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# Participatory budgeting for young people as democratic socialisation: An approach to the case of Spain

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## Abstract

This article analyses participatory budgets for young people (children and adolescents) held in Spanish municipalities during the period 2015–2021. A questionnaire was made and 35 valid responses were obtained after it was distributed by UNICEF Spain during July–September 2021. The data were processed using MAXQDA 2022 software, and the study characterised the language, strategy, objectives, phases and participants. From these last three variables, a document map was made to generate clusters and find affinities between cases. The main findings reveal the importance of the role of municipal officials and politicians, as well as the existence of three participatory budget models.

## KEYWORDS

child participation, children's rights, citizenship, participatory budgeting, public policy, young people participation

## INTRODUCTION

This article offers the results of an exploratory study on participatory budgets for young people (children and adolescents) in municipalities in Spain. The participatory budgeting experiences, both in the young people and adult versions, were developed within Spanish municipalities. For this reason, local authorities have become privileged spaces for convening and holding such events. The focus of this paper is on the efforts of Spanish local administrations to implement

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instruments for child and adolescent participation. These policies are a novel and innovative step of interest for the Social Sciences.

Our first objective is to diagnose the current state of local participatory budgeting for young people in Spain with data taken from a 2021 survey by UNICEF Spain in municipalities that form part of the Child Friendly Cities initiative (although municipalities not included in this network also participated).

Participatory budgeting for children and young people is a democratic way to actively involve young people in decision-making on issues of concern and to prioritise public funding for certain projects.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations Assembly on 20 November 1989 and marked a turning point in children's rights around the world. Article 12 of the CRC states that *States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. In addition, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

Then, child and youth participation has become an essential item on public agendas as young people are considered active citizens with the right to freely express their views on matters that affect them.

Participation is understood as the implementation of arrangements and practices that enable children and young people to influence something of interest to them or of a public nature. Qvortrup (2008), for example, understands participation in terms of rights like human rights in the Declaration of Human Rights. Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) frame child participation in a dialogical approach as participation is not seen as a claim by children to assert their rights, but as a dynamic that arises from mutual interdependence, recognition, and respect between young people and adults.

Participation in democratic debates by young people, regardless of scale and scope, is a means of developing democratic capacities and enhancing democracy (Bowles & Gintis, 1986). The underlying epistemological rationale is that young people are competent and endowed with agency (Gaitán, 2006; Hart, 1997; Lansdown, 2005; Lundy, 2007).

However, this concept of participation by young people produces serious paradoxes because many democrats deny or wish to prevent their participation in democratic decision-making.

Most studies reveal the importance of participation from a young age because: (1) participation strengthens the communication and negotiation skills of young people; (2) it increases their empowerment and ability to access information about rights; (3) it helps young people learn to defend their rights and prevent abuse; (4) it produces valuable intergenerational exchange; (5) it improves public policy outcomes; and (6) it innovates the political arena (Abellán-López et al., 2022; Gal & Duramy, 2015; Hart, 1992, 1997; Lansdown, 2005; Liebel, 1994; Lundy, 2007; Lundy et al., 2020; Thomas, 2009; Tisdall et al., 2014).

Having indicated the advantages of participation, one of the great challenges is how to materialise this activity. The plasticity surrounding participatory budgets has enabled them to be adapted in many ways as participatory experiences for young people.

Studies on participatory budgeting by young people in Spain are scarce and fragmentary, which is explained by the disparity of practices and their applications (mainly at local levels). Most studies have focused on a sole case (Francés, 2006; Ramírez Nardiz, 2009; Ruiz-Morales, 2014) or from a descriptive perspective and exploratory study (Pineda Nebot et al., 2021).

However, a great deal of research on participatory budgeting was carried out during 2021. This research focused on understanding the phenomenon (Cano-Hila et al., 2021), making a critical analysis (Martínez-Valle, 2021), and describing it in various areas (López & Gil-Jáurena, 2021).

With these initial ideas in mind, the layout of this article is as follows. After this introduction, the methodology is formulated, followed by the theoretical framework, data analysis and a discussion. Finally, we offer conclusions.

## METHODOLOGY

This work is framed within an interpretative paradigm as the use of discourses is part of the qualitative method and defines situations in terms that are meaningful regarding the participants, intentions and aims. A strategy based on mixed methods that combines quantification and the use of qualitative methodologies is implemented (Cardoso Braga et al., 2019; Medina et al., 2017). Content analysis facilitates the drawing of inferences from the responses obtained and helps us gain an understanding of the symbolic and semantic communications of the informants in the survey (Krippendorff, 1990).

Data were gathered through a survey that included 15 open-ended questions that was distributed with the collaboration with the UNICEF-Spanish Committee through the Child Friendly Cities network. Emails were sent to Spanish municipalities and local authorities, and a website with the questionnaire was opened to increase the number of responses. The responses were gathered between 15 July and 14 September 2021.

The informants involved in collecting the data were as follows (Table 1):

The data we present from the survey of Spanish municipalities reveal that the size of the municipality is not an obstacle to organising these participatory initiatives.

