THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Pragmatism or idealism? An urban perspective onto the politics of interurban cooperation for sustainability in the EU

OPEN ACCESS

Pragmatism or idealism?

An urban perspective onto the politics of inter-urban cooperation for sustainability in the EU

Elisabetta Mocca

University of Edinburgh Business School

Elisabetta.Mocca@ed.ac.uk

Abstract

European cities have been committed to achieve urban sustainability, participating into inter-urban networks dealing with socio-ecological issues. By examining the incentives derived by the involvement in these networks and the municipal political milieu where the decision about network participation is taken, this article seeks to understand the motivations for European cities to take part in sustainability networks. To do so, a small-N qualitative analysis was undertaken. The results show that cities' participation in socio-ecological urban networks is motivated by the economic, political and formative incentives that membership provides, and is influenced by institutionalised values, political agency and previous cooperative experience.

Keywords: Transnational Municipal Networks; Local Governments; European Union Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Urban sustainability has become an important area of cooperation among European cities, encouraged by the EU institutions to take on a pro-active role to create more sustainable cities. In particular, the publication of EU documents[1], the implementation of initiatives, such as the

---

[1] One the first document of this kind is the 1990 Green Paper on the Urban Environment (Gibbs 1997).

European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, and the establishment of specific EU funds have contributed to promote inter-urban networking in the realm of sustainability (Bulkeley 2005).

The cooperation among European cities on sustainability has resulted in collaborative projects and programmes, but especially in the participation in transnational municipal networks devoted to sustainability-related issues - called socio-ecological urban networks (SEUNs) (Mocca 2017). The engagement of European cities in these organisations constitutes a political phenomenon that calls for an in-depth exploration of the reasons why issues related to sustainability require the concerted action of cities at supra-national level. While sustainability-related issues are clearly important for cities, affected by pollution, social and economic disparities, cities' engagement in SEUNs may be motivated by political and economic reasons that go beyond environmental concerns. In this sense, understanding the reasons underlying SEUN membership is important to shed light on whether transnational municipalism constitutes a policy strategy for local governments to achieve specific economic and political objectives.

To examine the reasons for cities to engage at supra-national level, an analytical approach – termed elsewhere as "urban" (Mocca 2017) – centred on cities as the object of analysis is applied. From an empirical perspective, a small-N qualitative analysis involving seven European cities was undertaken to delve into the motivations underlying the decision to be part of networks dedicated to sustainability. In so doing, this article seeks to contribute to the literature on transnational municipalism, by providing an insight on the rationale behind European cities' mobilisation on sustainability.

The article is organised as follows. After this introduction, the analytical framework is introduced in Section 2 and explained in detail in Section 3. The methodology is presented in

Section 4, while the findings of the qualitative analysis are reported in Sections 5 and 6. A discussion of the results and final observations are provided in section 7.

2. An urban perspective onto transnational municipalism

The commitment of cities to achieve sustainability has spawned a host of research across a variety of disciplines. For instance, the literature on the science-policy interface has examined collaborations among local governments, experts and citizens in environmental policy-making (Munõz-Erickson 2014; White et al. 2008; Zborel et al. 2012), while research on sustainability planning has identified and analysed indicators, plans and policies to foster sustainability in cities (Pearsall and Pierce 2010; Taylor 2012; Wheeler 2013). Other streams of literature have devoted attention to inter-urban cooperation for sustainability and climate change. This topic has been explored through the lens of the policy mobility scholarship, which has critically examined the mechanisms of knowledge and policy transfer (Blok 2012; Temenos and McCann 2012), as well as by the literature on transnational municipal networks (see inter alia Betsill and Bulkeley 2004, 2006; Bulkeley and Betsill 2003; Bulkeley et al. 2003; Giest and Howlett 2013; Keiner and Kim 2007; Kern and Bulkeley 2009; Lee 2013; Toly 2008), which has shed light on the structure, the internal organisation, the functions, the policy outcomes and the external relations of the networks.

Despite the important scholarly contribution of this latter body of literature, the reasons why cities participate in transnational municipal networks for sustainability have not received considerable attention. In particular, the mobilisation of European cities within the EU calls for a distinct analysis, in that it occurs in a peculiar context defined by the *sui generis* nature of the European Union's architecture.

