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The Municipalisation of Gas in Latin Europe: Spain, Portugal and France Until the First World War

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Abstract

The chapter analyses the municipalisations in the gas sector in three Southern European countries, France, Spain and Portugal, from the last third of the nineteenth century up to the First World War. The first step is to describe the regulation of networked services and then assess the gas regulation, a pioneering sector that, since the mid-nineteenth century, set the standard for the management of the remaining utilities. To do this, we will first examine the

legislations and, second, the theoretical literature on the regulation of public utilities; more specifically, the new trend that emerged between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which supported the municipalisation of a service that had been deployed thanks, essentially, to private initiatives under concession. The aim is to analyse the context and the discourses that were used in those cases in which the authorities finally opted for municipalisation, which had a lot to do with socioeconomic dynamics and with the action of local elites. Though public management was exceptional in those nations before the First World War, we aim to identify where and why gas was municipalised.