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# Exogenous and endogenous determinants of Spanish mayors' notions of democracy: A multilevel regression analysis

*Determinantes exógenos y endógenos de las nociones sobre democracia  
de los alcaldes españoles: un análisis de regresión multinivel*

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## **Abstract**

A common ground in the literature on elite's notions of democracy is (1) that leaders' notions of democracy can be successfully captured by a representative-participatory dimension, and (2) that the way leaders view democracy is paramount to understand their behavior. Taking on an institutional perspective, the most common model combines an endogenous and exogenous origin of leaders' notions of democracy. The theory assumes that both local institutional arrangements and personal characteristics may have an impact on the way local leaders perceive democracy and behave. However, while some evidence has been found to support the exogenous aspect of this theory (leaders' ideology influence their notions of democracy), the impact of local institutional arrangements on leaders' notions of democracy has received more limited empirical support. In this paper we provide a model of endogenous and exogenous factors on local elite's notions of democracy. In particular, we show that local leaders' political experience endogenizes the effect of ideology on their notions of democracy and on their support to democratic reforms. We test our model using survey data from a sample of mayors in Spanish municipalities and find empirical support for our model. One of our main findings is that the effect of ideology on mayors' support for particular views of democracy decreases with political experience.

*Keywords:* notions of democracy, mayors, elite, ideology, career.

## Resumen

Existe acuerdo en la literatura sobre las nociones de democracia sostenidas por la elite acerca de (1) que las nociones de democracia pueden ser representadas adecuadamente mediante una dimensión representativa-participativa, y (2) que el modo en que los líderes conciben la democracia es relevante para comprender su comportamiento. Desde una perspectiva institucionalista, el modelo más común combina el origen endógeno y exógeno de las nociones de democracia de los líderes políticos. La teoría asume que tanto los aspectos institucionales como las características individuales tienen un impacto sobre la manera en que los líderes perciben la democracia y actúan. Sin embargo, aunque existe evidencia para apoyar el aspecto exógeno de esta teoría (la ideología de los líderes influye en su visión sobre la democracia), el impacto del diseño institucional local sobre las nociones de democracia ha recibido menor apoyo empírico. En este trabajo se proporciona un modelo de factores endógenos y exógenos de las nociones de democracia la elite política municipal. En particular, mostramos que la experiencia política endogeniza el efecto de la ideología sobre las nociones de democracia y el apoyo a reformas institucionales democráticas. Ponemos a prueba nuestro modelo mediante datos de encuesta sobre una muestra de alcaldes de municipios españoles y encontramos apoyo empírico para el mismo. Uno de los principales hallazgos es que el efecto de la ideología sobre el apoyo de los alcaldes a ciertas visiones concretas de la democracia decrece con la experiencia política.

*Palabras clave:* nociones de democracia, alcaldes, élites, ideología, carrera.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the study of local leaders' notions of democracy has a notorious tradition (Tarrow, 1977), the growing availability of data (Bäck *et al.*, 2006; Heinelt, 2013b) has given a revived attention to the study of the factors that determine the way local representatives see local democracy and how they carry out their roles in relation to other actors and their institutional environment. A common ground in this strand of research is (1) that leaders' notions of democracy can be successfully captured by a representative-participatory dimension, and (2) that the way leaders view democracy is paramount to understand their behavior (Haus and Sweeting, 2006a).

The nature of these new datasets has enabled both the testing of old theories (Sharpe, 1970; Page and Goldsmith, 1987; Page, 1991) and the production of new theoretical frameworks (Borraz and John, 2004; Genieys *et al.*, 2004; Haus and Sweeting, 2006a, b) on the existence and consequences of different types of local government. Two main innovations shape this new theoretical and empirical framework. On the one hand, now data cover larger numbers of (mostly European) countries, which has given this field of research a much-needed comparative perspective. On the other hand, the rich information available on the institutional arrangements that lead to different types of local government has favored theoretical and empirical works that link institutional factors to attitudes and behavior in a causal mechanism.

Previous studies, then, have taken on an institutionalist perspective. Based on the theory that different types of local government explain differences in styles of local leadership (Haus and Sweeting, 2006a), a model that combines both an endogenous and exogenous origin of leaders' notions of democracy has been established in this literature. In sum, the theory assumes that both local institutional arrangements and personal characteristics may have an impact on the way local leaders perceive democracy and behave. However, while some evidence has been found to support the exogenous aspect of this theory (leaders' ideology influence notions of democracy), the impact of local institutional arrangements on leaders' notions of democracy has received more limited empirical support, leading to conclude that we should "reject the idea that councilors' notion of democracy is determined by country-specific institutional conditions" (Heinelt, 2013a: 658). Hence, local representatives' notions of democracy are likely to have an exogenous origin.

In this paper we argue that leaders' notions of democracy have both an exogenous and endogenous origin. In particular, keeping the exogenous origin of leaders' notions as in the classic theory, we argue that the variation in leaders' notions of democracy is also highly dependent on leaders' political experience, which the old theory does not take into account. In addition, we further argue that, over time, political experience completely endogenizes leaders' notions of democracy, to the point that exogenous factors such as ideology no longer matter. Using data from political leaders in Spain, we offer empirical support for this model.

Section 2 offers an overview of how local leaders' notions of democracy have been approached in the new comparative perspective in the field. It discusses the main results regarding the endogenous and exogenous models of the origins of leaders' notions of democracy. Next, in Section 3 we outline our main theoretical argument presenting our exogenous and endogenous model of notions of democracy. In particular, we discuss the role of political experience in endogenizing local leaders' notions of democracy. We also outline our hypotheses. The data used to test the hypotheses are presented in Section 4, and the results are presented and discussed in Section 5; followed by some concluding remarks in section 6.

## MAYORS' NOTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Local leaders' notions of democracy are understood to play a central role in the way they perceive their own role and behavior. In very broad terms, notions of democracy are understood to come in two different kinds: representative democracy and participative one (Haus and Sweeting, 2006b; Heinelt, 2013a). First, the classic view of representative democracy sees elections as the main mechanism for democracy, as it is through elections (1) that parties and politicians present policy proposals to citizens and (2) that citizens hold parties and politicians accountable for their past actions (Manin *et al.*, 1999). The fact that elections are a mechanism for accountability serves as an incentive for representatives to act according to their promises (Manin, 1997;

Przeworski, 2010), but once elected, representatives are free to act solely according to their own judgement and (electoral) risk. Hence, Manin *et al.* (1999) call this the “accountability” model.