To unpack the motivations for cities to participate in SEUNs, an urban-centred approach is adopted. This hinges on two main assumptions. Firstly, this approach conceives city-

governments as political agents with an autonomous decision-making capacity. This entails that the choice to participate in SEUNs and the extent of their involvement is influenced by the interests and attitudes of the local political elite and by the benefits of SEUN membership expected by local policy-makers. This argument suggests that, to fully explore the phenomenon of transnational municipalism for sustainability, it is necessary to take into account the incentives that cities obtain from their engagement in SEUNs. Secondly, it is assumed that the choices of local governments are primarily embedded in the municipal context, whereby the political and institutional dynamics underpin cities' participation in SEUNs. From this standpoint, the urban level exerts a far greater influence than the supra-national level. As noted elsewhere, this argument stands in contrast with much of extant research on the topic, for which the establishment of inter-urban networks is deemed to be favoured by the multi-level EU architecture (see Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Bulkeley et al., 2003; Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005; Heinelt and Niederhafner 2008; Kern and Bulkeley, 2009) (Mocca 2017). However, while providing an insight on the opportunities that the new modes of governance have opened up to local authorities, the multi-level governance approach does not examine the institutional and political dynamics playing out at municipal level, which are pivotal to gain an understanding of why cities are getting increasingly important in the political landscape.

Moreover, many contributions in the field tends to emphasise the 'environmentalness' of inter-urban cooperation for sustainability and climate change, with the risk of overlooking its political aspects. By way of contrast, in this article it is assumed that cities' participation in SEUNs is driven more by the benefits provided than by the environmental preoccupations of the local political elites.

Approaches focusing on cities as analytical units have been criticised by some scholars studying transnational municipal networks (see for example Bulkeley and Betsill 2003; Bulkeley and Betsill 2005), as being incapable of fully understanding the scope of this

phenomenon. Nevertheless, other authors have argued for a more exhaustive analysis of the role of cities in transnational processes. A compelling example can be found in Saunier and Ewen's book (2008), which provides an historical analysis of transnational municipalism. There, Saunier argues that local governments are considered "as one embodiment of urban agency", rather than "mere sites for the flows that have made and unmade the world", warning not to conflate municipal governments with cities (Saunier and Ewen 2008, 9). Therefore, cities "are […] an appropriate target" for an historical analysis of the international engagement of local authorities (Saunier and Ewen 2008, 9). Drawing on this approach, Saunier and Ewen (2008, 177, 181) observe that, historically, transnational municipal networks have always been urban centred, in that cities acted at the same time (although not to the same extent) as "donors" and "recipient" through the dissemination of norms and practices.

The development of an urban approach as an alternative to the multi-level framework is not aimed at questioning the validity of the empirical conclusions reached by previous research on transnational municipalism applying this approach. The argument here is about recalibrating the supra-national reflections over urban politics. This is to say that local governments still have decision-making autonomy over their destiny. Cities, amid globalising and Europeanisation forces, can still shape their identity and can choose with a certain degree of autonomy the instruments to do so. In this sense, supra-national phenomena have facilitated the presence of cities on the global stage; but these are enabling factors, rather than the motivations for cities to engage at international level. To summarise, the urban approach is a tool aimed at analysing the context in which participation in SEUNs is embedded, while taking into account the role that local policy-makers play in influencing SEUN membership. In the next section, the two working assumptions of the urban approach are discussed.

3. Local governments and SEUN engagement

Before setting out the analytical framework here applied, it is appropriate to provide a definition of transnational municipalism and its cognate terms. Transnational municipalism is a phenomenon entailing the development of linkages among cities located in different states. As illustrated in Figure 1, the outcome of such phenomenon are all the associative forms grouping localities, ranging from town twinning to urban cooperative networks. The latter can be categorised in sub-groups according to the policy issues tackled and the breadth of mission. While some city networks focus on one single specific issue, such as urban security or culture, the mission of other networks is more comprehensive, including social, environmental and economic themes. This latter type constitutes the research object of this article.

[Figure 1 here]

Having elucidated the main terms recurring in this article, in the next sub-sections, the two categories of motivations considered as drivers of European cities' engagement in SEUNs are examined.

3.1 The functional appeal of transnational municipal networks

As mention previously, the first assumption of the approach here developed suggests that the engagement of cities in SEUNs is functional – i.e. incentive-oriented. SEUNs – and transnational municipal networks more broadly - are first and foremost cooperative organisations. As the vast literature on the collective action has shown, what underpins the decision to cooperate is the prospect of gaining benefits (see inter alia Laver 1997; Olson 1965; Taylor 1987). Notably, Olson (1965) states that participation in organisations is conditioned by the presence or absence of incentives, either in the form of benefit for the members, or sanctions

towards non-compliant members. Consequentially, one would expect local authorities be induced to engage in a network by the prospect of gaining benefits. More precisely, actors will be more likely to join SEUNs if the benefits of cooperating will be perceived as greater than the costs.