The data have been coded using the CAQDAS software, MAXQDA 2022, and this has enabled us to generate quantifiable evidence. Specifically, the following coding process was made (Figure 1):

The following activities were undertaken in each of the phases:

1. Generation of a theoretical framework based on a study of the bibliography obtained from national and international sources such as: *Web of Science*, *Scopus* and *Dialnet*.
2. Preliminary analysis of the answers to the open-ended questions to generate insights for coding.
3. Creation of an initial coding system based on the theoretical reference and the first impressions from the evidence obtained.
4. Development of a coding process which was later reviewed for compactness and validity.
5. Second coding for the detection of new evidence.
6. Generation of results and clustering.

Coding was carried out on the following variables of interest (Table 2):

To identify similarities between respondents, the Kuckart-Radiker Zeta was applied. This analysis is important as it enables categories to be generated when the sample is sufficiently large. In this case, the inference generates results that serve to contrast working proposition number 4.

TABLE 1 Local entities involved.

Local entities	Autonomous region	Size
Marmolejo	Andalucía	5001–10 000
San Javier	Región de Murcia	30001–50 000
Santomera	Región de Murcia	10001–20 000
Cangas del Narcea	Asturias	10001–20 000
Dénia	C. Valenciana	30001–50 000
Tiana	Catalunya	5001–10 000
Argentona	Catalunya	10001–20 000
Sant Cugat del Vallès	Catalunya	50001–100 000
Villena	C. Valenciana	30001–50 000
Coaña	Asturias	3001–5000
Molins de Rei	Catalunya	20001–30 000
Ayuntamiento de Puertollano	Castilla-La Mancha	30001–50 000
La Puebla de Cazalla	Andalucía	10001–20 000
Ayuntamiento de Barcelona	Catalunya	500 000+
Xirivella	C. Valenciana	30001–50 000
Conil de la Frontera	Andalucía	20001–30 000
Bellreguard	C. Valenciana	3001–5000
Reus	Catalunya	100 001–500 000
Madrid	Madrid	500 000+
Teruel	Aragón	30001–50 000
Paracuellos de Jarama	Madrid	20001–30 000
Oruella	Euskadi	5001–10 000
Lorquí	Región de Murcia	5001–10 000
Mancomunidad Rivera de Fresnedosa	Extremadura	Supramunicipal entity
Almendralejo	Extremadura	30001–50 000
Arganda del Rey	Madrid	50001–100 000
Vitoria-Gasteiz	Euskadi	100 001–500 000
Llerena	Extremadura	5001–10 000
Ataun, Azpeitia, Donostia, Eibar e Irun	Euskadi	Supramunicipal entity
Zalla	Euskadi	5001–10 000
Palafrugell	Catalunya	20001–30 000
La Pobl de Farnals	C. Valenciana	5001–10 000
Tegueste	Islas Canarias	10001–20 000
El Boalo	Madrid	5001–10 000
Cuenca	Castilla-La Mancha	50001–100 000
Derio	Euskadi	5001–10 000
Épila	Aragón	3001–5000
Martorell	Catalunya	20001–30 000
Carreño	Asturias	10001–20 000

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Local entities	Autonomous region	Size
Puerto del Rosario	Islas Canarias	30001–50000
Alcoi	C. Valenciana	50001–100000

Source: Authors.

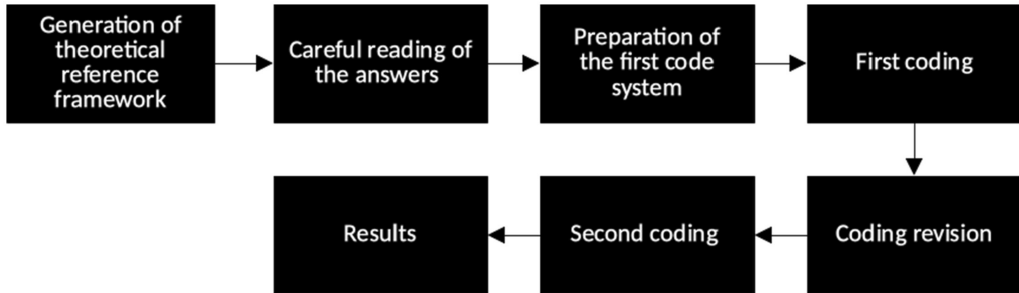


FIGURE 1 Data coding procedure. Source: Authors.

TABLE 2 Code groups.

Code groups
Dissemination of participatory experience
Evaluation and monitoring
Participatory budgeting participants
Public policy cycle
Scale of institutionalisation of participatory budgeting
Participatory budgeting phase
Development of participatory budget
Themes
Participatory budget aims
Other codes of interest

Source: Authors.

The MAXQDA program calculates document similarity based on four complementary variables (MAXQDA, 2022):

$a$  = Number of codes or variable values that are identical in both documents.

$d$  = Number of codes or variable values that do not exist in both documents.

$b$  and  $c$  = Number of codes or variable values that exist in a single document.

The variable  $d$  is matched as a coincidence if it does not exist in the documents being compared.

The Kuckart-Rädiker Zeta gives a greater weight to similarities than differences, which is useful for optimising similarities in exploratory studies. The ratio of this parameter is as follows:  $(2a + d)/(2a + b + c + d)$ .

The values and groupings obtained are represented on a map.

Thirty-five documents with a valid response were selected, and the variables related to the objectives, participants and phases were marked to identify a basic analysis of young people participatory budgeting. With this grouping, a table was constructed indicating the number

of pieces of evidence and the percentage of the total number of documents in which the code appears.

Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained as ethical considerations. All participants gave informed consent to the use of data for research purposes.

## Democratic learning and the paradox of participation by young people

One of the major challenges facing the Committee on the Rights of the Child—as the international body that assesses the implementation of these rights—is persuading states to prepare both legal and non-legal measures. As well as incorporating the ratified treaty into national legal systems it is necessary to design multi-level strategies and policies, improve coordination and advocacy services, gather data, formulate methodologies, train people working with young people, develop budgeting systems and make impact assessments. There is, therefore, no single way to implement the convention and states have adopted a variety of approaches. As a result, various groupings of rights have been created and discussed in the literature, such as the so-called 3Ps (Alderson, 2008; Mayall, 1994) or the 6Ps applied to public policy (Byrne & Lundy, 2019). However, there is considerable discussion about the tensions that exist between child protection rights and democratic participation. While participation is essential to democracy, when it comes to participation by young people there is a competition between independence and dependency that highlights power asymmetries between adults and young people (Moran-Ellis & Sünker, 2018). Adults (whether parents, professionals or public decision-makers) retain considerable control over what counts as participation by the young (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). This control can be compounded by other variables such as cultural norms and the underestimation of young people's capacities, often masked under the guise of appreciative commentary (Blanchet-Cohen & Torres, 2015; Shier, 2010).

The exercise of citizenship must be experienced as something that goes beyond well-intentioned speeches and so requires suitable spaces and resources that enable the development of participation—and the school appears to be an ideal place (Schugurensky & Wolhuter, 2020).

Although two major obstacles to full and meaningful participation by young people can be identified: adultcentrism and tokenism.

Adultcentrism refers to adults not taking young people's opinions seriously (Freeman, 2007). The underlying question is whether power is shared with young people, as it is adults who function as facilitators in guiding the young during participatory processes. This implies that adults must know when to step back and let young people take control (Bessell, 2009; Mitra, 2005).

Tokenism is linked to the previous concept, but from a perspective more related to participatory autonomy. The evolution of this concept can be followed in the literature on participation by young people (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1997; Lundy, 2007; Shier, 2001). Both Arnstein (1969) and Hart (1992) identify tokenism as one of the rungs on the ladder of participation. This ladder is an instrument for assessing the various stages of participatory intensity from the most basic levels to those that introduce elevated levels of independence for young people. Tokenism describes a symbolic participation without a correct implementation of young people's political rights—generating empty situations in which real participation has no impact. This situation tends to occur in early experiences and is overcome as better implementation skills are acquired. The problem is when this phenomenon becomes chronic and is accompanied by situations of adultcentrism which can often end in disengagement from the participatory experience (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

As Hart (1992, p. 11) states, the key principle is that of choice: projects should be designed to maximise the opportunity for young people to select their participation to the best of their ability.

## Participatory budgeting for young people

One of the most popular and innovative instruments of local democratic participatory governance is participatory budgeting (PB), and an indicator of its success is the substantial number of experiences registered—more than 11 000 in 71 countries according to the Participatory Budgeting World Atlas (2019). Participatory budgeting is a form of decision-making that actively involves citizens in prioritising how public funds are spent. However, this general definition captures a wide range of practices with varying levels of participatory intensity (Abers, 2000; Baiocchi, 2003; Cabannes, 2004; Douglass & Friedmann, 1998; Sintomer, 2005; Sintomer et al., 2008; Souza, 2001; Wampler, 2007).

Given its heterogeneity and diversity in terms of purposes, methodologies and logics, participatory budgeting offers an enormous flexibility for varying social situations—and this favours its dissemination.

Participatory budgeting originated in Brazil, with the election in 1989 of the mayor of Porto Alegre, Olívio Dutra, leader of the Workers' Party, who introduced a series of reforms to municipal spending management in a drive for social justice and regeneration. The impact of its success led to a spectacular international expansion, and it was recognised by the UN in 1994 as one of the best practices in urban management. For this reason, the Porto Alegre model is the pioneer and best-known model (Abers, 2000; Allegretti, 2003; Avritzer, 2002; Baiocchi, 2005; Genro & Souza, 1997; Marquetti et al., 2008; Souza, 2001) and the idea that public participation is a sign of political innovation has always played an important role in its dissemination (Sintomer, 2005).

If we take versatility and methodological flexibility as a starting point, we see the difficulty of defining a single and consensual concept that applies to all participatory budget initiatives, and so we have dealt with the broadness of the concept by developing categories to characterise and classify the different participatory budget experiences.

Despite the broad nature of participatory budgeting experiences, it is possible to offer some definitions for the purposes of discussion. Thus, for Genro and Souza (1997), participatory budgeting is a process of direct, voluntary and universal democracy in which the public discusses and decides on the budget and public policies. From a technical perspective, participatory budgeting is an innovation in public budget management that transforms democracy and the efficiency of public spending (Abers, 2000; Avritzer & Navarro, 2003). Other definitions emphasise the creation of spaces for dialogue and informal education to support democratic learning experiences (Lerner & Schugurensky, 2007).

