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**Perspectives on Online Engagement – A Study About
Civic Participation**

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Master in Management

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**Resumo**

Participação cívica tem vindo a diminuir e, tendo em conta quão importante representação é para sociedades democráticas, é fundamental perceber porque é que está a ocorrer esta diminuição. Porque é que algumas pessoas participam e outras não? Que fatores afetam a participação dos cidadãos? Baseada em estudos anteriores que se focam em participação jovem e interesse político, e tendo em conta casos de sucesso a nível mundial, a presente dissertação foca-se numa análise qualitativa para explorar participação online, recorrendo a um caso de estudo, a plataforma Participa. As principais conclusões, como o valor de transparência para participação online e a capacidade motivacional de interesse político, permitem chegar a uma compreensão sobre o que poderá afetar a participação em plataformas online. Compreender estes fatores pode ajudar a levar a sociedade a ter um ambiente mais inclusivo, com interesse suficiente para atrair as massas e garantir participação a longo prazo (Smith, Lister, Middleton & Cox, 2005). Estudos futuros podem considerar as diferenças culturais e recorrer a uma abordagem quantitativa. Aumentar os níveis de participação pode fazer com que as sociedades se tornem mais pró-ativas e unidas, trazendo esperança de que as gerações futuras alcancem um futuro mais brilhante, mais tolerante e aberto a mudanças.

**Palavras chave:** Participação civca, *Engagement*, Participação Política; Participação Online

**Classificação JEL:** Y40; M00

**Abstract**

Civic participation has been decreasing, and given the importance of representation for democratic societies, it is imperative to understand why this reduction is occurring. Why do some people participate while others do not? What factors affect citizens' participation?

Based on previous studies that focus on youth involvement and political engagement, and considering worldwide success cases, the present dissertation focuses on a qualitative research exploring online participation through the analysis of a case study of the *Participa* platform. Key findings such as the value of transparency for online participation and the motivational capacity of political interests allow for a broader understanding of what affects participation in online platforms. Understanding these factors can allow societies to aim for a more inclusive environment; with enough engagement to attract masses and guarantee long term participation (Smith, Lister, Middleton & Cox, 2005). Future studies can consider cultural differences and resort to a quantitative approach. Increasing participation levels could get societies to become more proactive and united, bringing hope that future generations reach a brighter future more tolerant and open to change.

**Keywords:** Civic participation, Engagement, Political Participation; Online Participation

**JEL Classification:** Y40; M00

**Table of Contents**

**Chapter 1. Introduction**

**1.1. Research Rationale**

Civic political participation and engagement comprise several processes that allow people to have their voice heard and impact the decisions that affect them (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). The basis of democracies includes participation and representation, and as such, they require citizen political participation, both by voting and also by taking part in other less formal political frameworks, such as grassroots movements and protests (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). Democratic systems are participatory and representative, and people are meant to engage in or with their government in such a way that they can help affect decisions with repercussions that impact them (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018)

In the past decades there has been a growing awareness of the importance and benefits of citizen participation and engagement and there is now a clear understanding that citizen political participation is key in democratic systems (de Jong, Neulen, & Jansma, 2019). But while participation is fundamental to democratic processes, there has been a growin lack of engagement, leading to declining citizen participation and rising absenteeism levels, which have now become a major issue, putting at risk the future of democracy (Kitanova, 2019, Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018). That lack of participation increases in younger groups, which is particularly worrisome, since it shows a concerning trend in the future of democracy (Kitanova, 2019).

Menteş (2019), Santini and Carvalho (2019), Boulianne (2016), and many others, have studied online participation, or e-participation, and e-government, considering the changes, challenges and potential benefits of this more recent form of participation. New technologies can help increase citizen participation, promote sharing of information, empower people, and allow for more participation possibilities (Oni et al. 2017).

As for understanding participation through its different channels, some authors have studied it with a wide focus on participation as a whole, and others focused on specific forms of participation or on the behaviour of specific social groups. The most relevant studies to understand participation in online platforms, besides those that study the platforms in question, are the ones that focus on online participation, youth participation, and factors influencing participation (Kitanova, 2019; Pruitt, 2017).

Bouza (2014), Kitanova (2019), Pruitt (2017), Motti-Stefanidi and Cicognani (2018), Checkoway and Aldana (2013), amongst others, have specifically study youth political participation, since factors influencing participation can change depending on generation. Youth levels of participation are a frequent focus of these studies not only because they are particularly low, but also because the

future behaviour of present day youth will determine the future of democracy  (Alteri, Leccardi & Raffini, 2016).

Many studies have been done, trying to understand which factors affect participation and why participation levels change from person to person (Kitanova, 2019; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). But participation is a very complex concept, and levels of participation depend on the people participating, the form of participation and many other factors (Kitanova, 2019; Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018; Slaev et al., 2019).

## 1.2. Research Aim & Objectives

As participation levels are different from person to person, and also from country to country (Kitanova, 2019), the main goal of this research is to understand what factors impact the participation of Portuguese citizens.

The following objectives will be completed to reach the research goal:

- Explore factors impacting citizen participation.
- Perform a case study to understand what are the most significant factors impacting citizen participation in Portugal.
- Perform a case study to understand what factors affect citizen participation in the online platform *Participa*?
- Understand what possible changes have to be done to improve that platform.

## 1.3. Thesis Structure

### Research Problem

The participation of Portuguese citizens is decreasing and there is little engagement in most forms of civic participation (Magalhães, 2009), including in online platforms and specifically in the *Participa* platform (Participa, n.d.-a).

While citizen participation is often studied, it is relevant to study the Portuguese context to account for cultural differences and reach an understanding of what factors lead Portuguese citizens to participate or to abstain (Kitanova, 2019).

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**Research Questions**

Taking into account the problem that is decreasing participation, the following questions arise:

- What factors can affect Portuguese citizen participation, and which might be the most significant ones?
- What factors affect citizen perception of the online platform *Participa*?
- How could the *Participa* platform be improved and increase engagement?

**Contributions**

Researching social perceptions on participation and online platforms, this study will contribute to the current literature by deepening the understanding of factors influencing engagement in the context of citizen participation, and of online platforms and aggregating the most relevant factors to improve online citizen participation in Portugal. Furthermore, determining which of those factors are key to improve online citizen participation on the Portuguese platform *Participa.* In the future, this study could also be adapted to other countries with similar cultures to investigate their own perspectives on participation.

**Chapter 2. Literature Review**

Participation levels are generally low, and as such it is important to understand why people participate at different levels and what are their reasons (Magalhães, 2017).

This research means to lead to an understanding of what factors impact Portuguese citizen participation in online platforms. But why is participation important? This literature review starts the study of participation with an analysis of its value in democracy and society. Once its value is clear, the concept of participation is going to be studied more in depth, with a focus on the differences between the concepts of participation and engagement, and then the consideration of several forms and categories of participation, along with their differences, similarities influences.

Is participation impacted by the challenges brought on by the 2020 pandemic? Some forms of participation change, some stay the same, and online participation can be a good option to keep participating while maintaining social distance.

The following topic focuses exclusively on online participation. The advantages of online participation are evaluated, along with a few Portuguese participation platforms. Knowing some of the advantages of online participation and seeing what has been done in Portugal, is it possible to know why each of the platforms succeeded or failed? To reinforce the idea that online platforms can be very successful, and in an effort to understand what makes them stand out, two successful platforms are analysed: FixMyStreet and DecideMadrid.

After knowing the importance of participation and what successful online platforms do, it is still necessary to understand what factors can affect citizen participation. The last part of the literature review starts with two models to help study online participation. The Civic Voluntarism Model as a theory that focuses on participation, and the Technology Acceptance Model that studies technology acceptance. To finish the literature review on factors affecting online citizen participation there is an examination of the works of Ballard (2014), and Henn and Foard (2014).

| Main topics | Authors |
|---|---|
| Citizen participation | Kitanova, 2019<br>Slaev et al., 2019 |
| Factors affecting participation | Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995<br>Davis, 1989<br>Ballard, 2014<br>Henn & Foard, 2013 |

Table 2.1: Topics for the literature review

Knowing what to expect from this chapter, the literature review starts with the previous table (Table 2.1: Topics for the literature review). It shows a brief summary of the most important topics

and studies of the literature review. Besides the mentioned contents, the descriptions of online participation platforms other than Participa are also of high relevance.

## 2.1. Citizen Participation

### 2.1.1. Democracy & Society

Democracies were formed on the principle of citizen representation, and as such, they require citizens to politically participate in such a way that they can decide on their representation (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Wirtz, Weyerer & Rösch, 2017). There are many ways to participate, like voting, being a part of grassroots movements and protests, amongst others, and all of these allow citizens to influence public policies, and governmental institutions (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Kitanova, 2019).

While most of the traditional practices of participation in democracy are often criticized, most scholars agree that the best form of government is a representative democracy, as it is the most ethical one (Glaas, Hjerpe, Karlson & Neset, 2020; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Owen, 2020). Representative democracies allow for citizens to have their interests justly represented, and for planning to more effectively benefit citizens (Slaev et al., 2019). Participation is essential for democracy, it legitimizes the government and promotes equality (Rodrigues, 2015). However, there is a delicate balance between citizens with different interests and their representation in a government that decides for all and can impose common rules (Slaev et al., 2019).

There are a few downsides to democracy, the first of all, is also one of its strongest advantages. Democracy requires participation, and when not all people participate, those that do are overly represented, and those that do not are ignored (Slaev et al., 2019; Zheng & Schachter, 2016; Bouza, 2014). In their 1995 work, Verba, Brady, and Schlozman underline this issue by defining participation as "the process that amplifies the voice of some citizens and mutes the voice of others" (Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995). A failure to participate leads to biased representation, which in turn leads to biased policies that are often unjust to the unrepresented (Bouza, 2014; Beauvallet & Michon, 2012). Different people react differently to the environment around them, and vary in their willingness to participate. In one extreme, people consider participation to be a duty and engage in it no matter what, in the other, people view it suspiciously and are averse to participating (Slaev et al., 2019). People often feel alienated from their political systems and have low trust in institutions, this may lead some to complete disengagement, and others to turn to extremist movements (Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018; Kitanova, 2019). In some cases, people might feel so alienated that

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even if they are engaged, they cannot trust their own ability to participate (Slaev et al., 2019; Balch, 1974).

Participation is needed and applauded in democracy, and citizen engagement with the government and each other is essential to society (Ballard, 2014). However, another one of the big pitfalls of democracy is that even if people participate, the opinion they express through their participation may not be corresponding to the optimal path. Owens (2020) puts it best by saying: "public perceptions may have to be lived with in a democracy but nevertheless they are `wrong'". In her work, Owens underlines the importance of participation, particularly for youth, describing it as "an empowering opportunity and a democratic right belonging to all young people", but clarifies that people might still "be wrong", be mistaken or manipulated into voting against their own interests. Education, interest and understanding are key in participation, and since the public in general is not composed of experts on every policy, citizens often lack understanding of most technical issues (Slaev et al., 2019; Owens, 2020). But even when people are clearly informed, factors such as the relevance of the problems, their social and political context and even personal constraints can muddle opinions and limit action (Owens 2020).

The same personal constraints that Owen (2020) points out as possibly muddling citizens opinions, can also influence the ruling elites, as there is always a possibility that the ruling government ignores the citizens it is meant to represent, and pursues its own agenda, or becomes corrupt and pursues agendas of others (Slaev et al., 2019). The periods between elections are not long enough to see results of long term plans, so politicians often focus on short term plans, putting more value into being re-elected than on actually improving the situation of their country (Slaev et al., 2019). Corruption is prevalent, and it is significantly detrimental to democracy, it can stall economic growth and development and promote inequality, and historically, politicians have been apt at avoiding accountability for their misconduct (Slaev et al., 2019).

Besides these, the challenges of democracy include the need for appropriate, informed and critical participation and fair and honest politicians (Slaev et al., 2019). While problems with democracy can be different from case to case, worldwide absenteeism has been rising in recent decades, and therefore, it can be said that the biggest threat to democracy as a whole is simple lack of participation (Kitanova, 2019, Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018).

### 2.1.2. Citizen engagement and citizen participation

Since participation is essential but decreasing, it is important to understand why people do not participate and if they are or not engaged. The two concepts, citizen participation and citizen

engagement, are very similar and closely intertwined, and to understand lack of participation it is useful to understand them both.

In her work, Boulianne  (2016) clarifies that engagement is broader than participation and considers it to "encompass varied responses to issues facing the world". Engagement is more of an everyday process of acknowledging and evaluating the issues of society and finding the causes that each citizen finds most relevant, the causes they want to be invested in (Boulianne, 2016). Practicing engagement in turn leads to participation, as once they are engaged, people then participate to try to change their society. Participation can have many goals, and there are many forms of participation though it is generally divided into civic activities or political activities (Boulianne, 2016).

Checkoway and Aldana (2013) consider citizen participation to be an involvement in processes that allow people to have their voices heard and impact decisions that affect them. Kitanova (2019) defines political participation as "any lawful activities undertaken by citizens that will or aim at influencing, changing or affecting the government, public policies, or how institutions are run".