Research contributions have underscored the importance of incentives associated with the participation of cities in supra-national initiatives. As Vion (2001 in Le Galès 2002, 108) argues, transnational municipal networks constitute the arena where "political and economic entrepreneurs" market local authorities to obtain financial and political benefits. Similarly, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004), with regard to cities' engagement in the Climate Change Protection Programme (CCP), found that the highly committed local governments were attracted by the economic and political incentives and by cognitive and rule-making aspects that the network provided. Moreover, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004, 479-480) highlight the importance of "co-benefits"[2] for network members and argue that "the exchange and production of material and nonmaterial resources are indeed factors in securing network participation". Kübler and Piliutyte (2007, 367) consider policy learning as a motivation for cities to engage in networks, in that knowledge and experience exchange reduces information and "transaction costs" and enables cities to be updated on European urban policies. In particular, the importance of "collective incentives" (such as gaining importance at EU level) and selective incentives (as for example acquiring competences in a policy area) associated with the participation in transnational municipal networks has been highlighted by some authors (Kübler and Piliutyte 2007, 370, for the case of Eurocities). These aspects shed light on the capability of networks to act as means for collective action, through which cities can pursue common interests (see on this point Heinelt and Niederhafner 2008).

---

[2] For example, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) found that in by participating in the CCP programme, the co-benefits for the members are financial savings, better air quality and improved quality of life at city level.

The incentives above discussed correspond to the functions undertaken by networks. These can be grouped in three main categories: formative, economic and political functions. Formative functions include information and knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking. A pivotal function performed by networks is facilitating the exchange of information, practice and knowledge, as emphasised by several authors[3]. Moreover, networks also enable "capacity building" and "policy implementation", by equipping the members with the practical skills, tools and financial resources to implement the initiatives promoted by the networks (Andonova et al. 2009, 64; Bulkeley et al. 2003; Bulkeley and Newell 2010, 56-57). Furthermore, network engagements constitutes *per se* an important aspect for members, as some authors suggest (Happaerts et al. 2010; Niederhafner 2013).

With regard to the economic functions performed by transnational municipal networks, Bennington and Harvey (1994) point out the role of networks as a means for local authorities to access EU funding. Through networks, local authorities can meet other European peers willing to set up project partnerships to bid into EU funding (Bulkeley et al. 2003; Kern and Bulkeley 2009; Ward and Williams 1997).

The networks also fulfil political functions. One of these political activities is "coalition-building, which involves forming alliances with like-minded actors who share certain goals in a given policy area" (Bomberg and Peterson 1998 in Happaerts et al. 2011, 325). A second political function is lobbying, as a sizeable number of authors have emphasised[4]. By lobbying at national and supra-national level, local governments have the opportunity to influence

---

[3] See: Andonova et al. (2009); Bulkeley and Betsill (2003); Bulkeley et al. (2003); Bulkeley and Newell (2010); Kern (2009); Keiner and Kim (2007); Kern and Bulkeley (2009); Le Galès (2002); Leitner and Sheppard (1999); Marshall (2005); Ward and Williams (1997).

[4] See: Bennington and Harvey (1994); Betsill and Bulkeley (2006); Bulkeley and Betsill (2003); Bulkeley et al. (2003); Clarke (2009); Ewen (2008); Happaerts et al. (2010); Happaerts et al. (2011); Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008); Kern (2009); Kern and Bulkeley (2009); Kübler and Piliutyte (2007); Labaeye and Sauer (2013); Le Galès (2002); Leitner and Sheppard (1999); Marshall (2005); Niederhafner (2013); Phelps et al. (2002); Ward and Williams (1997).

directly national governments and international organisations to obtain support for network programmes and policies (Bulkeley and Betsill 2003). By lobbying jointly with other network members, cities put in place collective actions that allow them to influence EU institution, which would be challenging for one city alone (Heinelt and Niederhafner 2008). Furthermore, local authorities, by developing direct links with the EU institutions, can "bypass" the central state, which is sometimes perceived as an antagonist (Ward and Williams 1997, 445). Finally, it is argued that, although networks do not generally have binding rules regulating membership and network functions, "rule setting" may be a central function to some networks, which establish rules for the members, drawn on international or national norms, or generate new standards to fill a lack of regulation (Andonova et al. 2009, 65).

These networks' functions are seen by several authors as the objectives of transnational municipal networks conceived as collective units. However, by concentrating the analysis on the individual actors involved, then such functions, or "structural goals" of networks (as defined by Niederhafner 2013, 381), may be seen as incentives for cities to participate in transnational municipal networks.

In addition to the prospect of gaining incentives, non-financial factors can also prompt cities to cooperate, as discussed in the ensuing sub-section.

