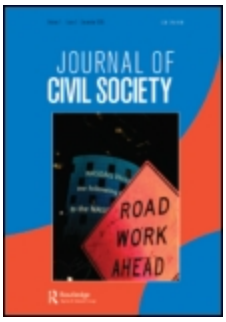

Social participation in context. Participatory culture in Spain and Germany

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Table 1. Sample Expert Profile (%)

Table1. Sample experts (%)						
Profile Expert	Scholar	Social worker	Psychologist	Gerontologist	Community worker	Total
Germany	45.45	27.28	9.09	9.09	9.09	100
Spain	33.33	46.66	13.33	-	6.66	100

Table 2. Sample Elderly Community Leaders

Table 2. Sample Elderly Community Leaders								
Social class	**Precariat**		**Middium Classes**		**Upper class**		**Total**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Germany	1	25	1	25	2	50	4	100
Spain	2	28.57	4	57.15	1	14.28	7	100

Table 3. Sample Focus Group (%)

Table 3. Sample Focus Groups					
F.G. 1 (Spain)	**CATEGORY**	**AGE**	**INCOME**	**SAMPLE**	**%**
Social Class	**Precariat**	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≤ 1×MW	3	37
	Middle classes	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≤ 4×MW	4	50%
	Upper class	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≥ 4×MW	1	12.5%
		Total		**8**	**100%**
F.G. 2 (Germany)	**CATEGORY**	**AGE**	**INCOME**	**SAMPLE**	
Social Class	**Precariat**	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≤ 1× MW	0	-
	Middle classes	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≤ 4× MW	6	66.66%
	Upper class	≥ 60	I ≝ Income ≥ 4× MW	3	33.33%
			Total	**9**	**100%**

Table 4. Codes of participants

Code	Meaning
E	Spain
A	Germany
e	Expert
m	Older people
≤	Precariat
µ	Middium class
≥	Upper class
N	Individual code

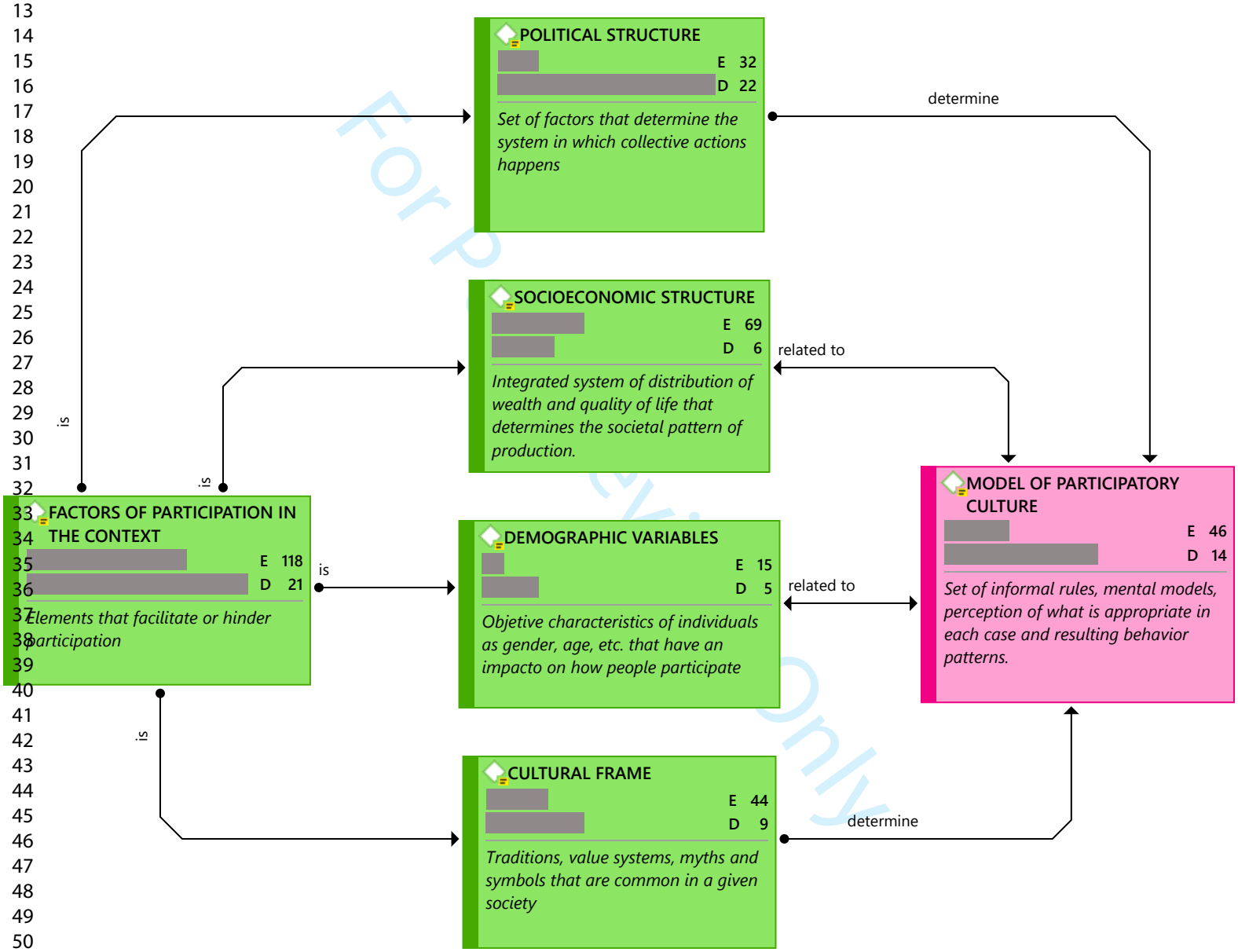
Table 5. Factors of Participation in Context in the discourses of participants in percentage (%) and grounds (Gr)