A much more fertile ground is the preparation of classifications that, based on numerous empirical cases, order and describe the different experiences. Thus, the abundant literature offers a diversity of descriptions according to various variables and aims: the methodology employed (Gret & Sintomer, 2003); the geographical territorial scope (Avritzer & Navarro, 2003; Cabannes, 2004; Cabannes & Delgado, 2017; Sintomer & Allegretti, 2009); strengthening democratic values (Fung, 2004; Sintomer et al., 2008); promoting governance and public policy (Fung & Wright, 2003; Smith, 2009); promoting government transparency and accountability (Ackerman, 2004); combating political clientelism and corruption (Baiocchi, 2001); and redistributing resources to favour the most vulnerable social sectors (Avritzer & Navarro, 2003).

In this systematising task, Cabannes and Lipietz (2015, 2018) propose a classification to distinguish the three logics that underpin PB: political logic; the logic of good governance; and



technocratic logic. The first aims to ‘radically democratise democracy’ and contribute to the construction and deepening of the new politics of participatory democracy. It is a manner of including various groups and encouraging democratic education (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018, p. 72). The second of these logics focuses on improving governance by creating an institutional fabric in a discussion between different actors. Finally, technocratic logic seeks to improve public outcomes through bureaucratic improvement, transparency and cost reduction (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2015).

The first model is the most deeply rooted and common in Spain because it closely connects to the needs of the political culture and respects diversity through the adaptation of the participatory method.

Spain introduced participatory budgeting in the early 2000s, and among the municipalities that led these experiences were Cabezas de Juan, Rubí, Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Cordoba and Seville (Ganuzo, 2007; Ganuzo & Francés, 2012; Sintomer, 2005). According to the Participatory Budgeting World Atlas (2019), experiences in Spain have been increasing and adapting to local needs and characteristics. Experiences have been extended to the regional level in Valencia and in some universities in an incipient manner. Consequently, and with some exceptions, Spanish PBs are organised by municipalities.

One of the participatory modalities that has gained most recognition is participatory child-budgeting (Abellán-López et al., 2022; Gadotti, 2005; Lundy et al., 2020; Pineda Nebot et al., 2021; Ruiz Morales, 2009; Tomás, 2008). Participatory experiences give prominence to children as the demographic changes in the Western world are producing an ageing population that may threaten the visibility of children.

Based on the main defining attributes of PB, child participatory budgeting is understood as a way of involving children and adolescents in the prioritisation and definition of public spending in areas of interest to them. In the same way as in the adult versions, a wide range of heterogeneous practices are covered under the umbrella of children's PB (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018; Dias et al., 2019; Font, 2011; Sintomer et al., 2008).

In the adult and children's versions in Spain, the participatory nature of these experiences has left educational and political socialisation aspects in the background (Gadotti, 2005; Muñoz, 2004; Pardo Beneyto & Abellán López, 2022; Pineda Nebot et al., 2021; Ruiz Morales, 2009).

The propositions that guide this research are the following:

**PROPOSITION 1.** *Young people's participatory budgets offer a finalist and adult-centred approach and prioritise participation over other objectives.*

**PROPOSITION 2.** *The design of young people's participatory budgets favours technical and organisational aspects over teaching aspects.*

**PROPOSITION 3.** *Three models of participatory budgeting underlie the case studies: one in which the focus is on providing solutions; one in which deliberation is emphasised; and one in which prioritisation is combined with other phases.*

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Several analyses are offered that focus on the following dimensions: (a) code cloud; (b) number of participatory budgets; (c) development of participatory budgeting and degree of institutionalisation; (d) dynamics of participation; and (e) objectives of participatory budgets.

## Code clouds

Code clouds help researchers determine the discursive threads of cases. As can be seen from the evidence, most of the reported cases focus on the design of public policy, followed at a distance by evaluative aspects and the generation of transparency measures. Most informants referred to the search for comprehensive policies and highlighted important phases such as the technical evaluation of proposals, deliberation and the prioritisation of alternatives (Figure 2).

## Number of participatory budgets

Another variable of interest is the number of participatory budgets organised for young people, as can be seen in Figure 3. One of the ideas underlying these data is that there is a high degree of mortality. Thus, 36.6% of the respondents said that they had made only one participatory budget, while 22% had made two. In addition, 14.6% of the sample (not considered for the rest of the data) had not yet launched a participatory budget. Finally, 36.7% had organised more than three budgets, which suggests consolidation is possible when an experience threshold has been reached.

## Development of participatory budgeting and degree of institutionalisation

The development and degree of institutionalisation have been measured through the legal instrument used and its degree of exclusivity.

Figure 4 shows that most informants report the use of institutionalised participatory events. These are defined as those with ad-hoc structures or some type of representative institution. Children’s councils stand out here, taking various forms of organisation and terminologies.

Below is some of the evidence found in the responses.

[E5] ‘These have been developed through the municipal council for children with specific sessions as part of the participatory budget programme.’



FIGURE 2 Code clouds. Source: Authors.