3.2 The municipal political milieu

The second assumption at the core of the urban approach is that cities' engagement in SEUNs is embedded in municipal politics. In this regard, the rich scholarship on institutional decision-making processes suggest that decisions to cooperate are not only spurred by the opportunity to gain benefits, but are mediated by the context within which are taken (see e.g. Etzioni 1967, 1988; Sabatier 1988). Accordingly, decision-making is not exclusively aimed at the

maximisation of the actors' utility, but it is "loaded" with the normative beliefs of the deciding actors (Etzioni 1988). This means that decisions are embedded in a specific political environment and institutional culture stratified over time. Municipal political culture can be defined as a set of political values developed across a medium-long timespan that influences (more or less consciously) the decision-making of the city government. The political culture in a council may be the result of the long permanence of a party in government, which exerted a sort of cultural hegemony by mainstreaming party core ideological principles in the policy practice of the municipality. Notably, political values derive from "the transforming, creative sociopolitical practice of the social forces that meet the requirements of social progress and of the development of human personality on a social scale" (Kallos and Trasnea 1982: 182). While their development is prompted by societal forces and perceptions, their institutionalisation – i.e. the settlement of these values in an institutional environment - is chiefly enabled by ruling political parties, in particular those that have governed for a long time. The development of a political culture is a phenomenon both exogenous and endogenous to the political institutions. On the one hand, voters determine the leaning of the council and articulate the political demand. On the other, political culture is also produced endogenously, in that the political elite shapes the culture by bringing their personal ideologies and beliefs. At municipal level, the political milieu is shaped by three main factors: the council's political outlook, the presence of political champions and the council's history of inter-urban cooperation (or lack thereof).

With regard to the first element, it can be argued that the political outlook of the council may influence the decision to participate in European city networks. This means that the position of the ruling party/coalition on SEUN engagement may affect the scope of the European engagement of the local government. In effect, given the highest number of seats in the council, the governing majority may be able to impose its decisions over SEUN engagement, which are determined by the position of the ruling majority on the EU affairs and/or on sustainability.

Therefore, it could be expected that those parties with a pro-EU and an ecologist bent – which, broadly speaking, are positioned on the centre-left of the political spectrum - will be keen on participating in SEUNs (Mocca 2017). More precisely, the longer a party stays in government, the more likely is for it to impose its political position on SEUN membership. In this regard, empirical research found that the local council's political leaning – determined by the colour of the party governing the longest over a 30-year period - while not impacting on the SEUN membership, influences the scope of the involvement, with left-leaning councils more likely to be members of a higher number of SEUNs (Mocca 2017). Moreover, Leitner and Sheppard (2002, 496) highlight how political parties may elaborate different interpretations of inter-urban cooperation, identifying a progressive conceptualisation of networks, which are depicted "as an alternative to market", and a neo-liberal interpretation, which sees these structures as a means to expand capitalist ideas. This suggests that a new ruling party/coalition, even if it does not share a pro-SEUN position, may not break the previous commitments taken at EU level.

Although ideology guides the positioning of a party on a given issue, this is mediated by individual politicians, whose personal aspirations and interests concur to orient policy-making. In this sense, local governments' participation in networks is also affected by the individual aims and beliefs of the elected (and to some extent non-elected) officials involved in the networks. Therefore, some council members may support SEUN engagement driven by their pro-European and ecologist vision and/or by the collective (i.e. for their party or for the city) and/or personal benefits they can get out of it. On this latter point, Payre and Saunier (2008) argue that the personal and collective interests of the local representatives determine the extent to which municipalities are involved in the activities of the networks. Through the participation in networks, local officials gain the opportunity to lobby at the EU institutions and have a chance to influence EU legislation at their advantage, thus gaining political influence at EU level. As some authors observe, the development of a European profile for their city may boost

local politicians' personalities (Bennington and Harvey 1994; Borraz and John 2004; Payre and Saunier 2008). For example, Payre and Saunier (2008, 81) argue that different mayors of Lyon have exploited their role in Eurocities as "a stepping-stone for their political careers".

Decisions about SEUN engagement are also influenced by the previous experience of a city in a network. More precisely, the continuous engagement in SEUN may be path-dependent or simply rolling due to the unquestioning of SEUN membership (Mocca 2017). As a significant thread of scholarship shows, political decision-making is strongly path-dependent (e.g., Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). Again, changes in SEUN membership may not necessarily be affected by changes of the political make-up of the local council. To illustrate this argument, graphically displayed in Figure 2 below, it may be assumed that at a given time (t_0) a council is led by a pro-network party. Hence, it may be hypothesised that the new council will be keen on joining a European city network (named Y). If during the mandate, the politicians and local officials in charge of the network-related activities can identify benefits of membership in Y that are valued far greater than the costs of the involvement, then - all other things being equal - the local government will be more likely to stay in the network Y, regardless of which party will gain the majority of seats in the council in the following mandate. Therefore, if participation in the network is generally perceived as being beneficial, even the election of an anti-network party in the council (t_1) may not lead to a withdrawal from the network. At most, the new majority, more hostile to EU network engagement, may reduce the scope of the involvement in Y, for instance by selecting the number of activities in which to participate or by withdrawing from other less profitable networks. By way of contrast, if the previous experience in the network Y is not considered as being beneficial, then the likelihood for the city to leave this network would be higher.