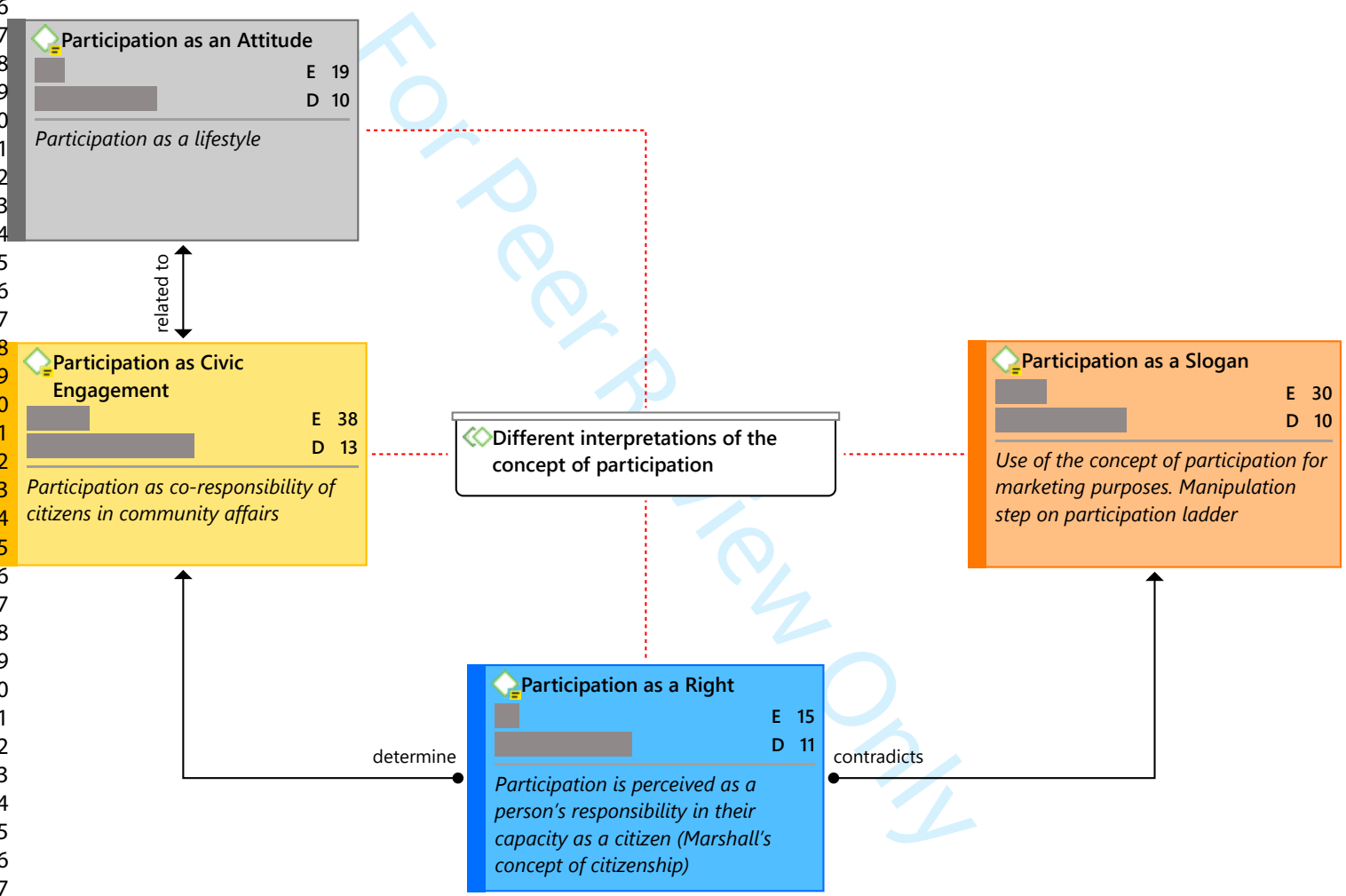
	FG 1. Spain Gr=74	**FG 2 Germany** Gr=123	**German Experts** Gr=440; GS=11	**German leaders** Gr=126; GS=4	**Spanish Experts** Gr=609; GS=12	**Spanish Leaders** Gr=200; GS=8	**Totals in the discourses**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Cultural Frame Gr=134; Gs=8	2,6%	2,6%	24,8%	9,4%	53,8%	6,8%	18,7%
Demographic Variables Gr=59; Gs=4	4,2%	2,1%	29,2%	6,3%	41,7%	16,7%	7,7%
Political Structure Gr=286; Gs=19	4,6%	8,0%	43,7%	6,7%	26,5%	10,5%	38,0%
Socioeconomic Structure Gr=263; Gs=8	0,9%	8,5%	28,3%	17,9%	30,5%	13,9%	35,6%
Totals	**2,9%**	**6,7%**	**33,5%**	**11,2%**	**34,2%**	**11,5%**	**100,0%**

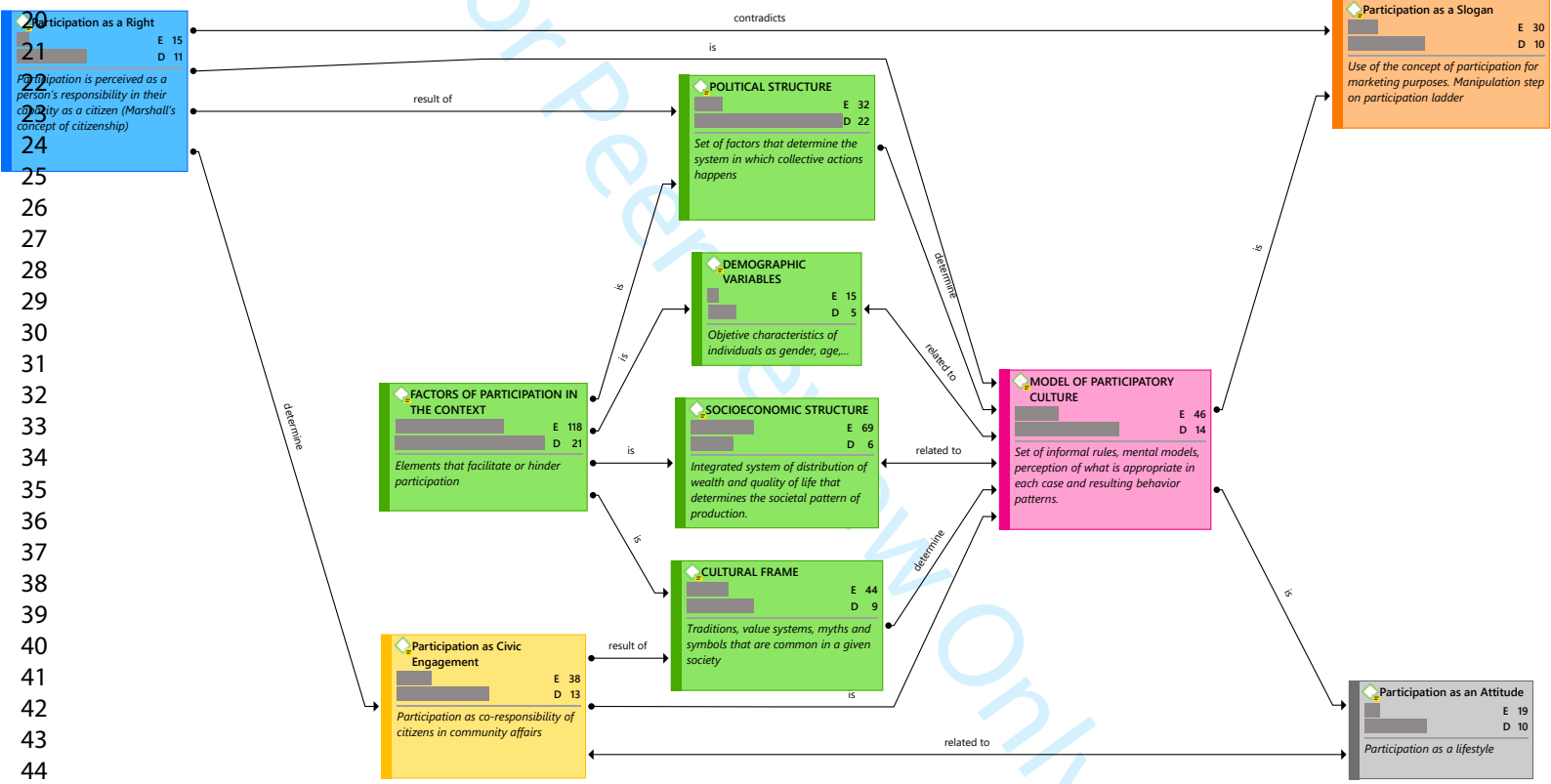
Table 6. Conceptualisations of participation in Spain and Germany

Table 6. Conceptualisations of participation in Spain and Germany (quotations by percentage)

