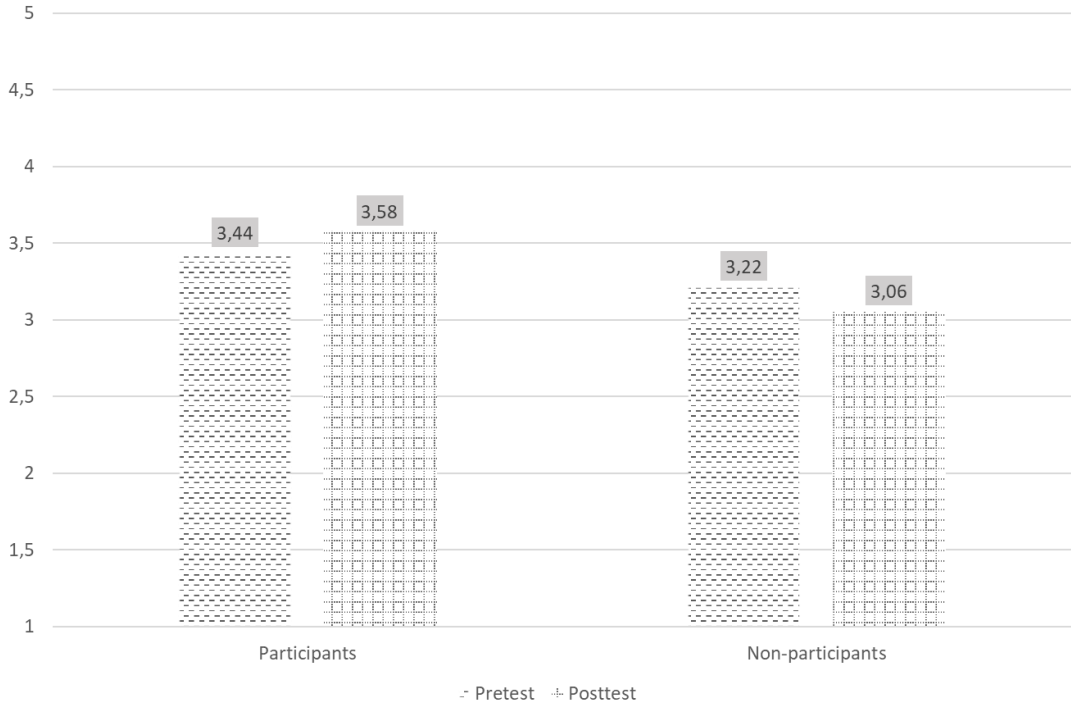
We did see, however, that taking part in this democratic innovation did not wane down people’s support for more engagement, in spite of greater feelings of being heard by the political system (observed in the test of H2). Importantly, the question asked referred to citizens’ involvement in the majority of political decisions, which is indicative that they value some form of decision-making power in a wide range of issues of differing degrees of importance.

I also expected that participating in the LCC would lead to an increase in citizens’ self-perceived and factual knowledge<sup>23</sup> about the issue at stake, climate change (H5 and H6, correspondingly). Figure 4.5 shows that participating citizens’ levels of self-perceived knowledge had slightly increased after the LCC. However, this increase did not prove to be statistically significant, according to a t-test for paired samples:  $t(35) = -1.536, p > 0.05$ . Nonetheless, in an *ex-post* comparison with their counterparts,