[Figure 2 here]

Although simplifying a little, the hypothetical situation discussed above indicates that party politics, individual political personalities and the previous experience in networks define the political context in which the decision on participation in SEUNs is taken. These political factors, together with the prospect of gaining incentives, concur to shed light on European cities' participation in SEUNs.

4. Methodology

The urban approach above outlined was devised to provide the theoretical framework within which to inscribe the research question. To shed light on the incentives and factors that explain European cities' participation in SEUNs, a small-N qualitative research design involving a sample of European cities was applied.

To avoid an arbitrary sampling strategy, the sample was selected drawing on a previous quantitative study on the topic (Mocca 2017). In the latter, which employed a dataset including 210 European second and third cities[5], an OLS regression was run using as a dependent variable the number of SEUNs of which cities were members of and a set of socio-economic independent variables[6]. According to the study, the cities that are more likely to participate in a higher number of SEUNs: 1) were governed for most of the period from 1985 to 2013 by parties/coalitions at the left of the centre; 2) have advanced economic activities (research, advanced technology industries etc.); 3) are entitled of an administrative status (province, regional capital or more simply the major city of a territorial unit), and 4) are members of at least one non sustainability-related network, which suggests a higher propensity to cooperate internationally.

---

[5] The dataset used by the study was built on the Urban Audit database compiled by Eurostat.
[6] The independent variables included in the regression are: progressive city, modern city, cooperative attitude, environmental performance, strong mayor, administrative status. For further information, see Mocca (2017).

Employing the same dataset and the predictors of SEUN membership as the abovementioned article, the following cities were included in the sample for the qualitative analysis: Birmingham, Cremona, Hamburg, Lille, Malmö, Manchester and Turin. The data were gathered mainly through face-to-face semi-structured interviews undertaken between November 2013 and March 2014. When arranging interviews was not possible, telephone interviews were carried out. When participants declined the invitation to participate in an interview due to time constraints, semi-structured questionnaires were sent out containing all the questions asked during the interviews (see Table 1). The topics discussed during the interviews are the following: 1) reasons to join one or more European urban networks for sustainable development; 2) direct and indirect benefits of membership; 3) financial and non-financial costs of membership; 4) network membership as part of the City's internationalisation strategy; 5) network membership as part of the City's environmental strategy; 6) process of joining and withdrawing from a network; 7) influence of politics over network membership.

The participants included five local councillors and ten officers with knowledge and experience of SEUNs (Table 1). Both categories of respondents were involved at various degrees in different networks with different roles. While some of the participants held executive positions, others had no prominent roles within networks. The interviewees worked on different thematic areas of a network, such as energy, environment or culture. The councillors and officers participating in the interviews worked within their local councils on two main areas: environment/sustainability/climate change or International/European affairs. One participant (LLL3) was more involved in an international urban network than in European networks. The participant was included in the study since some of the networks considered in the quantitative study have also an international reach, such as Euromed[7]. Furthermore, MNC3 was not a

---

[7] Network of Mediterranean cities.

member of any European networks, but agreed to participate in this study after having experience in working with partners from other European cities and from working with colleagues involved in networks. The participant can thus be considered as an informant, displaying knowledge of the topic derived by the role covered, albeit not being directly involved in networks, as well as expertise on the environmental aspect.

[Table 1 here]

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim[8]. A thematic analysis was then carried out to explore in-depth the themes and the causal patterns emerging from the interview transcripts. Two comprehensive thematic categories were identified: the first comprises the incentives underpinning participation in SEUNs identified by the respondents. The second category systematises a set of themes related to the municipal political environment of the case studies.

5. Incentives

The qualitative evidence showed that the engagement of European cities in SEUNs is fuelled by economic, formative and political incentives, as will be discussed in the ensuing sub-sections.

5.1. Economic incentives

Some of the participants highlighted the economic benefits derived from European networking (LLL1), while several respondents indicated the possibility of finding partners for projects as a motivation to join networks. The establishment of project partnerships among network

---

[8] Only the digressions not pertinent to the topic of the interviews were not transcribed.

members opens up opportunities for cities to access European funding. Thanks to the personal connections developed among members, the networks allow potential partners for EU projects to be found. As BGM1 argued, by developing personal contacts, members create a "readymade" network of potential partners for EU projects.