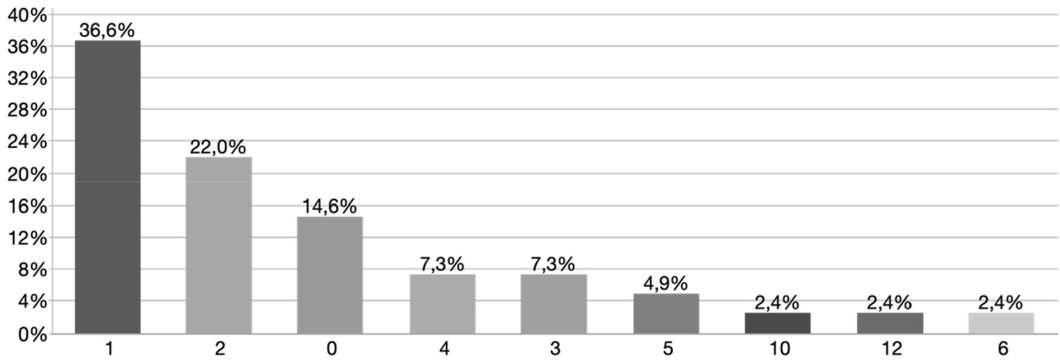


FIGURE 3 Number young people's participatory budgets held. *Source:* Authors.

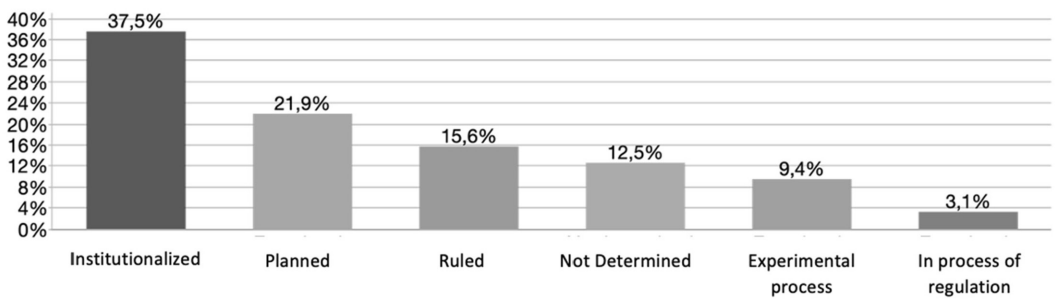


FIGURE 4 Development of participatory budgeting and degree of institutionalisation. *Source:* Authors.

These councils are made up of young people in most cases, although in many of them, participation is assisted by adults and, in others, independence is limited by the inclusion of adults. In the first case, the comments of informant E24 stand out: 'the procedure has been carried out through a council for young people, a consultative and representative body, made up of 28 children between 11 and 16 years of age'. In the second case, the participation of teachers and facilitators can be found. E19 highlights that: 'the members of the children's council played an important role during the process, acting as 'experts providing support to the teachers and facilitators'.

Other modalities focused on combining the participation of various interest groups, something that serves to improve the legitimacy of decision-making as E38 argues: '*The members of the children's council played a key role during the process, acting as "experts" who supported the teachers and facilitators.*'

One group of municipalities reported on a form of participatory budgeting whose design is part of a broader strategy that includes a children's plan and a political project that goes beyond simple participation.

[E14] 'Definition of the participatory budgeting methodology was worked on between 2015 and 2016 with the political and technical sections of the city council and also with the schools, the municipal school council, and the children's council.'

[E2] 'The mission of the strategic plan was to define the actions needed in all areas of municipal activity.'

Given that the number of participatory budgets in the cases reported was not high, it is natural to find experimental experiences in which there is no continuity nor express regulation. Changes in the participatory process, or even the abandonment or transformation of the decisions taken by the young people stand out. Finally, experience gained in regulation helped in the generation of informal and school groups:

[E4] ‘To create participation groups, schools and informal groups of young people were involved.’

In short, these experiences mostly have a formal level of organisation that supports the suitable development of participatory public policies aimed at young people. The planning of the experiences suggests the interest of the institutions in incorporating the children’s point of view in municipal public policies. Furthermore, the inclusion of councils in decision-making ensures their primary purpose. Thus, there is prior knowledge of the procedure, the stakeholders, the conditions of participation and the areas of intervention. This helps to formally guarantee children’s autonomy.

## Participation dynamics

Regarding the dynamics of participatory budgets for young people, it is worth noting that most have singular and differentiated dynamics (Figure 5).

[E9] ‘Yes, there is a second phase in September open to adults.’

This hybrid approach, combining young people’s and adult versions, is embodied through decision-making on specific issues:

[E16] ‘Procedure was through the Decidim platform with collaboration with schools from the age of 14’. ‘For the first time in [E16], participatory budgets were launched for the city to decide part of the municipal investments in the districts.’

Another modality was identified that offered young people (always in a specific age bracket) the chance to participate in participatory budgets under the same terms as adults.

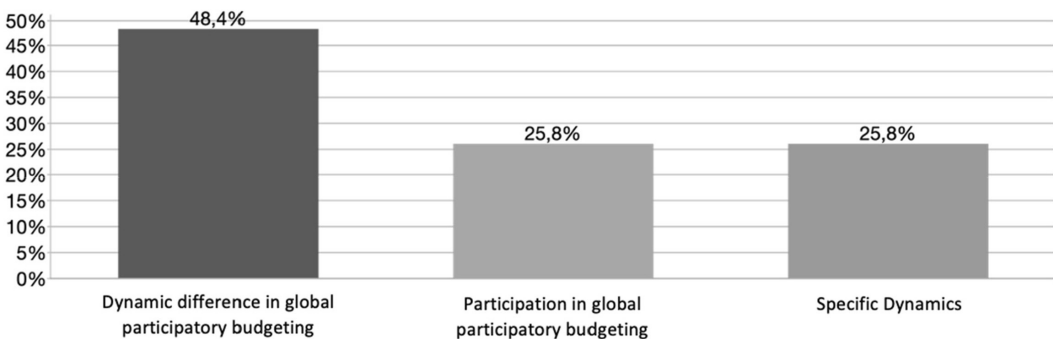


FIGURE 5 Type of dynamics compared with other participatory processes. *Source:* Authors.

