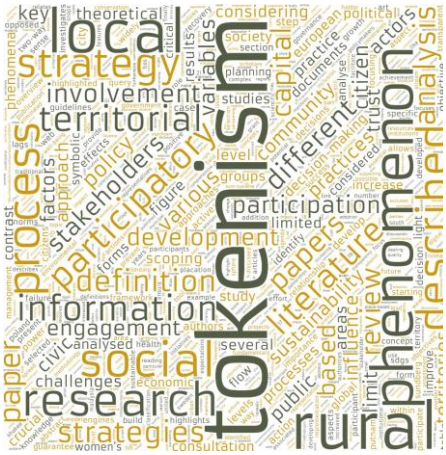
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TOKENISM IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT: ENABLING FACTORS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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Abstract: Most EU policy documents highlight the need to ensure and contribute to the achievement of the multifaceted goal of social sustainability. In this framework, the paper investigates tokenism, a common phenomenon of crucial importance for rural development, although not widely studied. The paper focuses on a scoping literature review to analyse the forms of tokenism affecting the territorial development practices and which factors can prevent this phenomenon. More specifically, recent scientific papers dealing with tokenism, social capital, rural areas, and decision processes were analysed to shed light on the various underhand practices in which tokenism occurs and possible limiting factors. The results show the role played by adopting participatory approaches and by some variables (e. g., trust, influence, involvement, civic engagement, information) in reducing the phenomenon of tokenism. It is important to highlight how improving the local amount of social capital represents a key factor positively affecting the success of territorial development strategies. The originality and the value of the present study lie in the fact that notwithstanding tokenism is analysed by several authors, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies focusing on the relationship between tokenism and territorial development.

Keywords: Territorial development, Social sustainability, Tokenism, Social Capital, Participatory processes

Highlights

- Various forms of tokenism negatively affect territorial development.
- Involvement, trust, and influence can mitigate tokenism effects.
- Civic engagement and information can limit tokenism.
- A higher level of social capital is crucial for territorial development.

1. Introduction

Sustainability is a challenge for environmental, economic and social policies at the European level. The European Commission has outlined several programs aimed at promoting sustainability in member states and their regions. Coherently, the whole sustainability of rural areas is one of the objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (European Commission, 2021). Furthermore, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises the importance of sustainability not only in the economic or environmental sphere but also in the social sphere (ONU, 2019). Indeed, it is crucial to analyse this topic to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and emphasizing the importance of social sustainability (Khan, 2016; Walker et al., 2021).

By structuring the initial phase of this study around an analysis of current policy documents, we can underscore the profound connection and significance that policy documents hold for territorial development. The European Union's active advocacy and implementation of strategic initiatives aim to bolster and coordinate socio-economic progress within territories. For instance, the adoption of regional policies by the European Union strives to foster balanced and sustainable growth across regions. At the same time, the guidelines offered through the European Structural and Investment Funds outline interventions for territorial development. European documents provide invaluable guidance and directives for spatial planning and management, facilitating an integrated and harmonized approach to territory development. Instruments like the European Territorial Cohesion Policy exemplify this approach. Other documents prove instrumental in stimulating innovation, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting economic growth in European regions. These documents provide strategic guidelines and financing instruments that directly shape the development agenda of areas.

However, unlike economic and environmental sustainability, the issue of social sustainability in rural development has received limited attention so far. Policy and research papers (Littig & Grießler, 2005; McManus et al., 2012; Sisto et al., 2022) demonstrate a strong link between social sustainability and critical aspects such as inclusion, social equity and, community participation.

Territories have increasingly become complex systems in which various challenges arise, for example, rural exodus, aging, marginalisation, social exclusion and other associated problems (Aldea-Partanen, 2011; Bock, 2016; Dax & Fischer, 2018). Concerning the social sphere, literature stressed the role of participatory processes involving stakeholders as a fundamental strategy to address the complexity of rural areas and promote their development (Brown et al., 2017; Halonen & Kattilakoski, 2018; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Sisto et al., 2022; Sisto et al., 2016; Vijayanand, 2013). More specifically, the complete involvement of local actors in the decision-making process, supported by partnerships with local enterprises, public authorities and community representatives, is advocated in Agenda 2030. This approach, known as the place-based approach to policymaking, stimulates economic development which highlights as the place-based approach to policymaking stimulates economic development (Campbell & Marshall, 2000; Weck et al., 2021).

However, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholder interaction complicates the decision-making process because each stakeholder has multiple interests and objectives to pursue (Ahenkan et al., 2013; Hart & Bas-Defossez, 2018).

This situation, more frequently in areas with a weak tradition of participation, can generate negative phenomena such as tokenism, that can lead to unsuccessful processes. Although this phenomenon has been analysed in different research fields, a single definition is difficult to identify. Oxford Dictionaries (2017) defines tokenism as: 'The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups to give the appearance of sexual or ethnic equality'. However, this definition is only a starting point, and this review will summarize several conceptual ideas surrounding tokenism. Notwithstanding, tokenism is analysed by several authors in studies such as health care, women's employment and youth development programs (Adley Hiebert et al., 2018; Ban & Rao, 2008; Elstad & Ladegard, 2012; Linkov, 2014; Morrison & Dearden, 2013; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016), to the best of our knowledge, only a few documents have focused on the relationship between tokenism and rural areas. For example, Furmankiewicz's study (2017) investigates tokenism in the Local Action Groups (LAGs), which are critical territorial unit for rural development planning.