Albeit constituting an important source of money (BGM2), all the respondents agreed on the fact that funding is definitely not the main motivation to engage in a network. Partly this is because EU funding complements, but does not replace local and national funding (CRM; BGM1; BGM2; MNC1). More precisely, as some respondents suggested, being a network member does not give automatic access to EU funding: although networks are a means to find project partners, to obtain funding it is necessary to be actively engaged in a network and propose a good project to the European institutions (MLM2; TRN1). Therefore, network membership does not increase the likelihood to get funding *per se*. What matters is the ability of cities to develop innovative projects - a key factor to obtain EU funding. As BGM2 stated, an important reason for the involvement in SEUNs is regeneration, and "that's about European funding".

Participation in SEUNs also helps cities to develop their image. Some participants identified visibility and the possibility to raise cities' international profile as benefits deriving from engagement in European networks (LLL3; HMG; MLM1; MNC1; TRN1). Some interviewees suggested that the involvement in European networks is a way to market cities (BGM1 and TRN1), serving as channels for "territorial marketing" (TRN1). In effect, within networks, cities have the chance to talk about themselves, to showcase to other European cities the successful achievements of policies and projects implemented at urban level, and hence to build their international reputation. A case in point is Manchester. The strong engagement of the local council in Eurocities - signalled by their presence in the network executive committee, their nomination to the presidency and the hosting of network events - was motivated, in

addition to the other factors discussed previously, by the willingness to put "Manchester back on the map" (MNC1).

5.2. Formative incentives

The evidence shows that the most significant incentive for local authorities to participate in SEUNs is the opportunity to learning and sharing ideas and information. Through networks, cities can gather information about policies and projects developed by other European peers, but also about how EU legislation was interpreted and implemented in other cities. In this sense, the network is a "learning environment" (TRN1), where participants get to know new ideas and practices developed in other European cities. What is more, given the absence of intermediation of national or regional governments, European urban networks deliver the flow of information from the EU institutions more quickly (LLL1). Network members have also the opportunity receive advice and feedback from other cities (MLM1) as well as to improve their practical knowledge especially on how to apply for EU funding (MNC1; TRN1).

The opportunity to exchange information and learning from other experience is made possible by the establishment of permanent contacts among the members. Through networks, the members have the chance to personally know other colleagues in Europe and get in touch with experts and/or local officers (BGM1; BGM2; CRM; HMG; MLM1; MLM2; MNC3). Through the networks, local authorities can discuss common problems and learn how other cities have dealt with specific issues (CRM). As LLL3 stated, one of the main benefits is the opportunity to gather "knowledge about how others work", which gives "the perception that there isn't just only one way of doing things, but many ways of doing things with the same objective".

Moreover, the evidence shows that participation in SEUNs provides the members with the opportunity to compare themselves with other European peers and as a result, to identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of urban policy and planning. Interestingly, those cities that have successfully tackled specific urban problems become a source of inspiration for other cities - what LLL2 defined as "the virtue of imitating".

5.3. Political incentives

The political incentives provided by SEUNs include lobbying and the possibility to influence indirectly the nation-states. As the evidence suggest, by participating in European networks, cities can exert a certain degree of influence over EU institutions (BGM1; HMG; MLM1). In effect, networks enable cities to undertake collective action and thus enhance their political weight in the European decision-making. As BGM1 stated:

> "there are other ways of getting access as an individual city, but you'll always just be an individual city, we'll just be Birmingham or Manchester, or whoever you are. And be able to speak on behalf of all, effectively, all cities across Europe […] lends a lot of more weight to trying to make changes at EU level."

Similarly, MNC4 argued that

> "Groups of cities together with a common agenda can have far more influence on the European Commission for example than by cities acting singularly. I think that particularly coming out of America, the idea of metropolitan areas being masters of their own destiny really. Having a greater say in their own affairs is pretty universal across most cities, but not universally accepted by most of national governments. Certainly not ours."

Therefore, through networks, members try to influence EU decision-making by sending a "collective political message" to European institutions (MNC1) and even "join[ing] against the Commission" (HMG). In particular, networks enable local authorities to lobby at European level with the aim of making sure that the Commission and other EU institutions understand the urban dimension (BGM1; BGM2) and the challenges faced by cities (BGM1). The ultimate goal of lobbying is thus to ensure that the role of cities is recognised in European funding programmes and EU legislation (BGM1; BGM2; MLM2; MNC1). Some participants highlighted the importance of including the urban perspective in EU legislation, to ensure that "policy is not harmful to cities" (BGM1) and to avoid adverse impacts on some cities while benefiting others (MCN4).