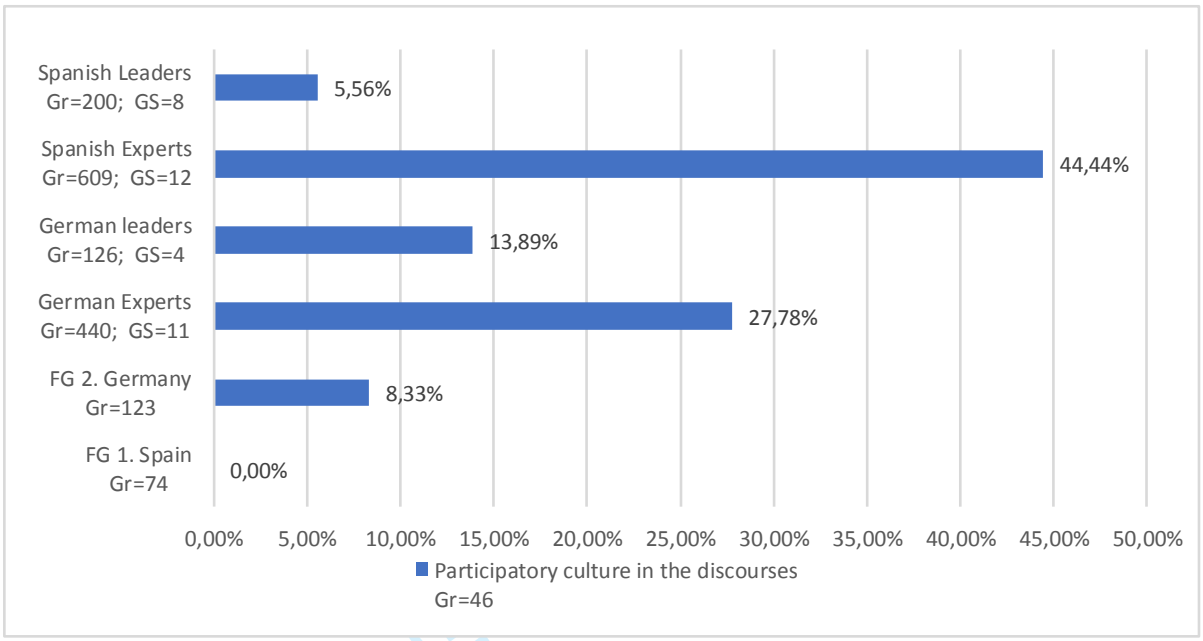
Meaning Attributed To Participation	FG 1. Spain	FG 2 Germany Gr=123	German Experts	German leaders	Spanish Experts	Spanish Leaders	Total German discourse	Total Spanish discourseh	Total speech
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Participation as a Right Gr=15	7,1	-	64,29	14,29	14,29	-	78,57	21,43	18,18
Participation as an Attitude Gr=19	11,11	-	11,11	33,33	-	44,44	44,44	11,11%	11,69
Participation as Civic Engagement Gr=38	-	25,00	58,33%	4,17	12,50	-	87,50	12,50%	31,17
Participation as a Slogan Gr=30	-	-	10	3,33	86,67	-	13,33	86,67%	38,96







Graph 1. Quotes about participatory culture in the various discourses by profile and country (%)



Social participation in context. Participatory culture in Spain and Germany

This article aims to examine and describe the ways in which elderly people participate in post-industrial societies. The literature points out the benefits of social participation. However, the influence of context in features of civil society has remained relatively understudied. This paper analyses the influence of context on the conceptualisation of the phenomenon of social participation and civic engagement. In addition, the findings are linked to the broader academic debate on civil society. This empirical study consists of results from semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with experts on social participation and elderly members of different associations. The German and Spanish case studies confirm that socio-demographic variables, cultural frames, political structures and social structure shape the culture of participation. The paper argues that each context creates its own participatory culture through the incorporation of four different conceptualisations of participation: (1) participation as a right; (2) participation as an attitude; (3) participation as civic engagement; (4) participation as a slogan. The Spanish discourse tends mostly to conceptualise participation as a right and/or a slogan. The German discourse conceptualises participation mainly as civic engagement. These conceptual differences give rise to two different participatory culture models.

Keywords: social participation; civil society, participatory culture; Spain; Germany

Introduction

The volatility of liquid modernity described by Bauman (2005) has led to a change in traditional forms of social relationship and participation. Participation is a mechanism of social self-regulation linked symbolically to the theoretical principles of democracy. Participation is the essential structure on which social interactions are built, providing a channel for conflict resolution between them. This study is part of broader research on social participation and its ability to reduce socio-economic inequalities among elderly people. In our opinion, context is a determining factor in the process of developing and maintaining social participation. The quality and resilience of civil society depends on the strength of civic engagement (Heitzmann, Hofbauer, Mackerle-Bixa, & Strunk, 2009), so as a relevant research topic we have chosen to pinpoint the mechanisms that lead individuals to participate

and engage in the community. In this article, we focus on how the different elements of a given context are able to condition the participatory practices of a society. To this end we have focused on the comparative study of the cases of Germany and Spain through four contextual elements: 1) the socio-demographic perspective of the elderly; 2) German and Spanish cultural frames; 3) socio-political structures; and 4) socio-economic structures (the social class of elderly people). From the data obtained, we analyse the main symbolic meanings attributed to the concept of participation. Secondly, we study how these conceptualisations influence the capacity to participate. Thirdly, we present the different elements that make up the participation model. Finally, we analyse the contextual variable as a determining factor in participation options.

Context as a factor in social participation

Cunill (1991) distinguishes three types of participation: political participation, social participation and citizen participation. We understand social participation to mean all the collective activities that occur in any aspect of social life. Political participation involves political rights being exercised through democratic processes of delegation and representation, while citizen participation involves the exercise of citizenship rights through processes of direct democracy (Espadas & Alberich, 2014). The depth and development of each type of participation will depend on factors such as the type of political opportunity structure (Funes and Monferrer, 2003; Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; 2009); participatory culture (Amenta & Ramsay, 2010; Putnam, 1993, 1994; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001) or position in the social structure (Bourdieu, 2001; Loveday, 2015).

Through a contextual approach, different studies show that the scale of and commitment to voluntary association activity differs radically from country to country (Putnam 1993; Fourcade & Schofer, 2016; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001; Verba & Almond, 1963). These studies indicate that there are several reasons for these variations in

citizen participation: 1) demographic variables; 2) the cultural frame; 3) political structures and 4) socio-economic structures.

Demographic variables

Demographic variables at an individual level are considered to have an effect on the level and degree of participation. Variables such as religious beliefs, education, income level, gender and marital status have a positive effect on the level of participation, while age has a curvilinear relationship, with middle-aged individuals having the highest rates of participation (Cutler & Hendricks, 2000). However, studies indicate that the main factor in the participation of elderly people is not age, but health, that is, their functional capacity. Some studies indicate that there are no significant decreases in the participation of people as age progresses until their functional capacity is reduced (Shanas et al, 2017).

Cultural frames

Each cultural frame is shaped by different elements depending on the extent of the roles played by civil society. Cultural frames produce similar mental processes, giving rise to group identification and commonly established social practices (Edwards & Woods, 2017; Jepperson, 2002; Meyer, 2009). Cultural frames 'are cognitive scripts, embedded in long institutional traditions and organisational frameworks that shape the social behaviours and practices that are deemed legitimate, even thinkable' (Schofer & Fourcade, 2001, p. 810). Thus, variables of strong social tradition such as religion represent a core element in the development of the civic engagement model. For example, Protestantism is pointed out as a religious system that reinforces a civic-oriented approach (Inglehart, 1997). Other authors (Verba & Almond, 1963) highlight deep interpersonal trust as a cultural factor which is a driving force behind civic participation.

Political and institutional structures

However, although cultural frames are fundamental to the promotion of participation, they are only internalised and begin to take effect if political institutions establish paths to direct

them (Sewell, 1992). Individual civic engagement becomes effective as a social phenomenon when political opportunity structures pave the way for it. The form that citizens' participation takes will depend on the extent to which the political structures limit the opportunities for it to happen, whether it be the encouragement of individual action or, conversely, the opening up of those opportunities in the form of social spaces (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000; 2009). In this way, civic engagement is institutionalised by making the individual an active subject in the community. The existence of political structures that foster participatory spaces can encourage participation more than the values and ideologies that support it (Schofer & Fourcade, 2001). Political institutions limit the conditions under which interested parties can mobilise themselves so that they are able to access state-owned public services. The capabilities and durability of institutions 'is a function of the extent to which they are inculcated in political actors at the individual or organizational level, and the extent to which they thereby tie up material resources and networks' (Amenta & Ramsay, 2010, p. 17).

Depending on the degree of influence that each of the two essential players of all the political institutions - the state and civil society – has, there are two types of political opportunity structures in post-industrial societies. If it is the state that assumes greater power, the social institutions will have a statist character. If civil society takes on more responsibility, the institutions will have a corporatist style (Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2016a; 2016b). According to this classification, the institutionalised patterns of political sovereignty and organisation, that is, the degree of statism or corporatism, are associated with distinguishable patterns of citizen engagement.

