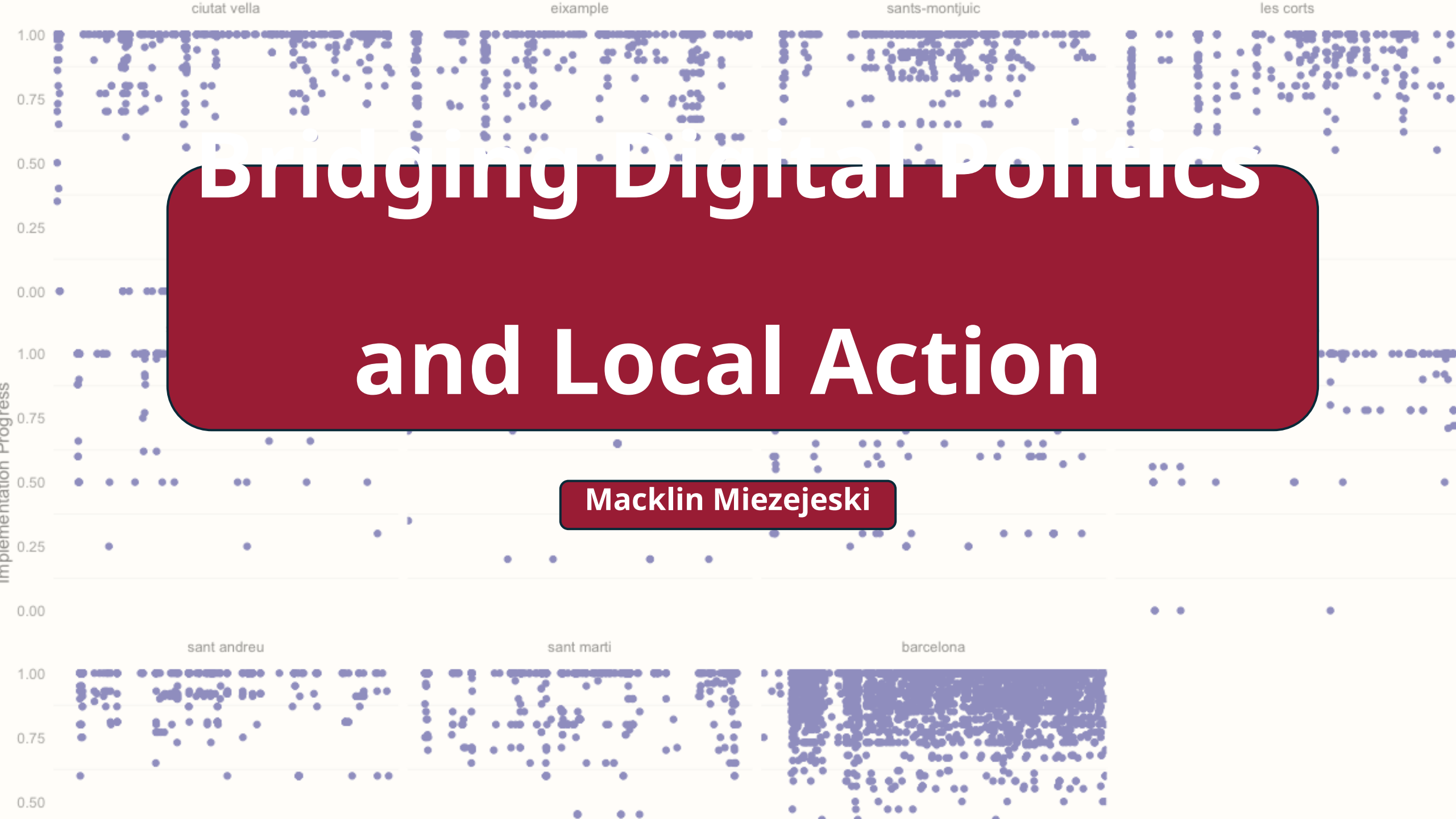


Bridging Digital Politics and Local Action

Macklin Miezejeski

The Context

Encroachment of Civic Spaces

- Arenas to exercise civil rights; including participation and engagement in decision-making
- Research typically follows the physical spaces