Participation generally has the goal to change something in society, and most of the time, the best way to do that is through political activities, since governments can establish and enforce changes throughout the society (Slaev et al., 2019; Boulianne, 2016). As such, the term is often used to talk about the traditional forms of political activity, such as voting or being a part of a political party or another organization with political goals, what is often known as formal participation (Kitanova, 2019; Pruitt, 2017). However, the concept of citizen participation can include many different forms of participation, such as activities with a social purpose, and all of those meant to express a political opinion and affect political outcomes, like protesting, petitioning, boycotting, volunteering and being part of other organizations (Määttä & Aaltonen, 2016; Kitanova, 2019).

In short, to underline the differences between engagement and participation, it can be said that in general civic engagement is the main motivation that leads people to participate, but mere participation does not require engagement. Citizen engagement means that citizens are involved and worried with the situation around them, citizen participation means that people are acting on their concerns and trying to make an impact in society (Slaev et al., 2019).

### 2.1.3. Different forms of participation: formal and informal

In recent years, citizen participation has been declining, lack of engagement and rise of absenteeism have become abundant throughout the European Union, and pose a threat to the future of democracies (Kitanova, 2019; Motti-Stefanidi and Ciagnami, 2018).

Though present throughout all generations, lack of engagement is particularly notorious in young people, which points to a dangerous route towards the future, it puts at stake the sustainability of democracy in the long term (Kitanova, 2019; Bouza, 2014).

Younger generations have lower levels of participation and this lack of participation is shown through rising levels of youth absenteeism (Kitanova, 2019). Considering the European elections, abstention growth is very significant, according to Bouza (2014), absenteeism here has been growing since 1979, surpassing 50% in the 2009 elections, with youth absenteeism of 65%, greater than in all the other age groups (Bouza, 2014). In this case, it is also important to consider the participation of Portuguese citizens in these same elections, with an absenteeism rate of 63%, Portuguese citizens participate less in these elections than the average EU citizen  (Pordata, 2019a).

Youth absenteeism is particularly alarming, since it can lead to a vicious cycle of biased policy making where young people are not represented and therefore, their interests are not protected (Bouza, 2014). The less the youth votes, the more eroded the power to fight for their generation is and once seen as less relevant stakeholders, politicians are less likely to protect their interests leading them to get more disenchanted and even less likely to vote (Bouza, 2014; Thew, Middlemiss and Paavola, 2020).

While participation is fundamental for democracy, the dissatisfaction of citizens with their government and institutions leaves them feeling alienated and leads them to distance themselves from representation processes and not formally participating (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013; Wirtz, Weyerer & Rösch, 2017; Rebolledo, Zamora Medina & Rodríguez-Virgili, 2016).

Young people seem to participate less, and as such are often seen as disconnected and disillusioned with political participation (Kitanoava, 2019; European Commission, 2001).  But, as previously mentioned, lack of participation does not mean lack of engagement, and participation is not a simple act, it can take many forms (Meschede & Mainka, 2020). This apparent reduction in participation might only relate to formal participation, arising from a feeling of exclusion from traditional systems since the lack of formal participation goes along with a growing concern for cause related action  (Kitanova, 2019; O'Toole, Marsh & Jones, 2003).

Though young people are generally participating less in formal politics, with a clear fall in voting rates, they have been increasingly active in non-formal politics, such as boycotts and demonstrations (Kitanova, 2019). Kitanova (2019) points out "some countries (Germany, Luxemburg, Ireland, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia) with lower levels of engagement in formal politics than France have higher levels of engagement with organisations". Other studies reinforce this pattern, with decreasing voting rates and membership in political parties, but high levels of youth participation in local associations (Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018).

This shift can be due to many different factors, for one, younger people have a different perspective of what politics are, and are often disenchanted and feeling alienated from their political organizations (Kitanova, 2019; Marsh, 2014). Along with this, it is relevant to consider that if citizens do not formally participate, as much if they feel like the government is not receptive to their desires and inclinations, if that happens, the process of participation feels inconsequential and ineffective (de Jong, Neulen, & Jansma, 2019).

Besides age, other sociodemographic characteristics are commonly pointed out as very relevant in the context of citizen participation (Kitanova, 2019; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Higher education levels have often been associated with higher levels of participation (Zheng and Schachter, 2016). Education levels are also connected to political efficacy since it helps citizens gain political knowledge, and the perception that citizens have of their own political efficacy also influences their participation (Henn & Foard, 2013).

Higher income levels are also associated with higher levels of participation, and this is particularly important since it often means that the needs of those that participate and are represented do not match the needs of those that abstain (Pak, Chua & Vande Moere, 2017; Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995). People in a bad financial situation tend to put more weight in issues related to their own lives, issues related to basic human needs, they are often the ones that most need awareness to be brought to their problems as they would benefit most from government action and government benefits (Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995).

Another factor that might impact participation is gender, however, according to Zheng and Schachter (2016) there is no consensus of the impact that gender has on participation as it changes from study to study. Participation levels of each gender change depending on the topic being addressed (Zheng & Schachter, 2016). However, for Henn, Weinstein and Forrest (2005), in their study regarding attitudes that youth have towards politics, young men were more interested in politics, and therefore more likely to participate in them.

Another factor to consider in understanding participation is the awareness that citizens have of societal problems, as some people might be privileged enough to not see many problems in their society while others have to face problems daily and therefore find participation in those topics to be particularly relevant and meaningful (Boulianne, 2016). Once there is awareness of problems, there is need for knowledge about politics and participation, as formal participation requires knowledge about political institutions and politicians and informal participation requires a more broadly constructed knowledge (Boulianne, 2016). Also closely connected with awareness and knowledge are social ties, particularly in younger people, since such ties are fundamental to the

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development of personal political interest, and essential for mobilization since younger citizens tend to encourage those around them to participate with them (Renström, Aspernäs & Bäck, 2020).

To clarify the separation of participation methods into groups, formal, traditional, conventional, or top down participation, from now on referred to as formal participation, consists of a wide range of participation practices, most of them carried out through established channels, that have been systematized and standardized in society (Wilson & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019; Alteri, Leccardi & Raffini, 2016; Moreno-Jiménez, Ríos Rodríguez and Martín, 2013). Formal participation generally consists of activities such as voting, attending public meetings, writing to public officials, being a part of political parties or trade unions amongst others that have been systematized and standardized in society (Wilson & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019; Moreno-Jiménez, Ríos Rodríguez & Martín, 2013). Informal, innovative, unconventional, or bottom up participation, from now on referred to as informal participation, occurs more in level with daily life, independently from governmental organizations and includes activities that are more spontaneous and personally meaningful, often with intent to bring about social change  (Moreno-Jiménez, Ríos Rodríguez and Martín, 2013; Alteri, Leccardi & Raffini, 2016; Gotlieb and Thorson, 2017).

 Some of the informal participation methods are boycotts, demonstrations, protests, petitions, recycling, artistic expression, civil disobedience, political consumerism, lobbying, and other protest activities and alternative ways of activation (Renström, Aspernäs & Bäck, 2020; Kitanova, 2019; Harris et al., 2010; Gotlieb & Thorson, 2017; Henn, Weinstein & Forrest, 2005).

Lifestyle politics can also be considered as informal participation, with citizens expressing many of their concerns daily through lifestyle practices (Gotlieb & Thorson, 2017). Citizens have an opportunity to act on their values and political consumerism, focusing on boycotts and ethical purchase, so that they support companies, industries or institutions in line with their values (Haenfler, Johnson & Jones 2012).

It can even be said that the lack of formal participation might by itself be a form of informal participation, a show of dissatisfaction, a protest against the political system as a whole (Bouza, 2014).

This shows that with decline of levels of one form of participation (formal), other forms of participation (informal) are still being practiced, showing that citizens are engaged. People are then only disengaged from formal participation, and not from their society. Knowing this, it becomes relevant to understand why people engage in such a way and how can society provide options for participation that are able to raise engagement levels.

**2.1.4. Online participation as an alternative to other forms of participation**

With growing disengagement in formal and offline participation and a rising need for innovations to bridge the gap between citizens and government, e-participation had the potential to empower citizens and drastically improve citizen engagement (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012). With all the technological advancements in recent decades, and considering the availability and potential of the internet and how it affects human life, online participation started to become a way to improve interactions between citizens and between government and citizens (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012).

E-government is often seen as a marvellous solution that is going to completely redesign all the time consuming and difficult to access tasks, increasing efficiency, reducing costs, cutting out red tapes and even dematerializing documents (Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016).

The internet has grown to become a very useful tool to share information, connect with people, and mobilizing citizens to express their opinion and to participate in different communities that they would not be able to access in their offline life (Menteş, 2019; Alathur, Ilavarasan & Gupta, 2016). Social networking sites have proliferated and now allow for the existence of exclusive online communities with their specific identity and goals, so that members can support one another, and in that way, they help promote engagement and participation (Menteş, 2019).

Specifically in 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, social media and e-participation have been essential to help manage citizen participation in times of crisis (Chen et al., 2020). The 2020 pandemic made people rethink life in society, with many things hitherto taken from granted, such as availability of public space and freedom of assembly, being unavailable (Hunger & Hutter, 2020). The pandemic is also shining light on many other previously present issues, such as poverty and inequality, bringing about a reminder that there is a need to rethink our society (Uldam & Asjanius, 2020).

Environmental protection is a big subject of online activism, and in 2019, the *Fridays For Future*[1] movement, was labelled as "one of the most extensive social movements on the planet" (Gardner & Neuber, 2020), due to its strong international mobilization for climate action, but it had to drastically change its actions due to the pandemic (Hunger & Hutter, 2020; Menteş, 2019). Teenage activists like Greta Thunberg inspired millions of people around the world to engage in *School Strike 4 Climate* and the *Fridays for Future* protests, and protests occurred in 150 countries, drawing attention to the climate crisis in an unforeseen way (Thew, Middlemiss and Paavola, 2020). This movement was only possible because of social and digital media tools, both to bring awareness to

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[1] Fridays for Future, or School Strikes for Climate is a movement started in 2018 after Greta Thunberg started a

the crisis and promote participation and organise protests on an international scale (Boulianne, Lalancette & Ilkiw, 2020).

The movement was still going strong when the current pandemic started and severe lockdowns all over the world along with the need for social distancing prohibited protests. However, organizers took advantage of the power of online participation, they took the Covid-19 crisis as a challenge and adapted the movement by focusing on hybrid protests and digital strikes, and learning opportunities compatible with social distancing (Uldam & Askenius, 2020; Hunger & Hutter, 2020).

Though none of these alternative participation methods got as much attention as the protests did, just in Germany, over 60 thousand strikers registered on the website in April, to participate in the hybrid protests (Hunger & Hutter, 2020). Though there was a clear reduction in numbers, they are not insignificant and it can be said that that has more to do with the current health crisis than the methods themselves as one of the main concerns of activism in the current pandemic is how much harder it is to bring awareness to issues of any kind when the pandemic is at the centre of most minds (Hunger & Hutter, 2020; Uldam & Askenius, 2020). And yet, the Black Lives Matter protests[2] show that when there is enough reason to do so, thousands of people still gave their attention and concern to that cause (Dave et al., 2020). Timing is an important factor that strongly influences citizen participation, as a crisis occur or awareness is brought to one issue, people feel more connected to that cause and it becomes easier to join it, considering these two big movements, it is reasonable to say that at least some people were concerned with both causes, but in 2019 it was more relevant to focus on taking advantage of the awareness the climate movement already had and maximize it, and in 2020, a specific events triggered the protests, and with more attention being paid to racism and police brutality, those concerned with those topics had to focus on them in the hopes of attaining change (Boulianne, Lalancette & Ilkiw, 2020; Dave et al., 2020; Bosi, 2007). However, change is continuous, old causes are still relevant and worth fighting for, and as time goes by, new causes come up and have to be addressed, online participation methods tend to be more inclusive and convenient than their offline counterparts (Cho et al., 2020). Now, with the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the world, online participation is also safer than its alternatives (Dave et al., 2020).

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[2] The main 2020 Black lives Matter protests started after the death of George Floyd at the hands of police, bringing attention to racism, racial inequality and police brutality (Dave et al., 2020). The protests counted fifteen to twenty six million people just in the US (Arana-Chicas et al., 2020), and around the world, 40 countries had protests (NBC News, 2020).

**2.2. Online platforms**

**2.2.1. Online participation and e-government**

As information and communication technologies developed, online platforms emerged as new resources that could help solve the participation issues in our society, they are often seen as the best solution to most participation problems (Santini & Carvalho, 2019; Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016).

Nowadays, online participation can be more practical and more accessible than many other forms of participation, it can be simple and easy to use, it can be done anywhere at any time, it is convenient and accessible to most people at no cost (Santini & Carvalho, 2019).