Therefore, to overcome this gap, this paper has two main objectives: (i) to analyse the different forms of tokenism affecting the territorial development practices and (ii) to identify factors that can prevent this phenomenon. To achieve these objectives, a scoping literature review was performed, focusing on recent scientific papers dealing with tokenism, social capital, rural areas, and decision processes. This review sheds light on the various covert practices in which tokenism manifests and explores potential limiting factors associated with it. Considering this study as one of the first attempts to shed light on the relationship between tokenism and territorial development practices worldwide, the literature analysis is not limited by geography or time. Its aim is to identify (i) the various definitions of tokenism found in the literature and (ii) the different forms it takes concerning territorial development. After providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, the research then focuses on the factors that can prevent or limit tokenism.

The structure of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical background of the main concepts; Section 3 describes the methodology adopted. Moving forward, Section 4 reveals the initial results from the scoping review, shedding light on the current state of research in the field. Section 5 describes the various way in which tokenism can manifest itself. Section 6 reveals a comprehensive discussion of the findings. Finally, Section 7 summarizes the key results and offers insights for future research, concluding the paper.

2. State of the art

Considering sustainability as an environmental and resource use issue leaves out essential aspects of a territory's development (Ly & Cope, 2023). Many scholars in the literature have emphasized the positive effects of a participatory process (Berner et al., 2011; Bos & Brown, 2015). Many scholars in the literature have emphasized the positive effects of a participatory process (Berner et al., 2011; Bos & Brown, 2015), as it increases community support, which in turn has a significant influence on the outcomes of spatial projects. Efficient resource management is also influenced by the development of transparent participation of local stakeholders (Nkansa & Chapman, 2006).

The pursuit of a healthy society is one of the first indications pointed out in the SDGs. According to Ly & Cope (2023), these considerations of a healthy society moved through the concepts of the Social Capital Theory. There are various definitions of Social Capital. We recognize the relevance of that expressed by Putnam (Putnam et al., 1993), who defines Social Capital as a set of characteristics that can improve the efficiency of society through better coordination of individual actions and collective action, through trust, solidarity, tolerance, customs.

This definition emphasizes the importance of effective and efficient collective actions, focusing on the characteristics of social organization that promote the development of norms based on reciprocity and enhance overall societal efficiency (Putnam et al., 1993; Sobels et al., 2001; Zarra Nezhad, 2007). Moreover, in several papers, Social Capital has been studied as an element that affects the quality and the success of territorial development projects. Positive impacts can also be traced to the effect of economic growth (Woodhouse, 2006):

1. There is an improvement in market exchanges as there is a reduction in transaction costs and an increased focus on avoiding or limiting opportunistic or churning behaviour induced by the stakeholders.
2. There is an increase in the quality and quantity of public goods that otherwise would not have been produced in less quantity in the territory.

Institutional frameworks play a fundamental role in improving the availability of public goods and ensuring transparency and democratization, thereby fostering inclusivity within the territory. Another key element of Social Capital is the civic participation, often used as a proxy for measuring the phenomenon. Many authors identify this predisposition to shared norms and one's drive for the community's well-being as an essential element in the analysis of Social Capital. Furthermore, many stakeholders find a solid motivation to support a participatory approach in this subject. (Arrighetti et al., 2003; Parker & Murray, 2012).

While Social Capital can positively affect projects' success and improve an area's social sustainability, phenomena such as tokenism can limit the positive effects mentioned above. Therefore, scholars are interested in analyzing how this phenomenon manifests itself and what factors may limit its spread.

In the literature, the need to adopt a theoretical framework for a scoping review is widely recognized. This need is based on several aspects: i) the initial theoretical framework can provide a conceptual structure for the entire process of the scoping review; ii) a scientific starting point can help identify key concepts and relevant variables, guiding the selection of inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies to be included in the review; iii) using a theoretical framework can enhance the transparency and reproducibility of the scoping review by defining a specific scope; iv) the adoption of a theoretical framework can facilitate the association between variables found in the selected papers; v) finally, the addition of a theoretical framework can aid in the process of synthesizing the results (Godfrey et al., 2010).

So, to analyse the phenomenon of tokenism, this paper uses the seminal work of Sherry Arnstein's article "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", published in the Journal of the American Institute of Planners in 1969. Specifically, citizen participation was classified by Arnestein based on different power levels into eight levels (Figure 1). Moreover, from the literature review's preliminary results, several authors applied this method to address this topic (Kamols et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pipan & Zorn, 2013).