In contrast, the participatory notion of democracy views the “accountability” model as too “thin” (Barber, 2003) as it undermines direct self-government by citizens. If citizens should govern themselves, elections are not to be seen merely as a mechanism to select representatives but as one to select policy programs that *must* be implemented by elected representatives. This way, elections set up a mandate that governments should implement (Manin *et al.*, 1999). Given that representative systems hold periodic elections between quite long terms (typically every four or five years), they hinder active citizen involvement in politics and therefore “representation [...] alienates political will at the cost of genuine self-government and autonomy” (Barber, 2003: 90). Therefore, citizens should have other ways besides elections to continually direct their preferences, so that “every citizen [is] his own politician” (Barber, 2003: 152) and the mandate is adequately and continuously transmitted for representatives and governments to implement. It is worth noting, though, that the key theoretical difference between these two views does lie on whether citizens enjoy alternative ways to participate in politics, but on the notion of mandate. While the representative notion of democracy views the elective system as the tool for ensuring accountability, the participatory notion sees it as a transmission device for the citizens’ mandate. Following Manin *et al.* (1999), we call this model a “mandate” model of democracy<sup>1</sup>.

According to this theoretical framework, institutional arrangements and personal characteristics can influence the way mayors view local democracy which, in turn, affects the way local leaders perceive how they should behave and how local government should be reformed. This model, then, has triggered two main sets of questions in studies of local leaders. On the one hand, questions related to the extent to which institutional arrangements determine distinct notions of democracy among local political leaders. On the other hand, whether distinct views of local democracy explain behavior or attitudes toward reforms of local government that touch on key aspects of the functioning of democracy.

Heinelt (2013a) has recently shown that European local councilors align on these notions of democracy, and he explored whether these notions might be influenced by

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1. Adopting the distinction made by Manin *et al.* (1999) instead of the one based on the normative proposals by Barber (2003); Cohen (2007), which is most common in this strand of literature, has two main advantages. The first one is that the models identified by Barber (2003) and Cohen (2007) depend on such a large number of assumptions (e.g., about human nature and about what do people actually expect from politics or politicians) that their models end up being too demanding in empirical terms. Instead, the model by Manin *et al.* (1999) is far simpler in terms of assumptions and puts its focus on what is actually distinctive: the role of elections. The second advantage is that the model proposed by Manin *et al.* (1999), being simpler, is also flexible enough to accept different approaches to the study of political behavior —e.g., rational-choice or behavioral models.

two sets of factors: institutional and personal ones. Institutions are understood as providing different incentive structures to political leaders to shape their behavior and therefore to understand their own role as leaders (Karlsson, 2013; Denters and Klok, 2013), thus offering guidelines for appropriate behavior (March and Simon, 1958; March and Olsen, 1984; 2006). Most of the previous studies, then, have taken on an institutionalist perspective, hypothesizing that, if local institutional arrangements can explain local leaders' behavior, they may also have an impact on the way local leaders perceive democracy, because "notions of democracy, especially notions concerning the role behaviour of actors, are [...] causal mechanisms between political institutions and actor behaviour" (Karlsson, 2013: 682). This model of causality linking institutions, notions of democracy, and behavior, then, sees institutions as the rules of the game, an environment to which political leaders adapt their behavior. Once these rules are set up, "each actor forms his or her own views on how democracy ought to work, and these notions help them shape their roles as actors within their political system" (Karlsson, 2013: 682). Notions of democracy, therefore, are endogenous to the functioning of institutions.

This view of the role of institutions has favored studies that try to identify instances of different "adjustments" of notions of democracy to various institutional frameworks. For instance, Haus and Sweeting (2006a, b) used the rich existing theoretical framework on typologies of local government (Borraz and John, 2004; Genieys *et al.*, 2004; Goldsmith and Larsen, 2004; Leach and Wilson, 2004; Wollmann, 2004; Heinelt and Hlepas, 2006) to model different types of local democracy —such as "local representative" northern European local democracy and "strong mayor" models in southern Europe— to predict distinct types of local leadership. On the other hand, Denters and Klok (2013) explored whether local institutions that promote citizen participation are related to more responsive attitudes among local leaders. In a similar fashion, Heinelt (2013a) studied the relationship between types of local leadership and local councilors' notions of democracy in a representative-participatory dimension. So far, however, no conclusive evidence has been found that institutional factors influence local leaders' notions of democracy, or at best results are glaringly weak (Haus and Sweeting, 2006b; Denters and Klok, 2013). Once local leaders' notions of democracy have been measured, their relation to the kind of reforms of the democratic system that leaders tend to support or oppose is quite straightforward and consistent (Heinelt, 2013a).

Nevertheless, the lack of effect of institutions constitutes an important challenge to the endogenous theory of notions of democracy. First, this strand of research has assumed that notions of democracy should be endogenous to particular types of institutional frameworks, but empirical evidence has given little support to this. Second, there is stronger evidence that local leaders' notions of democracy depend on their political orientations, especially ideology. For instance, using a typical left-right scale for self-placement of European local councilors, Heinelt (2013a) found that self-placement to the right among councilors is a quite robust predictor of support for a more representative view of local democracy. On the other hand, Denters and Klok (2013)

also observed that individual orientations toward participatory democracy affected councilors' orientations toward democratic responsiveness. Other personal characteristics such as age and gender have also been found to explain significant variation in local leaders' notions of democracy, although differences between groups are rather modest. Evidence, therefore, seems to support an exogenous theory of the origin of notions of democracy among local leaders instead of an endogenous one.

Very little attention, however, has been devoted to explaining whether leaders' notions of democracy can change due to their repeated interaction within their institutional environment, although the causes and consequences of local career paths and recruitment have been thoroughly studied (Bledsoe, 1993; Eldersveld *et al.*, 1995; Bäck, 2006; Køer, 2006). It is worth noting that the very model of causality posed by both the endogenous and exogenous theories of notions of democracy leaves little room to change. If leaders' notions of democracy are the result of particular institutional arrangements (because local leaders adjust their notions to their institutional environment), changes in their notions of democracy will not occur unless institutions change. Therefore, a change in notions within a fixed type of institutional framework is not likely. If, instead, local representatives' notions of democracy are purely exogenous and therefore emerging only from their ideology or political orientations, change in notions of democracy is only possible if political leaders evolve ideologically with age. However, the scant existing evidence shows that some variation in notions of democracy might be attributable to "generational effects", but not to age *per se*, and in any case its effects are rather modest.

## THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Our argument is that local leaders' notions of democracy are *both* exogenous and endogenous. On the one hand, it is quite safe to assume that political orientations or ideology provide local leaders (and the rest of us) with general principles that shape opinions regarding how democracy should work. For instance, it is political orientations that give local representatives a set of notions of democracy at the outset of their political career, when they have no prior experience as representatives. On the other hand, it is also reasonable to think that leaders' ongoing career as political representatives —i.e., within one or several institutional frameworks— offers them incentives to adjust their notions of democracy according to their experience. In the end, what we understand as notions of democracy (a set of notions regarding how democracy should work) should be influenced precisely by our experience with democracy, because "politicians also bring with them a heritage from their political lives" (Køer, 2006: 76). This way, since "the route to the mayoral office affects the mayor's course of action once elected" (*id.*), local leaders' notions of democracy may be independent of particular institutional frameworks but endogenous to the accumulation of interactions within institutions. By the same logic, political experience might also influence local leaders' support for institutional reforms that deal with how democracy works —i.e., reforms

that would change their roles as representatives giving either them or citizens more decision capacity in local democracy. Political experience, then, endogenizes local representatives' notions of democracy.

Our first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) tests the exogenous theory of notions of democracy, and we expect to find —like Heinelt (2013a)— that the more local leaders place themselves on the left, the more they agree with a “mandate” (or participatory) model of democracy, while rightist leaders would agree more with an “accountability” model. Secondly, we test the endogenization of notions of democracy with political experience. Our main argument is that notions of democracy that local leaders hold may change over time with the exercise of political power, as may do their level of support to democratic reforms that might either increase or decrease the level of citizen participation in local politics. As they spend more time in elected positions, leaders may progressively see themselves as professional politicians, which may influence their notions of local democracy. In particular, growing professionalization would make leaders more protective of their roles as representatives and therefore less enthusiastic about the “mandate” model of democracy ( $H_2$ ). Also, over time, ideology would have less weight in leaders' notions of democracy, since notions of democracy get progressively endogenized by their interaction within their institutional environment. Finally, longer political careers would also diminish leaders' support for institutional reforms that increase citizen involvement in politics ( $H_3$ ).

## DATA AND METHOD

We test our hypotheses using data from the second round of the “Political Leaders in European Cities” survey, which aims at studying the role of mayors and the transformation of political representation at the local level in several European countries. We use a subset of these data corresponding to mayors from Spain for two main reasons. First, to our knowledge, there has been no published empirical work on the notions of democracy of Spanish mayors so far, and this paper intends to fill this gap. Second, our intent is not to test the role of different institutional designs in shaping mayors' notions of democracy, but to look at the mechanisms at work within institutions. The Spanish local political system presents no regional differences and is based on a model of representative, parliamentary democracy where the local assembly of elected councilors elects the mayor. Once indirectly elected, mayor leadership is “strong” (Page and Goldsmith, 1987; Page, 1991; Borraz and John, 2004). Municipal elections are held on the same day throughout the country, every four years. This representative system has been at work without significant reforms since the re-establishment of local democracy in 1979 (Kersting and Vetter, 2003). Therefore, the fixed and stable institutional framework of the Spanish system of local government offers an optimal environment for our hypotheses to be tested.

The survey took responses from mayors elected in municipalities larger than 10,000 inhabitants. The original sample size was 752 mayors (all municipalities

beyond that population threshold), and the actual responses amounted to 303, which yields a response rate of 40 %. Despite the response rate, the final sample is rather representative of the universe both in terms of territorial distribution and gender (see table 1) and, therefore, we do not expect the results to be biased due to unbalanced response rate.

TABLE 1.

TERRITORIAL AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (PERCENTAGES) ACROSS REGIONS THROUGHOUT SPAIN

	Universe	Sample
<i>Region</i>		
Andalucía	20.48	14.65
Aragón	1.73	1.83
Balears, Illes	3.06	4.03
Canarias	5.59	5.86
Cantabria	1.33	1.10
Castilla-La Mancha	5.32	2.93
Castilla y León	3.19	1.83
Catalunya	15.96	23.81
Ceuta	0.13	0.00
Comunidad de Madrid	6.52	6.96
Comunitat Valenciana	13.16	14.29
Extremadura	1.86	1.47
Galicia	7.45	5.13
La Rioja	0.53	0.73
Melilla	0.13	0.00
Navarra	1.33	2.93
País Vasco	5.45	6.23
Principado de Asturias	2.79	1.83
Región de Murcia	3.99	4.40
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	23.01	21.61
Male	76.99	78.39

In order to test our hypotheses, we fit multilevel linear regression models of mayors' notions of democracy and support to democratic reforms on ideology and political experience as main independent variables. Multilevel models (ML) can better deal with unbalanced samples at the second level (Gelman and Hill, 2007). In a

nutshell, in ML models region-level intercepts are given a probability distribution, which puts them in relation to the average intercept and, therefore, region-level estimates are less biased than, say, pooled or standard fixed-effects models. With ML, we thus get an actual intercept which is the average cross-region estimate. We could also get  $J$  separate intercepts, one for each region, relative to the model intercept. Given the modeling of each region's intercept, ML models deal much better with regions with fewer observations, and therefore the model takes regional variation into account.

Our two main dependent variables are mayors' notions of democracy and their support to institutional reforms. Mayors' notions of democracy are measured through their responses to a question that asks about their level of agreement (on a five-point scale) to a number of statements, which can be read table 2. Mayors' level of support for democratic reforms is measured through another question where mayors were asked how desirable or undesirable (in a five-point scale) they considered a number of institutional reforms, regardless of whether these reforms had actually been implemented in their municipalities or not (see table 2).

TABLE 2.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL INFORMATION OF THE MAIN VARIABLES

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Dependent variables</b>					
<i>Notions of democracy</i>					
Political parties are the most suitable arena for citizen participation	284	3.183	0.895	1	5
Residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions	286	4.213	0.730	2	5
Residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are made by elected representatives	282	4.167	0.618	2	5
Apart from voting, citizens should not be given the opportunity to influence local government policies	283	2.155	1.129	1	5
Council decisions should reflect a majority opinion among the residents	282	3.993	0.706	1	5
Political representatives should make what they think are the right decisions, independent of the current views of local people	283	3.254	1.007	1	5

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.../...