Nowadays, participation platforms have been implemented all over the world, with different goals and purposes and depending on what they do, they can be broadly accepted and highly successful, or they can have the same lack of participation that traditional participation channels suffer from (Santini & Carvalho, 2019). Pina, Torres & Royo (2017) studied online participation and concluded that it can only enable or exacerbate the participation that is already occurring, it does not overcome the lack of participation that other participation methods have. Online participation can not be the solution to current absenteeism and lack of participation problem, however, integrated with offline participation methods it can offer new perspectives on old problems and can bring citizens closer to their governments and that in turn can lead to more participation (Pina, Torres & Royo, 2017; Santini & Carvalho, 2019). Online participation platforms have a lot of potential to bring up new problems, to formulate new participation possibilities and to directly inform citizens so that they can make a more knowledgeable participation (Santini & Carvalho, 2019; Pina, Torres & Royo, 2017). In Portugal there is little public participation (Magalhães, 2017).

**2.2.2. Online Participation in Portugal**

In Portugal, the introduction of technology was slow but gradual, and  the changes brought about by technology were clear, it simplified procedures and increased transparency (Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016). There was hope that technology adoption would improve internal government processes, and reduce inefficient bureaucracy (Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016).

In 2006, the Simplex[3] platform was created to improve internal efficiency of public services and help simplify Portuguese Public Administration (Simplex, n.d.-a). In 2019, after being online for more than a decade, it won the European Public Sector Award, the European and National category

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[3]  Website of Simplex: https://www.simplex.gov.pt/

(EPortugal, 2019). Participation is not its main function, but it has an open communications channel that allows citizens, companies and others to give suggestions for new measures (Simplex, m.d.-a).

Though it is not possible to see which measures were implemented due to citizen participation in particular, it is possible to see which measures have been implemented and which ones are now in the process of being implemented (Simplex, n.d.-a).

Some past measures include the possibility to see *Diário da República* online, automatic *IRS*, paperless prescriptions and many, many more. And some future measures, to be implemented in 2021 are the creation of a new informational area dedicated to promote youth participation and inform citizens reaching majority on how they can participate, improvement on the 2017 measure of automatic IRS, and the request of a family doctor online, amongst many others (Simplex, n.d-b; Simplex, 2017; SNS, 2018).

In 2007, a new form of citizen card was implemented, and latter on, that allowed for the implementation of the Digital Mobile Key[4], allowing citizens to have a digital signature and more easily identify themselves in all government bodies (Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016). This made participation easier, citizens could identify themselves and gain access to information and many functionalities of the platforms (Autenticação.Gov, n.d.).

In their 2012 work, Fedotova, Teixeira and Alvelos study e-participation initiatives in Portugal, and their results showed that 90% of the websites of national Municipal Councils had an exclusively informational goal, only one Municipal Council included opportunities for engagement (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012). On a national level, only three of the fourty Municipal Councils studied allowed for direct citizen participation (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012).

In 2012, the study only found one national level e-participation initiative, "O Meu Movimento", where citizens were allowed to submit ideas on forty three different areas, and vote on the ideas they supported (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012). Besides promoting communication, the initiative also promoted partnership with citizens, as it allowed for the authors of the most voted ideas would have an opportunity to present a case for its implementation to the Prime Minister (Fedotova, Teixeira & Alvelos, 2012). The winner of the 2013 edition was "End public funding to bullfighting" (Henriques, 2013), a similar idea had won the previous year, and this situation is still being debated eight years later, showing that it was not implemented (Lopes, 2020).

The initiative ended up only occurring twice, in 2012 and 2013, and posts and information shared in the Government portal are no longer available, the only official page about it that remains online is their official Facebook page (O Meu Movimento, 2013).

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4 The Digital mobile key is a method of authentication and digital signature accepted and certified by the Portuguese government (Autenticação.Gov, n.d.). It was launched in 2007 and allows the user access to many different government portals (Fernandes & Barbosa, 2016).

If citizens have a broad understanding of their society and see situations worth targeting, they can resort to petitions (Boulianne, 2016). Social media is frequently used to bring awareness to societal issues (Renström, Aspernäs and Bäck, 2020), and once citizens are invested, online petitioning platforms are one of the easiest ways to participate, and young people in particular are more likely to participate through petitions than other more formal methods (Boulianne, 2016).

One such platform in Portugal is *Petição Pública.* This is a free platform that allows any citizen to start a petition or sign petitions and it aggregates hundreds of petitions, so people can visit the website, browse it and support the petitions they identify with (Petição Pública, n.d.). This platform provides an easy and fast way to participate, and besides signing the petition, users can leave comments and leave their own (Petição Pública, n.d.).

Besides *Petição Pública*, which has petitions with hundreds of thousands of signatures (Petição Pública, n.d.), it seems like other Portuguese participation platforms are not as successful. What do successful participation platforms have that could be adapted to Portuguese platforms and improve participation?

### 2.2.3 Platforms throughout the world

There are many platforms for citizen participation, some created by governments that want to hear their citizens, others by other organizations that want to empower citizens by giving a voice to concerns that might otherwise be ignored. To see what successful platforms are like, one of which is going to be considered: FixMyStreet, created by an organization and DecideMadrid, created by the local government.

### 2.2.3.1. FixMyStreet

MySociety is a non-profit organization that was created in 2003 to empower citizens and promote citizen participation through technology (MySociety, 2020). The organization has built several platforms to support citizen participation in the United Kingdom, WhatDoTheyKnow facilitates requesting information from public bodies, TheyWorkForYou helps keep citizens informed on what their representatives vote for, WriteToThem expedites the process of writing to representatives (MySociety, 2020).

Another one of their platforms, FixMyStreet[5] was created in 2007, also in the United Kingdom, but it has since expanded to thirteen other locations all over the world (FixMyStreet, n.d-a). FixMyStreet is a public website that allows citizens to report all kinds of local problems, like littering, damaged pavement or street lighting, that report is sent to the appropriate local government body

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[5]Website of FixMyStreet: https://www.fixmystreet.com/

and it is then made public so that everyone in the community can read and add to it  (FixMyStreet, n.d.-b). The website shows data on the number of problems reported, their updates and the number of resolutions, and even the average time it takes for each council to solve the problems (FixMyStreet, n.d.-c). In the data shown in the website, it is easy to see that participation has been rising ever since the platform was created thirteen years ago and that citizens are engaged, with thousands of problems being reported each week (FixMyStreet, n.d.-c).

This platform allows citizens to report what they see in their surroundings, addressing situations that are only noticeable to the people that live in the environment and that would be incredibly costly and difficult to solve in a top-down approach (Pak, Chua & Vande Moere, 2017). Besides helping solve problems in a more cost effective and timely manner, allowing citizens to complain about what they see wrong in their environment is likely to lead to an outcome that solved the most relevant problems for the citizens rather than only the problems of those with a strong voice (Brabham, 2008; Pak, Chua and Vande Moere, 2017).

With just around ten thousand issues reported each week and over two million since its debut, this platform is highly successful (FixMyStreet, n.d.-c). What makes this platform successful when so many fail? There are many factors leading to the success or failure of a platform, from campaigns to promote it, to its ease of use, relevance, amongst others. The following paragraphs point out the most significant ones, for this specific platform.

This platform was one of the first participation platforms available, and thanks to that, it has had years to amass the users it currently has (Pak, Chua and Vande Moere, 2017). It also made it easier to do something that the citizens were already doing, or at least, interested in doing, in this case, reporting concerns about their cities, meaning that people only had to change what they were already doing and not learning how to do something completely new (Pak, Chua and Vande Moere, 2017). The platform allows people to see the statistics of most common problems, average time of resolution of each council, status of the problems they report, if the council has seen it or addressed it, if it is solved, and even if other citizens have an update on the situation (FixMyStreet, n.d.-d). This shows that the platform does achieve its goals, and the display of transparency motivates people to keep participating, since their reports are not ignored or erased, and do help the problem get solved (FixMyStreet, n.d.-c).

Interactions are highly valuable in online participation, and once people report a situation, other citizens can comment and give updates on the situation, allowing for social interactions and social support (FixMyStreet, n.d.-b).

The website itself is also very appealing and easy to use. The first page shows recently reported problems on the right, and on the left, there are clear instructions on how to make a report, and the process itself is very simple and intuitive (FixMyStreet, n.d.-d).

### 2.2.3.2. Decide Madrid

DecideMadrid [6] is another great platform for citizen participation, this one, exclusive to the capital of Spain. This platform launched in 2015 and in 2018 won an United Nations Public Service Award (Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado, 2020). Some of the success of the platform might be due to the fact that it includes many forms of e-participation. While FixMyStreet was mostly meant to report problems, through DecideMadrid, citizens can create proposals, participate in e-forums, e-voting, participatory budgets and e-consultation (Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado, 2020).

In the first three years, over 400 thousand citizens registered, with different forms of participation having different levels of adherence (Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado, 2020).

The website has a very appealing design, and the first page immediately directs citizens to the most active proposals and debates, and offers rerouting to pages with relevant information (Decide Madrid, n.d.-a). The section of debates works similarly to an online forum, one citizen starts a debate with a certain title and description and other citizens can leave a like or dislike and comment (Decide Madrid, n.d.-b). In the tab for proposals, it is clarified that in this case, the proposals work like petitions and if a cause attains enough support, the city council will make an effort to cary it out (Decide Madrid, n.d.-c).

In the e-voting part of the platform, besides the projects under vote, the closed polls are also available (Decide Madrid, n.d.-d). For each project, there are a few questions to reflect the opinion of the citizens, below them, there is more information about the project for those that want to know more, and more often than not, documents with the details of the projects are also available, it is frequent that a project has two proposals, and in that case, both proposals are explained, so that citizens can vote for the proposal they prefer (Decide Madrid, n.d.-e). The platform is very transparent, for closed polls, there are very thorough participation statistics, with information of participants, such as age, gender and district, it also shows how many votes were positive, negative or blank (Decide Madrid, n.d.-e). This transparency might be one of the reasons the platform is so well accepted by users (Rebolledo, Zamora Medina and Rodríguez-Virgili, 2016).

It is likely that including a plethora of participation methods and being fully transparent is what makes the platform so successful (Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado, 2020).

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[6] Website of DecideMadridt: https://decide.madrid.es/

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## 2.3. Factors affecting online citizen participation

Participation rates fluctuate a lot across different sociodemographics and contexts (Williams et al., 2008). What other factors affect participation? There is a need to understand the intricacies of participation, why some methods of participation are more accepted than others and why some people participate while others do not. As Hayrapetyan (2019) puts it, "in order to ensure effective participation, it is important to first understand the factors that affect citizens' decisions to actively participate". In this subchapter, previously studied participation factors will be selected from existing literature to gain a better understanding of what can affect participation.

### 2.3.1. Relevant theories

The first step on the road to understanding online citizen participation is understanding theories that can help explain citizen behaviour towards participation. To understand political behaviour and participation, the Civic Voluntarism Model is going to be considered, and for online platform acceptance and participation, the insight will be from the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989).

#### 2.3.1.1. CVM - Civic Voluntarism Model

The Civic Voluntarism Model was created in 1995 by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady to give a comprehensive understanding of what motivates people to politically participate and is widely used to study political behaviour (Barkan, 2004; Oni et al. 2017). The model deepens the understanding of why people participate by establishing requisites to participation: resources, *psychological engagement and access to networks (*Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995).

Starting with "resources", this component explains the connection between socioeconomics and participation as it includes time, money and civic skills, and the more a citizen has of those factors, the more likely they are to participate *(*Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995). According to Oni et al. (2017), in present times, the concept of civic skills can be expanded and adjusted to online participation by including computer and Internet skills.

"Psychological engagement" is related to political interest and efficacy and refers to the attitude that citizens have towards politics, the intentions they have to be active or not, and the belief that their actions have the power to influence political processes *(*Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995).

And at last, the third component of this model is "access to networks" and it relates to the access one has to channels from which to request participation and proximity to networks through which citizens can be recruited into political participation *(*Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995).

And as such, according to the Civic Voluntarism Model, resources, psychological engagement and access to networks are the three main factors affecting citizen participation.

### 2.3.1.2. TAM - Technology Acceptance Model

Adapted from the theory of reasoned action, and with influences from the self-efficacy theory, TAM was formulated in 1989 by Davis with the goal to explain technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Schmidthuber, Hilgers, Gegenhuber & Etzelstorfer, 2017). It is a simple and adaptable theory that has been widely used to study technology acceptance of individuals (Al-Qaysi, Mohamad-Nordin & Al-Emran, 2020; Schmidthuber, Hilgers, Gegenhuber & Etzelstorfer, 2017). The theory states that the behavioural intention of an individual to use a technology is established mostly with regards to two factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989; Wu, 2011).

"Perceived usefulness", or PU, is the opinion that the user has of how perception that the user has of how advantageous, and when there is perceived usefulness, it adds value to the usage of the technology and therefore promotes its acceptance (Davis, 1989).

"Perceived ease of use", or PEoU, is the expectation that the user has of the convenience or inconvenience of using the technology, and the effort they expect to put into it (Davis, 1989).

One of the biggest criticisms of TAM is that it does not consider the effect that specific social, cultural or user-context factors might have on technology acceptance (Al-Hujran, Al-Debei, Chatfield, & Migdadi, 2015; Moon & Kim, 2001). However, according to Wu (2011), "prior acceptance studies confirm that the model consistently explains more than 50% of variance in acceptance".

