Comparing local councillors in Spain and the UK: representation, participation, and party politics

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Paper presented at the 63rd Political Studies Association annual conference, Cardiff, 26th March 2013, in the panel 'Local Politics 1: International developments in local representative democracy and the role of the councillor in times of austerity'

Chair: Colin Copus

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Session: Session 5 (Tuesday 26 March 2013, 09:00 - 10:30)

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Introduction

This paper compares local councillors in Spain and the UK. It explores the attitudes of councillors in those countries in relation to representation, participation, and the roles of parties. In doing so, it investigates the nature of the democratic process in municipalities in those countries. The paper particularly seeks to assess if and in what ways parties in either country exert more influence over decision-making and the behaviour of local councillors; which forms of representation are prevalent; and whether there are discernible differences in attitudes towards participation. Before that, however, the paper puts the two countries in broader context in relation to the comparative local government studies literature, and brings into question the view of UK local authorities as larger than their southern European counterparts.

The paper proceeds in the following way. First, we set out the context of local government in which councillors operate. Second, drawing on literature in relation to local democracy, we offer some observations on the nature of representative and participatory democracy, and the functioning of political parties therein. Third, we outline our methods used – primarily a survey of councillors plus interviews. Fourth, we present the results from the questionnaire and interviews, and discuss our findings, before concluding with some reflections on the nature of the democratic process as revealed by the analysis.

Local government in Spain and the UK

Spain

There are over 8,000 Spanish municipalities (**see table 1**), the largest of which is Madrid, with over 5 million inhabitants. At the other end of the scale, nearly 7,000 municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants.

Table 1: Municipalities by population size in Spain (Sweeting, 2009)

Population size of municipality	Number	Percentage of municipalities
Up to 5000	6 948	85.7
5001 - 20 000	841	10.4
20 001 - 50 000	201	2.5
50 001 - 100 000	62	0.8
Above 100 000	56	0.7
Total	8 108	100.1

Note: percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The number of councillors in individual municipalities rises with population as shown in **table 2** (Vallés and Brugué, 2001: 278). However, the number of councillors does not rise in proportion to the population, meaning that the ratio of councillors to inhabitants falls as population size increases.

Table 2: Number of councillors by population size

Number of residents	Number of councillors
1-99	Mayor only
100 – 250	5
251-1000	7
1001-2000	9
2001-5000	11
5001-10,000	13
10,001-20,000	17
20,001-50,000	21
50,001-100,000	25
100,001 upwards	27 councillors upwards. For municipalities above 100,000, one more councillor is added (to 25) for each extra 100,000 inhabitants or fraction thereof, plus one more if necessary to make an odd number

While there are a many small municipalities, about half the population live in one of 118 larger municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. As the number of councillors does not rise in proportion to population size, about half of the voters in Spain are represented by about 5% of councillors, with the other 95% of councillors representing the other half of the population (**see table 3**). In the extreme, in the case of the municipality of Madrid this means that 57 councillors represent nearly 3.3 million people – or one councillor for approximately every 57,900 people.

Table 3: Municipalities and councillors in Spain (see Delgado, 2006: 166)

Population size of municipality	Number of voters	Per cent of voters	Per cent municipalities	Number of councillors	Per cent of councillors
Up to 250 inhabitants	299,491	0.9	28.9	8,680	13.3
251-5000	5,075,436	15.1	57.0	37,348	57.2
5001- 20,000	6,718,903	20.0	10.5	12,306	18.9
20,000 – 50,000	4,119,461	12.3	2.1	3,696	5.7
Above 50,000	17,372,666	51.7	1.5	3,235	5.0
Total	33,585,957	100.0	100.0	65,265	100.2

Spanish municipalities with more than 250 inhabitants operate a system of proportional representation to allocate seats, with a threshold of 5% in order to gain representation (Alba and Navarro, 2003: 208). Each municipality is a single constituency, and parties present closed lists. It is generally the case that the larger the municipality, the more proportional the election outcome. The mayor is chosen by councillors and must be the head of a party list.

The *Partido Socialista Obrero España* (PSOE, socialist) and the *Partido Popular* (PP, right of centre) dominate elections in Spain, taking about 70% of the total vote, with the *Izquierda Unida* (IU, a coalition of left wing parties) taking around 10%. Local, regional, and independent parties take the remaining votes (Delgado, 2006: 171-2). Municipal elections take place every four years. Turnout is high, and in each of the elections since 1979, has been between 60% and 70% (Delgado, 2006: 191).