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
The results of local elections should be the most important factor in determining local government policies	285	3.579	0.899	1	5
Decentralization within local government is necessary to involve citizens in public affairs	284	3.475	0.781	1	5
<i>Support for democratic reforms</i>					
A decisive (binding) referendum	277	3.477	0.984	1	5
Direct election of the mayor	278	3.558	1.021	1	5
Non-binding referenda	275	3.360	0.874	1	5
Participatory Budgeting	281	4.046	0.838	1	5
Reduction of the number of councilors	279	2.326	0.924	1	5
<b>Independent variables</b>					
Political experience (years since first elected position)	252	12.444	8.485	1	37
Ideology (Left-Right)	278	3.392	1.953	0	10
Municipal size	303	44,897.9	69,753.9	10,002	666,058
Age	277	46.31	8.99	20	73

Our main independent variables are ideology and the mayors' political experience. Regarding the former, it is measured through a classic 11-point self-placement scale where 0 means extreme left and 10 extreme right ideology. The average ideological position leans toward the left (3.39) with a standard deviation of 1.9. Regarding political experience, the questionnaire asked mayors the year when they were first appointed to an elected position, regardless of whether this position was at the local or any other level of representation. From this variable, we calculated the number of years current mayors have been serving as representatives of any kind. Given that municipal elections had been held on May 2015 and the survey was responded between September 2015 and February 2016, respondents whose position as mayor was their first experience as elected representatives were counted as having 1 year of experience. The average mayor in the sample had had a bit more than 12 years of political experience, but there is notable variation among the respondents (a standard deviation of 8.5 years), with 9.5% of respondents serving for the first time as elected representatives. The maximum number of years serving in elected positions in the sample is 37 years, which corresponds with the time when Spain returned to democracy after Franco's dictatorship (1978-79). Apart from these main variables, the models include three more control variables: age, level of education, and the population size of the mayors' municipality.

## EMPIRICAL RESULTS

*"Mandate" vs. "accountability" notions of democracy*

Table 3 shows the regional distribution of agreement on the statements summarizing the notions of democracy, which in most cases deal with the level of citizens' participation in local democracy. In general, statements that point to a higher degree of citizen participation in local politics receive higher support (higher scores point to more agreement) than the ones pointing to a representative or "accountability" view of democracy. The widest agreement is found on the statement according to which "residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions", while the least agreed upon statement is that "apart from voting, citizens should not be given the opportunity to influence local government policies". Moreover, the standard deviation for each statement shows that variation tends to be quite lower in statements close to a participatory view, unlike those that receive more negative scores, which points to the possibility of heterogeneous effects along other variables.

In order to test for this heterogeneity, we fit a multilevel linear regression model of mayoral agreement on each statement dealing with various forms and levels of citizen involvement in politics, taking into account a number of individual and contextual variables, the results of which are presented in table 4. As expected, ideology carries a major explanatory power, with leftist mayors showing higher levels of agreement with statements implying higher levels of citizen participation (i.e., a "mandate" view), and rightist mayors supporting statements involving lesser or participation or simply keeping the *statu quo* ("accountability" model).

In particular, the more mayors place themselves to the left the stronger their agreement is with statements that imply that "residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions", and that "residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are made by elected representatives". On the other hand, when mayors place themselves on the right they show higher levels of agreement with statements that affirm that "political parties are the most suitable arena for citizen participation", that "apart from voting, citizens should not be given the opportunity to influence local government policies", that "political representatives should make what they think are the right decisions, independent of the current views of local people", and that "the results of local elections should be the most important factor in determining local government policies".

Turning now to political experience, the number of years serving in elected positions tends both, to play against statements that involve higher or deeper levels of citizen involvement in politics, and to significantly reinforce the *statu quo*. For instance, while (as mentioned above) leftist mayors significantly agree with a statement such as "residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are made by elected representatives", their support diminishes with political experience (negative coefficient). On the other hand, agreement with statements that either limit the ability of citizens to exert influence beyond voting or that

TABLE 3.  
AVERAGE AGREEMENT STATEMENTS REGARDING PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY (1=STRONGLY DISAGREE/ 5=STRONGLY AGREE)

CCAA	Parties most suitable	Residents should participate	Residents' views known before decisions	Nothing apart from voting	Council decisions reflect majority	Political representatives independent	Make policies depend on results	Local decentralization necessary
Andalucía	3.34	4.17	4.12	1.98	4.22	3.05	3.58	3.46
Aragón	3.00	3.80	4.00	1.40	3.60	4.00	4.00	3.40
Balears, Illes	2.92	4.23	4.00	2.00	3.69	3.15	3.38	3.46
Canarias	2.56	4.38	4.31	2.25	4.19	3.62	3.31	3.62
Cantabria	2.75	4.00	4.25	1.25	4.75	3.25	3.50	3.75
Castilla-La Mancha	3.75	4.11	3.88	2.67	3.78	3.33	3.56	3.78
Castilla y León	3.71	3.71	4.00	2.14	3.86	3.29	3.86	3.43
Catalunya	3.13	4.29	4.31	1.98	3.99	3.19	3.75	3.53
Comunidad de Madrid	3.63	4.16	4.11	2.47	3.94	3.67	3.47	3.47
Comunitat Valenciana	3.08	4.42	4.30	2.42	3.92	3.05	3.40	3.50
Extremadura	3.00	3.40	3.20	2.00	3.80	3.40	3.60	2.60
Galicia	3.25	4.19	4.06	2.40	4.06	3.31	3.88	3.19
La Rioja	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50
Navarra	3.00	4.75	4.62	1.75	4.00	2.75	3.38	4.00
País Vasco	2.94	3.88	4.12	2.31	3.81	3.38	3.50	3.44
Principado de Asturias	3.40	4.40	3.80	2.00	4.20	3.00	3.00	3.40
Región de Murcia	3.42	4.08	3.92	2.33	3.92	3.58	3.67	3.17