The 'pure' statist structure will be made up of a centralised and completely autonomous state apparatus, while pure corporatism will correspond to a completely decentralised political power structure run by an active and organised civil society (Fourcade & Schofer 2016a; 2016b). This categorisation illustrates an institutional trend that has emerged from the historical, political, ideological, economic, social and cultural evolution of a given context. Trends in the political institutions of different countries towards both models can be found in varying degrees, which are not mutually exclusive. Fourcade & Schofer

(2001, p. 817) classified national political structures into four trends based on the degree of statism or corporatism. According to this scheme, Spain is classified as having a high degree of statism and low corporatism, and Germany a high degree of statism and corporatism.

Socioeconomic structure

Participation is considered a means of attaining social justice and reducing inequalities by facilitating the empowerment of people or groups at risk of exclusion. The influence of social position on the degree of participation has been the subject of research in different studies. Some authors maintain that social networks are more active among the upper-middle and upper classes (Bell & Boat, 1957; Sewell, 1992). Similarly, after analysing the impact of different levels of income inequality on participation, Lancee and Werfhorst (2012) conclude that 'low-income household members participate less in voluntary organizations and social life than high-income household members, and this difference gets larger in more unequal societies' (p. 33). Different case studies confirm this trend in Spain (Alarcon, Font & Madrid, 2015; Navarro, 2011) and in Germany (BMAS, 2017).

Methodology

In order to fully understand the dynamics of social participation of the elderly we have used the method of triangulation of data in qualitative research in a case study. The methodological model is based on semi-structured interviews with key informants (Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007) and focus groups (henceforth FG) (Rabiee, 2004) with elderly people.

The intentional sample had 53 participants responding to the profiles of 'expert' and 'elderly person'. Experts with two professional profiles were selected: researchers and professionals from voluntary associations of elderly people (N=25) with the selection criteria: a) nationality; b) minimum work experience of five years; c) discipline (see Table 1). The criterion of gender was not considered, resulting in a sample of 65% women experts.

[Table 1 near here]

The sample of elderly people followed three criteria: 1) be 60 years old or more; 2) be a member of an associative organisation; 3) be proportionally representative of social classes (see Table 2). For this latter criterion, the minimum wage (MW) of 2016 of each country was taken as a frame of reference when considering income level. The sample size was established following the methodological principle of data saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).

Two FGs were also carried out, one in Germany (N = 9) and one in Spain (N = 8). The formation of the FGs followed the same criteria as that of the elderly respondents (see Table 3), seeking gender representation (60% women; 40% men).

[Table 2 near here]

[Table 3 near here]

Both techniques followed a semi-structured script with open-ended questions about the participation of the elderly. The analysis procedure followed the basic concepts of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). Using the discourses as our basis, the underlying meanings of the stories were extrapolated, restructuring the categories of analysis and their definitions. The technical support of the Atlas.ti V8 software was used for the codification of themes, concepts, processes, as well as for the systematisation of groundedness (Gr) and density (D) of the results. Table 4 explains the identification codes of the participants for a better understanding of the text.

[Table 4 near here]

Results and discussion: The contextual framework as a constituent element of participatory culture

The results of this research indicate the context and its associated elements -demographic variables, the cultural frame, political structures and socio-economic structures- as defining factors of the social participation model (see Figure 1).

[Figure 1 near here]

Regarding the physical environment, the data shows it to be a relevant factor. It is argued, for example, that a warm climate, such as that of Spain, is more conducive to frequent improvised social relations. The temperament is predominantly informal and spontaneous thanks to the multiplicity of opportunities that a warm climate offers. In contrast to this kind of climate that makes it easier to socialise, a colder climate like the German one encourages the creation of formal spaces for people to establish relationships that prevent social isolation.

On the other hand, contexts are not neutral, but rather, as cultural frames comprised of human groups, they influence the types of relationships established in the community. Therefore, regardless of individual, social or structural circumstances, an environment in which strong social networks have been consolidated will foster interactions and social cohesion, while a fragile environment will inhibit them.

> Group cohesion is not only the result of social background or experience, but also the environment in which you live. (Ae9)

The data collected seems to validate the relevance of context in the participatory culture of a society (see Table 5). Among the four factors initially considered (demographic variables, cultural frames, political structures and social structure), the demographic variable of age, in line with the theoretical bases that underpin this work, is not considered to be a significant determining factor in the degree of participation (7.67%), although in the Spanish context (62.51%) this is the factor which more frequently inhibits participation. The data seems to show that old age is not in itself a decisive factor in the exercise of social action in the community, but rather certain elements associated with it, and it has an individual, non-collective impact on the participation of the elderly.

The results seem to demonstrate that the elements of the social structure that determine the status of individuals also determine the degree and level of participation of individuals. 35.62% of the comments in which participants reflect on the factors that have an impact on social participation refer to elements of social class such as income level, educational level or position in the labour market, etc. This discourse is common to both

contexts, although it is worth noting that it is the experts, both German (28.25%) and Spanish (30.49%), who are the main contributors to it.

On the other hand, the results indicate, with 38% frequency, that social participation is conditioned by how socio-political structures are oriented. It is the experts, both Spanish (53.85%) and German (24.79%), who mainly support this argument, highlighting elements that shape those structures such as the welfare state model, the ideological orientation of public policies, the role of the family and the extent to which the third sector has become institutionalised. As regards the cultural frame, it is also present in the discourses (18.69%). The strength of social networks, the degree of group cohesion, the development of values of social reciprocity and civic engagement are the most notable features of the cultural frame that stand out in the development and maintenance of social action in the community. In this sense, a direct correlation is established between the contextual framework and the cultural frame that would foster the development of a participatory culture of its own (see Graph 1). In this study, we are focusing on the qualitative analysis of this last point.

[Graph 1 near here]

[Table 5 near here]

Participatory Culture

We understand participatory culture as the 'set of informal rules, mental models, awareness of what is appropriate in each case and resulting behaviour patterns' (Puig, 2004, p. 363). From this perspective, participation is understood as a result of the historical evolution of a shared culture in a given context. Over the course of time, what is gradually forged in each context is a culture defined by certain values, ideas and beliefs that, having been shared and passed on from generation to generation, form the group identity of the community. The ways in which social action take place are part of this culture, and are their distinguishing features.

> In all societies there are a number of traditions, values and concepts that they share for generations, and that is the interrelationship. I imagine it is the way society builds this type of identity. (Ae9)

The cultural variable is part of the contextual framework, as agents produce and transform society by giving it new meanings through social action. Thus, the social practices of the two contexts studied have resulted in a conceptualisation of participation closely linked to the underlying socio-political principles of welfare states and with positive symbolic connotations.

> Participation is extremely valuable, it is immensely important, given that we aspire to live in a democratic regime and I understand that we must recognise there are options for everyone and, above all, recognise the possibilities for everybody to defend their rights and interests. (Ee1)

In this regard, we identify four different discourses in the conceptualisation of participation: 1) participation as a right; 2) participation as an attitude; 3) participation as engagement; 4) participation as a slogan (Table 6 and Figure 2).

[Table 6 near here]

Participation as a right

The discourse that conceptualises 'participation as a right' describes it as an element linked to the nature of citizenship of each individual. Participation is considered: 1) a fundamental element in the development of democratic societies; 2) a basic principle of welfare states; 3) a tool for exercising citizenship rights. These beliefs are backed up by the inclusion of 'participation' in fundamental norms and specific regulations both in Spain and in Germany.

> Nobody would deny that citizens can take part. That is a general principle which everyone accepts, don't they? (Ee2)

The conceptualisation of participation as a normative right represents 18.18% of the discourse in this regard, although it should be pointed out that it is mostly found in the German context (78%). The differences in how participation in each context is conceptualised depend on how one defines the parameters of the individual's involvement in it. The Spanish discourse simply indicates the right to participation regardless of the attitude

that each individual takes – or doesn't take – towards exercising it. Meanwhile, the German discourse identifies participation as an active right, in which the participant must be the 'subject' of what is carried out, must take the initiative and act according to a criterion of social benefit. In German discourse, participation in theory only means nothing, as it is concrete actions that have meaning. Therefore, it includes the 'duty to participate' as part of the condition of citizenship: 'it is my duty as a citizen of a democratic state' (Ae7). Participation as an active right also requires the subject's will in order for them to act. It is the subject who must consider what type of participation they want to carry out and enquire about the most appropriate channels of participation.