For the purpose of the present study, TAM can be considered to study the acceptance of online participation platforms, and as such, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness can be considered factors that affect online citizen participation.

### 2.3.2. Previous studies

Some other factors have already been mentioned in the first chapter of the literature review were sociodemographic ones, such as age, gender, education, and income (Kitanova, 2019; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Zheng and Schachter, 2016; Tenn, 2007; Pak, Chua and Vande Moere, 2017; Henn, Weinstein & Forrest, 2005). Some other participation factors that have been mentioned are the level of awareness of societal problems (Boulianne, 2016), knowledge about political institutions and politicians (Boulianne, 2016), and social ties (Loader, Vromen, and Xenos 2014). And to all of the previously mentioned categories, Henn, Weinstein and Forrest (2005) add the region in which people live.

As it relates to the present research, CVM explains the connection between socioeconomic factors and different participation levels *(*Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995), and TAM considers the perceptions that users have of technology to understand their acceptance of it (Davis, 1989).

Considering now more in depth studies on citizen participation, a few more key factors are going to come to light. The following table (Table 2.2: Factors affecting participation and corresponding authors) shows factors influencing citizen participation that were identified in the studies of Bellard (2014) and Henn and Foard (2013).

| Author | Factors |
|---|---|
| (Ballard, 2014) | Personal issue or cause |
| | Beliefs |
| | Self Goals |
| | Response to an invitation |
| | Personal barriers |
| | Systemic barriers |
| (Henn & Foard, 2013) | Political interest |
| | Internal efficacy |
| | External efficacy |
| | Faith in the electoral process |
| | Perceptions of the value of elections |
| | Support for the principle of voting |
| | Effectiveness of political parties and politicians |
| | Trust in political parties and politicians |

Table 2.2: Factors affecting participation and corresponding authors

### 2.3.2.1 What Motivates Youth Civic Involvement - Ballard, 2014

This 2014 article studies motivations and barriers to youth civic involvement, with the goal to understand why some young people participate while others do not. Resorting to a qualitative study with 22 interviews, Ballard identified six factors influencing youth civic participation, four motivational ones, and two that were barriers (Bellard, 2014). These factors are: personal issue, beliefs, self-goals and response to invitation as motivational factors, and as for barriers, personal and systemic barriers were identified (Bellard, 2014).

"Personal issue or cause" is a motivational factor that came up because citizens felt so strongly about a specific issue or cause in their community that it motivated them to participate (Bellard,

2014). Bellard (2014) also points out that this involvement seems to be associated with a more political participation.

"Beliefs" is the belief about the importance of civic action, it is a concern with the process of participation itself more than specific issues, the conceptualization of participation as a duty (Bellard, 2014).

"Self-goals" is a personal motivation to participate for personal goals or interests, such as gaining knowledge and experience (Bellard, 2014). Bellard points out that this factor was not present on its own in her study, every interviewee that had this motivator had others as well (Bellard, 2014).

"Response to an invitation" is exactly what it seems to be, a motivation to participate to respond to an invitation or pressure to do it (Bellard, 2014).

"Personal barriers" is the lack of the previously mentioned motivational factors, citizens in this category do not participate because they feel like they have no reason to do so (Bellard, 2014). This factor can be related to disinterest, complacency or being unaware of worthwhile issues or causes (Bellard, 2014).

"Systemic barriers" points out the existence of perceived impediments to participation, usually expressed as lack of opportunities or ability to participate but also as lack of time or power (Bellard, 2014). Bellard underlines the need for society to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement, but points out that this perceived lack of opportunities was often translated into disempowerment on a personal level as well (Bellard, 2014).

Understanding this study and these factors has the potential to improve civic engagement among youth, but in the specific case of the present study, the work of Bellard provides a validated base to study factors impacting citizen engagement and participation, and can be easily extended to cover other age groups. The current research will add value as it considers a different context, a different age group, and focuses on online participation methods.


**2.3.2.2. Social differentiation in young people's political participation: the impact of social and educational factors on youth political engagement in Britain - Henn & Foard, 2013**

This study uses a mixed methods approach to understand the impact of sociodemographic characteristics on youth participation (Henn & Foard, 2013). The quantitative part of the study aimed at collecting insights related to five demographic factors, gender, ethnicity, educational qualifications, education status and social class, the qualitative analysis resorted to focus groups and a thematic analysis to gain a more in depth understanding that could not be transmitted through the survey (Henn & Foard, 2013).

"Political interest" is also referred to as political engagement, it reflects the interest in politics that citizens have and their understanding of political concepts (Henn & Foard, 2013). The majority of respondents expressed a discontentment with politics and considered it to be elitist and self-serving, as well as disinteresting and confusing.

"Internal efficacy" considers the degree of confidence that one has in their knowledge and capabilities, and therefore, their capacity to add value through participation, and in the case of this study, most young people felt confidence in their capabilities (Henn & Foard, 2013).

"External efficacy" considers the views that citizens have on the electoral process and how relevant they think their participation can be (Henn & Foard, 2013). This is a very significant factor, in this study, 61% believe that they cannot influence the political parties in power, but if citizens do not believe that participation leads to results, then they are less likely to participate (Henn & Foard, 2013).

"Faith in the democratic/electoral process" refers to the belief that the democratic process such as elections are worthwhile, and in this case it is connected to the "perceptions of the value of elections", along with "support for the principle of voting". In this study, it seems like the majority of respondents considered elections to be a useful way to " keep politicians broadly accountable to citizens "(Henn & Foard, 2013).

"Effectiveness of political parties and politicians" considers how trustworthy citizens consider their parties and politicians to be (Henn & Foard, 2013). Young people with low qualifications and education levels are more likely to doubt the effectiveness of politicians (Henn & Foard, 2013).

"Trust in political politics and politicians" relates to perceived levels of honesty  of politicians and transparency perceived by citizens (Henn & Foard, 2013). In this study, three quarters of citizens considered that "there is often a big difference between what a party promises it will do and what it actually does when it wins an election", meaning that there is very low levels of this factor (Henn & Foard, 2013).

The study found that young people are disengaged from political processes and disenchanted with their political experiences (Henn & Foard, 2013). However, Henn and Foard (2014) point out that with careful educational participation and less class differences, there could be an improvement in participation.

This study allows for understanding of how the perspectives of citizens can affect their behaviour. Providing a structure to study political beliefs and perceptions and the effect they can have on participation, this study will be adapted for purposes of the present study. The new research will add value as it considers a different context, a different age group, and focuses on online participation methods.

### 2.3.3. Factors to consider

Since the 2014 study of Bellard has a very similar structure to this one, the factors from the work of Bellard (2014)  were selected in full and without changes. As for the study of Henn and Foard (2013), a few slight changes were done, taking into account the structure of their research and the factors proven to be relevant. The final factors to consider in the analysis are shown in table 2.3: Selected factors.

| Author | Factor |
|---|---|
| (Ballard, 2014) | Personal issue |
| | Beliefs |
| | Self goals |
| | Response to invitation |
| | Personal barriers |
| | Systemic barriers |
| (Henn & Foard, 2013 | Political interest |
| | Internal efficacy |
| | External efficacy |
| | Faith in the political process |
| | Attitudes politicians |

Table 2.3: Selected factors

Faith in the democratic process is a new factor that joins the fators: faith in the electoral process, perceptions of the value of elections, and support for the principle of voting.

The final factors, effectiveness of political parties and politicians and trust in political parties and politicians are joined into a single factor attitude towards politicians.

Considering CVM, "political engagement" is included in the factor Political Interest, and "access to network" can be considered as embodied in Systemic Barriers, as that factor can include perceived lack of access to network. As for the factor "resources", it can be closely intertwined with sociodemographics, that is only going to be considered to evaluate the sample distribution, and as for civic skills, they can be encompassed in Beliefs and Internal Efficacy. Ease of use and usefulness of TAM will be more relevant for the analysis of the platform, but still, "usefulness" can be considered as part of the factor External Efficacy.

**Chapter 3 - Research Methodology**


**3.1. Research context**

Sociodemographic factors can affect participation  (Henn & Foard, 2013), as such it is relevant to consider the distribution of the Portuguese population in order to better understand what factors affect its participation. The goal of this research is not to study the effects that sociodemographic factors have on participation but having a representative sample was still relevant. A sample that has a distribution similar to that of the Portuguese population ensures that many different perspectives are considered in the exploration of factors impacting online citizen participation.

This research studies Portuguese citizens and their political participation, with a case study related to their participation in the online platform *Participa.*

The first step to understanding Portuguese citizens is understanding the population demographics. The most relevant demographic factors are shown in appendix L, along with the corresponding occurrence in the population and in the sample. Portugal is a Mediterranean country with a population of around 10 million and 2 hundred thousand people, with around 52% of the population being female and 48% male (INE, n.d.; Pordata, 2020a).

Portugal has a fertility rate below the replacement level, at only 1,4 children born per woman, the country has one of the lowest birth rates in the world at 8,4%, quite lower than the mortality rate of 10,9%, meaning that the population is shrinking. Portugal has one of the most ageing populations in the world, as of 2018, there were 157 senior citizens per 100 youths, and the average age of 44,6 years (CIA, n.d.). The ageing and shrinkage of the population can both be seen in the population pyramid of Portugal, it is not the expected triangular shape, it has a base smaller than the middle, meaning there are less younger people than middle aged ones (CIA, n.d.). On top of the pyramid, the age bracket 75 years or older accounts for 9% of the population, the following one, aged 60 to 74 corresponds to 16% of the population, people from 45 to 59 are 21% of the population, the next bracket is still bigger, people age 30 to 44 make up 22% of the population (Pordata, 2020b; CIA, n.d.). Up to this point, the population pyramid of Portugal still show the expected triangle shape of a growing population, however, the population decline shows itself in the size of the age bracket 15 to 29 years old, since these people only amount to 17% of the population, and as it gets to the younger members of the Portuguese society, people up to the age of 14 only make up 15% of the total population (Pordata, 2020b; CIA, n.d.).

When it comes to the geographic distribution of the population, the majority of people in the country leave near the coast, and 66,3% of people live in urban areas, just under 7 million (CIA, n.d.).

The biggest population centres are its two major cities, Lisbon, with a population of 2.957.000 million people, and Porto, with 1.313.000 people (CIA, n.d.).

As for the job market, Portugal has an active population of just over 6,6 million people, from those, 4,4 million are employed full time, and half a million are employed part-time (Pordata, 2020d). That said, as of 2018 the average annual income per adult was 11.786€, or 982,17€ per month, according to INE. As for unemployment, in 2019 just under 340 thousand people were looking for a job, and the unemployment rate was 6,5% (Pordata, 2019b). When it comes to the inactive population, there are almost 800 thousand students, over 1 million and 790 thousand retirees, 11,5 thousand househusbands and 354,6 thousand housewives, and other 655 thousand non-active people.

Portugal has a literacy rate of 96%, and from a resident population aged fifteen and older of 8 million and 863 thousand in 2019, only around 600 thousand people had no educational qualification (Pordata, 2020e). For schooling qualifications, 1 million and 904 thousand people have finished primary school, the first cycle of education, 2 million and 653 thousand people have completed the second and third cycles of education, up to the ninth grade (Pordata, 2020e). The most common educational qualification group counts 2 million and 11 thousand people that have completed high school and postsecondary but not tertiary education (Pordata, 2020e). For higher education, Portugal has 1 million 734 thousand people with some university degree, be it a bachelor, a masters or a doctorate (Pordata, 2020e).


### 3.2. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative analysis based on the works of Ballard (2014) and Henn and Foard (2013) to understand what factors can affect citizen participation in Portuguese online platforms.

Considering how complex and sometimes contradictory information about participation is, and how ambiguous this type of information can be, a qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews followed by a thematic analysis was the chosen method to obtain the desired information. An advantage of conducting interviews was that information could be clarified to the interviewee if any doubts arose, and it was possible to probe for more information.

In the beginning, an exploratory research of existing literature was conducted in order to find factors affecting citizen participation, either motivational or demotivational. Through that, a lot of relevant information was found, such as CVM, (Verba, Brady, & Schlozman, 1995) TAM (Davis, 1989), and the works of Ballard (2014) and Henn, and Foard (2013).

The qualitative analysis chosen was adapted from the works of Ballard (2014) and Henn, and Foard (2013), and the survey was constructed through adaptation of concepts from them and

Sveningsson, 2016; Naranjo-Zolotov et al., 2019; Mourão, Bernardes & Carvalho, 2020; Boulianne, 2016; Al-Hujran, Al-Debei, Chatfield & Migdadi, 2015; and Cantijoch, Galandini & Gibson, 2016).

The script of the interview was laid out in a qualtrics survey to facilitate data collection and analysis. The survey was composed of forty eight questions however, participants only answered twenty seven to thirty seven questions, depending on the branches of the survey their specific knowledge led to (see Appendix B: survey flow).

Once finished, the interviews were analysed through thematic analysis, table 4.1 shows the motivational themes obtained and direct quotes illustrating them, and table 4.2 does the same for demotivational themes.