The UK[1]

There are 351 principal authorities in England, 32 Scottish Unitary and 22 Welsh Unitary Councils (see **table 4**). English councils comprise 32 London Borough Councils, 36 Metropolitan District Councils, 27 Counties, 6 Unitary Counties, 201 District Councils, and 49 Unitary Districts (LGBCE, 2013). The smallest of these 351 authorities in voter terms is West Somerset, which has an electorate of just over 28,000. The largest is Kent, with an electorate of more than 1,051,000. There is considerable variation in the number of electors per councillor between councils. West Somerset (again) has the highest proportion of councillors to voters at one councillor per 1,002 voters. At the other extreme, each of Essex's councillors serves on average 13,975 electors.

Table 4: Principal authorities in the UK - electors and councillors

	Number	Range of Electors	Range of councillors	Range of electors per councillor (rounded to nearest whole number)
London Borough	32	105,784-259,256	46-70	1,959-3,992
Metropolitan District	36	112,257-762,461	48-120	1,782-6,354
County	27	328,334-1,051,591	45-84	4,682-13,975
Unitary County	6	38,016-501,300	39-123	2,802-3,679
District	201	28,064-156,967	24-62	1,002-3,488
Unitary District	49	28,588-322,387	26-82	1,100-4,606
Total England	351	28,064-1,051,591	24-123	1,002-13,975
Scottish Unitary	32	16,659-493,950	21 -79	1,132-6,253
Welsh Unitary	22	44,115-248,062	33-75	1,337 – 3,308
Total	405			

Sources: LGBCE, (2013); Electoral Commission (2013); Boundary Commission for Scotland (2013)

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[1] The United Kingdom comprises England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. This paper concentrates on councillors in England, Scotland, and Wales.

These figures do not include parish and town councils. A publication by the Local Government Association and National Association of Local Councils estimates there are about 9,000 parish and town councils in England, and interestingly distinguishes them from the 351 'principal' councils by calling them 'local' councils (LGA/NALC, 2013: 2). Wilson and Game (2006: 80) state that there are about 8,700 town and parish councils with some 75,000 councillors serving on them. They also point to the 750 Welsh community councils, and the 1,150 community councils in Scotland. While Scottish community councils are limited to consultative, non-service delivery roles, English and Welsh parish, town or community councils can provide a limited range of services. According to Wilson and Game, they are 'likely to be involved in helping with the provision of meals on wheels, providing recycling facilities, organising community buses, setting up car sharing schemes, installing TV cameras to prevent crime, enabling local post offices and stores to remain open, or arranging local GP clinics' (Wilson and Game, 2006: 81). This is not the stuff of massive state intervention, yet the services that these councils provide will make a difference to the communities that they serve. The councillors that serve on them are often party members and elected. Wilson and Game explain the 'limited attention' (Wilson and Game, 2006: 81) given to them in their book by pointing out that they are not universal, and cover about only one third of the population, have no specific duties, and importantly, have only discretionary powers.

Elections to principal councils in England and Wales are on the basis of first-past-the-post in single or multi-member wards. Councillors are elected for four years, either in 'all out' elections where all council seats are contested, or by 'thirds', where one third of seats is contested in three of every four years (Wilson and Game, 2006). In Scotland, councillors are elected for three years on the basis of single transferable vote (STV). In many cases – and certainly the case in principal authorities, the majority of seats are contested and won by national parties (Copus, 2004).

Comparing the Spain and the UK

Much of the comparative literature on comparative local government in Europe puts Spain in the southern or Napoleonic groups of coutries, and England, Scotland and Wales in the Northern or Anglo groups (see e.g. John, 2001; Hesse and Sharpe, 1991). It is debatable whether or to what extent these typologies still hold in a world that has since globalised, further Europeanised, seen the collapse of the Berlin wall, and, in the comparative local government studies community at least, seen greater interest in countries from central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Swianiewicz, 2006). Nevertheless, in that literature the picture is painted of the UK having 'large' local authorities, and Spain having 'small' municipalities. In **table 5**, we set out the size of authorities in different countries, according to John (2001) and Norton (1991).