The evidence gathered seems to suggest that networks enable the establishment of a direct relation between local authorities and the EU, without necessarily passing through the national state. In this respect, one respondent noted that the common European praxis is that the EU deals with member-states, which implement directives into national legislation, and then this goes down at regional and local level (MLM2). Nonetheless, networks allow the creation of a "strong link" between cities and the EU Commission, the Parliament and the Committee of the Regions and with other member-states (TRN2).

According to the findings, it appears that national governments do not serve as a mediator between local authorities and the EU institutions. By way of contrast, the evidence depicts an image of the EU as a mediator between local and national governments. Cities' engagement in networks enables them to exert an indirect influence over national decision-making. In this respect, BGM1 claimed that the role of cities in networks "is about getting at the European level into the policies, all the directives, the legislation." However, if agreed at European level, the central government has to take into account cities' requests (BGM1). As BGM1 put it

clearly, for the local government, "European engagement is a way of influencing national policy, bypassing it sometimes." The mediated pressure exerted by cities on national governments through the EU institutions provides cities with more political leeway. For TRN1, to some extent the networks have enabled cities to bypass the central state, a process fostered by the subsidiarity principle, which has enforced the participation of those non-state actors closer to citizens in the decision-making. For some participants networks give a certain degree of economic autonomy (BGM2; CRM; MCN4), insofar as the network membership assists the local economic development, which in turn provides local authorities with a certain degree of "self-sufficiency" (BGM2). Similarly, MNC4 stated that cities acquire more policy autonomy from participating.

As most of the respondents acknowledged, their capacities are bound to national laws and constitutional arrangements, thus they cannot really acquire more autonomy by participating in European networks. Nevertheless, European involvement enables cities to influence national policy – that is, to influence the "philosophy" of national administration (LLL2).

From the data collected, it appears that the endemic opposition between national and local level about the definition of their competencies is projected at the European level, where local authorities can find allies on this issue. The collective action undertaken at EU level strengthens the scope of the requests for more freedom – or, rather, "self-sufficiency", as BGM2 defined it. Interestingly, MNC3 argued that the network is

> "a forum to make that case and make the point about EU" [and] "it is partly a pitch to national government and Europe about recognising the importance of cities and helping cities to have the policy frameworks they need in order to be able to develop the best effect".

As suggested by MNC3, the success of policies implemented in other localities is used by the city "as an argument back to the government […] for more freedom and flexibility" to be able to emulate those examples. Hence, the use of examples from other European cities helps to make the case for broadening their policy-making capacities.

5.4. The assessment of SEUN membership

Although the respondents did not identify any significant disadvantage deriving from network membership, there are some costs associated to it. The main financial costs indicated by the majority of the respondents are the membership fees, followed by travel costs, indicating both money and time for attending meetings and events organised by the networks (BGM2; HMG; LLL1; MLM2; MNC3).

For what concerns non-financial costs, the main issue with SEUN engagement is the lack of time (BGM1; LLL1; MLM2; MNC1; MNC3). Some of the respondents argued that a fruitful and serious involvement in networks is time consuming and requires the commitment of officers to deal with project management, meeting attendance etc. (BGM1; CRM; HMG; MLM2). Such workload adds up to other activities to which the council staff is already committed (MNC1). However, this is an "initial investment" that members have to pay to be involved, otherwise membership would be a waste (LLL3). In this respect, HMG stated that "joining networks without internal transition, without local reflection and without the attempts to get local effects is just [a social event]". Similarly, TRN1 stated that the network does not provide any benefits if it is not used. A second issue brought up by some respondents is the limited human resources working on networks' matters (CRM; LLL1; MNC4; TRN1). On this point, TRN1 highlighted the lack of linguistically competent personnel.

The evidence seems to suggest that membership and participation in SEUNs are two different conditions. As noted by Payre and Saunier (2008, 78), a local government may "merely pay their subscription fee" and then acquires the status of member, but it may decide not to participate in many initiatives of the networks or not to take any leading role. In this case, membership is merely nominal, since there is no active participation. By way of contrast, another local government may decide to participate in and contribute to several initiatives of a network. In this case, membership is the precondition for participation. Local governments may identify different costs and benefits associated with membership and participation and evaluate them differently. As exemplified in Table 2 below, if a local government evaluates the costs of membership and participation being too high (and higher than the potential benefits), then it will decide not to join. If a local government considers positively the prospect of joining a network, but evaluates the benefits of participation greater that the costs, it will be more likely to become an inactive member. By way of contrast, when both the benefits of membership and participation are considered higher than the costs, the city will have strong incentives to join and become an active member[9].