TABLE 4.  
MULTILEVEL REGRESSION MODEL OF AGREEMENT ON STATEMENTS REGARDING PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY (1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE / 5 = STRONGLY AGREE)

	Agreement (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)										
	Parties most suitable	Residents should participate	Residents' views known before decisions	Nothing apart from voting	Council decisions reflect majority opinion	Political representatives independent	Make policies depend on results	Decentralization to local necessary			
Ideology (L-R)	0.053* (0.029)	-0.100*** (0.023)	-0.064*** (0.020)	0.124*** (0.036)	-0.031 (0.024)	0.146*** (0.032)	0.081*** (0.029)	-0.012 (0.026)			
Age	0.008 (0.048)	-0.021 (0.039)	0.004 (0.034)	0.020 (0.059)	0.036 (0.039)	-0.027 (0.052)	0.024 (0.048)	0.015 (0.043)			
Age squared	-0.0001 (0.001)	0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.0005)			
Female	-0.112 (0.137)	0.027 (0.111)	0.030 (0.097)	0.138 (0.169)	0.048 (0.110)	-0.022 (0.150)	-0.336** (0.137)	0.102 (0.123)			
Education Elementary	-0.085 (0.451)	0.018 (0.365)	0.289 (0.316)	0.261 (0.552)	-0.284 (0.420)	-0.658 (0.493)	-0.322 (0.452)	0.242 (0.405)			
Secondary	-0.175 (0.161)	-0.012 (0.128)	0.071 (0.112)	-0.318 (0.199)	-0.070 (0.127)	-0.204 (0.175)	-0.103 (0.159)	-0.282** (0.142)			
Years elected	0.007 (0.007)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.009* (0.005)	0.022** (0.009)	-0.0002 (0.006)	0.024*** (0.008)	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)			
Municipal size (log)	0.099 (0.068)	0.086 (0.054)	0.059 (0.048)	-0.053 (0.083)	0.018 (0.054)	0.072 (0.074)	-0.139** (0.067)	0.161*** (0.060)			
Constant	1.884 (1.246)	4.447*** (1.008)	3.885*** (0.880)	1.428 (1.525)	3.142*** (1.002)	2.542* (1.361)	3.861*** (1.248)	1.426 (1.115)			
Observations	242	244	240	241	242	242	244	244			
Log Likelihood	-328.637	-281.072	-243.402	-373.599	-276.977	-348.742	-331.373	-304.999			
AIC	679.273	584.143	508.805	769.198	575.954	719.484	684.746	631.999			

Note: \* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01.

ensure the independence of political representatives beyond current public opinion, tends to grow higher among those mayors that have more experience as politicians. Finally, no other variable seems to have an impact on mayors' notions of democracy.

These results, therefore, allow us to give preliminary support to our first hypothesis that linked more leftist ideology with wider support to a “mandate” view of democracy. On the one hand, the relationship between mayors' ideology and their notions of democracy gives preliminary support to the exogenous model of notions of democracy. These results, moreover, are consistent with those reported by Heinelt (2013a) among local European councilors. On the other hand, our results point to a consistent negative effect of political experience on the support for the “mandate” model of local democracy, thus giving support to our second hypothesis.

TABLE 5.

LOADINGS OF THE FACTOR ANALYSIS OF ALL DIMENSIONS OF AGREEMENT ON STATEMENTS REGARDING PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL POLITICS. “VARIMAX” ROTATION

	<b>Factor1</b> <b>(Mandate view)</b>	<b>Factor2</b> <b>(Accountability view)</b>
Residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions.	<b>0.726</b>	-0.228
Residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are made by elected representatives.	<b>0.662</b>	-0.156
Decentralization within local government is necessary to involve citizens in public affairs.	<b>0.395</b>	0.038
Council decisions should reflect a majority opinion among the residents.	<b>0.341</b>	0.016
Apart from voting, citizens should not be given the opportunity to influence local government policies.	-0.167	<b>0.263</b>
Political parties are the most suitable arena for citizen participation.	0.095	<b>0.423</b>
The results of local elections should be the most important factor in determining local government policies.	0.006	<b>0.451</b>
Political representatives should make what they think are the right decisions, independent of the current views of local people.	-0.185	<b>0.536</b>

These results, however, do not ensure that mayors are actually consistent in their notions of democracy —i.e., that they tend to agree and disagree with the statements in a consistent way. To test the consistency of these findings, we carry out a

factor analysis of the statements regarding democratic notions. Using this very procedure on data from local councilors from several countries, Heinelt (2013a) found that responses to a similar set of items clearly aligned along either a participatory or a representative view of democracy. Our results with data from Spanish mayors, presented in Table 5, show exactly the same pattern with two clearly distinguishable dimensions. The first four statements are related to a more “mandate” view of democracy according to which (1) citizen opinion should be heard beyond elections and influence decisions made by representatives, and (2) decisions made by representatives should reflect nothing but public opinion, because decisions about the policies to be implemented should be in the voters’—and not the representatives’—hands (Manin *et al.*, 1999). In contrast, the last four statements score high in the second dimension and very low in the first one. They are quite coherent with the “accountability” view of democracy, according to which elections are designed to hold representatives accountable before the people, representatives have incentives to act in favor of citizens policy-wise, but once elected they should be left alone deciding what is best at a time.

We also find that the two factors are highly (negatively) correlated, which supports the idea that mayors align with either one of the two views of democracy, since they are actually theoretically exclusive which, in turn, is consistent with the effect of ideology on their notions of democracy.

TABLE 6.

MULTILEVEL REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF AGREEMENT ON THE “MANDATE” VIEW OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

	Mandate view	
Ideology (left-right)	-0.104*** (0.028)	-0.234*** (0.050)
Age	-0.005 (0.044)	0.002 (0.044)
Age squared	0.00001 (0.0005)	-0.0001 (0.0005)
Female	0.063 (0.128)	0.015 (0.126)
Education [Ref. University]	-0.481 (0.477)	-0.452 (0.467)
Elementary		
Secondary	0.070 (0.153)	0.042 (0.151)
Years since first elected position	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.041*** (0.012)
Municipal size (log)	0.102 (0.065)	0.115* (0.064)

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	<b>Mandate view</b>	
Ideology x Years since first elected		0.010*** (0.003)
Constant	-0.395 (1.156)	-0.296 (1.134)
Observations	232	232
Log Likelihood	-295.322	-295.310
Akaike Inf. Crit.	612.644	614.620
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	650.558	655.981

Note: \* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01.