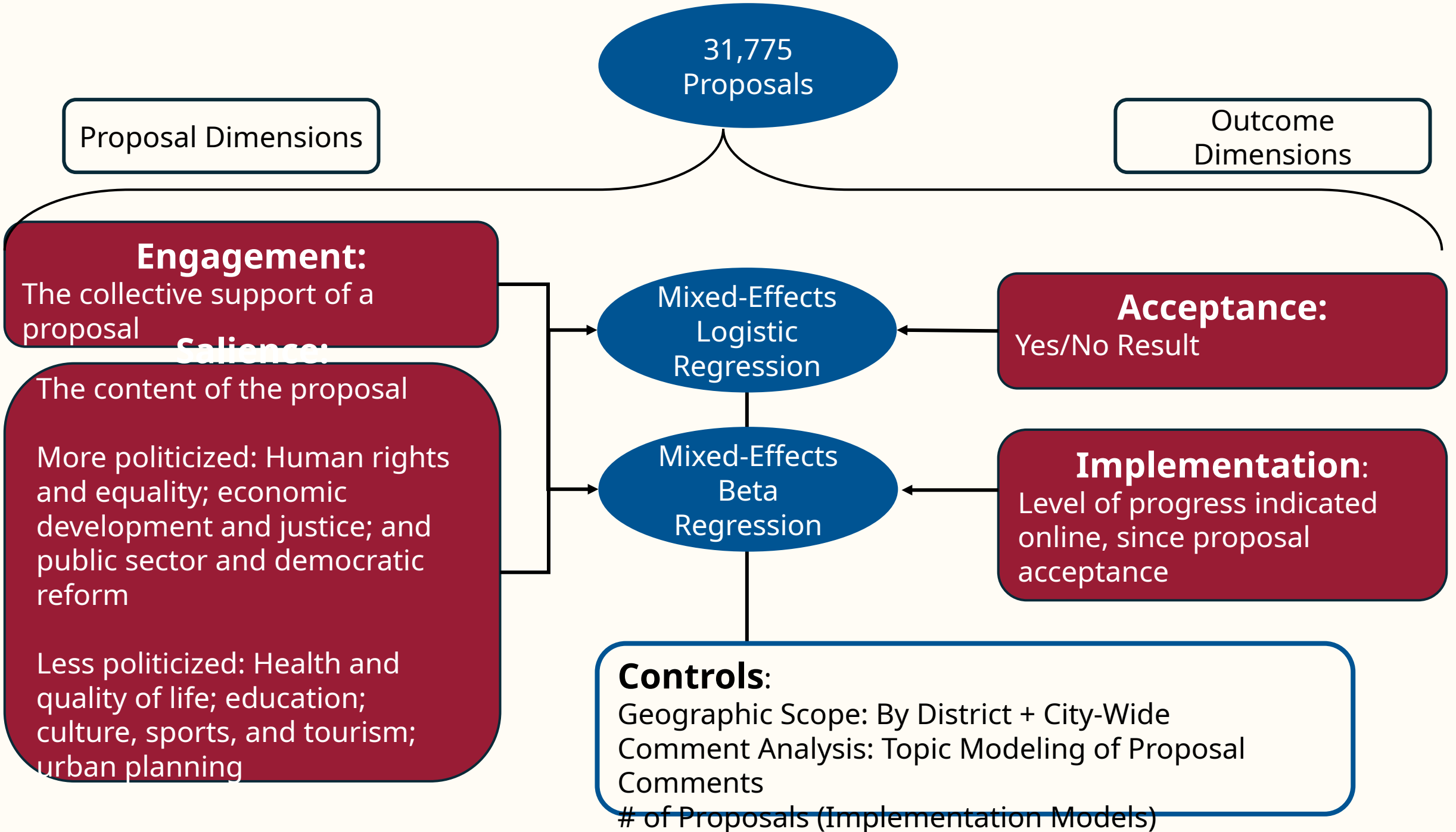
The Role of Decidim

- An alternative digital space designed for democratic affordances

Digital Civic Spaces

- Typically constructed on social media
- Not designed for nor accommodating to political or civic engagement
- Connective action diffuses political activity and limits the impact of any digital movement

How does Decidim Influence Participation?