### 3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through twenty three interviews, conducted by asking participants a series of questions (Appendix A: survey).

The universe being studied consists of the Portuguese population, and to get a sample that was representative, a purposive sampling method was used. This strategy allows a more sociodemographically balanced sample that has a similar distribution to that of the Portuguese population. Another consideration in the choice of participants was that the majority of them had access to and knew how to use the Internet, so that they could evaluate the platform.

The forty six questions of the survey were organized into four themes, sociodemographics, perceptions on participation, analysis of the platform of the case study and suggestions. The survey started with a question about consent to be interviewed, followed by eight multiple-choice questions about sociodemographic characteristics. To understand contextual awareness, past participation, and perceptions on politics, participation and e-government, thirteen open ended questions and three multiple-choice questions were asked.

The interviews were conducted by phone call, and the answers written down in *Qualtrics* through an intelligent verbatim transcription method to facilitate the analysis. Each interview lasted between 25 minutes to an hour, with most taking just over 45 minutes to complete.

As questions were asked, the survey could be taken into different directions. After asking participants about their Internet usage, those that did not use it only had one more question to ask, with the smallest total of questions, at twenty seven. Participants that had known of and used the platform before had the biggest number of questions to answer, thirty seven, with a total of twenty five open questions and twelve multiple choice ones.

The sample had a distribution of females and males identical to the national distribution, but no other demographic grouping was interviewed in a proportion similar to that of the national one. The

sample was still quite varied, including people from most sociodemographic categories, still allowing for representative results. Appendix L shows the sociodemographic distribution of the Portuguese population compared to that of the sample.

**3.4. Data analysis**

The main data analysis method used was a thematic analysis. The analysis process had two different end goals, study of factors affecting citizen participation, and study what factors affect citizen perception of the online platform *Participa*.

The data analysis started with an in depth overview of the data collected, becoming familiar with the responses and their content. Afterwards, when it came to coding, the analysis was separated into two.

The first part was meant to answer the research question: What factors can affect Portuguese citizen participation, and which might be the most significant ones? For this thematic analysis, a deductive approach was used, there were expectations of factors that might arise in this analysis, after having studied them in literature. The responses were analysed with the expectation to find motivational and demotivational factors previously selected from the literature, studying the impact they had on participation. The study considers factors from the work of Bellard, Henn and Foard, to see if they were relevant in the Portuguese context.

The second part focused on answering the question: How do Portuguese citizens perceive the online platform *Participa*? For this analysis, a hybrid approach to thematic analysis was used. Based on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006 study and the context of this research, inductive and deductive thematic analyses were combined. TAM can be a relevant model to consider, as some factors affecting online citizen participation can be adapted from perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. However, TAM is based on qualitative methods and is therefore not ideal for a qualitative approach. TAM does not offer a framework that leads to the expectation of other factors arising from the thematic analysis.

The analysis of the data was entirely based on the answers of the interview participants, data was coded and categorized into themes to identify patterns and understand the perceptions that interviewees had of what affected their participation.

There is one last question to answer: How could the *Participa* platform be improved and increase engagement? To answer this question, the results of the thematic analysis of the *Participa* platform are considered, along with suggestions given by the participants of the interview.

In Chapter 5. Research findings, the three main questions are answered and an understanding is reached about what are the perspectives of Portuguese citizens on participation, what factors can affect it, and how it can be improved.

**Chapter 4 – Case Study**

The *Participa*[7] portal is going to be the case study for this dissertation. It is an official platform of the Portuguese Ministry of Environment and Climate Action that was created in July of 2015 (Participa, n.d.-b). In 2019 the portal had an upgrade to improve its capabilities and it means to ease access to public consultation processes, therefore incentivizing informed participation, while also improving the efficiency of process management (Participa, n.d.-b).

The *Participa* portal is a Portuguese governmental platform that aggregates all public consultation processes from the Portuguese Ministry of Environment and Climate Action (Participa, n.d.-b). The portal was created to make it easier to access public consultation processes, and with that, incentivizing public participation and improving process management (Participa, n.d.-b). Print screens showing the platform are available in Appendix J (Participa, n.d.-a).

Though one of its goals is to promote participation, the portal is failing at doing so. To understand why it is important to know that there are three main ways to interact with the platform:

- Consulting documents, all public documents related to a project are available for anyone to see, and there is no available way to see how many people have consulted the documents.
- Following a project shows interest in receiving updates on it, and while the number of followers a project has is shown, it is not possible to see who they are. Generally, the number of followers stays under 100 (Appendix J).
- Participating is the option of leaving a comment. Any user can see how many participations there are in a project, but the comments themselves are private, as is the identity of who commented. The number of participations generally stays under 30, and most projects have zero to five participations.

Considering the number of followers and participations of a project both generally stay under 100, and that Portugal has a population of 10 million, these numbers show a severe lack of participation.

This study analysed the factors that affect how citizens perceive the platform in order to understand why it is not more successful and what can be done to improve online participation

**4.1. Survey results**

Twenty three interviews were conducted to study online citizen participation, the series of questions asked is available in Appendix A: Survey, and the path in which the questions were asked is in Appendix B: Survey Flow.

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[7]Website of Participa: https://participa.pt/

One of the first non-demographic questions the participants were asked refers to their interests. Two people mentioned politics as an area they are interested in, but since this was an open question with no follow up direct question, this interest might be underrepresented. The idea that this interest is underrepresented is strengthened by the fact that later on in the interview, seven respondents said that their main motivation to participate was political interest.

As it relates to social media, four of the participants did not use any at all. Nineteen people use social media, but twelve of them use it just to see content of others and or communicate, not posting their own content or opinion. Only four people share content and opinion and only two share content that they themselves created. This shows an inclination of most people to avoid participation even if just on social media.

Questions about access to information were asked. Only ten participants considered themselves to be well informed, and most of those professed an interest or curiosity in knowing about current events and being well informed. Five people did not consider themselves well informed and did not share a specific motivation, they simply stated that they did not pay attention to the news. However, in the question immediately following this one, only two people said that they did not actively access news, while this difference could be due too people not watching political news, this discrepancy was still worth mentioning. Nineteen of the participants accessed news and information about current events online. Considering their trust in said news sources, only eleven participants, less than half, had significant trust in their sources.

As it relates to familiarity with e-government platforms, to the questions of how frequent is the use of said platforms, five participants said it was not applicable, though only one had never used any before. As for the most used e-government platform, twenty two of the respondents said to have used *Portal das Finanças*[8]. More than half of the participants, thirteen use an e-government platform on a weekly or monthly basis, so it can be said that they are familiar with e-government. None of the platforms the interviewees knew were participation platforms, most were used merely for informational purposes or for specific services.

When asked about non-governmental participation platforms that they knew, ten respondents did not know of any, seven knew of participation platforms with a social, civic or professional purpose and nine people were familiar with online petition platforms, and eight had used *peticaopublica.com.* On average, participants new less social or civic participation platforms than government ones.

One of the questions was multiple choice and related to personal history of participation, and from the list provided, the only activity that was not done by at least one of the participants was the

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[8] Website of Portal das Finanças: https://www.portaldasfinancas.gov.pt/at/html/index.html

posting of political signs. Twenty of the twenty three had voted before, and two of the ones that had never done it were young and said that they would vote when they could, but that they had not yet been of voting age in the last elections. Everyone who was interviewed said they recycled. The nine participants that had contacted public officials before were all over the age of twenty five. And in the group of six people that do or have done subcultural or artistic expressions, there was no one under twenty five either.

Another interesting demographic distribution of the participation in these activities was related to political consumerism. Grouping those who had done it, there was only one male and six females. In the entirety of the list related to history of participation, this was the activity with the biggest discrepancy between genders. Moving on to average household income, the range of past participation seems to be greater in some income intervals than others until one considers that some income intervals had many more participants in the survey than others.

One of the questions of the survey asked for the opinion of participants on participation methods. Voting was deemed the preferred participation method by fifteen of the participants, protests were chosen by eight people and donations by five. But more important than knowing what is the preferred method of participants, is understanding why they valued some participation methods more than others. Ten people pointed out that allowing them to express their opinion was one of the reasons they considered when deciding which methods to use. With one of the participants saying "more chances to directly express opinion or will of the citizens would be nice. I think that the essence of voting is the expression of opinion and desire of the citizens". These answers also consider that expressing opinion is the most valuable when governments pay attention to what their citizens actually want.

Ten people also pointed out that they preferred participation methods that could raise awareness to the problems at stake. One of the participants also explained why they valued awareness "something key for participation is emersion and exposure, awareness can make a real difference in the perspective of people (...) Showing people the consequences of the behaviours we have as humanity, it could really change some people."

Another factor that interviewers considered while evaluating participation methods was how direct its effects were. Eight people saw significant value in being able to have a direct impact on the cause they are supporting or fighting against. One of the participants chose donations as the best form of participation for them "donations, since they can really directly help the organisation they are given too". Another participant chose volunteering, but for the same reason: "Volunteering is one of the best, it is really doing things, making a real impact".

What can these questions tell us about the motivations of the people who were interviewed?

They can give us an idea of the lives and beliefs of these people. Most of them use social media but do not post there. Most of them do not consider themselves to be particularly well informed but still they have some go to news sources that they pay attention to. Few trust news in absolute and most are aware of the dangers of partial truths and incomplete information. Few participate online, they only lurk in social networks, do not know about platforms for social causes and most use government platforms, but only as users and not as participants. All recycle, and more than halve have voted, donated, volunteered or signed petitions. And what does that mean for participation? It means that before participating, people already have criteria on what they want their actions to reflect.

**4.2. Thematic analysis - Most significant factors impacting online citizen participation**

The interviews were analysed and their content considered as a whole. Afterwards, results were organized in research questions to gain a better understanding of the essence of their content. The main goal of this analysis was to answer the question: What factors can affect Portuguese citizen participation, and which might be the most pertinent ones?

This thematic analysis resorted to a deductive approach. After studying the literature and before starting the analysis, there were already expectations related to which factors might arise. In particular, the expected factors were those in the works of Bellard (2014), and Henn and Foard (2014).

Adapting the idea of organization of factors from the 2014 study of Bellard into the factors of the work of Henn and Foard in 2014, they were separated into motivational and demotivational factors, to expedite analysis. The responses were then analysed with the expectation to find motivational and demotivational factors previously selected from the literature, studying the impact they had on participation.

Some of the factors to be considered as codes for the thematic analysis of factors affecting participation are:

"Personal issue" what motivates citizens to feel strongly about a specific cause (Bellard, 2014).

"Beliefs" the value of civic action, concerned with the process of participation itself (Bellard, 2014).

"Self-goals" a personal motivation to participate for personal goals or interests, such as improving one self, gaining knowledge and experience (Bellard, 2014).

"Response to an invitation" participating in response to an invitation (Bellard, 2014).

"Personal barriers" refers to a lack of reason or motivation to participate (Bellard, 2014).

"Systemic barriers" points out the existence of perceived impediments to participation (Bellard, 2014).

"Political interest" reflects the interest in politics that citizens have and their understanding of political concepts (Henn & Foard, 2013). "No political interest" is the lack of political interest and understanding.

"Internal efficacy" the degree of confidence that one has in their knowledge and capabilities (Henn & Foard, 2013). "No internal efficacy" occurs when one does not have confidence in their knowledge and capabilities.

"External efficacy" is how relevant do citizens think their participation can be (Henn & Foard, 2013). "No external efficacy" is giving citizens participation no value.

"Faith in the electoral process" refers to the belief that the democratic process such as elections are worthwhile (Henn & Foard, 2013). "No faith in the electoral process" translates belief that the process changes nothing and is not worth it.

"Attitude towards politicians" is how trustworthy citizens consider their parties and politicians to be (Henn & Foard, 2013). In this analysis, it was divided into positive and negative attitudes.