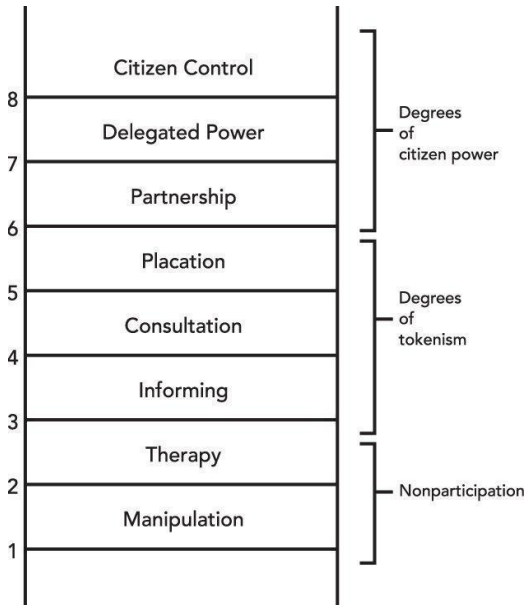


Fig 1. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969). Source: Arnstein, 1969: 217

In particular, tokenism can assume three different forms: informing, consultation and placation:

- Informing: In this case, there is a one-way information flow between policymakers and stakeholders. Participation is only apparent because information or previously made decisions are disseminated (Brownill & Inch, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pipan & Zorn, 2013).
- Consultation: The information flow is two-way, but the participatory decision-making process is not developed (Christensen & Grant, 2016; Jocom et al., 2021). Participation is minimal, and this approach is only used to increase trust in public decision-makers and develop only apparent stakeholder engagement.
- Placation: A two-way information flow takes place; some weak attempts to include participants' concerns and expectations are made, but the strategy outline does never consider stakeholders' expectations and needs (Brownill & Inch, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pipan & Zorn, 2013).

Therefore, tokenism is considered the practice of taking inclusive action, only in appearance, towards "disadvantaged" groups (Chinyele & Lwoga, 2019; Kumi-kyereme, 2008; Snape et al., 2014). Often, the purposes of this practice are deflecting and eliminating accusations of discrimination, improving the legitimacy of the decision process and of rural development partnerships and local governance, with the overall result of increasing consensus from public authorities (Castell, 2016; Kersten et al., 2015; Parker & Murray, 2012). The literature has shown that stopping at limited levels of participation, such as informing, consultation and placation, is not enough to improve complex systems such as territories. However, it is necessary to develop other tools to address the potential weaknesses of participatory approaches and an overall policy failure.

3. Methodology

A scoping literature review was adopted to analyse the various forms that tokenism can assume, especially in the context of rural development practices, and to identify factors that can prevent this phenomenon. A thorough review of the current state of the art could help identify potential future research avenues to fill existing literature gaps. Also, considering the research question involves topics that have yet to be fully explored, this methodology seems appropriate.

Moreover, scoping literature review follows a detailed process consisting of orderly, replicable, and transparent procedures (Littell et al., 2008). This approach is advantageous in overcoming the limitations of traditional literature reviews and in establishing an objective methodology (Carlucci et al., 2015).

The analysis was conducted on online scientific search engines such as Web of Science and Scopus. To further enrich the review, according to the current practice (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021; Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2022; Mohd Hamzi et al., 2020), we also performed a search on ScienceDirect, which is considered a good tool to expand the potentiality to retrieve original article not included in other research engines (de la Cruz del Río-Rama et al., 2020; Lee & Gambiza, 2022; Oliveira et al., 2018).

The first step was matching the keywords with Boolean operators. Specifically, the query used is: “TITLE-ABS-KEY (“tokenism*”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“social capital” OR “citizen*” OR “local development” OR “rural area*” OR “decision making” OR “rural development” OR “territorial development” OR “participatory approach*”)”.

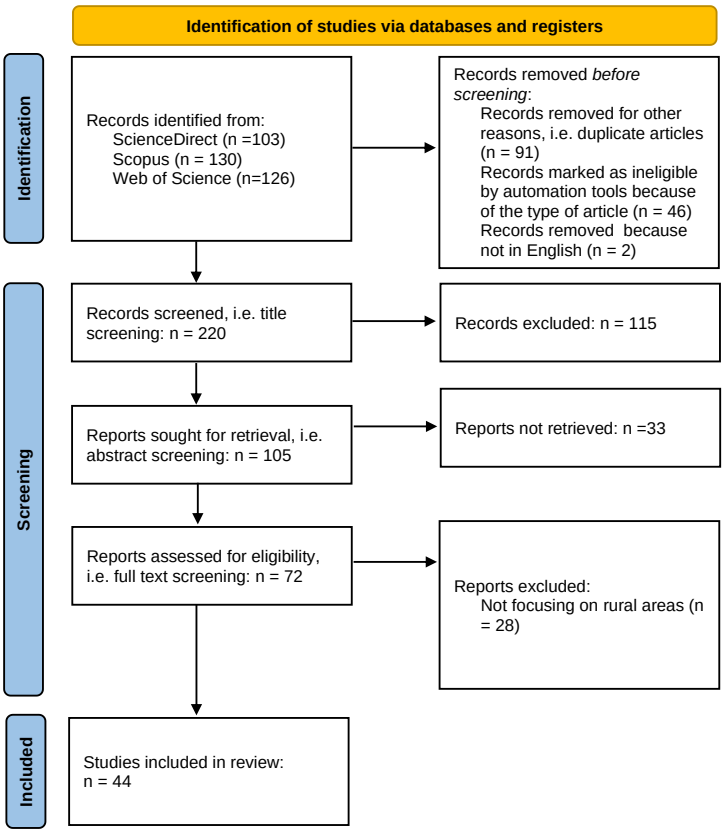


Fig 2. Flow chart of the articles’ selection process. Source: Page et al., (2021)

This implemented query searched for the information in the title, keywords and abstract. The papers’ selection process is briefly summarized in Figure 2, following the flow chart suggested by the PRISMA extension guidelines.