Table 5: Size of basic local authorities

Country	John (2001)	Norton (1991)
Belgium	11,000	16,740
Denmark	18,000	18,500
Finland	11,026	10,646
France	1,491	1,500
Italy	7,182	6,800
Germany	7,900	7,240
Greece	1,803	1,600
Ireland	36,100	41,910
Netherlands	2,723	17,860
Norway	9,000	9,145
Portugal	2,342	34,180
Spain	4,997	4,700
Sweden	33,000	30,000
England	-	127,000
Scotland	-	91,620
Wales	-	75,870
UK	137,000	-

Clearly using these figures one would conclude that councils in the UK are the largest in Europe. It is these sorts of statistics that allowed John Stewart to state "the average size of a British local authority is about ten times the average size of local authorities in the rest of Europe" (2000:65-6).

One of the interesting differences between the two tables is the case of Portugal, which according to John has an average local authority size of 2,342, whereas Norton calculates the figure to be 34,180. The difference in the figures for Portugal can be accounted for as John appears to include parish councils in his calculations, whereas they are excluded in Norton's. Norton, even though he excludes these sorts of councils, says that the Portuguese parishes 'have a much wider scope than the English parish and Welsh community authorities whose functions are entirely discretionary and not comparable with the other authorities [included]' (Norton: 1991: 31ff).

The basis to exclude parish councils on the basis that their functions are discretionary and limited is questionable. First, in the case of limited functions, how many functions need a tier of government to provide in order for it to be deemed significant enough to be included in these sorts of figures? Where might such a line be drawn, and on what basis do authorities become 'comparable'? In the case of Spanish municipalities, the smallest authorities are only obliged to provide drainage, pavements, street lighting, cemeteries, waste collection, street cleaning, water supply, and food regulation, and even then such services are actually provided by provinces (the second tier of local government in Spain) or inter-municipal arrangements on behalf of municipalities (Sweeting, 2009). The smallest Spanish authorities are very different from large authorities in other countries, who might provide health services and education. Yet they are included and in doing so are deemed 'comparable'.

Second, in the case of discretionary functions, why is the fact that functions are discretionary so significant? Isn't it more significant that they exist and do carry out functions, rather than the basis on which these functions are provided? Surely the fact that these authorities exist trumps the fact that they provide services on a discretionary basis. Third, in linking the significance of parish and town councils to the breadth of services they provide falls into the trap of downplaying the representative, democratic functions that these councils, and the councillors on them play. There is good reason to believe that parish and town councils, at a level closest to the community, may well be most 'in touch' with local people. Their councillors, especially those that are party members, many also help to link parish and district, or even parish and county, representing those communities in other arenas and at other levels of government.

Third, another way of measuring the size of local authorities is to consider the number of councillors in relation to population size. As **Table 3** shows, about half of the voting population of Spain lives in authorities with more than 50,000 inhabitants each. The ratio of councillors to votes in these municipalities is one councillor to every 5,370 voters. By comparison with UK local authorities that is a higher ratio than many of the UK's principal authorities: higher than all London Boroughs, all unitary counties, all districts, all unitary districts, and all Welsh unitary authorities. Many metropolitan districts, and even some counties, have lower rations of councillors to voters than this figure. Of course, this average figure for half of Spain is itself a measure of central tendency, skewed by the presence of the massive municipalities of Madrid and Barcelona. Yet even in more modestly sized municipalities, the difference is marked. The city of Granada has a population of about 240,000, and therefore has 27 councillors. Southampton, a similar sized unitary authority has 48 councillors. The point is, that the view transmitted by the 'one statistic' comparisons of local government leads to the view of large and distant local authorities in the UK, at odds with the rest of Europe's smaller municipalities does not stand up to scrutiny. The way that the average sizes are calculated – simply by dividing the overall population size of a country by the number of authorities, or dividing the population size by the number of councillors captures nothing of the variation in size of local authorities - which is to be expected as the mean is a measure of central tendency!

Our issue is not that scholars of local government in the UK concentrate on principal authorities rather than parish and town councils. This is perfectly justifiable. The problem comes when this focus is transferred to the comparative context. This gives the misleading impression that UK authorities are larger than they really are, because these figures routinely ignore the thousands of parish and town councils that exist, and mean scores don't capture the variety of councils in other countries. The conventional wisdom of seeing British local authorities as much larger than their European counterparts is brought into question as illustrated in comparison with Spain

Consequently, we argue that there is good reason to include English parish and town councils, and Welsh community councils, in comparative statistics regarding the size of local authorities. We also make the case for the inclusion of Scottish community councils though recognise that, they serve only representative functions.   Taking Wilson and Game's figures for town, parish, and community councils in England, Wales, then Scotland, and adding them to the numbers for principal authorities, gives the following, very different picture of the size of British local government **(table 6)**.