All of the expected factors came up in the thematic analysis and table 4.1 shows the motivational themes obtained and direct quotes illustrating them, table 4.2 does the same for demotivational themes.

| Motivational factors | Example from interview |
|---|---|
| Personal issue | "I think that a lot of things have to be changed" |
| Beliefs | "it is also a duty, it was a hard right to obtain"<br>"I feel a duty to share my opinion when it can improve the life of someone"<br>"I am very worried about the political state of our country" |
| Self Goals | "What motivates me the most is improving myself and my society"<br>"I hope to improve and to be better as I grow up." |
| Response to invitation | "I only used it once, someone asked me to go there participate and I did"<br>"And with other people asking, I have checked another few participation channels, particularly my parents"<br>"I trust people around me to tell me who to vote on." |
| Political interest | "I do worry about the political situation that surrounds me" |
| Internal efficacy | "I like to understand what is going on, understand what is going on in other countries around us, like in the EU and in the international communities." |
| Faith in the political process | " voting, it is the best way to directly affect political outcomes. It is the best and easiest way for the average citizen to get involved in political life"<br>"If people voted more, the policies of the country would change, and the society could change as well"<br>"there is a lot of potential in politics" |

Table 4.1: Thematic analysis, motivational factors

| Demotivational Factors | Example from interview |
|---|---|
| Personal barriers | "a bit of conformism, as really fighting for a cause is hard"<br>"I do not see how my participation would truly help or be relevant." |
| Systemic barriers | "If it was easier to know about opportunities around me and if there was some easier way to join projects every once in a while"<br>"people want to participate but feel discouraged because they do not have enough information or do not know where to go to participate or what to do." |
| No political interest | "I am not interested in it at all, it never was something that I would pay attention to. I am completely disconnected from all political things around me"<br>"I do not care at all about political topics" |
| No internal efficacy | "feel disillusioned and I do not see how my participation would truly help or be relevant."<br>"they already expect me to have some knowledge and I feel ignorant" |
| No external efficacy | "this experience tells me that the ministry is not at all interested in having people actually consult, much less participate in this process (...) this one (website) is unusable and so crappy, it is a message that the government does not care."<br> "It changes nothing, like it is worth nothing." |
| No faith in the political process | "I have not yet found a way to participate in that without being a part of a corrupt and stupid system"<br>"the system is not as good as it could be" |
| Negative attitude towards parties and politicians | "the majority of people really involved in politics are more fighting for themselves"<br>"I feel like often their intentions are not at all to help those that need it"<br>"I do not trust the vast majority of politicians, I believe that power corrupts" |

Table 4.2: Thematic analysis, demotivational factors

In all the interviews, seven people said their main motivation to participate was "Political interest", and for 5 people it was "Beliefs. As for the main reasons for not participating, five people answered had "Personal barriers" and another five others had "Negative attitudes towards parties and politicians". Other main reasons to participate or not were personal issues, response to invitation, no political interest, no internal efficacy and no faith in the political system. The topics that did not come up in the analysis were external efficacy and a positive attitude towards political parties and politicians.

Interviewees pointed out many more reasons not to participate than to participate. The thematic analysis had almost double the codes for factors that demotivated them to participate than for motivational factors. When asked if they were politically engaged, ten people answered in the negative, nine in the positive and four said they were in between. Non-engaged people might still participate and engaged people might not. Participants that said they were engaged gave some reasons of what motivated them and only one pointed out a factor that demotivated them. On the

other hand, participants that said they were not engaged tended to give more reasons for their disengagement and out of the nine, five pointed out some factors that motivated them to participate. Even though they were not engaged and usually did not participate, some factors could still motivate them to participate.

Keeping the factors in the same order they were studied in the literature review, the first to consider is Personal Issues. In this study the results for this motivation were less specific than in the work of Ballard, eight people said they were motivated to participate by having causes worth fighting for and situations in society that really needed to be changed, and not so focused on a single cause.

For Beliefs, four people pointed out that their main reason for participating was that they felt like participation is a duty, three other people said this was a significant factor in their participation.

As for Self Goals, three people said that they were motivated to participate because they wanted to learn or to improve themselves. These three people had three completely different perspectives, one was very interested in politics, trusting in themselves and ready to participate. Another was only moderately engaged, demotivated by lack of faith in the political system, and a negative attitude towards politicians and yet motivated to participate by Self Goals because they considered participation to be an opportunity to improve themselves and hopefully their society as well. The last person motivated by Self Goals was not engaged, not interested and yet felt like learning about these topics and participating could be beneficial.

Only one person was motivated to participate due to Response to Invitation. This person said that they were not engaged and had No Political Interest and No Internal Efficacy, but that they trusted people around them if they invited them to participate. Another interesting consideration about this factor was that when asked why they used the *Participa* platform, the only person that had used it before had done so at the request of someone close to them. A few people pointed out some other social influence in their participation, such as being more informed or even gaining or changing an opinion, but other than that, the main reason for participation did not seem to be as a response to an invitation.

Personal Barriers were the most relevant factors, as they were a demotivating factor to ten people. Five respondents pointed out Personal Barriers as their main reason not to participate, and another five pointed out this factor as one of the reasons for their demotivation. A lot of personal barriers were mentioned, from disinterest to lack of knowledge and understanding.

Systemic barriers were demotivating to eight people, with one person pointing them out as their main reason for not participating and another seven pointing it out as relevant. One of the impediments more pointed out was the complexity of politics.

Political Interest was a motivational factor to eight people, with six of them pointing this out as the main factor influencing their participation. Sharing knowledge and opinion was often connected to this influence of participation. As for the demotivator No Political Interest, one person pointed this out as the main reason for their lack of participation and another three mentioned it as a motivational factor. The four people that said that lack of political interest was a relevant factor to them also had Personal Barriers and all of them considered themselves to not be engaged at all in politics. These people also seemed to hold very negative feelings towards politics in general.

Internal efficacy was only associated with two answers and they were secondary factors impacting participation and not very direct, but these people were motivated to participate by their confidence in their beliefs and the need to act on them. No internal efficacy occurred three times, and once, it was the main demotivating factor for non participation. These participants felt like politics were not interesting or very complex and as such, did not know enough to feel comfortable participating.

Two people had faith in the political process, one of them said that often people don not participate because "they do not see as many problems in the world around them, and as such, they are not as engaged politically as I am", and clarified that voting without knowing what to vote for is a problem, and the implication of that interview was that they believed that if more people participated in an informed way, causes could be helped and policies changed for the better. No faith in the political process was more common, with five participants pointing it out. One considered this lack of faith to be their most demotivating factor, and four other participants considered it a strong demotivating factor.

No one had a positive attitude towards politicians, the attitudes were all quite negative, with three interviewees pointing out that their negative attitude towards politicians was the main reason for them not to participate, and another two people considered this to be a relevant demotivating factor for them.

All the factors selected from the literature review arose, as expected, and valuable insights were gained by analysing how many people referred to each factor as impactful and the intensity they were referred to. With this analysis complete, it is now possible to answer the first research question.

### 4.3. Thematic analysis - Factors impacting participation in *Participa* platform

For this thematic analysis the data in the answers will be the key determinant of the themes to select, there is not a list of expected factors. Though there is no set list of expected factors, there were some expectations, such as mentions to factors related to the ease or difficulty of using the

platform and how accessible it was, along with factors related to the possible outcomes of their participation.

Starting the analysis of the platform *Participa,* participants were asked if they had ever heard of the platform. The multiple choice question had four options, and this was a key point in the flow of the survey: Yes, and I use it; Yes, but I do not use it; No; No, I do not use the internet.

In order to evaluate the platform participants, participants that had never heard of it were asked to visit it. They went to the website, looked at its characteristics and possibilities and interacted with it for a bit. However, though no data was collected on whether participants visited the platform on their phone or computer, three participants said that they could not access the platform on their computer and had to resort to using their smartphones. In one case, the platform was having such technical issue that postponing the interview was considered, however, it ended up loading and there were no further issues.

But these issues with the platform have to be taken into account and were negative user experiences. User Experience was selected as a factor affecting participation and considered to be related to the interaction between user and platform. Ten of the participants had a negative user experience and only four identified their user experience as positive. One of the participants explains one of the reasons their user experience was not great "This is a very good initiative (...) But it is an illusion of accessibility, if you go there and do not understand much of what is going on, if there is a very technical language, it seems very inaccessible".

User Experience and the other selected ones are organized in the next page in table 4.3: Factors affecting citizen participation in the platform *Participa* .

The fact that the platform is an online space offering information and possibilities for participation was originally well received, but as interviewees interacted with the website, their perspectives changed and with a bad user experience, many users will abandon the platform. While sharing their perception of their experience, one of the users disliked it so much that they said: "I feel like the previous process management methods would have to be absolutely terrible for this website to be an improvement".

When asked what they thought of the platform, eighteen people pointed out that the workings of the platform were unclear and that the information was too complex and confusing. Objectivity was chosen as a relevant factor impacting participation, and in this case, it was the lack of objectivity of the platform that was impacting participation. Objectivity is meant to consider how easy or difficult it is to participate. Clear and objective platforms are easier to understand and the more complex the platform is, the less people feel like participating. The factors of Objectivity and User

Experience are somewhat comparable to Ease Of Use of TAM, and these factors are key for the acceptance of a platform.

| Factors | Example from interview |
|---------|------------------------|
| Objectivity | "Many people might be interested in learning and reading these documents but then get discouraged by their complexity." |
| Informational character | "The information shared directly in the website is very small (...), most of the information will have to come from the documents" <br> "Information should be more digestible." <br> "Each project should have a better summary, each PDF should also have a summary, they are very hard to understand." |
| User experience | "There is a lot of confusion on how these processes work. It is a mess, unusable and inaccessible." |
| Value of participation | "It feels weird to be a participation thing if it is just public consultation and leaving unseen comments." <br> "This experience tells me that the state or ministry is not at all interested in having people actually consult, much less participate in these processes." |
| Communication | "Maybe some better publicity for the platform would be important." <br> "letting people know about situations is not just publishing things online in some unknown website (...) it is still not enough if it is not publicised." |
| Transparency | "You can only see how many people participated before, not how they did it, it is impossible to know if they just left a comment or if it was something different." <br> "this is a good method for transparency (...) but at the same time, it is less transparency than desired." |
| Design | "The design and user interaction is terrible, the information exposure is terrible (...) The design failures go behind graphic design and go into usability design." <br> "The design is not the best nor the worst, it is decent enough." |

Table 4.3: Factors affecting citizen participation in the platform *Participa*

Thirteen people pointed out that the Informational Character of the platform was a factor to consider in the evaluation of its levels of participation. Participants tend to value information and it could be a motivational factor for the platform having information "exclusive for these topics, so that people who care about projects from the Ministry of Environment, can go to just one place. It is easy to use and to obtain information". However, in this specific case study there were also concerns that the information was too complex to truly increase engagement meaning that it was mostly a demotivational factor.

Another selected factor was the Value of Participation, with nine participants pointing out that one of the problems of the platform was the expectation they had for it: "From the name, I would be expecting to participate in my society.". The first impression of the platform led people to focus on

participation but then interacting with it showed that participation was not the focus. A few people even pointed out that if the platform was exclusively informational and did not have a name related to participation, they might have perceived it as a better platform: "giving people the chance to consult these processes from home is still something very useful". The clash with the name and what the platform stated to do and its participation possibilities led participants to feel like their participation was irrelevant or useless, an answer that clearly explains the frustration felt: "the state or ministry is not at all interested in having people actually consult, much less participate in these processes".

Transparency is another factor to consider. Transparency factor means that the platform does not choose to hide specific information, and in this case is mostly demotivational and six participants expressed desire for more transparency in the platform. Most participants felt that without transparency, participation was irrelevant: "Even the possibility of participation if it worked, seems terrible, there is need to have feedback, to know what was the result of the participation, if we can not see what it made, then it is not transparent enough". Both Value of Participation and Transparency are complementary to each other and analogous to the usefulness od.

The Design of the platform was also a factor to consider. Five people mentioned it, four did not have strong feelings about it, either liking it or thinking it was average. But one person who disliked the design had very strong feelings about it "The design and user interaction is terrible, the information exposure is terrible. It is very hard to understand how to look for information, user experience is terrible. I do not even know what I am supposed to do as a user. The design failures go beyond graphic design and go into usability design. The filter button is almost invisible. The filters themselves are not great". The filter button and the filters themselves can be seen in Appendices four to six.

The last selected factor was pointed out by five of the participants and was Communication, this factor considers how well known the platform is and how their communication is perceived. The perceptions of communication that participants have of a platform influence their participation. If users perceive a platform to be well known and popular, they are more likely to see more Value of Participation in that interaction and as such, more likely to participate. If a platform is unknown, not many people are going to participate and as such, their participation is not going to be relevant. And this factor is also relevant because it can refer to all the people that do not know the platform exists, and those are certainly not going to participate in it.

**4.4. Participants suggestions**

After being shown the platform, nine of the participants said they would never visit it again, another nine said that they might visit it just because they got curious, and four could imagine a hypothetical situation where they were personally affected by one of the projects, and said that if that happened they would use it.

When asked about what methods they would prefer to have available, nine participants chose voting through multiple choices, four chose to vote yes or no, three chose leaving a comment and another three chose a complete interface like social networks (like, dislike, comment, share) and ten of the participants suggested another option. Most of the answers related to a new option focused on optimising the platform, keeping it clear and objective and including multiple options of participation. This desire of multiple options for participation is compatible with the conclusions that Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado (2020) reach as they consider variety to be one of the reasons for the success of the DecideMadrid platform.

Besides increasing participation methods, there are many more changes that could be done to improve the platform and through that, increase engagement. Most participants were interested in changes in the participation methods and their transparency. Participants focused on seeing accessible information summaries, to make it more accessible and make the participation process more simple and time efficient. Reformulating information into a new simple and organised system was a desire shared by many. There was also a clear desire to improve participation methods of the platform, including more options, such as voting, and sharing opinions, all these, with full transparency. Five of the interviewees also expressed interest in having a FAQs tab to explain new users how to fully take advantage of the platform. Another suggestion to increase engagement in the platform was to communicate it better, advertise it, disseminate it and lead people to encounter it. People that do not know the platform exists are certainly not going to participate in it.