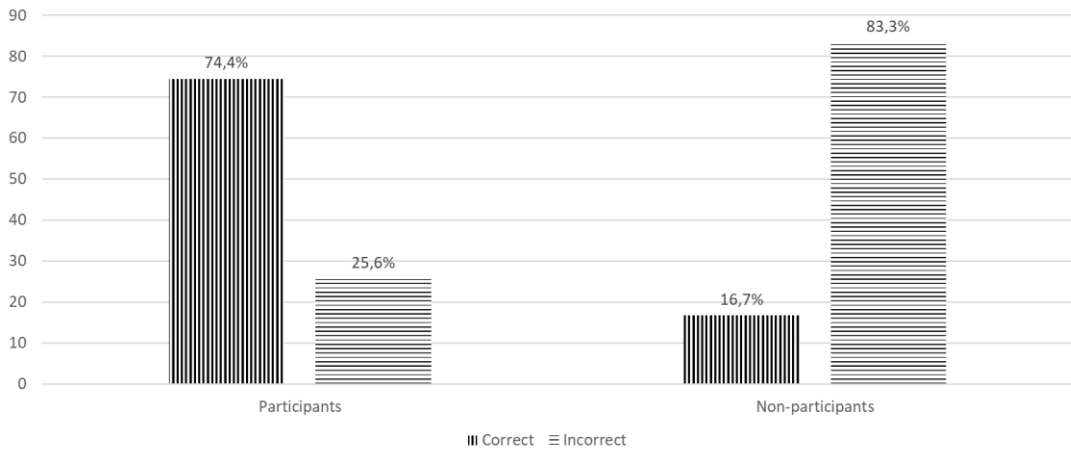
<sup>23</sup> I tested factual knowledge with the following two questions:  
 1) “Which sectors are responsible for the greatest energy consumption in Lisbon?” Set of possible answers: Residential and Services; Transportation and Industry; Transportation and Services (correct answer).  
 2) “Lisbon has the potential to generate more than 90% of the electricity it consumes through...” Set of possible answers: Solar energy (correct answer); Hydraulic energy; Wind energy.

participating citizens excelled in the first and hardest factual question posed, as shown in Figure 4.6. This difference in performance was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1.57) = 16.65, p < 0.05$ . The same did not happen with the second factual question, whose answer could be easily inferred (Figure 4.7). With that in mind, I conclude that H5 was not confirmed. Alternatively, H6 was partially confirmed.

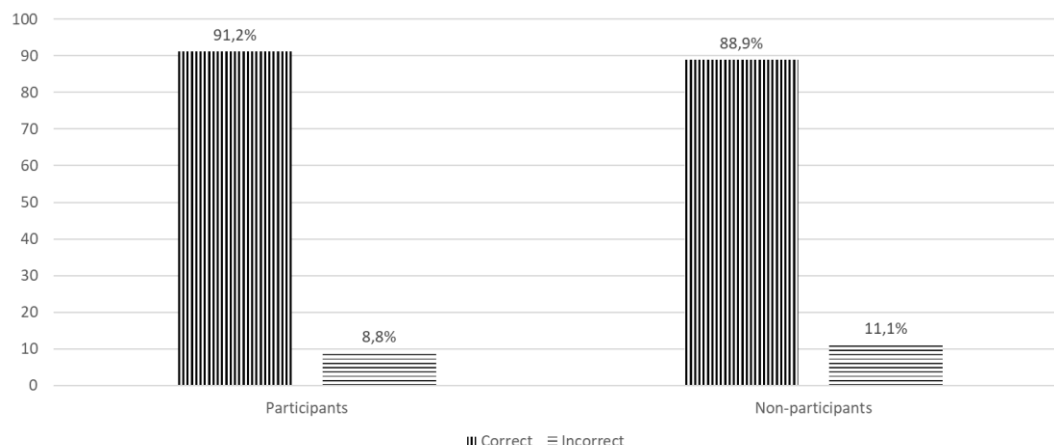
**Figure 4.5 – Mean levels of self-perceived knowledge of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



**Figure 4.6 – Percentage of correct and incorrect answers of participating and non-participating citizens to the 1<sup>st</sup> factual question.**