[E5] ‘Collaboration with schools was sought. Due to the health situation, it was not possible to enter classrooms, so an explanatory letter was sent to teachers and a proposal form was sent to pupils.’ ‘There was no lower age limit for making proposals and the age limit for voting was changed from 16 to 12.’

In some cases, it was reported that adults should be the ones to decide on children's policies:

[E2] ‘Annual budgets allocated to programmes, projects, and specific actions aimed at young people.’

Children's participatory budgeting gives children a leading role, especially when differentiated experiences are articulated. In cases where adult and children's versions are brought together in the same process, there is a clear risk of diluting children's decisions. Adults are more numerous and powerful, which can be interpreted as a tendency towards tokenism (Hart, 1997).

## Objectives of participatory budgeting

The objectives of participatory budgets represent the goals and enable us to understand their procedural and empirical logic. Figure 6 shows the objectives of the participatory budgets in the sample.

Most municipalities chose a finalist approach by promoting participation as the singular goal. Relevant evidence from the survey included

[E14] ‘In the case of young people, the objective is to encourage their social participation as citizens of the present and not only of the future.’

[E32] ‘The public can propose and decide on the destination of part of municipal spending, and in this case giving a specific space for children's proposals.’

From the rest of the observations, some highlight the improvement in the allocation of public resources based on participation, while others combine several objectives.

Examples of the first case include

[E8] ‘In the municipal budget, €15,000 was available to invest in an action chosen by young people.’

[E19] ‘Let children directly decide on what to spend €4,500 of the municipal budget.’

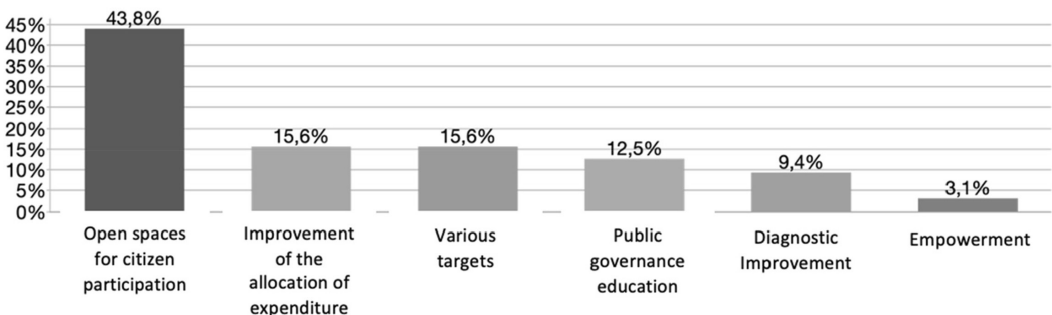


FIGURE 6 Types of objectives of participatory budgeting. Source: Authors.

For those local authorities that combined several objectives, there is evidence of the following:

[E27] ‘Young people and the public learnt from young people about participatory budgeting, public resource management, and awareness of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda.’

A small group of municipalities emphasised the educational nature of the procedure to train young people in democratic content and public affairs. Statements included:

[E31] ‘In the beginning, the children did not know what a budget item was or where it came from, and that is why we saw the need to instil the values of responsibility, equity, and equality – and support young people making decisions in these budgets.’

A few municipalities also considered as an objective of these participatory budgets, an improvement in the diagnosis of social problems and needs:

[E41] ‘To learn the opinion and priorities of the public on the issues that most interest them, providing they are within the governmental responsibilities.’

[E34] ‘Develop children’s emotional intelligence and personal skills.’

This focus on participation as an end moves away from democratic education. This weakness of an educational purpose in the objectives conveys the idea of a lack of maturity in participatory experiences for children. As a result, adultcentrism is easily encouraged as it is the procedure that is important and not the results (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1997).

## The conjunction of variables and the generation of a classification

This graph represents the main clusters generated from MAXQDA and the use of the Kuckartz-Rädiger Zeta. Figure 7 shows that three clusters with similar characteristics were generated.

From this map, three variables were generated that enable the calculation of the coded segments by category. Table 3 shows code frequencies per cluster and the percentages.

### Cluster 1: Proposal-generating budgets

The participatory budgets included in this cluster give a key role to politicians and municipal technicians as leaders in some of the phases.

This analysis is not conclusive about the aims of participatory budgeting, although there is a predomination of activities focused on the participation process and the public policy cycle, such as the opening of spaces for the public and an improved diagnosis of municipal problems.

