

The Environmental Agenda of Local Plans: A Comparative Analysis in the European Context

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This paper presents the results of a comparative study designed to identify and characterise the environmental contents of local plans in four different national planning systems in Europe: Portugal, Spain, France and England. Our research made evident an important tension between the common framework of the European environmental policies, developed throughout the last three decades, and the profound differences between national planning systems in Europe, deeply rooted into the political and administrative country contexts, distinct past and present practices and national planning cultures. The comparative analysis seems to point out that, so far, significant differences can still be found in the way local (urban) plans integrate environmental policies. In other words, planning systems seem reluctant to adopt a common European approach as it is the case with the environmental policy standards and instruments driven by the European Union. For how long this planning diversity holds, at least as far as environmental policies are concerned, remains to be seen.