Applying the query in the search engines, 359 papers were selected (Web of Science: n. 126, Scopus: n. 130, ScienceDirect: n. 103). Considering the limited literature on the topic, no limits were imposed on the year of publication. Subsequently, duplicate articles were removed (n. 91). In addition, 46 other papers were excluded because they were not articles published in peer-reviewed journals related to the topic. Moreover, only articles written in English were included, so two more papers were eliminated. At this point, 148 papers were excluded based on the information obtained while reading the title and the abstract. After that, a full-text reading step was performed, and 28 papers were eliminated. For example, many papers were not considered because they used the term "token" concerning the blockchain, which is different from the concept of tokenism considered in this paper (Bamakan et al., 2021; Santana & Albareda, 2022). Thus, the final sample for this scoping review included 44 articles.

4. Results

In this section, the results of the scoping review are presented, starting with an overview of the key global features of the literature in this field, including the time of publication, the geographical coverage, and the definitional contributions of the papers. Then, the research questions are addressed by describing the forms of tokenism prevalent in the territorial development practices as emerged by the literature review, along with the identified mitigation factors.

The survey of selected papers begins with a comprehensive overview of the results. The first step includes a study of the publication years and an overview of the geographic locations of the case studies. Next, each paper is analysed to explore the different levels of tokenism and the variables that may limit its impact.

The interest in the field started in 2006 and has remained constant during the years, except for the period between 2018–2021, in which there was an increase in the number of publications in this field. Since this study was carried out at the end of 2022, there should have been an increase in the published works, partially explaining the drop in the publication trend. Therefore, Table 1 reports the 44 results indicating the year of publication, the location of the case study and the tokenism definition used in the paper.

As Table 1 shows, there are several definitions of tokenism which focus on different features of the phenomenon, with eight papers including some aspect of the Arnstein's definition previously introduced. In addition, the studies cover different Countries and different geographical dimensions, including counties, villages, municipalities, and rural areas.

Tab 1. Selected papers. Source: own elaboration

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Location	Tokenism definition
1	(Kamete, 2006)	Participatory force: Youth and the making of urban places in Zimbabwe	2006	Zimbabwe	No definition
2	(Kumi-Kyereme, 2008)	Community participation in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Twifu-Heman-Lower Denkyira District	2008	Ghana	Tokenism allows citizens to participate but have no power to influence decisions.
3	(Mayo & Rooke, 2008)	Active learning for active citizenship: Participatory approaches to evaluating a programme to promote citizen participation in England	2008	England	Tokenism shows itself when the most powerful ones maintain power and marginalise other participants.
4	(Manteaw, 2008)	Tokenism or agency? The impact of women's reservations on village democracies in South India	2008	India	Tokenism is described as a symbolic strategy
5	(Ban & Rao, 2008)	Tokenism or agency? The impact of women's reservations on village democracies in South India	2008	India	Tokenism is described as a phenomenon in contrast to genuine participation.
6	(Bess et al., 2009)	Participatory Organizational Change in Community-Based Health and Human Services: From Tokenism to Political Engagement	2009	Global	Tokenism is described as a symbolic strategy.
7	(Seyed Hamid et al., 2011)	Relationship Between citizen's Perception and Level of Participation in Local Government	2011	Iran	Tokenism shows itself when stakeholders lack power to influence decisions. Tokenism is described as an illusion to be influential.
8	(Pollock & Sharp, 2012)	Real Participation or the Tyranny of Participatory Practice? Public Art and Community Involvement in the Regeneration of the Raploch, Scotland	2012	Scotland	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
9	(Monno & Khakee, 2012)	Tokenism or Political Activism? Some Reflections on Participatory Planning	2012	Sweden, Italy	Tokenism shows itself as a reluctance on the part of planners to provide citizens with real influence.