Table 6: The size of British local government

	Number of authorities	Average population
England	9,000	5,890
Scotland	1,182	4,480
Wales	772	3,968
UK	10954	5,603

There are of course problems with the calculations in **table six**. They are based on in some cases three tiers of authorities (parish, district, and county), whereas, for example Norton's figures were based on 'basic' authorities, (though John's figures for the UK included two tiers). Including parishes is in some senses misleading, as large parts of the population are not covered by such councils. Yet the same point could be made about other sorts of council

Representation and participation[2]

There are two main variants of local democracy that are apparent in local government in Spain and the UK: the traditional representative form, and the participatory form (Sweeting and Copus, 2012). The representative form is based on the election of representatives to some sort of decision-making chamber, with representatives in different ways representing citizens (Haus and Sweeting, 2006). The participatory form has increased considerably in importance in recent years, prompted the 'deliberative turn' in democratic theory (Goodin, 2008). It is part of a long line of literature critical of the infrequent, confined, and limited nature of citizen input within representative democracy (see for example Pateman, 1970). Democratic theorists of this school 'encourage people to come together to discuss common problems and to agree to solutions', and 'talking together' is of particular value (Goodin, 2008: 2). The movement pushes 'micro-deliberative innovations' (Goodin, 2008: 2) such as deliberative opinion polling, various neighbourhood or decentralised fora, and citizens' juries. This 'turn' has been joined by the activities of many municipalities to experiment with 'democratic innovations' (Smith, 2005) and to embed participation in processes of municipal decision-making (Lowndes et al, 2001). Again, this can be connected to a much longer history of state-led participation schemes. However, what is clear now is that the participatory form of democracy is now firmly rooted, perhaps uncomfortably, alongside the representative form.

Within the boundaries of liberal-democratic theory, these two conceptions of democracy correspond to the aggregative and deliberative forms of democratic decision-making set out by Cohen and Sabel (1997). The aggregative form is based on counting votes, allowing for the expression of conflicting, and contradictory interests of group members (Cohen and Sabel, 1997: 320). This form places emphasis on reaching decisions, despite the existence of competing views. It accepts that not all decisions will have full support, but that there are sound reasons for accepting majority decisions, as everyone, via voting,

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[2] This section draws on Sweeting and Copus (2013)

has an equal chance of influencing them. Alternatively, the deliberative form is based, rather than on the acceptance of decisions based on majority views, on decisions that are 'supported by reasons acceptable to others' and via 'free public reasoning amongst equals' (Cohen and Sabel, 1997: 320). The idea in deliberation is that citizens attempt to convince others, or seek consensus, for decisions. Though Cohen and Sabel concede that agreement will not always be possible, this form of decision-making is clearly based on very different conceptions of the nature of democracy.

These forms of democracy – sitting alongside each other - imply very different roles for local councillors. In the aggregative form, their role lies in representing citizens' interests, and in making decisions in municipal chambers. There are differing ways to enact the concept of representation, whether as trustee, delegate, or party soldier. As trustee, an elected representative is free to use her own judgement, whereas delegates are bound by the opinion of those that represent them (Judge, 1999). Additionally, in party systems, it has been argued that the loyalty of the representative is transferred away from the electorate and towards the party of which that representative is a member (Copus, 2004: 20), and the representative acts in accordance with the wishes of the party – essentially becoming a party soldier. These three forms of representation – trustee, delegate and party soldier – imply different emphases in the act of representation. However, the overall role of councillors in the representative or aggregative system is clear in that they contribute in some way to the representation of citizens, with councillors involved in local decision-making via their role in the full council, on committees of different sorts, or as either executive or non-executive councillors - and often mediated via the operation of party groups.

In the deliberative form, the role of councillors is far less clear. Copus (2004) has argued that deliberative processes in local democracy challenge the position of councillor as elite decision-maker, and threaten the private, party group based arenas of private deliberation to which councillors are used. This sort of analysis sits within the longstanding tension in the roles of councillors caused by the existence of both participatory and representative democracy (Lepine and Sullivan, 2010).