> Society has the obligation to give you opportunities, but you also have the obligation to take responsibility for what society offers you. (Ae9)

Participation as an attitude

This discourse relates to a conceptualisation of participation as the attitude of a citizen who wants and is able to 'take part' in society. It is a way of considering the role that each individual represents in their community.

> Participating means taking action. If you don't take action, all its meaning is lost. (…) It has to have an influence on the course of social life, political life, everyday life, the life of citizens. It is fundamental, otherwise it makes no sense. (Ee10)

However, participating is also an attitude in the sense of being a lifestyle that involves solidarity and commitment to the community. It is behaviour that is woven into the daily life of the individual, in their daily routine, which is cultivated and maintained throughout their life. This discourse is shared by all groups of informants and with consistent regularity in both contexts (44% in Germany and 55% in Spain).

> Taking part is a normal thing for me and it is part of my life. There would be something missing in my life if it wasn't like that. (Am≥30)

> People who get involved do so before and after entering old age. They are usually intelligent people who have been involved all their lives. (Ae17)

Participation as civic engagement

The discourse that conceptualises participation as civic engagement is a development of the two previous discourses within the ideological and political framework of the welfare state. From this perspective, participation is understood as a passive right that, in order to become effective, requires an attitude and action on the part of society, which must provide choices for participation within a framework of equality of opportunity, but also requires an attitude and an action by each individual: take part and take on a role in the community.

> Participation is the activity and attitude of grassroots citizens who try to exercise their citizenship rights and who seek respect from government bodies and government institutions through their participatory action. (Ee1)

The discourse of participation as civic engagement is mostly German (87.5%), appearing with a significantly lower frequency (12%) in the Spanish discourse of experts. The German discourse maintains that participation 'is part of the cultural tradition in Germany'(Ae9) due to a succession of historical milestones initiated with the so-called 'school revolution' (1809). This educational reform was based on a model of bourgeois corporatism which believed in the need for citizens to take on self-responsibility and which promoted corporate practices and voluntary association activity as an instrument for creating community resources. The introduction in the educational field of a conceptualisation of civil society as a corporation of which one is a part and in which it is necessary to take part is thought to have stimulated participatory practices within the framework of social legislation.

> Here the tradition of voluntary associations is something that is embedded in citizen culture, in German civic culture. (Am≥33)

This culture was fostered during the Allied occupation after World War II (1945-1949) with the creation of participatory structures in institutions that replicated American models such as

the Citizens' Councils. These were participation bodies that embodied the conceptualisation of a society in which citizens had to take on roles to solve community problems within the framework of civic engagement. This model of participation grew in the 1960s, when citizen participation became a vehicle for social transformation towards values such as 'social justice', 'equality' or 'human rights' that was connected to the concerns of the new social movements.

> In the 60s and 70s people [were] on the street, the whole society was flourishing, everything was moving forward, there was a feeling of excitement, a kind of idea that everyone was doing something important. (Ae20)

These activities were considered relevant social functions, with significant consequences for the future of society. Citizen engagement was considered a duty, but also a cause for personal and civic pride. German reunification, for example, is cited as a success of civic engagement in the face of political problems.

> (...) the reunification of Germany was strongly driven by people's civic engagement in the cities involved. It was very impressive for all Germans to see that the power of civic engagement can really change almost everything, I mean by working together. Reunifying both parts of Germany was a very big deal. (Ae8)

This long historical trajectory leads one to believe that the German social participation model is part of its culture and its particular way of doing things. The participatory culture based on the concepts of responsibility and civic engagement is considered to be a bastion of the German corporatist welfare state model. However, 'society is not something static, it is constantly changing' (Ae9), so the ways in which citizens' engagement in the community project have developed have also changed over time. The traditional forms of participation are thought to have lost currency and so new ways need to be found that are adapted to the new social realities because 'the things that worked 20 or 30 years ago don't work anymore' (Ae9).

> Participation, especially in political initiatives, has changed. For example, when nuclear power plants were first introduced, there were loads of initiatives that fought against the installation of these plants, so there was a lot of engagement by citizens. However, that's how it used to be done before and now there are new ways and it's a question of developing new ideas on how to participate. (Ae16)

The importance of building and preserving the public space is part of German collective consciousness because it receives encouragement both from the public and private sphere resulting in the constant renewal of civic values of social co-responsibility embodied in the associative tradition.

> I see that my children, all three are ... maybe it's one of the effects of my involvement. [I'd like them to] think that [the point] is not only to get something from society, but also to take care of others. They have become good human beings, and now everyone is involved. I gave them the idea that their lives are not individual, but rather that when they think of other people, when they think of creating a good community, when they think of others, they will manage to make a better society. (Amμ30)

German culture encourages participation because it results in individual and social benefit through acts of solidarity, in which the performance of functions in the public sphere is considered to be a civic responsibility. This model of participatory culture is linked symbolically to the behaviours typical of 'civilised societies in the sense that citizens behave like that in the public arena' (Am≥33). In this sense, the different ways of understanding other cultures' civic engagement pose barriers to integration. With regard to immigrants, professionals point to cultural differences as a fundamental stumbling block to the participation of these groups in German civil society. They contend that the coping model of the family interferes negatively with the German participation model. German professional experts point out the difficulty of involving groups of immigrant descent in participatory processes due to cultural differences in the conceptualisation of participation, civic engagement or co-responsibility.

> Sometimes I find it quite difficult to explain the concept of volunteering, of civic engagement, to people who come from other cultural contexts because in their own communities, in their cultural context of origin, it is very difficult to get across how volunteering is organised in a city like X. (Ae16)

The ways in which different cultures understand participation are borne out by elderly immigrants. They point to language as the main barrier to taking part in associative practices. That is why they ensure that the second generations of immigrant origin, whose socialisation process takes place within German culture, assimilate and reproduce the normative standards of voluntary association activity in Germany with greater ease as part of the process of their social integration.

In this regard, the discourse on participatory culture ties in with the analysis of how power relations are configured within social structures. According to Foucault (1988; 1992; 1999), who broadens the dialectic of 'power' and 'no power' by incorporating the category 'knowledge' as an instrument of power, those who possess formal and non-formal sets of knowledge about a culture acquire a pre-eminent status. Having deep knowledge and direct experience of issues that are relevant to oneself and to the community brings together 'knowledge' and 'knowing'. However, having that 'knowledge' also requires 'understanding' the deep meaning of that knowledge and the extent of its power as well as the ability to 'tell' in what spheres it is appropriate and when to use it. In short, 'knowledge' is control.

> There are people who know better than others how to work in their own interests. Education plays an important role in this, and the ability to express oneself as well. Some people who have learned to express themselves in certain contexts, for example, at work or in other areas, know how to do it. It's easier for them to participate than for other people. (Ae16)

Finally, despite the fact that participation is a determining factor in the sustainability of the German society model, there is not thought to be enough awareness of its importance in public affairs, and that 'there is a need for public recognition of the importance of participation on the part not only of politicians but society too, a recognition that it is something valuable and relevant to society'. (Ae8)

Participation as a slogan

The data shows that in Germany there is a long tradition of participatory culture. However, in the discourse that identifies participation as a slogan, the Spanish discourse reveals a high degree of scepticism expressed about the capacity for participation to be a mechanism for social cohesion and integration (86.67%). What Spanish experts are referring to in this discourse is the conscious and intentional use by institutional bodies of the concept of participation without any intention of making it effective. It is pointed out that a 'participation discourse' exists, but it is usually a declaration of good intentions only. The German discourse (13.33%) refers to this as 'one-off failures' within an efficient participatory model. Instead, Spanish experts decry the use of participation as a slogan as a systematic practice by social and political institutions. Thus, many actions are called 'participatory' because it is 'politically correct' to do so owing to the positive connotations associated with it, but which in reality lack an ideological base or the political will to complete the participatory process. This discourse asserts that the use of participation in Spain as a slogan is a flaw in the participation model and that this, as a constituent element of a social model of cooperation, has never been developed.