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Location	Tokenism definition
10	(Pipan & Zorn, 2013)	Public participation in recovery after earthquakes in Friuli (NE Italy) and the Upper Soča Valley (NW Slovenia) in 1976, 1998, and 2004	2013	Italy, Slovenia	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
11	(Hoskins, 2013)	Meet the habermasses: Charting the emergence of a social media-enabled public sphere in new democracies	2013	Brazil	No definition
12	(Furmankiewicz, 2013)	Co-governance or hidden domination of the public sector? the concept of governance in the practice of 'Leader' Local Action Groups	2013	Poland	Tokenism relates to the practice of symbolically including actors traditionally excluded from decision-making.
13	(Snape et al., 2014)	Exploring perceived barriers, drivers, impacts and the need for evaluation of public involvement in health and social care research: A modified Delphi study	2014	United Kingdom	Tokenism is described as a symbolic strategy.
14	(Kenny et al., 2015)	Community participation for rural health: a review of challenges	2015	Global	Tokenism is a phenomenon in contrast to meaningful participation.
15	(Christensen & Grant, 2016)	Participatory Budgeting in Australian Local Government: An Initial Assessment and Critical Issues	2016	Australia	Tokenism is described as a symbolic effort to implement participatory approaches.
16	(Kariuki, 2016)	Community experiences of engaging political representatives using mobile phone technology and web app in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	2016	Africa	Tokenism is described as a phenomenon in contrast to genuine participation.
17	(Rusnaini, 2016)	Citizen Participation in Medium-Term Local Development Plan in Indonesia	2016	Indonesia	Tokenism shows itself when the powerholders retain the right to decide
18	(Cortés-Selva & Pérez-Escolar, 2016)	Civic participation and interactive documentaries: a contribution to the open government model	2016	Global	Tokenism is considered as a distraction strategy. Although citizens express ideas and opinions, there is no feedback between citizenship and political power.
19	(Campbell et al., 2021)	Collaborative Counties: Questioning the Role of Civil Society	2017	United States	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
20	(Chado et al., 2017)	Citizen participation in urban governance: experiences from traditional city of Bida, Nigeria	2017	Nigeria	No definition
21	(Kotus & Sowada, 2017)	Behavioural model of collaborative urban management: extending the concept of Arnstein's ladder	2017	Poland	Described tokenism as a tool to legitimise previously chosen decisions.
22	(Furmankiewicz, 2017)	Government within governance? Polish rural development partnerships through the lens of functional representation	2017	Poland	Tokenism relates to the illusory actions of collaboration towards representatives of other interests.
23	(Lundy, 2018)	In defence of tokenism? Implementing children's right to participate in collective decision-making	2018	Global	Tokenism is considered like a manipulation strategy.
24	(Adley Hiebert et al., 2018)	Tokenism and mending fences: How rural male farmers and their health needs are discussed in health policy and planning documents	2018	California	Tokenism is considered as a symbolic strategy.
25	(Chinyele & Lwoga, 2019)	Participation in decision making regarding the conservation of heritage resources and conservation attitudes in Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania	2019	Tanzania	Tokenism is described as a symbolic effort allowing residents to take part but with limited power to decide.
26	(Brownill & Inch, 2019)	Framing people and planning: 50 years of debate	2019	Global	Tokenism is described as a tool to incorporate, co-opt and manipulate citizen action.

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Location	Tokenism definition
27	(Bonakdar & Audirac, 2019)	City Branding and the Link to Urban Planning: Theories, Practices, and Challenges	2019	Global	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
28	(Samndong, 2019)	The participation illusion: questioning community participation in a REDD plus pilot project in the Democratic Republic of Congo	2019	DR of Congo	No definition
29	(Haldar et al., 2020)	Tokenism or realism? Gender inclusion in corporate boards	2020	India	Described tokenism as opposed to realism.
30	(Levenda et al., 2020)	Rethinking public participation in the smart city	2020	Canada	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
31	(Ignacia & Valenzuela, 2020)	Santiago, providencia y las condes. Tokenism participation?	2020	Chile	No definition
32	(Von Peter et al., 2020)	Participatory research in Germany – quo vadis?	2020	Germany	No definition
33	(Nugroho et al., 2021)	Stakeholders' mapping and strategy for restoring peatland forest in Indonesia	2021	Indonesia	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
34	(Bensus, 2021)	Improving local governance with citizen engagement?: Quotidian participatory mechanisms in two middle-class districts in Lima, Peru	2021	Peru	No definition
35	(Dedding et al., 2021)	Exploring the boundaries of 'good' Participatory Action Research in times of increasing popularity: dealing with constraints in local policy for digital inclusion	2021	Netherlands	Tokenism is described as symbolism and it is considered in contrast with 'good' Participatory Action Research.
36	(Jocom et al., 2021)	Community participation in local economic development in the village of Makalu, Posumaen sub-district	2021	Indonesia	Tokenism is described as a justification to make the community feel recognized.
37	(Nkrumah, 2021)	Beyond Tokenism: The "Born Frees" and Climate Change in South Africa	2021	Africa	Tokenism is conceived as a decorative involvement.
38	(Kamols et al., 2021)	Beyond engagement theatre: challenging institutional constraints of participatory planning practice	2021	Australia	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
39	(Love & Hall, 2021)	Decolonising the Marketing Academy: An Indigenous Māori Perspective on Engagement, Methodologies and Practices	2021	Global	Tokenism is conceived as a "ticking box" to " fill" a position.
40	(Lim et al., 2021)	The Right or Wrong to the City? Understanding Citizen Participation in the Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Eras in Malaysia	2021	Malaysia	Tokenism is considered as a symbolic strategy.
41	(Fernandez-Bou et al., 2021)	3 Challenges, 3 Errors, and 3 Solutions to Integrate Frontline Communities in Climate Change Policy and Research: Lessons From California	2021	California	Tokenism is described as a tool to incorporate vulnerable stakeholders to manipulate citizen action.
42	(Sundberg & Gidlund, 2022)	Dimensions of e-Participation: Levels of Participation and Citizen Configurations	2022	Sweden	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
43	(Oredo, 2022)	Evaluating the Impact of e- Government Initiatives on Citizens: Empowerment or Tokenism?	2022	Kenya	Based on Arnstein's definition (1969).
44	(Shangare & Wielenga, 2022)	Repositioning African women in politics: From critical mass to critical acts	2022	Africa	Tokenism is conceived as a "ticking box" to enable women's representation desired by policy documents.

Figure 3 provides a visual inspection of the forms of tokenism as defined by Arnstein (1969). Indeed, the idea is that the three tokenism forms can be classified according to two variables: the "stream of information" and the "participant involvement": when these are at their minimum level, tokenism assumes the form of *information*. In contrast, *placation* is characterised by a two-way flow of information and a true citizen participation. Between the previously cited ranks, there is the *consultation* form, which has a medium level of the two variables. As shown in Figure 3, 18 documents identified tokenism as *information*, 16 as *consultation*, and 10 as *placation*. This classification is based alternatively on: i) the identification, explicitly made in the paper, of the form that tokenism assumed; ii) on our own reading and analysis.