It is often argued that there are tensions between representative and participative democracy, hindering their effective functioning in a single decision-making system. For example, Sullivan *et al* (2004: 248-9) argue that representative democracy rests on the advocacy of interests by councillors feeding into formal decision-making processes over a large area but within a restricted view of the 'political'. Alternatively, participatory democracy functions with a much broader conception of inclusion but within much smaller areas, emphasising the deliberation of individuals which may then lead into more concrete proposals for action. Tensions therefore arise around the relative weight that ought to be accorded to the representation of interests articulated by councillors, and the weight accorded to the views of those citizens that actually participate. There are also tensions related to scale, with strains between the articulation of sectoral/and or neighbourhood interests that may emerge from participation mechanisms, and the overarching and city-wide interests with which councillors are faced.

 In many European countries, these tensions now take place within cities where local decision-making arenas are in over-arching terms representative in character, but which contain within them, to a

greater or lesser extent, elements of citizen participation (Klausen *et al*, 2005). This takes place against a background of party political local politics, where in many municipalities, a high proportion of councillors are elected to the council as party members. Assuming the existence of a chain of command where councillors play a key role in translating the demands of citizens into policy decisions which form the basis of action on the part of municipal bureaucracies (Denters, 2005: 423), the opinions of councillors on the ways that citizens ought to participate in decision-making processes, and their opinion of different forms of participation mechanism, are of critical importance.

Methods

The results presented in this paper emerge from a larger project called Municipal Assemblies in European Local Governance, or MAELG (see Egner, Sweeting, and Klok, 2013)[3]. The project sent an identical, translated questionnaire to a sample of councillors in sixteen countries. In Spain, the questionnaire was sent to a random selection of councillors in authorities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. 2,004 were sent out, and 520 were returned – a response rate of 25.9%.In the UK, 6,082 questionnaires were sent out to a stratified sample of councillors in different sorts of authorities. 700 were returned, a response rate of 11.5%.

Results

This section presents the results of the survey of councillors in each country. The first results in **table 7** are in response to a set of questions around party.

Table 7: councillors and party

	UK	Spain
Party member	92.8	93.7
Influence over local authority activities: party leaders (high or very high influence)	29.3	27.0
Influence over local authority activities: party groups (high or very high influence)	37.7	44.3
Influence over local authority activities: party organisations (high or very high influence)	9.9	15.9
Agreement with: 'the local party organisation has much influence over the decisions of the party's council group' (agree or strongly agree)	48.9	87.3
Agreement with: 'the party's council group has much influence over the decisions of the local party' (agree or strongly agree)	58.0	88.5
Importance of implementing the programme of my party/movement (great or upmost importance)	47.7	88.2
Frequency of contact with other members of party group: a few times a week (the highest frequency option)	52.8	91.0

These results show some revealing differences between councillors in the UK and their Spanish counterparts. There are broad similarities over the influence of party leaders, groups, and organisations over municipal activities. However, there are considerable differences in other areas. That Spanish councillors are much more likely to agree than UK councillors that the local party organisation and council party group seem mutually influential may be a function if the fact that in Spain many party leaders are also Chairs of the local party organisation. Spanish councillors are much likely to rate as more important to implement the programme of their party (or movement), and to be in contact with their party group colleagues. Part of this may be a result of many Spanish councillors in Spain being full-time. But that, coupled with the finding that Spanish councillors tend to rate the programme of the party or movement more highly, suggests a state where, at one level at least, parties are more important in the activities of councillors that those in the UK.

This suggestion is supported by the results to a further question on voting orientation, designed to tease out whether councillors see themselves as trustees, delegates, or party soldiers (see **table 8**).

Table 8: representative style

		UK	Spain
If there should be conflict between a member's own opinion, the opinion of the party group, and that of the voters, which way should a member of the council vote?	Own conviction	57.3	32.0
	Party group	24.7	55.6
	Opinion of voters	17.1	12.4

The results in **table 8** demonstrate the greater prevalence of the party soldier in Spanish local government, reinforcing the picture of a more party influenced system of local government. Styles of representation can be further explored using the responses to a set of questions taking in attitudes to representation and participation (**table 9**).