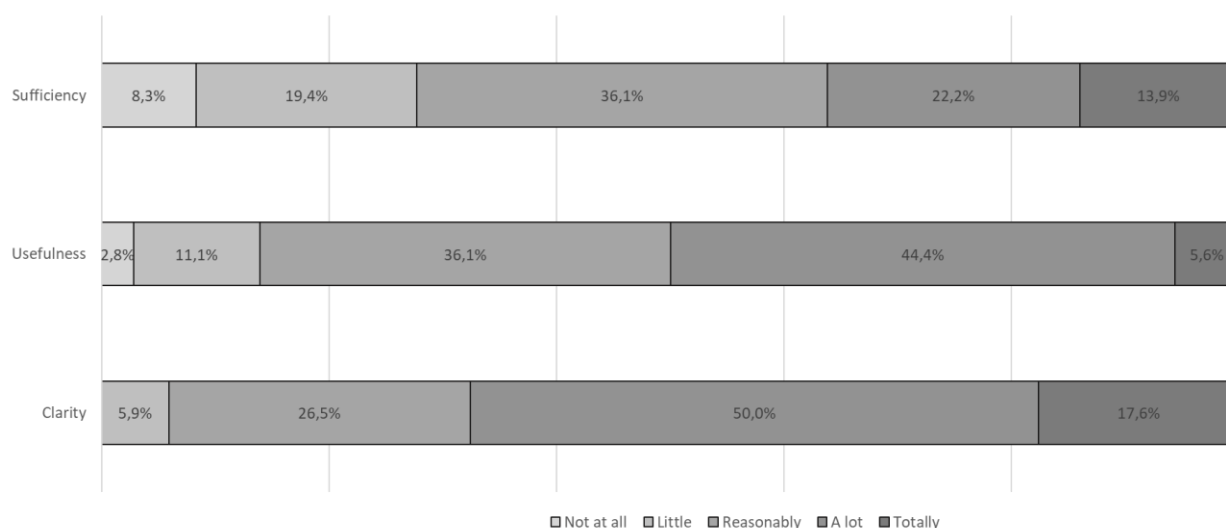


**Figure 4.7 – Percentage of correct and incorrect answers of participating and non-participating citizens to the 2<sup>nd</sup> factual question.**



While participating citizens did learn about climate change, they did not perceive an increase in their global knowledge on the matter. One possible explanation has to do with the limited time allocated to the learning phase (one morning). Some citizens complained throughout the weekend about the shortage of information. One of the six small deliberation groups said through their spokesperson: “We should have received a lot of information before we were here”. Considering the characteristics of the group (highly educated people with a medium-high perception of knowledge on climate change), their expectations for the amount and depth of information were probably not met. In fact, when asked to evaluate the information transmitted, participating citizens were quite satisfied in terms of clarity and usefulness, yet sufficiency was rated less positively in comparison (Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8 – Participating citizens’ evaluation of the information provided in terms of sufficiency, usefulness, and clarity, in percentage.**

