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Environmental Governance and Transnational Municipal Networks in Europe

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Abstract

The nature of environmental governance within Europe is increasingly considered to be multilevel - involving actors and institutions at local, national and international levels, and from public, private and civil society spheres. One interesting feature of the development of multilevel governance is the emergence of transnational municipal networks (TMNs). This article examines why and how TMNs have emerged in the arena of European environmental governance, and the ways in which they can be conceptualised. Some specific examples of TMNs concerned with urban sustainable development are examined in order to explore the structure and capacity of networks, the development of new forms of governance within such networks, and the nature of co-operation and competition between governments and networks. From these preliminary analyses, three key themes relating to the role of such networks in environmental governance emerge: the impact of networks on policy making; their influence in multilevel governance; and issues of representation and legitimacy. In the final section, issues for future research are considered.