To test the effect of ideology and political experience on mayors' views of democracy, we incorporate the score of each mayor on the first dimension of our factor analysis ("mandate" view of democracy) and use it as a dependent variable in another multilevel linear regression model including ideology and political experience as main independent variables. Results can be observed in Table 6. Again, ideology is the only good predictor of a mandate view of democracy: more leftist mayors tend to agree on a mandate view of democracy in a significant way, while those that place themselves more to the right are significantly less favorable to this model of democracy. In order to test the endogenization of notions of democracy through the institutionalization of representation, we fit an interaction term between ideology and years of political experience (second column of Table 6), and the coefficients for both the interaction and the constitutive terms are significant and with the expected sign. On the one hand, the positive sign of the coefficient of the constitutive term for ideology ( $-0.234$ ) is to be interpreted as the effect of ideology on agreement to a mandate model for mayors with zero years of experience, that is, for those just starting their careers. Here the effect of ideology is largest. However, the coefficient for the interaction term between ideology and years since first elected (political experience) is positive, which points to a moderating effect of political experience on ideology.

To better depict the effect of this interaction, Figure 1 plots the marginal effect of political experience on the relationship between ideology and mayors' holding mandate views of democracy. The solid line shows that as mayors grow in political experience, the link between their ideology and their defense of mandate views of democracy weakens (is closer to zero), up to a moment in their career when their ideology just ceases to be a good predictor of their notion of democracy. This critical moment (when the upper confidence interval in Figure 1 crosses the zero line) comes just after finishing their fourth four-year term as elected representatives —i.e., 16 years. In other words, after an average of four terms as elected representatives, leftist mayors will no longer be distinct to rightist mayors in their notions of democracy.

*Democratic reforms*

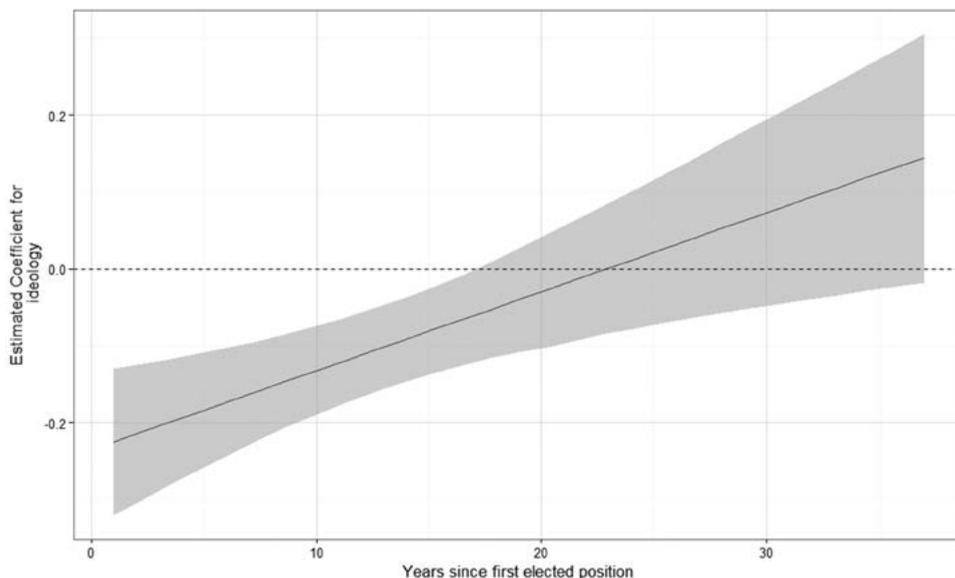
Once the effect of ideology and political experience on the mayors' notions of democracy has been tested, we are ready to test our third hypothesis —the effect of views of democracy on mayors' support for institutional reforms of local government.

Our data contains five proposals of institutional reform for mayors to score according to their level of desirability. These reforms are:

- a) A decisive (binding) referendum.
- b) Direct election of the mayor.
- c) Non-binding referenda.
- d) Participatory Budgeting.
- e) Reduction of the number of councilors.

At least two of these proposals —namely binding referendum and participatory budgeting— are clearly related to the mandate view of democracy, since they imply a stronger link between voters and policy, even beyond the role of the representatives. On the other hand, the direct election of the mayor and the reduction of the number of councilors seem more broadly related to an accountability model of democracy, and in particular support the strengthening of the local executive power (direct election of mayor) and the reduction of the number of representativeness of the local

FIGURE 1.  
MARGINAL EFFECT OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND YEARS SINCE FIRST ELECTED POSITION



assembly (reduction of councilors). Finally, non-binding referenda could fit in either model of democracy, since despite being a form of direct democracy it does not directly bind elected representatives to act according to the results.

The plot shows that leftist ideology has a significant effect on mandate views of democracy, but that this effect diminishes with time spent as a politician.

Table 7 shows the results of five separate regression models on the level of desirability mayors' express regarding each reform proposal. On the one hand, ideology explains significant variation in four of the five items even controlling for both individual and contextual factors, according to our expectations. Left-wing mayors (which according to our previous results are prone to hold a mandate view of democracy) present significant support for binding referenda and participatory budgeting, while right-wing mayors (supporters of an accountability view) tend to support the direct election of the mayor and the reduction of the number of councilors in the local assembly. Ideology, finally, seems to have no effect on the support to reforms implying non-binding referenda. Interestingly, moreover, political experience tends to run against these democratic reforms. Thence, the higher the number of years since a mayor's first elected position, the lower her support for participatory reforms such as binding referenda and participatory budgeting, which tend to be supported by leftist mayors. Moreover, as mayors grow in political experience, they tend to be more supportive of being directly elected by voters, although they also tend to be less supportive of reforms that imply a reduction of the number of councilors.

TABLE 7.

