

Advisory councils in Spain: a description of the most common participatory device

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ABSTRACT

Sectorial and territorially based advisory councils are the most common of all existing participatory devices. However, the generalized perception that they perform in most cases basically a ritual role and their limited visibility has resulted in an almost complete lack of research about their features, development and results: What is an advisory council? Which are their main goals? Do they achieve them?

Even if there is a strong tendency towards promoting explanatory research, one fundamental goal of social sciences consists on develop good descriptions of reality, especially when this reality is not well-known (Gerring, 2012). Hence, the objective of this paper proposal is to describe the reality of advisory councils in Spain. Firstly, by mapping them at the local, regional and national level. Secondly, we want to analyze some basic features of their composition, organization, functioning and outputs as a first step from where to evaluate their performance. To do so, the paper relies on the data generated by the Assodem Project (Associational democracy: accountable autonomy, participatory bias or vicious circle?), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and developed during 2017 and 2018 by IESA-CSIC. Departing from a universe of 2.013 advisory councils, 70 advisory councils -sectorial and territorially based local councils- have been selected to obtain specific information from their constitutional documents and functioning rules.

Palabras clave: advisory councils, participatory democracy, participatory governance, local government