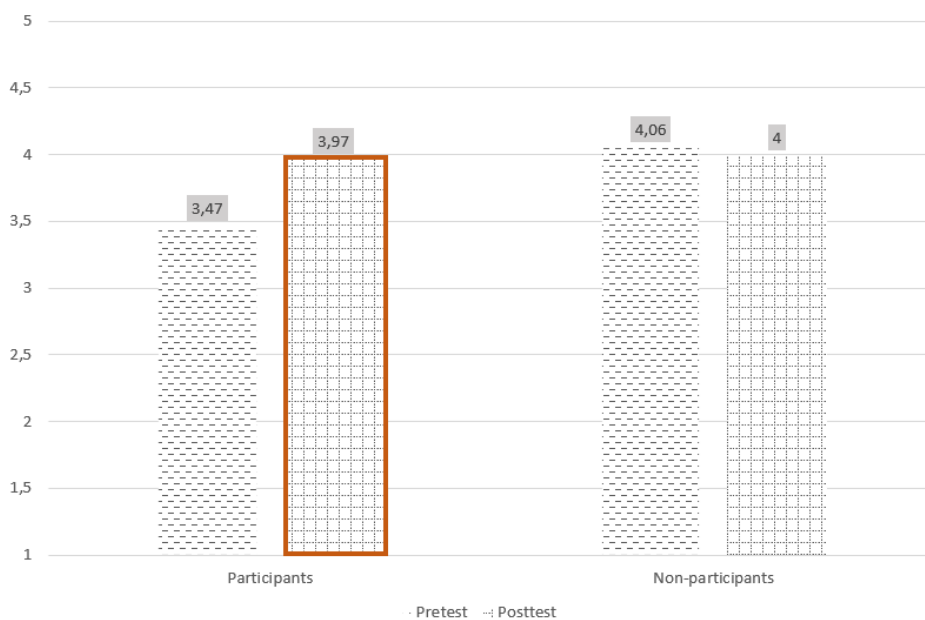




Interestingly, the t-test for independent samples found statistically significant differences between the levels of self-perceived knowledge of participating and non-participating citizens, after the LCC:  $t(53) = 2.764, p < 0.05$ . I speculate that the reason behind this had to do with the decrease of non-participants' levels after the process ( $M=3.06, SD=0.639$ ) vis-à-vis the pre-LCC values ( $M=3.22, SD=0.647$ ). While not statically significant,  $-t(17) = 1.374, p > 0.05$  – this decrease might have potentiated the result, which could be related to the presence of two factual questions in the post-test questionnaire on topics the control group was not exposed to.

The last two hypotheses predicted an increase in participating citizens' satisfaction with democracy in Lisbon and Portugal (H7 and H8, respectively). As Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show, while satisfaction with democracy at the local and national levels remained steady for non-participating citizens, it improved for the ones who took part in the LCC. The increment was, as expected, steeper in the case of the city (from  $M=3.47, SD=1.156$  to  $M=3.97, SD=0.805$ ). I conducted t-tests for paired samples and found that both the increases in satisfaction with democracy in Lisbon ( $t(37) = -3.062, p < 0.05$ )<sup>24</sup>, as well as in the country ( $t(37) = -3.048, p < 0.05$ )<sup>25</sup> were statistically significant. Accordingly, H7 and H8 were confirmed.

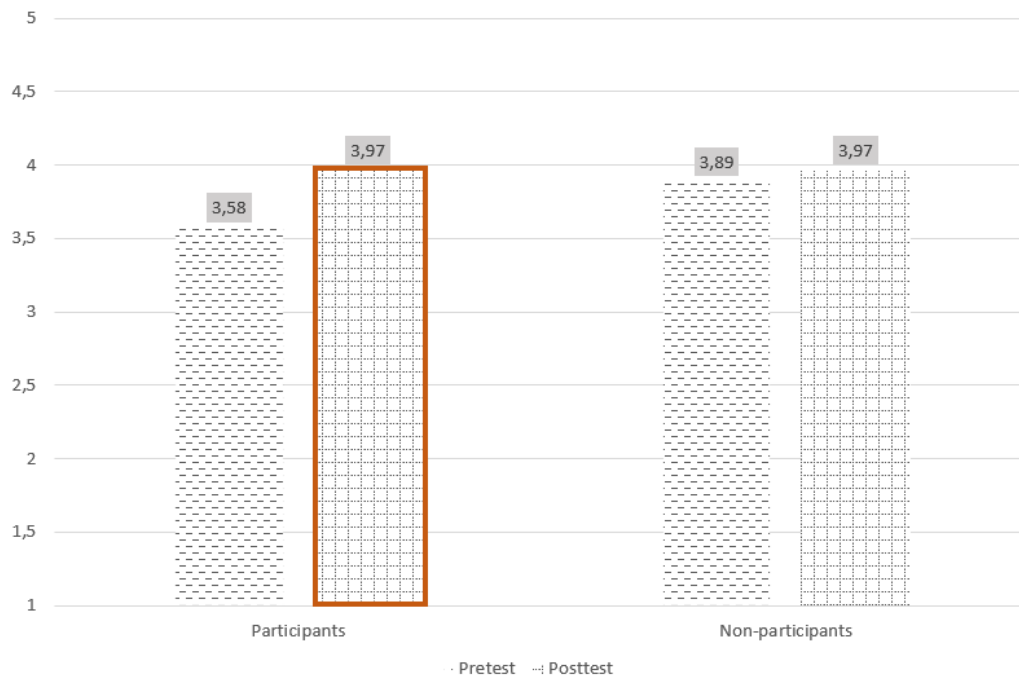
**Figure 4.9 – Mean levels of satisfaction with Lisbon's democratic life of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, a t-test for independent samples revealed no statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants, after the LCC,  $t(55) = -0.130, p > 0.05$ .