Table 9: Attitudes to representation and participation[4]

	UK	Spain
Councillors should make what they think are the right decisions, independent of the views of local people	54.7	22.1
Apart from voting, citizens should not be given the opportunity to influence local decision-making	16.9	8.3
The results of local elections should be the most important factor in determining municipal policies	48.7	62.5
Council decisions should reflect majority opinion among residents	43.6	78.2
Residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before decisions are made by elected representatives	90.8	82.0
Residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions	63.6	64.0

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[4] Percentages in table 9 are the sum of agree and strongly agree

As suggested by the results in table 8, the results in table seem to show that many councillors in the UK have a more Burkean conception of representation – they are much more likely to want to have independence from voters once elected. Spanish councillors are more likely to point to the supremacy of the electoral process in informing decision-making in that they are more likely to agree that elections should be the most important factor in municipal policy-making. Spanish councillors are also more likely to agree that decisions reflect majority opinion – pointing towards a more trustee style of representation. On the final two statements, on active and passive participation, apart from noting that in both countries most councillors tend to support both sorts of participation, the results are less revealing. In order to delve deeper into the attitudes of councillors towards participation, it is necessary to ask about particular participation mechanisms. Attitudes to individual participation mechanisms are presented in **table 10**.

Table 10: councillor attitudes to participation mechanisms[5]

	UK	Spain
Voting (effective)	81.9	86.0
Party meeting (effective)	31.9	44.5
Public meeting (effective)	50.4	50.4
Petition (effective)	35.5	61.0
Complaints schemes (effective)	43.2	61.2
Satisfaction surveys (effective)	47.4	69.1
Non-binding referendum (desirable)	32.8	73.8
Citizens' Juries (effective)	25.2	28.5
Co-decision procedures, where citizens can discuss and make binding decisions on local issues (desirable)	31.9	69.2
Binding referendum (desirable)	25.1	59.7

The table includes participation mechanisms of different sorts. There are traditional mechanisms of voting, petitioning, and public meetings that are familiar in the context of representative democracy. Also included (though not strictly a participation mechanism) is the party meeting. Also included are the consumerist methods of complaints schemes and satisfaction surveys, and those that imply a greater role for citizens as decision-makers, such as binding referenda and co-decision procedures.

The first thing to note about the table is that in every case, Spanish councillors are more enthusiastic about the mechanisms that their UK counterparts (the only exception being the public meeting, which has exactly the same level of support). The greatest differences appear to be for those mechanisms where there is the greatest level of participation by citizens in decision-making – the co-decision

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[5] All results presented in the table are responses to one of two questions: How effective do you think the following are in letting councillors know public opinion? (Voting, petition, party meeting, public meeting satisfaction surveys, complaints schemes, citizens' juries); and how desirable or undesirable do you consider the following? (Co-decision procedures, where citizens can discuss and make binding decisions on certain local issues, devolution of responsibilities to neighbourhood organisations, advisory (non-binding) referendum, decisive (binding) referendum. Percentages are sums of effective and very effective or desirable or highly desirable as appropriate on a 5 point scale.

procedure, and both forms of referendum. So even though both sets of councillors tend to agree to the same extent that 'residents should participate actively and directly in making important local decisions', this only translates through to support for those sorts of mechanisms in the case of Spain, who seem to be more open to direct participation in decision-making. This would be consistent with councillors in the UK holding a more trustee-style view of representation.

Conclusions

The findings of this paper indicate that Spanish councillors seem more influenced by their parties than their UK counterparts. This is comes of something of a surprise to those of us schooled in UK literature on local government which emphasises the cohesiveness of party groups and the influence of party over decision-making. It is therefore something of a surprise that Spanish councillors appear to be more open to participation mechanisms, as these seems to go against the grain of party-dominated decision-making. There may however be other explanations. For example, it may be that UK councillors have grown weary of participation mechanisms, having suffered years of exhortations from central government about their value. Or it may be that Spanish councillors see them as useful adjuncts to a decision-making system that at its core is the party group, and such initiatives are not seen as any sort of threat to the role of the councillor in a representative party system of local government. Yet there remains the sense that UK councillors are more wedded to a role as trustee in the system where there is scope for individual judgement. To be able to substantiate such explanations, however, is beyond the scope of this research, and would likely need more in-depth qualitative analyses. The value of this cross-national research approach, however, lies in revealing and challenging what might be regarded of long-held assumptions about the nature of local government in any particular country.

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