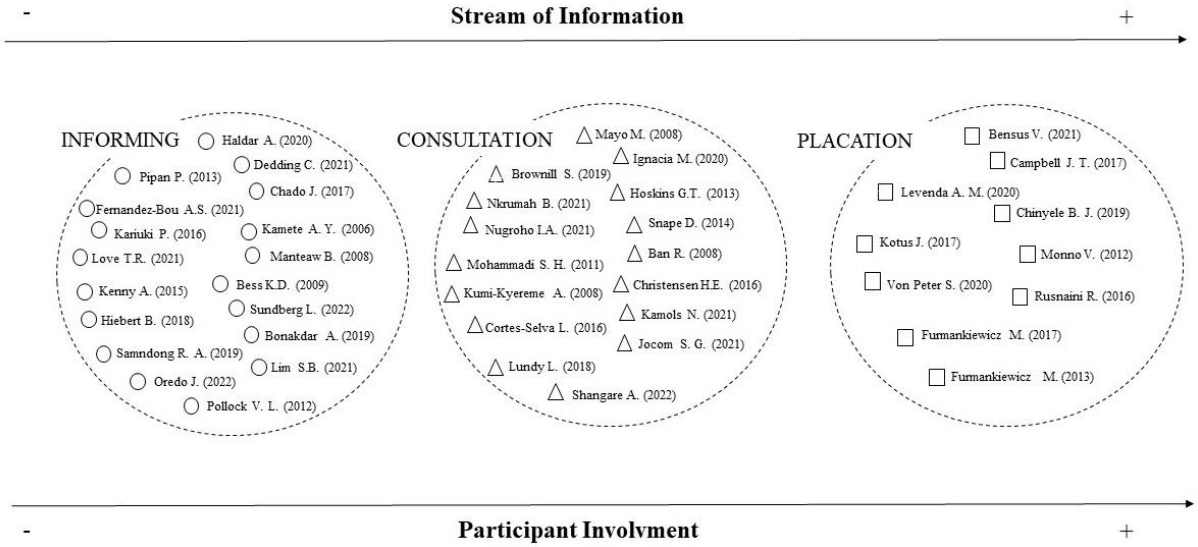


Fig 3. Papers' sorting based on variables by Arnstein's classification. Source: our elaboration

Notes: i) Selected papers are mentioned in this figure with the name of the first author;
ii) The arrows' direction indicates an increasing level of the variables ("stream of information" and "participant involvement").

Furthermore, after reading the selected papers in-depth, it was possible to recognize some factors that can limit tokenism, namely involvement, information, influence, trust, and civic engagement. Figure 4 shows that involvement and information are the variables most frequently used to mitigate the effect of tokenism, followed by influence and trust, which are also frequently utilised. In the next paragraph, these variables will be discussed in relation to the literature, elucidating their effects on local development.

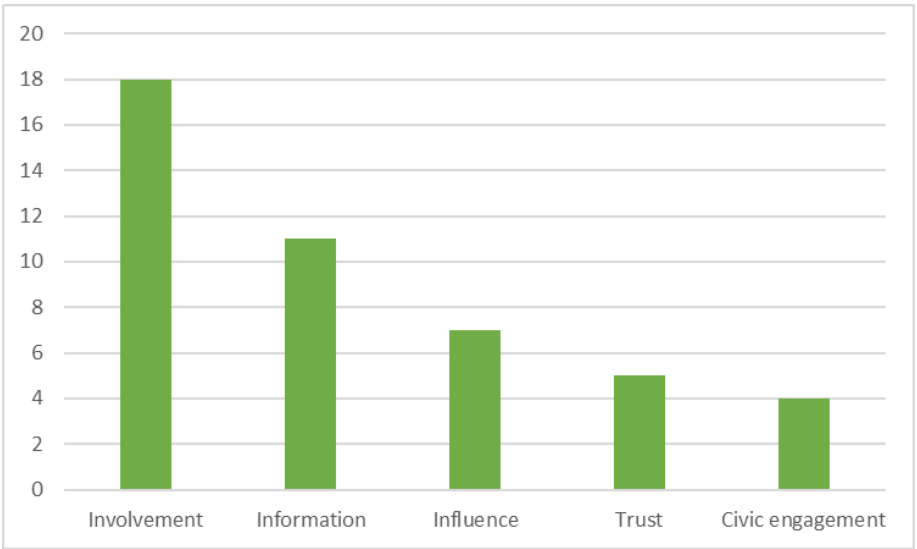


Fig 4. Variables that can limit tokenism. Source: our elaboration based on the number of papers which analyse the variables

5. Discussion: How tokenism manifests itself?

Table 1 shows that many papers used Arnstein's theory to explain tokenism (Campbell et al., 2017; Levenda et al., 2020; Pipan & Zorn, 2013; Sundberg & Gidlund, 2022). Other studies have attempted to provide their own definitions. For example, it was described as a phenomenon that stands in opposition to realism (Haldar et al., 2020) or as a symbolic and illusory practice of collaboration and participation (Chinyele & Lwoga, 2019; Furmankiewicz, 2017; Lim et al., 2021).