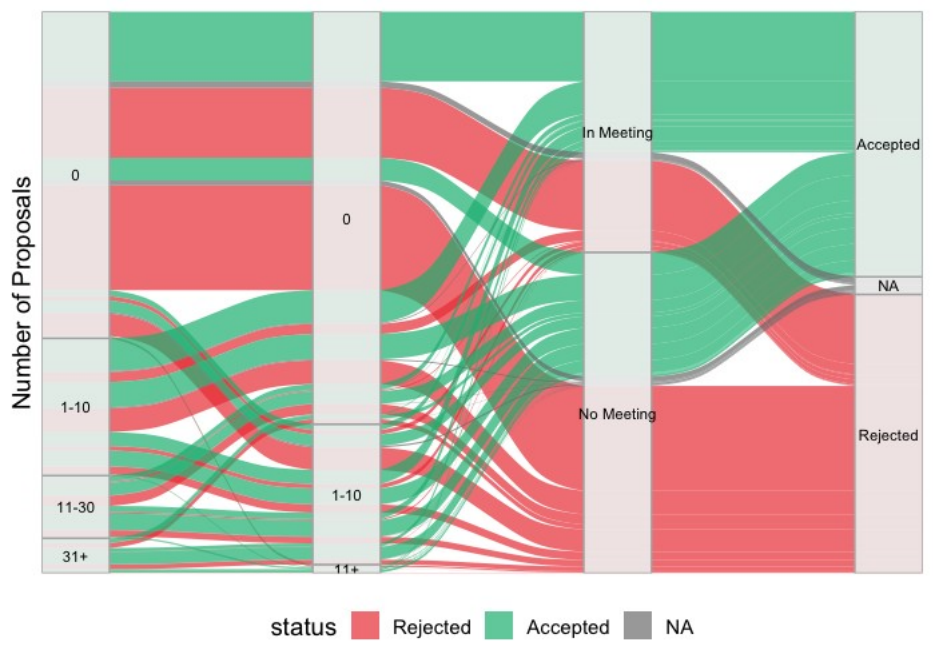

31,775 Proposals
Proposal Dimensions
Outcome Dimensions
Engagement:
The collective support of a proposal
Salience:
The content of the proposal
More politicized: Human rights and equality; economic development and justice; and public sector and democratic reform
Less politicized: Health and quality of life; education; culture, sports, and tourism; urban planning
Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression
Mixed-Effects Beta Regression
Acceptance:
Yes/No Result
Implementation:
Level of progress indicated online, since proposal acceptance
Controls:
Geographic Scope: By District + City-Wide
Comment Analysis: Topic Modeling of Proposal Comments
# of Proposals (Implementation Models)

Results

Acceptance Models

Collective Usage increases the likelihood of a proposal's acceptance

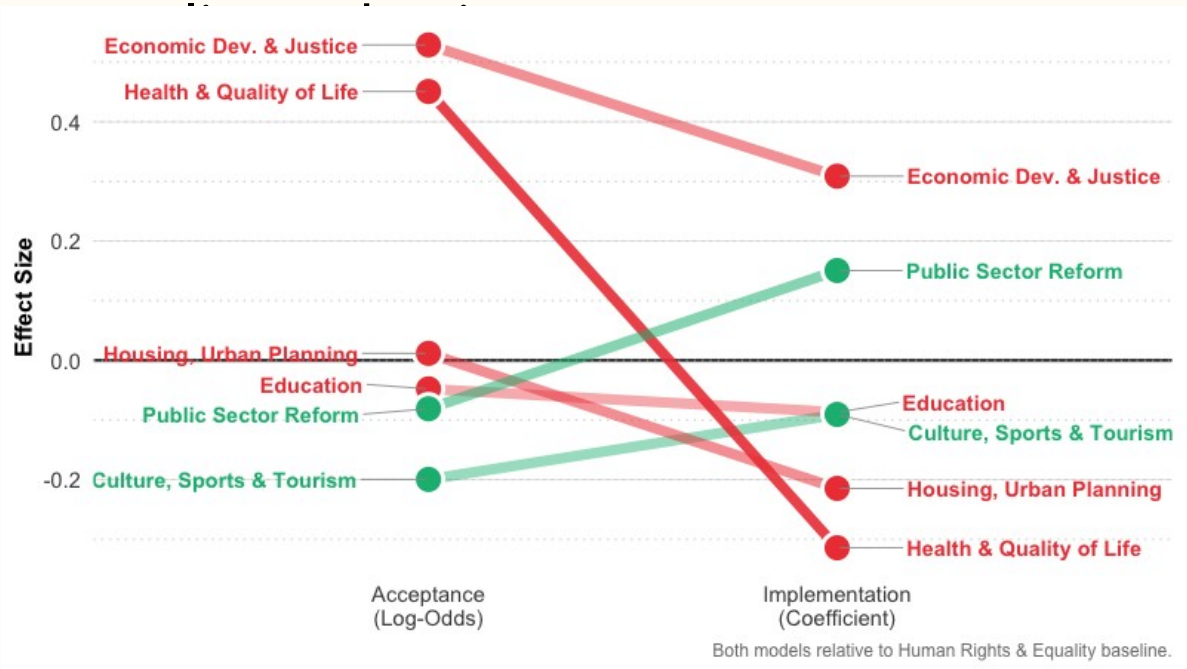
- Strongest effect from "supports"
- Proposal topics had mixed, smaller significance with a lower model fit



Implementation Models

Implementation becomes dependent on the content of the proposal

- Meeting inclusion has a small negative effect
- Understand content on a thematic not