> In reality, citizen participation as the root of the model of society in which we live exists only in intentions and declarations. (Ee2)

The causes of this participation deficit in Spain that are singled out are the absence of participatory culture and lack of political will to incorporate citizens into decision-making processes.

Absence of participatory culture: Experts argue 'that in Spain this culture of participation does not exist' (Ee13) because citizens, who have been treated historically as the 'object' of action and not as the 'subject', have no prior experience to provide them with the necessary tools so that their participation reaches the decision-making processes.

> You want me to fall into my own trap, asking me, in this society, where we've not been involved in any truly participatory process, and which is why we carry on being seen not as subjects, but as objects - How we can deal with town planning, to choose one example, through citizen participation? (Ee2)

Spanish political regimes have been characterised by the centralisation of power. The lack of participatory culture arises from the resistance of traditional institutions - the crown, the clergy and the aristocracy - to losing their share of power, and the inability of political parties and unions to reach consensus. The arrival of the Democratic Transition (1975-1979) opened the doors to grassroots mobilisation, leading to a great rise in voluntary association activity, especially among neighbours and unions. However, Spanish experts point out that the scope of social participation gradually reduced in the nineties and first decade of the 21st Century. For example, it is argued that bodies set up in the spirit of promoting social participation, such as associations, have succumbed to institutionalisation, in line with the authoritarian and hierarchical logic of previous political stages. Consequently, 'it seems that citizen participation has been reduced to the political sphere' (Ee2). Experts blame associations and community leaders for falling back into undemocratic attitudes and for losing sight of their mission and vision of social transformation. They are accused of becoming mere intermediaries between civil society and the state, sticking to a bureaucratisation model far removed from the model of collective action and social initiative from which they originated. As for the citizen initiatives arising from the 15M movement and the 'mareas ciudadanas' ('citizen tides') from 2011, they are seen as a mirage that has faded and they have ended up being part of the same institutional apparatus against which they had originally emerged.

> The associations [are] somewhat removed from what gave rise to them in this country: the struggle against dictatorship, all the fights of the urban revolution and the crisis of industrialism. In the eyes of the citizen, the place we have ended up, as a strange or curious element of public administration in the neighbourhoods, is something which is very hard to change. (Ee2)

It is pointed out that information on the processes that bring about participatory culture must come first. To inform means to provide citizens with all the information that might be important in public decision-making, but it must also ensure that the information is relayed in such a way that any citizen can access it. The information must be sufficient and understandable for each individual, otherwise they might find themselves at the 'manipulation' stage set out in the 'ladder of citizen participation' theory (Arnstein, 1969; Sharp & Connelly, 2018).

> [What is needed is] information, but information that has to be understandable, easy to follow for the people it's aimed at, because if not, it's misinformation, they're being taken for a ride. (Ee5)

Secondly, achieving full participation requires some learning or training: 'First of all, if you want to get socially involved, you have to know how to do it' (Ae9). According to the 'knowledge/power' dialectic of Foucault, knowledge leads to power. Knowing how to participate is the knowledge not only of participatory practices, but also of which pieces of the puzzle make up participation, understanding the way in which these pieces have to be moved so that they fit together. All of this drives empowerment. The 'subject' citizen's decision-making capacity is assumed to be a power. Participatory culture is learnt through practice. Elderly people state that carrying out activities within the community develops their ability to operate in it. It is a feedback process that enhances the position of individuals in areas of decision-making at the same time as building up experience.

> (...) I discovered that I had the skills to do it. The more I took part, the more skills and responsibilities I had and the more contacts I could have, so it was like a snowball effect...in order to have an influence on politics. (Am≥30)
>
> And then, once you're taking part, once you've got into this world, they call you to collaborate on other things..., it's as if you're now in the volunteer market. (Em≥32)

Likewise, Spanish professionals point out that the capacity to participate is curtailed by the lack of participatory culture. Experts agree that one has to carry on climbing the ladder of

participation from the information and training stage to consultation, debate, decision making and co-management.

> (...) and then you need time for discussion, explanation, analysis, whatever it may be. Then there needs to be results and agreements need to be reached. (Ee5)

Co-management involves a degree of mutual commitment among all social agents, 'co-responsibility' that is associated with the concept of civic engagement. Civic engagement means the involvement and supportive participation of citizens in a shared project of coexistence, that is to say the establishment of a pact between the state and civil society in which the former has the last word. On the other hand, 'co-responsibility' assumes a state of equity between both actors. It is equality not only in terms of legal legitimacy, but also of executive practice. Spanish experts argue that citizen participation practices have a long way to go before they fulfil expectations of co-responsibility and co-management. It has been shown that the theoretical terms on which citizen participation is founded have little to do with the reality of their practices and that there is no real interest in bearing the costs required by joint responsibility in the management of common interests.

> The reason why many people say they don't know why people don't participate is precisely because they do not know what co-responsibility is and are not willing to take responsibility for it. (Ee5)

With this in mind, when designing strategies that encourage participation, experts are presented with a dilemma: 'How can we say that it is useful for something if we do not believe it?' (Ee10). They argue that the first requirement for achieving the goal of co-responsibility is 'to believe in participation', the conviction that participation is desirable for the building of a better society and that citizens are capable of being part of the decision-making processes. Nevertheless, there is a certain scepticism or lack of confidence in its capacity as a tool for building community projects.

> You cannot promote participation if people have the impression that, in the end, they are not taken seriously. (A16)

Getting citizens involved requires building confidence that they are capable of 'taking part' in decision-making processes and that their participation will have verifiable results. To this end, the main proposal is the formulation of procedural rules with guarantees and the establishment of mechanisms that aid transparency in participatory processes.

> That is why we must make the rules transparent for the people who are involved, but we must also ensure that the people who are in positions of responsibility, who make the decisions, follow the rules as well. (A16)

Lack of political will: In contexts where no strong participatory culture exists, it should be the institutions that promote spaces for participation. However, Spanish professionals complain about the lack of willingness of public institutions to integrate civil society in decision-making processes because 'those above are not interested in people being active' (Ee11). This would tie in with the interest on the part of politicians and technocrats to keep citizens as object-individuals and not as active subjects because 'people together are stronger [and] pushier' (Ee10). By restricting the capacity of citizens to be empowered, they avoid the loss of power and control.

This discourse points out that 'participation as a slogan' is a strategy used by institutions to project a false image of democratisation in the initiatives they carry out. The use of participatory terminology in defining their actions without incorporating practices that include citizens in decision-making processes is one of the most frequent strategies. Another is the organisation of events aimed at 'getting a picture taken' in order to appear closer to the citizens in question.

> (...) there has also been a side that's all about, 'let's look like we're really close to the organisations of elderly people', don't you reckon? Many times that's gone as far as mass events with older people, meetings, etc. As for real content, though, [there's been] rather little. (Ee5)

In this way, it is pointed out that when proposing participatory processes, the institutions that hold positions of power even withhold the necessary resources that could allow citizens to

rise up through all the levels of participation. Experts also accuse association leaders of falling back on undemocratic attitudes and losing sight of the mission and vision of their associative bodies.

> Things are made very easy for you and very difficult for me. Without us having gone through processes of subject building, they want us at that moment to make the great decisions in this society and of course, when you can't, then they say, 'now do see what participation means?' (Ee2).

The aim of putting up these obstacles may be to maintain the status quo of the system of social inequality. The organisation of political opportunity in Spain has taken a path which has limited participatory culture and the development of civic engagement. The experts agree that the key to promoting real participation is to go up through all the steps of participation, but to do it 'from the bottom up', that is, with citizens coming up with initiatives and participatory processes being opened up to everybody. Experts warn, however, that there is a long way to go.