MULTILEVEL MODEL OF SUPPORT TO INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS WITH VARYING INTERCEPT BY REGION. DESIRABILITY OF REFORMS (1 = HIGHLY UNDESIRABLE / 5 = HIGHLY DESIRABLE)

	Desirability of reforms (1=highly undesirable / 5=highly desirable)				
	Binding referendum	Direct election of mayor	Non-binding referenda	Participatory budgeting	Reduction no. councilors
Ideology	-0.090*** (0.033)	0.062* (0.035)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.178*** (0.025)	0.059* (0.032)
Age	0.056 (0.053)	0.045 (0.055)	-0.053 (0.046)	0.036 (0.041)	0.093* (0.052)
Age squared	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.001)	0.0005 (0.0005)	-0.001 (0.0004)	-0.001 (0.001)
Female	-0.015 (0.152)	-0.255 (0.157)	0.048 (0.133)	0.107 (0.120)	-0.096 (0.149)
Education [Ref. University] Elementary	0.365 (0.494)	-1.354*** (0.512)	-0.711 (0.432)	0.447 (0.388)	0.428 (0.483)

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	Desirability of reforms (1=highly undesirable / 5=highly desirable)				
	Binding referendum	Direct election of mayor	Non-binding referenda	Participatory budgeting	Reduction no. councilors
Secondary	-0.155 (0.183)	-0.247 (0.190)	0.254 (0.157)	0.035 (0.140)	-0.074 (0.174)
Years first elected position	-0.016 <sup>*</sup> (0.008)	0.015 <sup>*</sup> (0.008)	0.003 (0.007)	-0.011 <sup>*</sup> (0.006)	-0.014 <sup>*</sup> (0.008)
Municipal size (log)	0.004 (0.075)	-0.157 <sup>**</sup> (0.076)	0.248 <sup>***</sup> (0.066)	0.234 <sup>***</sup> (0.057)	-0.118 (0.073)
Constant	2.509 <sup>*</sup>	3.601 <sup>**</sup>	2.276 <sup>*</sup>	1.978 <sup>*</sup>	1.016
Observations	237	238	237	240	239
Log Likelihood	-342.583	-352.574	-312.189	-290.323	-339.545
Akaike Inf. Crit.	707.166	727.148	646.378	602.645	701.089
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	745.314	765.343	684.526	640.932	739.330

Note: <sup>\*</sup>p<0.1; <sup>\*\*</sup>p<0.05; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>p<0.01.

TABLE 8.

FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS OF DEMOCRATIC REFORMS. "VARIMAX" ROTATION

Type of reform	Variable	Mandate	Accountability
Participatory Budgeting	D26 4	<b>0.989</b>	-0.131
Binding referendum	D26 1	<b>0.371</b>	-0.047
Non binding referenda	D26 3	<b>0.081</b>	-0.156
Direct election of mayor	D26 2	-0.062	<b>0.188</b>
Reduction number of councillors	D26 5	0.179	<b>0.981</b>

However, to what extent is there a consistent relationship between mayors' notions of democracy and their support to institutional reforms? To test this relationship we follow the same method of reduction of variation employed above and carry out a factor analysis of the responses on these five proposals of institutional reform, as shown in Table 8. As expected, participatory budgeting and binding referendum score high in the first dimension, while direct election of the mayor and the reduction of the number of councilors score higher in the second. Somewhere in the middle lies the non-binding referendum, although it scores slightly higher in the first dimension. We use each mayor's score on the first dimension as dependent variable to test, first, the effect of ideology and political experience, and, second, the consistency between notions of democracy and support for reforms.

The results of this test are in Table 9, and give support to our hypothesis. The first two columns report the effect of ideology and political experience on support for more participatory reforms, and results show a high level of consistency. Again, the negative coefficient for ideology shows that as mayors move from left to right their support for participatory reforms decreases even controlling for age, gender, education, political experience and the size of their municipality. Moreover, as long as mayors increase their experience as politicians, their support for institutional reforms that would increase the direct participation of citizens shaping policy decisions (budget and referenda) decreases. The interaction term in the second column shows that given enough time as elected representatives, mayors' ideology ceases to be a predictor of their support to participatory reforms.

The last two columns of Table 9 tell a similar story, but having mayors' notions of democracy instead of ideology as the main independent variable. Coherently with our previous findings, mayors who hold mandate views of democracy tend to support institutional reforms that should increase the role of citizens in political decisions at the local level. Besides, even controlling for mandate view, mayors with more political experience tend to give less support to these participatory reforms. Therefore, their political career seems, again, to run against this link between notions of democracy and support for "mandate" reforms, although in this case the interaction coefficient, having the right sign, is not significantly different from zero.

TABLE 9.

MULTILEVEL REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT TO PARTICIPATORY REFORMS ON IDEOLOGY AND PARTICIPATORY VIEWS

	Dependent variable: Mandate reforms			
Ideology (left-right)	-0.179*** (0.033)	-0.276*** (0.060)		
Mandate view			0.463*** (0.071)	0.507*** (0.130)
Age	0.083 (0.052)	0.091* (0.051)	0.087* (0.048)	0.090* (0.048)
Age squared	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)
Female	0.104 (0.148)	0.070 (0.148)	0.242* (0.137)	0.239* (0.137)
Education [Ref. University]	0.545 (0.478)	0.527 (0.475)	0.163 (0.505)	0.131 (0.513)
Elementary				
Secondary	0.106 (0.179)	0.067 (0.179)	0.291* (0.170)	0.289* (0.170)
Years first elected position	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.040*** (0.015)	-0.013* (0.007)	-0.013* (0.007)

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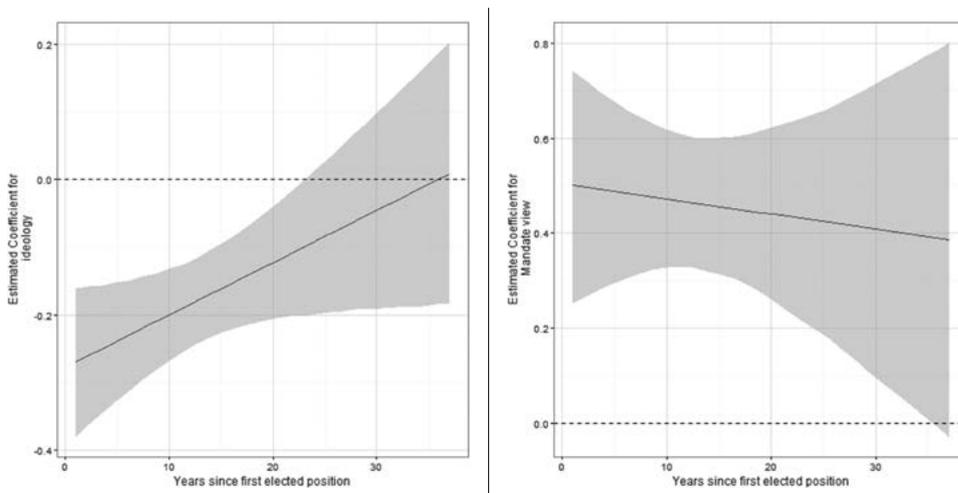
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	Dependent variable: Mandate reforms			
Municipal size (log)	0.237*** (0.077)	0.251*** (0.076)	0.111 (0.073)	0.112 (0.073)
Ideology x Years first elected		0.008* (0.004)		
Mandate x Years first elected				-0.003 (0.008)
Constant	-3.291** (1.355)	-3.284** (1.347)	-2.944** (1.256)	-2.996** (1.265)
Observations	232	232	224	224
Log Likelihood	-327.735	-330.471	-297.415	-301.193
Akaike Inf. Crit.	677.469	684.941	616.830	626.386
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	715.383	726.302	654.358	667.326