Research Outcomes

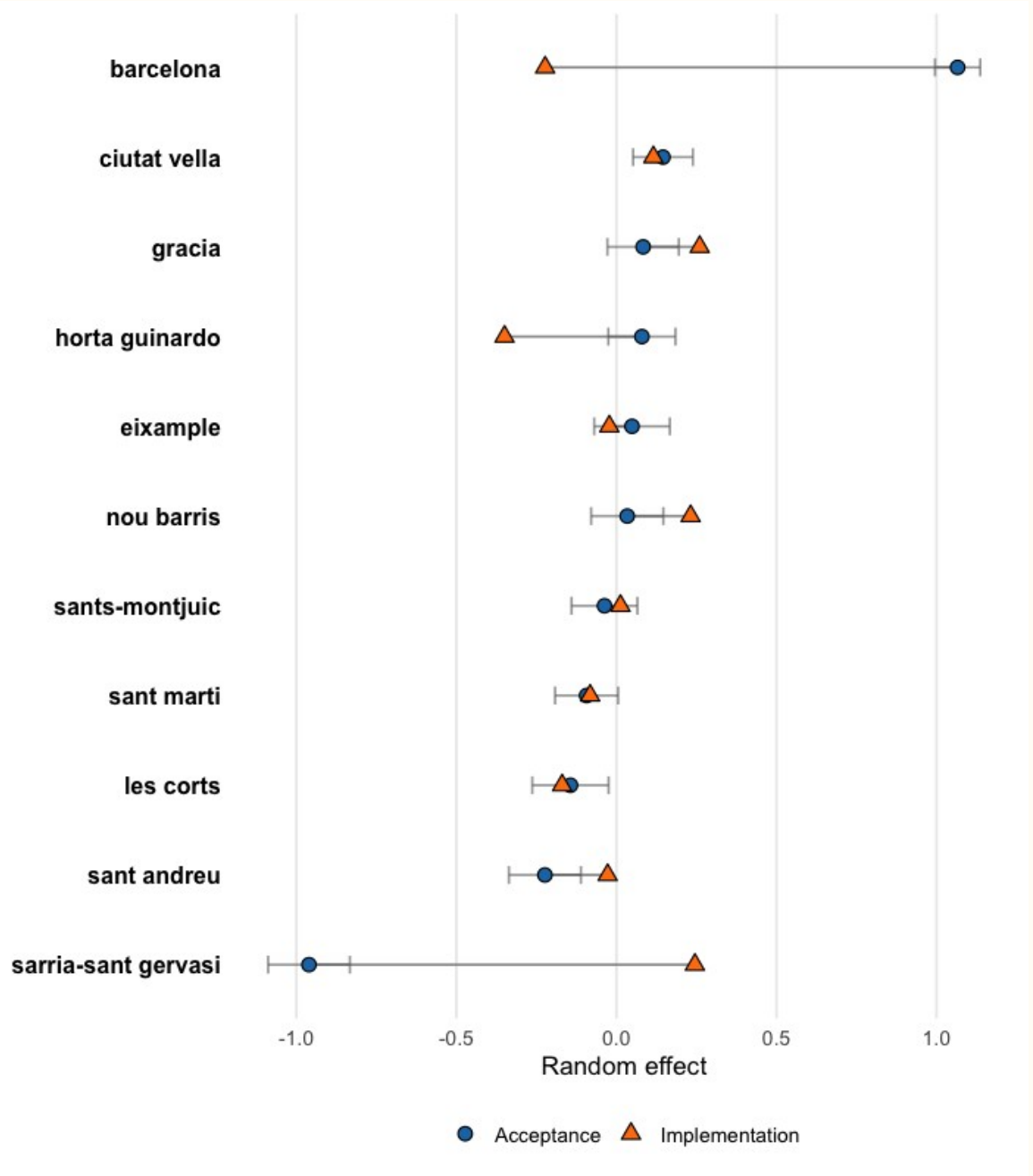
Decidim's design channels collective usage into active involvement with local politics

Regardless of the level of engagement implementation is limited by the content of a proposal

Confounding and intervening factors can influence policy implementation that is not easily determined through platform data

Geographic and topic variance reflect underlying power structures, administrative competence, and political will

Quantitative analysis is indicative of the trends in platform usage not necessarily a determinant of feasibility or viability



How to Leverage Decidim's Affordances?

Decidim creates a digital space that resists the broader trend of civic enclosure and political capture

An exemplary case of what is possible to design in a public good

Broaches the gap of connective and collective action

However

Does not preclude other forms of collective action crucial to democratic activity

The utility of the platform depends on the consent of decision-makers

Integrate citizens into civic life and demonstrate the impact of involvement in your environment– Facilitated through responsible, deliberate design of a digital platform