This affirmation confirms the emphasis on efficiency (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018) and the improvement of the outcomes of public policies. Efforts are aimed at collecting proposals, formulating problems and presenting satisfactory solutions for children and stakeholders. For this reason, from a procedural point of view, great importance is attached to data collection and the technical evaluation of proposals. The networks include children, associations, as well as youth and sectoral organisations. The evidence obtained shows an interest in efficiency in public actions and the incorporation of actors with expert knowledge of children’s public policies. Children’s

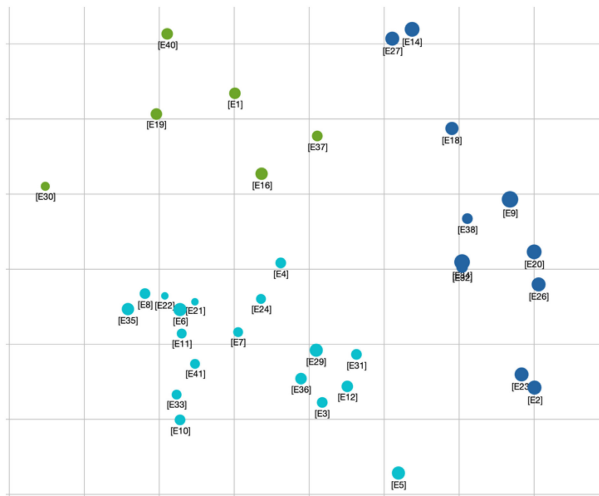


FIGURE 7 Map generated using Kuckartz-Rädiger Zeta. *Source:* Authors.

participation in decision-making is always accompanied by adult intervention, which suggests adult-centrism and tokenisation. Educational and democratic socialisation aspects appear in a secondary position in this model, as participation is fostered within a technocratic logic framed within the modernising current of new public management. For this reason, it focuses on issues such as cost reduction, bureaucratic modernisation and budgetary transparency.

The democratic education of children is overshadowed by the improvement of public policy design (Gadotti, 2005; Ruiz Morales, 2009). The institutional character of the public agenda controls the legitimisation process and children's agency is reduced to mere informational consultation (Hart, 1997; Shier, 2010).

The involvement of politicians and municipal technicians in key stages indicates a tendency towards tokenisation, as they are the protagonists in the proposal collection or technical evaluation phases of cluster 1.

## Cluster 2: Deliberative transformative budgeting

This model of children's participatory budgeting emphasises the decision-making role of children accompanied by educators. One of its main features is the use of deliberation as the key instrument of the process, a phase that is complemented with the collection of diagnostic data and proposals to be implemented by public organisations. Educators help the deliberation with lessons that enhance children's knowledge of public organisations, the public interest and the importance of the common good.

If we apply Cabannes and Lipietz's (2018) classification of logics, this model focuses on building democratic skills in participants to make society more democratic, as well as the deepening of an educational policy with a civic nature and a practical vocation. The aim is to socialise children in democratic values and so generate citizens able to take part in public affairs. This affirmation can be seen in the aims of this model, such as (1) develop citizenship skills and educate in public governance; (2) seek the general interest; and (3) improve the allocation of spending. In contrast to the previous cluster, the aims are tangible, and the intended results go beyond the promotion of participation itself. However, this effort is overshadowed by the prominence of politicians and technicians who manage and monitor the process (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010).

TABLE 3 Code frequencies per cluster.

Codes	Number (%)		
	Cluster 1 (N = 18)	Cluster 2 (N = 6)	Cluster 3 (N = 11)
<b>Participatory budget participants</b>			
Consultants and/or companies	2 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	4 (36.4)
Representatives of non-institutionalised groups	2 (11.1)	2 (33.3)	3 (27.3)
Politicians	15 (83.3)	4 (66.7)	9 (81.8)
General public	3 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)
Minors	13 (72.2)	2 (33.3)	3 (27.3)
Youth	3 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)
Children	0 (0.0)	3 (50.0)	0 (0.0)
Associations and representatives of sectoral organisations	5 (27.8)	0 (0.0)	5 (45.5)
Youth associations and representatives	9 (50.0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0.0)
Public employees—educators	2 (11.1)	5 (83.3)	6 (54.5)
Public employees—technical staff	16 (88.9)	4 (66.7)	8 (72.7)
<b>Participatory budgeting phase</b>			
Technical assessment phase	3 (16.7)	1 (16.7)	9 (81.8)
Experimental phase	1 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (18.2)
Prioritisation phase	3 (16.7)	1 (16.7)	10 (90.9)
Data gathering phase	3 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	3 (27.3)
Consideration phase	3 (16.7)	4 (66.7)	7 (63.6)
Institutional input phase	0 (0.0)	1 (16.7)	4 (36.4)
Gathering of proposals	9 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (72.7)
<b>Participatory budget objectives</b>			
Generating community links	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)
Opening spaces for public participation	6 (33.3)	1 (16.7)	11 (100.0)
Improving spending allocation through participation	3 (16.7)	2 (33.3)	1 (9.1)
Public governance education	2 (11.1)	3 (50.0)	3 (27.3)
Public interest	0 (0.0)	2 (33.3)	2 (18.2)
Child/youth empowerment	1 (5.6)	1 (16.7)	3 (27.3)
Improving problem diagnoses	4 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Personal development	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)
N = Documents	18 (51.4%)	6 (17.1%)	11 (31.4%)

Source: Authors.