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

FIGURE 2.

MARGINAL EFFECTS OF IDEOLOGY AND MANDATE VIEWS ON SUPPORT TO PARTICIPATORY REFORMS, BY NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE FIRST ELECTED POSITION



The effect of political time on the consistency between ideology and notions of democracy, and support for participatory reforms at the local level can be observed in Figure 2. The left panel shows the marginal effect of political experience on the coefficient for ideology. In this case, ideology ceases to be a good predictor of support for

participatory institutional reforms after 23 years of political experience. Let us recall that in our previous findings the critical point when ideology ceased to be a good predictor of “mandate” notions of democracy was 16 years. This finding supports the idea of the existence of a chain of causality between political experience, notions of democracy, and support for institutional reforms, in which political experience first erodes mayors’ notions of democracy at a faster pace. Although in the right panel of Figure 2 confidence intervals are too wide, we see that time spent serving in elected positions also tends to erode the link of consistency between holding a mandate view of local democracy and the support for reforms that would increase the role of citizens in shaping policy at the local level.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Understanding the notions of democracy that drive mayors’ political decision making is crucial for the understanding of local democracy and this article represents a first attempt to study Spanish mayors’ notions of democracy. Consequently, this research was designed to survey and explore the factors that influence mayors’ notions of democracy in Spanish municipal governments with populations over 10,000 inhabitants. In this study, being the first to look systematically into this timely issue in Spain, we hypothesized that mayors’ notions of democracy are influenced both by endogenous and exogenous factors. The hypotheses are grounded on two groups of theories: neo-institutionalism and theories of individual factors that shape political preferences. Both theories refer to the institutional and personal factors that influence mayors’ notions of democracy.

Three sets of findings stand out from this research. First, and taken together, our findings are consistent and in tune with prior findings in that exogenous factors are key factors influencing mayors’ notions of democracy and, therefore, influencing and shaping mayors’ political behavior and performance. It is also relevant a second set of findings indicating that mayors’ support for a model of representative democracy over a mandate model is endogenous to their experience while holding office. According to this, our study indicates that, as suggested by the neo-institutional approach, mayors’ notions of democracy tend to adjust to their experience, measured here by the number of years serving as representatives. Yet, overall our study suggests that notions of democracy are shaped by both institutional factors and personal preferences derived from individual factors.

The multilevel linear regression analysis and the factor analysis we have applied in this study show both consistent and significant statistical evidence supporting our three hypotheses. Regarding the first one, we have showed that ideology (an exogenous factor from an institutionalist standpoint, employed here as independent variable) results an excellent predictor of the mayor’s view of democracy (dependent variable). There is a strong and positive relationship between the agreement on a participatory (or mandate) model of democracy and a leftist position on the classic

11-point self-placement scale. In an analogous way, rightist positions yield high positive coefficients with agreements on representative (or accountability) models.

Political experience (an endogenous factor measured here as the number of years holding elected office, and employed in our analysis as the other main independent variable) also has an effect on support for the models of democracy researched. In particular, our data show statistical significant evidence of a negative relationship between political experience and the support for a mandate (participatory) model. Although the effects are not large, it is clear that the support for participatory views of democracy decreases with a greater number of years serving in elected positions. Moreover, the main finding is that the political experience erodes, slowly but gradually, the effect of ideology on the view of democracy, confirming so our second hypothesis.

The same kind of conditional effects between ideology (exogenous factor) and political experience (endogenous one) can be found when we analyze their impact on the support for democratic reforms (our second main dependent variable). Considered separately, the effect of ideology is stronger than that of political experience on the support for specific democratic reforms. Of course, left positions are positively and strongly correlated with the preference for a participatory or mandate model democratic reforms. However, once more, political experience erodes the effect of ideology on the support of participative democratic reforms, confirming our third hypothesis, although, in this case, the effect of political experience is weaker. This fact might be explained because in the Spanish setting many mayors perform both political and administrative managerial functions.

Being the first study of this kind in Spain, we remain cautious about the interpretation of our results, for a number of reasons. First, one important limitation of our study is that the data analyzed refer only to municipalities with populations over 10 000 inhabitants. Taking into account that most Spanish municipalities have less than 10 000 inhabitants, the results lack full generalization capacity and therefore it would be worthwhile to extend the analysis presented here to smaller municipalities. Apart from the need to broaden our sample, another limitation is that the items used as dependent variables to measure the notions of democracy are too limited and it would be desirable to verify our findings in a study including more items. Other possible factors that may explain variation in mayors' notions of democracy include, for example, cultural and civil society issues within the locality or how much transparency in political decision-making and government policy-making they are prepared to support as well as mayors' socialization within their political party. Of course, similar limitations of the indicators could be noted for the independent variables employed in the survey. In particular, political experience measured only by the number of years elected in office leaves out potentially relevant details on what happened during those years: level of government served, whether they had governmental responsibilities or were in the opposition, main issues faced during office, and the responses they had taken. Future rounds of the survey can improve reliability and accuracy by using longitudinal data as well as in-depth case studies to investigate how notions of democracy are acquired and developed.

Despite these concerns, we are convinced that our empirical study contributes to understand more thoroughly the functioning of local democracy. This research is important because it provides a national study of mayors' notions of democracy, and also the results presented here are of relevance for comparative cross-country research and suggest some directions for further research in order to test and to contextualize our findings.

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