In some studies, the phenomenon is seen as i) a practice employed to legitimize decisions made by policymakers (Jocom et al., 2021; Kotus & Sowada, 2017) ii) a distraction to avoid obstacles to political power (Cortés-Selva & Pérez-Escolar, 2016) iii) an illusory process of making stakeholders apparently influential in the decision process (Chinyele & Lwoga, 2019; Christensen & Grant, 2016; Fernandez-Bou et al., 2021; Kumi-kyereme, 2008; Mohammadi & Ahmad, 2011; Rusnaini, 2016).

Tokenism can also manifest itself in the composition of a LAG. Specifically, the number of the representation of different sectors must not exceed a maximum threshold of 50% of the total members of the LAG's decision-making committees (European Commission, 2006). This highlights the importance of the diversity of the LAGs partnership composition, including representatives of the public administration, the business world, the community, and the local population, to guarantee effective participation. Furmankiewicz (2017) analysed this aspect, and he found that in 89% of LAG decision-making committees, the representation of statutory interests was higher than the officially declared percentage since many committee members, officially recorded as representing the non-statutory sector, were employees of the municipal or district government. This analysis shows that phenomena can develop that limit the representativeness of the various sectors.

Another critical case of tokenism analysis is found in Pipan's studies (2013). His analyses included the case of the Municipality of Venzone (Italy), which was affected by earthquakes in 1976. Its residents opposed the manipulation attempts by the municipal authorities, who planned to raze buildings not damaged by the earthquake to build a new sports centre as part of post-earthquake recovery. Residents established a special committee which criticised even the most minor step of the municipal and regional authorities (Bellina et al., 2006). Indeed, the citizen supported the Regional Cultural Heritage Superintendency during critical moments of post-earthquake recovery. In this case, the level of tokenism has been surpassed, and this municipality is classified under "Citizen Control" on Arnstein's ladder.

Considering tokenism as a limited effort to develop participatory approaches, the variables potentially limiting its effects have been analysed in Figure 4.

6. Discussion

The literature review revealed several factors capable of mitigating tokenism, analysed one by one below.

Involvement. The analysis of the literature (Ahenkan et al., 2013; Kersten et al., 2015; Morrison & Dearden, 2013) has revealed several challenges that hinder involvement, such as the limited number of stakeholders present at meetings, the use of specific terminology or different norms that make it difficult to integrate different actors, and the limited availability of resources, which obstructs the development of a linear decision-making process. On the other hand, some studies showed how non-active participation, i.e., the presence at meetings or activities, was used as a tool to legitimize decisions that organizations would have made anyway or to increase public consensus (Love & Hall, 2021; Morrison & Dearden, 2013).

Indeed, Tokenism develops in situations where active public participation is restricted, and the few stakeholders involved in territorial strategy decision-making cannot bring about significant changes to strategies that have already been developed by policymakers.

So, participant involvement is a complex process that allows individuals to formulate goals and actions that emphasize their desire to participate in decision-making (Campbell et al., 2017; Cortés-Selva & Pérez-Escolar, 2016; Levenda et al., 2020; Maier, 2010; Sundberg & Gidlund, 2022).

This issue entails a dynamic and intricate process that necessitates the development of various tools and actions to ensure its success (Tritter & McCallum, 2006).

Thus, a good level of active involvement of the various actors makes it possible to generate a sense of commitment and participation that can limit the proliferation of the phenomenon of tokenism (Maier, 2010).

Tokenism is present in processes where involvement is limited, and a small group makes decisions of stakeholders (Luisi & Hämel, 2021; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016).

Trust. This is one of the most recurring factors analysed by various authors (Christensen & Grant, 2016; Dedding et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2021). In many cases, it is described as the willingness to limit one's individuality for the sake of achieving better community outcomes (Campos-Matos et al., 2016; Farrell & Knight, 2003). Complete trust on a territorial level is difficult to consolidate. Indeed, some citizens consider it impossible to trust the system because it needs to be more transparent. This is not helped by the negative news that current policymakers are reporting (Bess et al., 2009).

In this context, trust can be taken as vertical, considering the relationship with various institutions at different levels. However, it can also be taken as horizontal trust between the parties. In rural territories, in particular, cooperation among parties and increased trust among neighbours can lead to greater participation in various initiatives and the adoption of more sustainable practices facilitated by the disclosure of information (Carpenter et al., 2004).

Therefore, in the territories where the level of trust is shallow, participation in decision-making processes is limited, and this is precisely a critical aspect that can facilitate tokenism.

Influence. Tokenism is present when minority groups are suffering from the influence of stronger ones. In many cases, participatory processes should guarantee the participation of all sections present in the community and not only of the more influencing groups (Monno & Khakee, 2012). The literature analysis has shown that even if the presence of all local groups is respected, they are subject to the influence and directives issued by the most vital groups (Brownell & Inch, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2021; Ruming, 2019).

Every part of the stakeholder's involvement in the area can ensure the development of effective strategies with lower risks of failure as opposed to the tokenism that develops in processes in which minority groups tend not to have effective influence (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Vijayanand, 2013).