> At the moment, the process of global citizen participation is still on the first of a hundred steps that need to be climbed. (Ee2)

The lack of experience in participatory practices is a result of the lack of individual and collective freedoms which Spanish society has had to endure. The lack of the necessary abilities and skills to participate is a difficult goal to achieve, but not impossible. The problems are obstacles that can be overcome, given the right tools. To this end, it is suggested that the shortcomings both of citizens and institutions be taken on board and replaced by the active exercise of participatory practices. The fostering of civic engagement should be based on what has been learnt from participatory processes in open projects promoted by institutions. They do not refer to full participation from the bottom up, but rather participation that is managed by the institutions for the community, which encourages the development of

skills that will transform the object-individual into the active subject based on the belief that meaningful learning means combining knowledge and practice.

[Figure 2 near here]

Conclusions

This article set out to explore the contextual factors that determine social participation. Guided by the sociological theories of Putnam and Bourdieu on the organized forms of social capital, the article examines the impact of demographic variables, the cultural frame, political structures and the socioeconomic structure on building the culture of participation in a given context. Based on the discourse analysis of 53 participants in a qualitative study, the article appears to confirm that the participation model that plays out in each context is shaped by the contextual elements (see Figure 3). The geographical conditions, the historical trajectory, the demographic variables, the configuration of the power systems, the religion and the dominant culture help to determine what participation means in the community, giving rise to a culture of firmly or weakly rooted participation. The results lend different weight to each of these factors in the process of building a participatory culture. There is a perception that the elements that shape the social structure (income and education level and position in the labour market) have a great influence on the degree of social participation and how it is carried out. On the other hand, old age does not seem to have a great effect on the degree of social participation. It is accepted that participation is an attitude towards life, so participating has more to do with the course your life has taken than with a specific stage of life. The main factors that influence the participation model in each context are the socio-political structures and cultural frames. What stands out is the central role played by the discourse relating to the political structures in the development of a participatory culture. Spain and Germany conform to two socio-political structures and two ideological positions: (i) the distinction between statist and liberal societies, and (ii) the distinction between corporate societies and family societies. These two dimensions encapsulate the differences (developed through the course of history) in the structure of the state and its relationship with civil society. Among the

different positions are the political institutions and the cultures and subcultures of each context that channel or restrict different types of associative activity. All these elements lead social groups to identify associative practices as forms of social action that may or may not represent their collective identity. In this respect there are differences in the conceptualisation of participation between Spain and Germany. Four basic conceptualisations of social participation are identified: (1) participation as a right; (2) participation as a lifelong attitude; (3) participation as civic engagement; (4) participation as a slogan.

Participation as a right takes on a central role in the general discourse of participation, as it is built into the ideological foundations of welfare states and backed by the regulatory bodies of both countries. The conceptualisation of participation as a slogan is the result of a perceived failure of the welfare state to be a model of democratic integration. If we follow the theory of the participation ladder, the Spanish discourse reflects the belief that participation, as a means of social integration, is still at the 'manipulation' stage, and has not even started to act upon the participatory process. The lack of participatory culture and the absence of political will are primarily responsible for this participation model. Participation as an attitude is a way of life in the community, reflecting a cultural frame based on the values of reciprocity and solidarity. This conceptualisation of participation is the practical basis of participation as civic engagement where the citizen takes on responsibility for the management of community affairs. The ideological foundations of this conceptualisation of what it means to participate are the principles that underpin the welfare state, primarily in the German corporatist model. The results show that in Germany there exists a consolidated participatory culture. In Spain, on the other hand, the authoritarian historical-political trajectory has cut off the flourishing of a participatory culture based on civic engagement. Now that post-modern society limits the reach of family and support networks, there is no firm discourse that signals a paradigm shift towards another conceptualisation of the role of civil society as a social construct.

[Figure 3 near here]

Participatory culture must be nurtured and maintained. To achieve this, what must prevail is the principle of the central role of subjects in the participatory process. They must have the capacity to empower themselves through their engagement in the community, feeling that they are part of it and that they have the right to take part in decisions that concern it and them as citizens. The new challenges facing post-industrial society require new models of cooperation within the process of formulating policies that do justice to this diversity. A new culture of coexistence is needed for a vibrant local democracy. Work must be done to build a participatory culture through civic engagement. All social agents must take responsibility for this task. The first step, in our view, should be aimed at training professionals in the associative field. In this respect, we think it would be appropriate to foster a better understanding of the practical and theoretical aspects of the potential for empowerment that civic engagement brings with it.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Sample Expert Profile (%)

Profile Expert	Scholar	Social worker	Psychologist	Gerontologist	Community worker	Total
Germany	45.45	27.28	9.09	9.09	9.09	100
Spain	33.33	46.66	13.33	-	6.66	100

Table 2. Sample Elderly Community Leaders

Social class	Precariat		Middium Classes		Upper class		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Germany	1	25	1	25	2	50	4	100
Spain	2	28.57	4	57.15	1	14.28	7	100

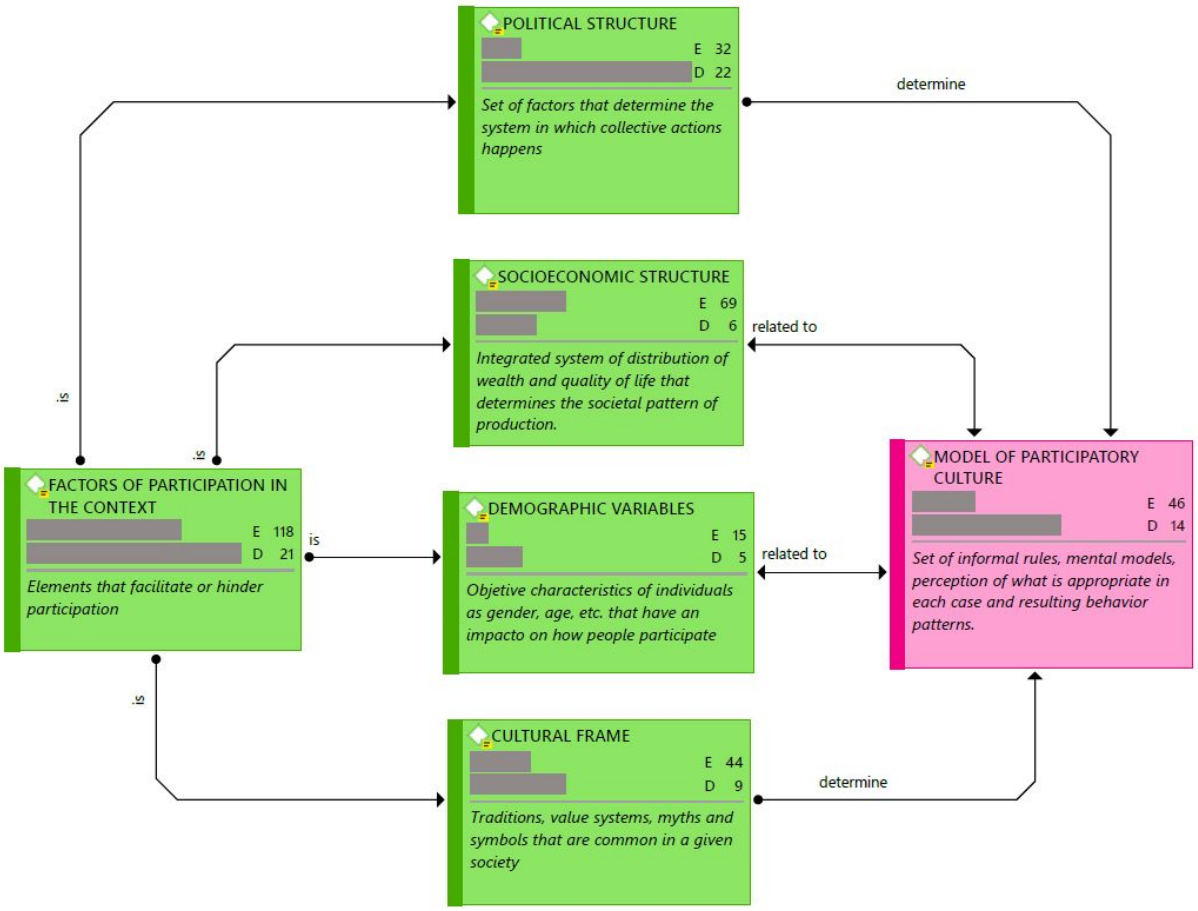
Table 3. Sample Focus Group (%)

