

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper aims to examine how Spanish local councils respond to changes in their institutional context by implementing a sustainable practice: Local Agenda 21 (LA21).

### **Design/methodology/approach**

– This paper uses the institutional approach to explain the factors influencing the adoption of LA21. It develops a series of hypotheses about how specific institutional factors affect the town and city councils that have implemented an LA21, as well as the differences between local councils with high versus medium implementation levels.

### **Findings**

– The analysis reveals some institutional factors that explain the process of institutional change, the outcomes of LA21, and the differences between local councils.

### **Research limitations/implications**

– Only one respondent from each local council completed the questionnaire. The authors tested for common method bias and did not find it to be present.

### **Practical implications**

– From a more practical point-of-view, the authors consider LA21 to be an effective instrument for improving both the sustainability of towns and the management of local councils.

### **Originality/value**

– The paper proposes institutional theory as a perspective that can explain change in organizations. The main value of the research lies in its identification of the factors affecting the process of change and the outcomes of implementing a sustainable practice like LA21.

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