Civic engagement. Many individuals are motivated to support a participatory approach to this issue. From this perspective, it emerges how the concepts of civic engagement and tokenism are contrasting: where civic engagement is well-established, tokenism will be less available (Cortés-Selva & Pérez-Escolar, 2016; Levenda et al., 2020; Oredo, 2022; Pipan & Zorn, 2013). Indeed, in practice, a process based on civic engagement presupposes a dialogue between all interested parties, which promotes and listens to all points of view without preferring any (Bull et al., 2010). Strategies based on civic engagement are developed on the strengthened expectations of citizens who want to assume their responsibilities and have their say without hiding behind choices made by others. In recent years, civic engagement has appeared as a symbol of democracy and a stimulus to develop a society resilient to difficulties (Petts, 2008). Thus, according to Levenda et al. (2020), social sustainability and participatory approaches are empty without civic engagement.

Information. Arnstein's theory (1969) revealed that information flow is crucial in developing practical participatory approaches. A proper flow of information can be fundamental to the success of local development strategies (Brownill & Inch, 2019; Jocom et al., 2021). The participation of different stakeholders is necessary because of the information they can share, helping the development of the area. It is not easy to give the correct information clearly to stakeholders, nor to receive so much different information from different actors (Lewis, 2013; Weinstein, 2010).

Indeed, however, exchanging information allows the success of rural development projects. On the other hand, the flow of information is unidirectional or limited to the simple disclosure of previously developed choices: tokenism can develop further (Brownill & Inch, 2019; Kenny et al., 2015; Nugroho et al., 2021).

7. Conclusions

The need to guarantee and contribute to the achievement of the social sustainability objective has emerged from EU policy documents and is highlighted by the crucial link between the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015) and the ten key objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2023–2027 (Matthews, 2020). Therefore, this study is the first attempt to conduct a scoping literature review to analyse the forms of tokenism affecting the territorial development practices and which factors can prevent this phenomenon. This literature review has shown that tokenism has been discussed in various thematic areas for many years, but only some authors have analysed its link with rural development. Stakeholders must be aware of their essential role in supporting policy-making processes, even though they are often eager to express their opinions (Sisto et al., 2016). The literature is replete with examples of best practices of active stakeholder involvement in defining medium- and long-term strategies, especially in the case of "complex" issues such as rural development, sustainable development or tourism. This focus on rural areas was chosen because, in these territories characterized by different challenges, phenomena that impair active participation appear to be more present. The different rural areas need an integrated policy to improve economic and environmental well-being, generating, as not a secondary objective, wealth and employment innovation (Kenny et al., 2015).

Therefore, this paper investigates tokenism, a phenomenon commonly affecting territorial development practices, but one that has yet to be widely studied. Many authors (Brown et al., 2017; Rizzi et al., 2011; Sisto et al., 2018) have highlighted how the tacit potential and interactions among actors can overcome the obstacles arising from the multidimensionality of problems and expectations in an area. Regarding local actors and relations between them, one local resource whose endowment affects the territorial development path and its quality is social capital (Kafková et al., 2018; Rizzi et al., 2011). As highlighted by many scholars (Belussi & Pilotti, 2000; Christoforou, 2013; Coleman, 1988; Shucksmith, 2000), social capital is a specific added value formed, maintained and developed through social interactions. In this way, the notion of place-based development involves a policy approach anchored in a locality, enabling it to develop its strategic capacity by utilizing its local social capital (Pappalardo et al., 2018; Weck et al., 2021).

This analysis reveals the various levels of tokenism and the main elements which, if adopted, could limit this phenomenon. Moreover, the study showed the importance of some variables that could reduce the phenomenon of tokenism (e.g., trust, influence, involvement, civic engagement, information) with a subsequent overall policy failure.

For example, the principal efforts to increase involvement and increment influence could focus on a more careful selection of stakeholders in the area. Also, a good strategy is to combine knowledge and adopt all participants of the same terminology as much as possible to have a free and smooth dialogue. In addition, mitigating the strength of some participants would be recommended, which may limit the free participation of others who feel afraid or in the background. In addition, information campaigns and new information-sharing technologies can be tools targeted at local communities for creating registries, bulletin boards, and unique sites where interested citizens can be kept up-to-date on future meetings and issues and leave their suggestions. The latter strategy requires a substantial effort, especially in rural settings where digital backwardness is still a significant obstacle.

In the same way, to increase participants' confidence, it is difficult to identify a strategy; ideally, the results achieved should be shared to increase clarity and transparency and make it clear that the strategies discussed became fundamental strategies that led to objective results. This new approach could also increase civic sense. Forming a sense of community and belonging through revalue of relationships, culture, and traditions can limit the spread of phenomena such as tokenism.

Therefore, it is essential to highlight how these variables have been used as proxies for social capital assessment in several studies (Adler & Kwon, 2017; Nardone et al., 2010; Wilson & Osborne, 2004). So, developing the highest level of social capital is certainly a key factor for the implementation of effective strategies for territorial development.

Consideration should be given to ensure stakeholders have practical implications in decision processes, but it is necessary to develop strategies supporting marginalised groups' participation in the territories. Institutions at different levels should build stronger links with universities, research centres, associations, and territorial units such as LAGs. These entities can act as intermediaries, take initiatives, and build with territorial communities winning strategies, enhancing positive social capital.

Tokenism is still unexplored: it is necessary to study the practices that could reduce its effects on the future planning of territorial areas. Indeed, when appraising the research findings, a more detailed analysis developed in other journals can help discover other variables useful to limit tokenism effects. It would be interesting for future research to analyse how much this variable is impactful, also using a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between social capital and tokenism.

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