This desire for a simple platform with clear instructions can be clarified by analysing the FixMyStreet platform. FixMyStreet has an appealing and easy to use website and the first page is very well organised, for returning users, there is an immediate opportunity to report a problem on the top, and a list of recently reported problems on the right. The left side of the opening page is directed towards new users and very clearly shows the steps to participate and the number of problems that have already been reported and fixed (FixMyStreet, n.d.-d). The *Participa* platform would benefit from having an equally clear opening page.

**Chapter 5 - Research Findings**

**5.1. What factors can affect Portuguese citizen participation, and which might be the most significant ones?**

Personal issues, Beliefs, Self Goals, Response to invitation, Personal Barriers, Systemic Barriers, Political Interest, Internal Efficacy, External Efficacy, Faith in the Political Process and Attitude Towards Politicians are eleven factors that affect Portuguese citizen participation.

Taking into consideration the factors that arose, the intensity level of their expression and how many people referred to each factor as impactful, it is now possible to say that there are six main motivational and demotivational factors affecting Portuguese citizen participation: Political Interest, Personal Beliefs, Personal Issues, Personal Barriers, Systemic Barriers and Attitude Towards Politicians.

According to this analysis, the most important motivational factor is Political Interest. This factor was pointed out as important by eight people, six of whom considered it their main motivation to participate. Following that, Beliefs were the second main motivator for four people and referred to as important by another three. Personal Issues were a significant motivator for eight people, though no one designated them as their main motivation to participate. This means that the strongest reasons to participate are interests in politics, and a belief that participation is valuable and must be taken seriously, and strong feelings towards a cause or issue.

As for demotivational factors, there were three main ones: personal barriers, systemic barriers and attitude towards politicians. Ten people referred to Personal Barriers as a relevant demotivational factor for them, with five of them naming it the main factor of their demotivation. Systemic Barriers followed personal ones, with eight people mentioning them as one of the reasons for their lack of participation. These two main demotivational factors were not associated with particularly strong emotions, but the next one was. The third main demotivational factor was supported by five participants, and was Negative Attitude Towards Politicians. In regards to this factor, there were a lot of strong feelings, with people having very negative opinions of people in politics, not trusting them or their intentions.

**5.2. What factors affect citizen participation in the online platform *Participa*?**

This study found that Portuguese citizens participation in the online platform *Participa* were affected by seven factors: Objectivity, Informational Character, User Experience, Value of Participation, Communication, Transparency and Design.

Most people interviewed had a negative perception of the platform, a few had a neutral opinion of it and only one person found interaction with the platform to be a positive experience.

All the factors considered to affect users participation in the platform are dependent on their perceptions of the platform. Participation is affected by how simple or complex the platform seems to be. For *Participa*, Objectivity is a demotivational factor as the platform was considered by many to be hard to understand. At the start of the interviews, Informational Character was perceived to be an advantage, it is easier to participate when the information needed for participation is in the same place as the option to participate. However, as citizens tried to understand the information, its complexity undermined its value and negatively affected participation.

User Experience considers how people felt using the platform and if their interaction with it went smoothly or if any problems came up. For the people that considered user experience to be a factor, it was a demotivator, as a few people had bad user experiences using the platform, with it not loading, and them not being able to understand what they were meant to do.

As for Value of Participation, in this platform, users often felt like any participation wouldn be valued at all and would only be a waste of time, mostly because participations were hidden away and there was no public feedback related to any participation. Transparency was also a demotivational factor for this platform, there was no transparency, and that undermined the value of participation.

Most people that mentioned design felt neutrally about it, but one of the interviewees had strong feelings of dislike towards it.

Communication is a very relevant factor. Of the twenty three people interviewed for this study, only one was familiar with the platform. For all others it was completely unfamiliar. *Participa* and other online participation platforms desperately need good communication. There are always some people motivated to participate, but if they cannot find a platform to do it, their motivation is irrelevant. In her 2014 work, Bellard underlines the need for society to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement, and for this platform, the opportunity for engagement is already available, it just does not have enough reach yet (Bellard, 2014).


**5.3. How could the *Participa* platform be improved and increase engagement?**

The main way to improve the platform would be to make it easier to use. The biggest focus of suggestions was on improving user experience, keeping the platform clear and objective. Examples of this clarification would be an improvement of its design and the inclusion of a FAQs tab to explain new users how to fully take advantage of the platform. To make the message clear and improve

understanding of the projects by the average citizen it would be useful to add information summaries of the documents in a non-technical language.

Another significant improvement would be the clarification of expectations in the platform. The name of the platform is not congruent with the participation possibilities of the platform. There is no clear understanding of what participation is meant to do. There should be a better explanation of the value of participation, who is going to consider it, what it is going to be considered for and how relevant is it.

And the final improvement would be to add more transparency along with more forms of participation. Six participants desired more transparency in the platform, and in the consideration of successful platforms, transparency was pointed out to be an important factor for both. For this platform, even just allowing the comments of citizens to be public would increase transparency. As for the inclusion of other forms of participation, eighteen of the participants were interested in additional means of participation.

## 5.4. Theoretical contributions

This study improves the understanding of factors affecting Portuguese citizens participation through the adaptation of the studies of Ballard and Henn and Foard into an analysis of the Portuguese context (Bellard, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2013).

It also contributes to the current literature by improving the understanding of the factors influencing citizen participation in Portugal.

By using a specific case study, this research obtains specific perspectives of participation, this study could also be adapted to other countries with similar cultures to investigate their own perspectives on participation.

## 5.5. Practical implications

This study deepens the understanding of factors influencing Portuguese citizens online participation. Furthermore, by giving suggestions on how to improvement the participation platform, this research can contribute to potential improvements of this platform or others in the future.

Companies can also apply some of the insights of this research in the development of other types of participation platforms, such as the factors that influence the perceptions of a participation platform.

**Chapter 6 – Limitations, Conclusions and Recommendations**

**6.1. Ethical considerations**

As it relates to ethical concerns, participants gave their concern for the study to be conducted before the start of the interview, knowing that it would require answering personal questions, and their anonymity was ensured throughout the analysis process.

**6.2. Limitations**

The sample was selected with different sociodemographic groups in mind, however, the sampling method still means that the interviewer selects the interviewees, and that limits selection to a single social context. The data is self reported by the interviewees, some factors might be underrepresented and others overrepresented as bad recall might lead to flawed reasoning. Conflicts might arise from cultural bias or personal issues. Researcher bias might also occur with a subjective analysis and limited scientific rigor.

One of the reasons pointed out for the success of FixMyStreet was that the kind of participation citizens could do in that platform was a participation that they were already doing before the online platform was available. This study does not consider previous participation related to public consultation processes when studying participation in the *Participa* platform.

There is also a lack of previous national research studies, and there is limited access to data.

Time constraints are also a factor, interviews could have been longer and more interviews could have been done. Another limitation is due to the method of the research itself, as the analysis was qualitative, the results cannot be verified**.**

**6.3. Future research**

This is an exclusively qualitative approach and some of the questions could apply to another country, another culture, a different education system, or a different economic situation. Future research should include a quantitative approach and expand on the size of the sample. Future research should also go behind reaching for a bigger sample and also aim to reach a more representative one, accounting for different cultural and ethnic backgrounds since that was not considered for this study.

The data is self-reported by the interviewees and as such some factors might be underrepresented and others overrepresented as bad recall might lead to flawed reasoning and social desirability might lead to faulty reporting.

## 6.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Many factors can affect citizen participation and in Portugal the most relevant motivational factors to consider when evaluating citizen participation are personal issues, beliefs and political interests, and for demotivational factors, personal barriers, systemic barriers and negative attitude towards politicians.

This study recommends that the *Participa* platform is updated, with a focus on improving the user experience, ensuring that the platform functions without issues and is clear and objective. One of the recommendations is that a FAQs tab is included to explain new users how to fully take advantage of the platform.

Changing the structure of the information for the projects to include summaries of the documents in a clear and simple language, could improve reach of information and with that, informed participation.

And the main recommendation is that participation methods are improved. More participation methods could be added, even if just allowing the comments of citizens to be public would increase transparency of the platform. Including other options, such as multiple choice voting on details of the projects, voting yes or no, about certain questions that might be relevant to those implementing the projects.

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**Appendix A: Survey**

# Survey

Q0 Hello, my name is Marta Stamm and I am a master's student at ISCTE Business School in Lisbon. As research for my dissertation, I am conducting this survey to study factors influencing participation in Portuguese online platforms.All responses obtained will be handled anonymously, and according to the rules of the General Data Protection, and will only be used for research purposes.

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Q0.1 Are you willing to proceed with this interview, knowing that some questions involve personal data?

○ Yes  (1)

○ No  (2)

Q1 Gender

○ Male  (1)

○ Female  (2)

○ Chose not to respond  (3)

○ Other  (4)

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Q2 Age

- ◯ 15-19  (1)
- ◯ 20-24  (2)
- ◯ 25-29  (3)
- ◯ 30-44  (4)
- ◯ 45-59  (5)
- ◯ 60-74  (6)
- ◯ 75 or older  (7)

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Q3 Residence area

- ◯ Urban  (1)
- ◯ Rural  (2)

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Q4 Education

- ◯ Primary school  (1)
- ◯ 2nd and 3rd cycle  (2)
- ◯ High School  (3)
- ◯ Bachelor degree  (4)
- ◯ Masters degree  (5)
- ◯ Doctoral degree  (6)
- ◯ Other  (7)

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Q5 Occupation

○ Student  (1)

○ Unemployed  (2)

○ Freelancer  (3)

○ Self-employed  (4)

○ Paid employment  (5)

○ Retired  (6)

○ Housewife / Househusband  (7)

○ Other  (8)

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Q6 Number of household members

○ 1  (1)

○ 2  (2)

○ 3  (3)

○ 4  (4)

○ 5  (5)

○ > 5  (6)

Q7 Average yearly household income

○ < 5000€  (1)

○ 5.000€ - 10.000€  (2)

○ 10.001€ - 13.500€  (3)

○ 13.501 - 19.000  (4)

○ 19.001 - 27.500  (5)

○ 27.501 - 32.500  (6)

○ 32.501 - 40.000  (7)

○ 40.001 - 50.000  (8)

○ 50.001 - 100.000  (9)

○ 100.001 - 250.000  (10)

○ > 250.000  (11)

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Q8 Internet usage

○ Few times a week  (1)

○ Several times a week  (2)

○ Daily, for less than 1h  (3)

○ 1h to 4h daily  (4)

○ Over 4h daily  (5)

○ Not applicable  (6)

**End of Block: Socio demographics**

**Start of Block: Participation questions**

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Q9 In what area do you study, work or worked in?

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Q10 In what areas do your interests lie? What themes do you look for? (Music, science, design...)

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Q11 Do you use social media networks? Which ones do you use? What is your usage of social networks like?

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Q12 Do you consider yourself to be well informed? Why? What motivates you to keep yourself well informed?

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Q13 Where do you access most of your news?

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Q14 How much do you trust the information given through those sources? Why?

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Q15 Have you ever used e-government platforms? Which ones?

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Q16 How often do you use e-government platforms?

○ Yearly  (1)

○ Monthly  (2)

○ Weekly  (3)

○ Once a day  (4)

○ Several times a day  (5)

○ Not applicable  (6)

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Q17 Do you know other non-governmental online participation platforms? Which ones?

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Q18 Do you participate in platforms for social causes? Which ones and why?

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Q19 From this list, which activities have you done?

☐ Political consumerism (boycotting and buycotting)  (1)

☐ Attending political rallies  (2)

☐ Contacting public officials  (3)

☐ Posting political signs  (4)

☐ Voting  (5)

☐ Behing a part of a political party  (6)

☐ Behing a part of another organization with political goals  (7)

☐ Behing a part of other organizations with a social purpose  (8)

☐ Volunteering (participating in activities with a social purpose)  (9)

☐ Cultural and recreational involvement  (10)

☐ Donating  (11)

☐ Participating in demonstrations or marches  (12)

☐ Signing petitions  (13)

☐ Subcultural or artistic expressions  (14)

☐ Sharing political opinions or news on social media  (15)

☐ Recycling  (16)

☐ Others  (17)

Q20 Have your parents, friends or other members of your household participated in any of these activities? Do you think that has influenced your own behaviour?

☐ Political consumerism (boycotting and buycotting)  (1)

☐ Attending political rallies  (2)

☐ Contacting public officials  (3)

☐ Posting political signs  (4)

☐ Voting  (5)

☐ Behing a part of a political party  (6)

☐ Behing a part of another organization with political goals  (7)

☐ Behing a part of other organizations with a social purpose  (8)

☐ Volunteering (participating in activities with a social purpose)  (9)

☐ Cultural and recreational involvement  (10)

☐ Donating  (11)

☐ Participating in demonstrations or marches  (12)

☐ Signing petitions  (13)

☐ Subcultural or artistic expressions  (14)

☐ Sharing political opinions or news on social media  (15)

☐ Recycling  (16)

☐ Others  (17)

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Q21 What do you think each method of participation can achieve? What do you think are the best methods of participation?