<sup>25</sup> In addition, a t-test for independent samples revealed no statistically significant differences between participants and non-participants, after the LCC,  $t(55) = 0.077, p > 0.05$ .

**Figure 4.10 – Mean levels of satisfaction with the functioning of Portugal’s democracy of participating and non-participating citizens, before and after the LCC.**



To conclude, this study confirms an increase in external political efficacy (H2), as well as satisfaction with how democracy works, in Lisbon (H7) and in Portugal (H8). As stated before, previous studies have found these dimensions to correlate with each other. Additionally, an increase in factual knowledge about climate change (H6) was partially confirmed by an *ex-post* analysis. In this chapter, I furthermore offered insight to the possible reasons as to why the other four hypotheses were not confirmed by the analysis.

## 5. Conclusion

In the last decades, scholars, activists, and politicians have discussed the crisis of democracy and ways to strengthen it, namely by bridging the gap between citizens and politics. The aim of this study was to contribute to the ongoing debate about the potentialities of deliberative and participatory democracy, reflected in the wide array of democratic innovations of which the Lisbon Citizens' Council is a part of. I did this from the perspective of civic virtues, skills, and attitudes, which, despite current discouraging scenarios, are deemed of great importance to the health and vitality of democracies. This allowed me to rescue some of the most relevant features of the often-forgotten theory of participatory democracy and combine them with the less looked-at presumptive consequences of deliberative models of decision-making.

The LCC, as the first deliberative and participatory process to be initiated by a political authority in Portugal, offered the perfect opportunity to put the arguments of both theories to test. I did so by means of a quasi-experiment, where a treatment and a control group were assessed before the start and at the end of the one-weekend process. Based on the most relevant and up-to-date literature, I formulated eight hypotheses which expected that taking part in the LCC would lead to an increase in participating citizens' levels of internal and external political efficacy, trust in other people's opinion, support for citizen involvement in political decision-making, self-perceived and factual knowledge about climate change, and satisfaction with democracy at the local and national levels.

The statistical analyses performed lent support to four of the hypotheses. Citizens' feelings of being heard by the political system increased with the LCC. Furthermore, their satisfaction with democracy in their city and country, an understudied effect of participatory and deliberative processes, also improved. Lastly, this research showed once more that citizens can retain information and learn about complex topics such as climate change.

While one cannot generalize the findings of this study, both due to the methodology (experimental) as well as self-selection effects caused by the LCC design, a causality link can be established between the positive outcomes and this democratic innovation. The hypotheses which the data did not confirm underscore the need for further research, as well as the importance of institutional design in averting the reinforcement of participatory distortions. They also highlight the need to study the elements that are not so successful in each process and the ways in which that influences individual and system-level consequences.

There are shortcomings in my research, the most important being that I could not assess the longevity of the positive effects found. The participatory deliberative process does not end when the proposals are submitted, in a way it begins there. Implementation has been a big concern with democratic innovations in general. Changes in attitudes, and skills mostly require time-consuming and encompassing or recurrent experiences, which the case under study could not provide for. Finally, a deeper analysis would also probably require the adoption of a mixed-methods approach. This would

allow a better understanding on the mechanisms behind citizens' attitudes and skills in their relationship with each other and the political realm.

The present study is the first to look at civic virtues, skills, and attitudes in the context of a deliberative and participatory process in Portugal. The findings point out to the need of further research within this field, as hybrid instruments like the LCC are on the rise but are still overlooked. Key steps have been given when it comes to combining participatory and deliberative processes. Research, both normatively and empirically, should follow suit as these strands can certainly bring the best out of each other. It is worth investigating sometimes disregarded relationships between democratic innovations and interpersonal effects, attitudes towards democracy, and self-perceived abilities to participate. Moreover, the linkage between these processes, and those who do and do not take part in them, is of extreme relevance for the future contribution that mini-publics can give to democracies. What kind of democracies are citizens in search of is the underlying theme of all other questions.

In the end, there is reason to believe that democratic innovations such as the LCC contribute to making citizens better, but questions remain on the scope and longevity of these improvements, who can benefit from these practices, and their usefulness at a grander and institutionalized scale.

## 6. References

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