In this context, situations of tokenism arise that blur educational interventions and the presence of adults hinders the aims of child participation (Hart, 1992; Lansdown, 2005). The purpose of this model is to build democratic competencies in children (Schugurensky & Wolhuter, 2020; Shier, 2010). Deliberation becomes the epicentre of participatory budgeting and deliberative activity needs the support of educators to assist children. As a result, the deliberative approach significantly improves the quality of children's participation. However, municipal technicians still maintain a leading role in this category, conveying the idea of the decision-making weight of adults (Blanchet-Cohen & Torres, 2015; Lundy, 2007; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Shier, 2010).



### Cluster 3: Complex model

This model combines several instruments and addresses a wide range of audiences beyond children. It focuses on the generation of networks for creating greater trust and legitimacy to facilitate relations between participants. Actions focus on linking children with adults, as well as public organisations and organised civil society (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018). Evidence shows that the involvement of non-institutionalised groups of representatives and associations, as well as external educators and consultants, energises the process. While it is noteworthy that politicians and technicians play a prominent role in the participatory experience, it should also be noted that this model displays a high level of professionalisation and is usually implemented by consultancies and companies specialised in advising participatory processes.

The name 'complex model' comes from its design, which combines more sophisticated phases and generates networks between stakeholders. Its design has a prioritisation phase, a proposal collection phase and a technical evaluation phase. Deliberation is incorporated as a common phase and institutionalised forms of participation through sectoral councils are sometimes included.

The need for multiple phases shows that the experiences look to build instruments of co-decision between adults and children. One of the problems with this complex model is that it requires intense adult intervention, which makes it difficult for children and adolescents to take the lead in their participatory spaces and implies greater control in the co-decision (Bessell, 2009; Mitra, 2005). This model has a high participation of adults (politicians, technicians, sectoral organisations, consultants and educators). Because of the complexity, the technical phase plays an important role, as technicians decide which projects are viable. Adult control denotes an interest in preserving the government agenda. This indicates the subsidiary role of the child audience rather than genuine participation (Freeman, 2007; Shier, 2010).

Ultimately, both in terms of the objectives, the form of participation and the role of the actors, the predominance of adultcentrism and tokenism in this cluster seems clear.

### CONCLUSIONS

This paper offers some of the results from a series of open-question surveys distributed among Spanish city councils using a novel methodology that enables the identification of a series of variables of interest for the study of young people's participatory budgets.

We have tried to establish whether the participatory budgets for young people studied have a political and finalist focus or are approached as part of a broader educational process.

Most of the informants answering the survey in their respective local authorities report a vision of participatory budgets as a policy in which spaces in decision-making are opened to participation—but the teaching and democratic training aspects are left in the background. For this reason, it can be affirmed that Proposition 1 is fulfilled.

Less experienced local authorities designed simpler processes that include a tendency towards adultcentrism and an emphasis on participation above other objectives. Those municipalities more experienced in organising participatory budgets for young people show greater interest in transcending the merely participatory approach and institutionalising authentic citizenship education.

There seems to be a directly proportional relationship between an increase in the number of participatory budgets and the generation of democratic learning. These experiences offer learning opportunities for young people and all the other parties involved in the process. Citizen

education encourages budget literacy, a better understanding of what is local government, eligible projects, as well as the teaching of tolerance and plurality.

Adults can act as facilitators for these processes, but because these processes are convened by local authorities with a mandatory involvement for their staff, the outcome of young people's decision-making can be affected by various technical corrections. In other words, the intention and meaning of young people's opinions can be changed in the implementation phase. There is also a risk of tokenisation, although further research is needed to determine whether this occurs in most Spanish experiences in the sense suggested by Hart (1997).

Without sufficient efforts to adequately train adult staff and to raise awareness among parents and public leaders, the risks of non-participation, according to Hart, are greater. Likewise, children's and adults' expectations are also more difficult to meet when there is an insufficient shared understanding of the roles and power of children and young people in public governance. It is vital to understand how and where organisational decisions are made, to be transparent with children and young people about the decisions they can influence.

The evidence reported confirms that the interests of informants are oriented towards organisational aspects, implementation and the participation of municipal officials—with hardly any mention of the role of schools, teachers, associations of parents and volunteers (depending on each case). This assertion is paradoxical, considering that all the experiences take place in schools. Consequently, it can be affirmed that Proposition 2 is fulfilled.

If participatory budgeting experiences do not begin with an educational project (such as education in citizenship), then technocratic tendencies will eventually silence democratic socialisation tendencies.

The three models generated using the Kuckartz-Rädiger Zeta support the idea that there is a certain managerial adultcentrism as municipal officials and politicians play a fundamental role. However, models adapted to the needs of the municipality appear when the aim is to prompt participants to provide solutions (cluster 1); create proposals and generate citizenship skills (cluster 2); or open spaces for participation in which prioritisation plays a key role (cluster 3) (Proposition 3).

One limitation of this research is that the answers come from municipal authorities, so it would be advisable in the future to interview teachers, parent-teacher associations and young people. A triangulation of results would contribute to a better overview of the processes.

As future research work, the sample is being expanded to generate more evidence and observations to generalise the data and find adult-centric and tokenistic situations.

A comparative study of Spanish regions would be of great interest and link to the major theoretical-conceptual paradigms in the field of participation by young people.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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