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Q22 Do you consider yourself politically engaged? Why? What do you think it take for someone to be considered politically engaged?

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Q23 What about your friends and family? Do you consider the people around you to be politically engaged? Why? Do you think their behaviour influences you?

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Q24 Do you feel like you are involved in the process of civic participation? Why?

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Q25 Have you ever heard of the Participa online platform?

○ Yes, and I use it  (1)

○ Yes, but I don't use it  (2)

○ No  (3)

○ No, I don't use the internet  (5)

Q26 If you don't use the internet, do you feel like you lack access to political information or some forms of participation? If so, what and what do you suggest could be done to ease that?

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Q25.1 The *Participa* platform aggregates all public consultation processes for the Portuguese Ministry of Environment and Climate Action, and is meant to ease access to public consultation processes, incentivising informed participation and improving the efficiency of process management.
To see it click aqui

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Q27 What do you think of this platform? What do you think is the potential of such a platform? What would be the advantages of using it?

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Q28 Now that you know about its existence, will you use it? What could lead you to participate in this platform?

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Q29 How would you improve this platform? What are its main weaknesses?

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Q30 If you used the platform, or others like it, what topics would you address? (Environment, human rights, health...)

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Q31 What do you think of this platform? Why don't you use it?

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Q32 What would lead you to use this platform?

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Q33 What do you think are the advantages of using such a platform?

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Q34 How would you improve this platform? What are its main weaknesses?

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Q35 If you used the platform, or others like it, what topics would you address? (Environment, human rights, health...)

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Q36 What do you think of this platform?

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Q37 How long have you used the platform?

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Q38 Why did you participate? What is the goal of your participation? What do you hope to achieve?

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✳

Q30 What do you think are the advantages of using such a platform?

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Q40 How would you improve this platform? What are its main weaknesses?

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Q41 What would lead you to completely abandon this platform?

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Q42 What topics do you mainly address in this platform?

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Q43 If you used others participation platforms with a wider range of topics, which ones would you address? (Environment, human rights, health...)

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Q44 Do you have anything to add about the platform?

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Q45 For participation platforms, what is your preferred participation method?

☐ Voting through multiple choice  (1)

☐ Voting only yes or no  (2)

☐ Leaving a comment  (3)

☐ Interface like social networks, interacting with likes, comments, responses  (4)

☐ Other...  (5)

Q46 Do you have anything to add?

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**Appendix B: Survey Flow**
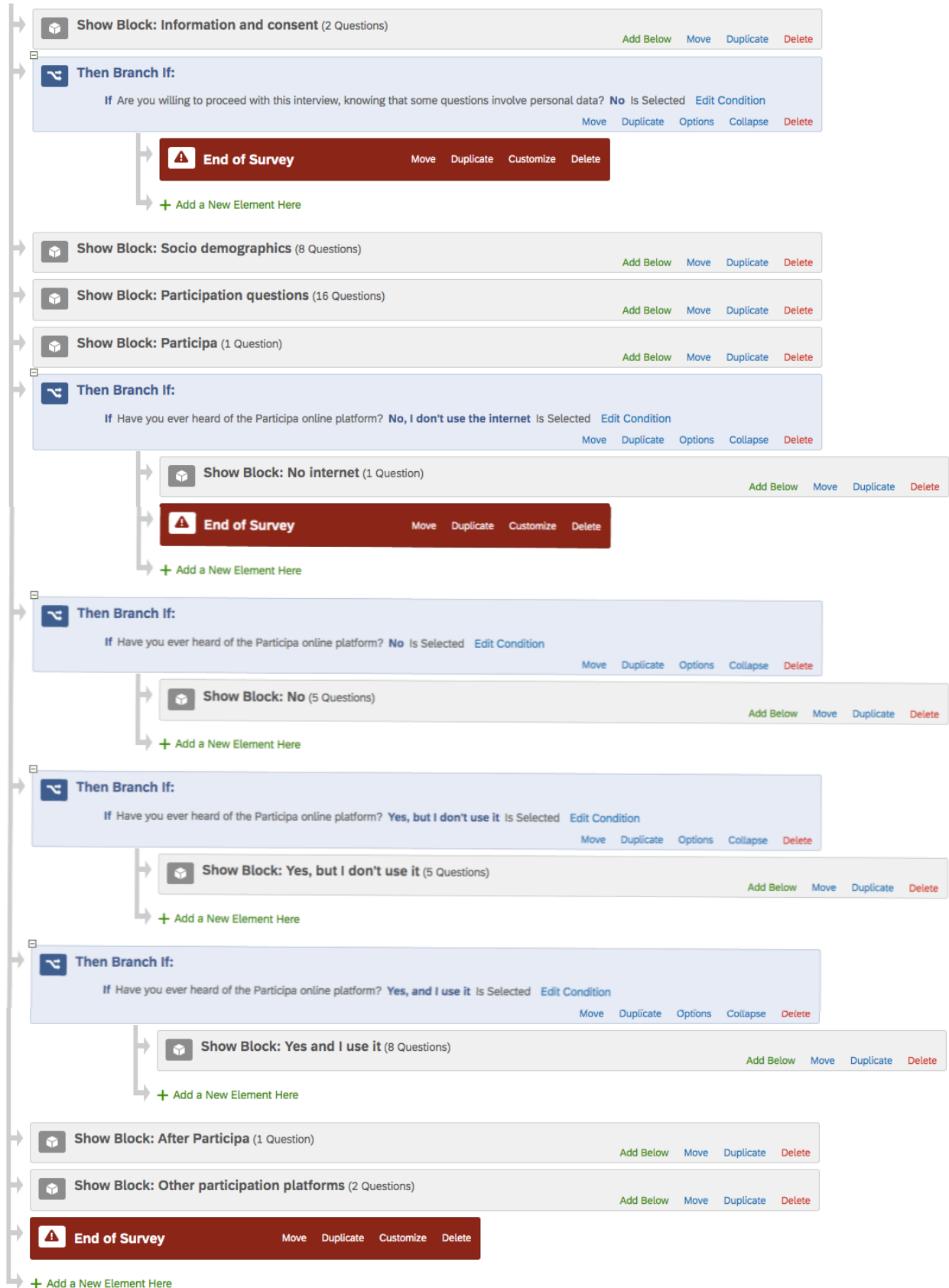
**Appendix C: Print screen from the *Participa* platform: Opening page**

**Appendix D: Print screen from the *Participa* platform: Opening page, first set of filters – thematic area**

**Appendix E: Print screen from the *Participa* platform: Opening page, second set of filters – typology.**

**Appendix F: Print screen from the *Participa* platform: Opening page, third set of filters –
entity.**

**Appendix G: Print screen from the *Participa* platform: Opening page, fourth set of filters – location.**

## Appendix H: Public consultation process – example Campoaves part 1

## Appendix I: Public consultation process – example Campoaves part 2

**Estado**
Aberta

**Área temática**
Ambiente (geral)

**Localização**

Esta consulta é de âmbito nacional.

**Documentos da consulta**

**Anexo 13 - Parecer CCDRC Altura Chaminés Fontes FF5 e FF6**
Documento

**Anexo 23 - Desenho Técnico Chaminé FF6**
Documento

**Anexo 37 - Resumo Não Técnico**
Documento

**Anexos RS_EIA - Anexo VIII_Paisagem**
Documento

**Projecto de Execução**
Documento

**Anexo 1 - Carta Militar com indicação da localização da unidade industrial**
Documento

**Anexo 34 - Rede de Águas Residuais Industriais**
Documento
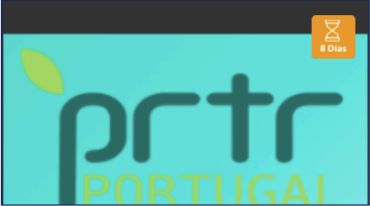
**Anexos RS_EIA - Anexo II.A_Planta da UTS e edifício da caldeira a biomassa**
Documento

**Ver mais**

**Documentos de encerramento da consulta**

# Appendix J: Browsing the platform – see numbers of participations and follows

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**SIAS - Barrada Norte**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-06 | 2020-11-02
1 Dias
0 Participações | 0 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**CITRI - S.A.**
CCDR Lisboa e Vale do Tejo
2020-10-06 | 2020-11-02
1 Dias
0 Participações | 0 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**ACL o estabelecimento Sameca - PQ Alfena, localizado na freguesia de Alfena, concelho de Valongo.**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-19 | 2020-11-06
5 Dias
0 Participações | 1 A seguir

Assuntos Internacionais — Aberta
**Relatório de implementação do Protocolo PRTR em Portugal**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-08-17 | 2020-11-09
8 Dias
0 Participações | 2 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**TRIAZA - TRATAMENTO DE RESÍDUOS INDUSTRIAIS DE AZAMBUJA, S.A.**
CCDR Lisboa e Vale do Tejo
2020-10-14 | 2020-11-10
9 Dias
58 Participações | 68 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**Consulta pública Campoaves**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-09-30 | 2020-11-11
10 Dias
5 Participações | 7 A seguir

Utilização privativa do Espaço Marítimo Nacional — Aberta
**Armação para captura de peixe.**
Direção Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos
2020-10-22 | 2020-11-11
10 Dias
2 Participações | 4 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**CP GALLOVIDRO, S.A.**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-01 | 2020-11-12
11 Dias
0 Participações | 1 A seguir

Licenciamento Ambiental — Aberta
**Fábrica de Papel da Lapa, Lda. - Renovação da Licença Ambiental n.º 307/2009, de 23 de junho**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-19 | 2020-11-13
12 Dias
0 Participações | 0 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**Consulta pública - Electrofer IV**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-19 | 2020-11-16
15 Dias
0 Participações | 0 A seguir

Avaliação de Impacte Ambiental — Aberta
**Central Solar Fotovoltaica de Polvorão**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-07 | 2020-11-17
16 Dias
1 Participações | 6 A seguir

Licenciamento Único de Ambiente — Aberta
**Consulta pública - Cemopol**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
2020-10-08 | 2020-11-18
17 Dias
0 Participações | 1 A seguir

**Raçōes Zêzere, S.A.**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente

2020-10-26 | 2020-11-20

19 Dias

0 Participações | 1 A seguir

Aberta

**Valovo II - Avicultura, Lda. - Aviário de Santiago**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente

2020-10-26 | 2020-11-20

19 Dias

0 Participações | 0 A seguir

Aberta

Outro

**Plano Nacional de Gestão de Resíduos 2030**
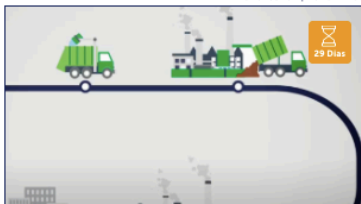Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente

2020-09-07 | 2020-11-30

29 Dias

0 Participações | 19 A seguir

Aberta

Planos

**Plano Estratégico para os Resíduos Urbanos (PERSU 2030)**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente

2020-09-07 | 2020-11-30

29 Dias

0 Participações | 21 A seguir

Aberta

Planos

**Plano Estratégico para os Resíduos Não Urbanos (PERNU 2030)**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente
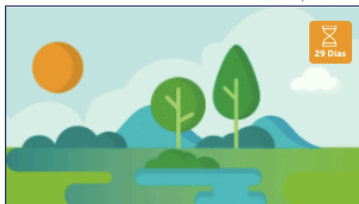
2020-09-11 | 2020-11-30

29 Dias
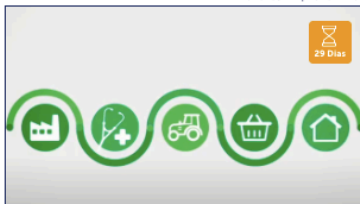
0 Participações | 12 A seguir

Aberta

Avaliação de Impacte Ambiental

**Modernização e Aumento de Eficiência Operacional do Terminal de Contentores de Alcântara**
Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente

2020-10-20 | 2020-11-30

29 Dias

0 Participações | 6 A seguir

Aberta

**Appendix K: Email received after asking for alerts on the platform**

**Appendix L:** **Portuguese demographics and sample comparison**

|  | Portugal | Sample |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Female | 52% | 52% |
| Male | 48% | 48% |
| **Age** | | |
| 0-14 | 15% | - |
| 15-29 | 17% | 35% |
| 30-44 | 22% | 22% |
| 45-59 | 21% | 17% |
| 60-74 | 16% | 17% |
| 75 or older | 9% | 9% |
| **Living location** | | |
| Urban | 66% | 43% |
| Rural | 34% | 57% |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Employed full time | 42% | 48% |
| Employed part time | 5% | - |
| Self-employed | 3% | 13% |
| Student | 8% | 35% |
| Retired | 17% | 4% |
| Housewife/Househusband | 4% | - |
| Other | 6% | - |

|  | **Portugal** | **Sample** |
|---|---|---|
| **Education** | | |
| No qualification | 5% | - |
| Primary school | 19% | - |
| 2nd and 3rd cycle | 26% | 9% |
| High School and post-secondary education | 20% | 26% |
| Higher education | 17% | 65% |