F.G. 1 (Spain)	**Category**	**Age**	**Income**	**Sample**	**%**
Social class	**Precariat**	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≤ 1×mw	3	37
	Middle classes	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≤ 4×mw	4	50%
	Upper class	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≥ 4×mw	1	12.5%
		Total		**8**	**100%**
F.G. 2 (Germany)	**Category**	**Age**	**Income**	**Sample**	
Social class	**Precariat**	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≤ 1× mw	0	-
	Middle classes	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≤ 4× mw	6	66.66%
	Upper class	≥ 60	I ≝ income ≥ 4× mw	3	33.33%
			Total	**9**	**100%**

Table 4. Codes of participants

Code	Meaning
E	Spain
A	Germany
e	Expert
m	Older people
≤	Precariat
µ	Middium class
≥	Upper class
N	Individual code

Figure 1. Diagram of the main participation factors identified in the discourses



Graph 1. Quotes about participatory culture in the various discourses by profile and country (%)

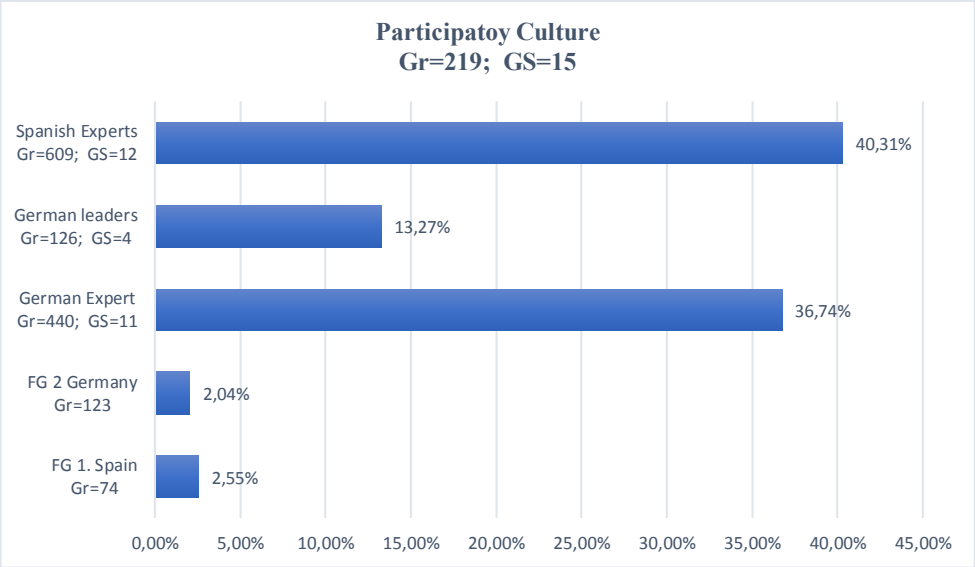


Table 5. Factors of Participation in Context in the discourses of participants in percentage (%) and grounds (Gr)

	FG 1. Spain Gr=74	**FG 2 Germany** Gr=123	**German Experts** Gr=440; GS=11	**German leaders** Gr=126; GS=4	**Spanish Experts** Gr=609; GS=12	**Spanish Leaders** Gr=200; GS=8	**Totals in the discourses**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Cultural Frame Gr=134; Gs=8	2,6%	2,6%	24,8%	9,4%	53,8%	6,8%	18,7%
Demographic Variables Gr=59; Gs=4	4,2%	2,1%	29,2%	6,3%	41,7%	16,7%	7,7%
Political Structure Gr=286; Gs=19	4,6%	8,0%	43,7%	6,7%	26,5%	10,5%	38,0%
Socioeconomic Structure Gr=263; Gs=8	0,9%	8,5%	28,3%	17,9%	30,5%	13,9%	35,6%
Totals	**2,9%**	**6,7%**	**33,5%**	**11,2%**	**34,2%**	**11,5%**	**100,0%**

Table 6. Conceptualisations of participation in Spain and Germany (quotations by percentage)

Meaning Attributed To Participation	FG 1. Spain	FG 2 Germany Gr=123	German Experts	German leaders	Spanish Experts	Spanish Leaders	Total German discourse	Total Spanish discourseh	Total speech
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Participation as a Right Gr=15	7,1	-	64,29	14,29	14,29	-	78,57	21,43	18,18
Participation as an Attitude Gr=19	11,11	-	11,11	33,33	-	44,44	44,44	11,11%	11,69
Participation as Civic Engagement Gr=38	-	25,00	58,33%	4,17	12,50	-	87,50	12,50%	31,17
Participation as a Slogan Gr=30	-	-	10	3,33	86,67	-	13,33	86,67%	38,96

Figure 2. Different interpretations of the concept of participation

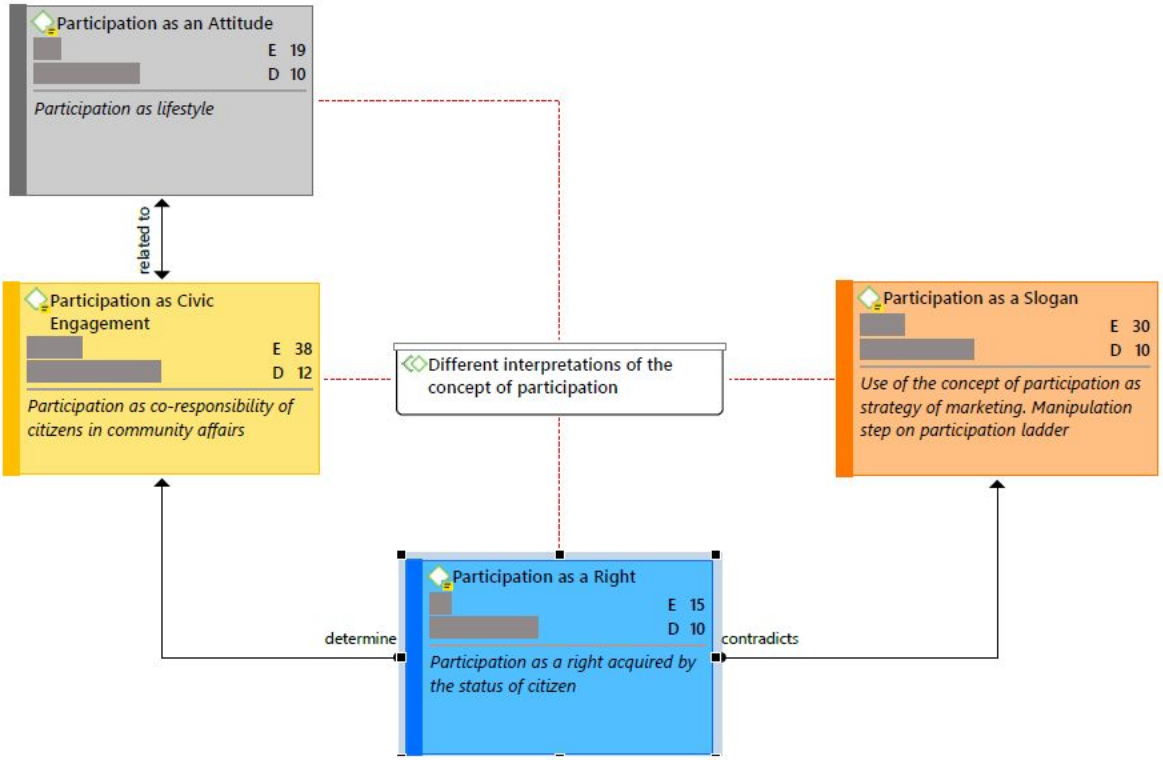


Figure 3. Correlations between factors of participation in the context and model of participatory culture