[Table 2 here]

Given the current economic conditions, cities weight financial considerations in the decision to remain members. If network engagement comes to a high cost, then local authorities have to balance out the costs and benefits of participation (BGM1; LLL1; MNC4). In this respect, MNC4 pointed out the possible negative electoral payback of using part of the local budget to subsidize the network activities:

> "it's quite difficult to explain to our citizens sometimes that we're investing in European networks when we're having to make decisions about closing facilities and services.

---

[9] In this article, the focus is on cities actively participating in SEUNs.

> Explaining balance of development and economic growth alongside their desire of not seeing their local library closed is quite hard, it's a real challenge."

The respondent concluded that:

> "I think we will consider [network membership] alongside everything else. And we would never stop. We might have to scale back slightly, because of the economic situation. But in terms of the investment it brings, it has generally a very good rate of return."

This finding seems to suggest that the decision about SEUN engagement may also be affected by exogenous events, such as a severe economic crisis, which may impose a rationalisation of local spending. Therefore, the gravity of the economic situation may induce the ruling party, even if supporting SEUN membership, to withdraw or drastically reduce the European commitments, which may not be considered as essential.

Despite the financial expenses, all the respondents agreed that the costs are offset by the benefits deriving from network engagement, provided that cities assume a proactive role in the networks' activities. The participation in networks appears to be perceived by members as an investment, since they have to sustain financial costs - in terms of staff salaries, travel costs, event organisations and membership fees – to obtain some rewards. By weighting costs and benefits, cities decide whether they want to be fully committed or just being nominal network members. However, the choice of engaging in network is not simply dictated by a rational calculus of the pros and cons of membership, but it is bounded to the municipal political culture.

6. The municipal political milieu

To examine the relationship between politics and SEUN participation, participants were asked questions as to whether local politics influences SEUN membership and how this plays out. More in detail, the following factors were explored: 1) party politics and political agency; 2) previous experience in networks, and 3) institutionalised values.

6.1. Party politics and agency

Most of the respondents argued that membership is not affected by changes in the political composition of the local council. Rather, as LLL3 suggested, there is continuity. Some respondents observed that councillors of any parties participate in European urban networks. Indeed, some participants argued that networks are not politically orientated, but they are more "practical" and "pragmatic", since their work is about planning actions (BGM2; MNC3). Speaking about Eurocities, MNC3 stated that there is not "an issue about political control of Eurocities or anything like that. It's much more practical in that. […] The political involvement in Eurocities is about making the case for cities". HMG answered that party politics does not affect network membership very much; rather, the city decides to continue their activity in those networks that "bring benefits to the city".

However, some respondents argued that to some extent party politics may influence European city networking. For instance, BGM1 asserted that, with the recent change in the political composition of the council, the focus of international relations of the City shifted. The previous Conservative/Liberal-Democrat coalition government was more concerned with the development of relations with emerging economies, with the aim of enhancing investments and partnerships with them. However, the respondent pointed out that such orientation was dictated

more by the international strategy proposed by the Conservative party in the council, while the Liberal-Democrat deputy leader was very interested in the European dimension and supported the European engagement of the city. With the Labour party taking the majority of the council, European engagement gained more importance on the political agenda of the council. This view is partially supported by CRM, who argued that the revision of network membership might be prompted by a new party majority in the council. Furthermore, CRM stated that the content of the initiatives implemented within networks may actually clash with the political leaning of council – for instance, some working methods proposed by European networks such as citizens' active participation.

Most of the respondents agreed on the fact that, individual politicians have played a significant role in determining the scope of local authorities' engagement in Europe. Some respondents emphasised the important role of agency in determining the involvement in SEUNs – but also in networks and European initiatives more generally (BGM1; BGM2; MLM2). For LLL1 the scope of engagement in SEUNs is a mix of personalities and parties: generally, greens are more active on sustainability, but also councils not governed by the green party may have a strong engagement in sustainability, when there is a political champion supporting such commitment.

6.2. Institutionalised values

The third element that completes the analysis of the drivers of SEUN participation are the values characterising the municipal political milieu. The overall attitude of the respondents towards networks was explored by running a word frequency query to find the most recurrent words in the data sources. The resulting words were grouped by semantic similarity[10], as

---

[10] The evidence collected from the respondents of the same city was merged to generate aggregate-level data for each local government.

reported in Table 3. The topics discussed the most by the respondents were grouped in eight semantic categories. The chart in Figure 3 shows how much the semantic categories are discussed by the seven cities..

[Table 3 here]

The chart displayed in Figure 3 shows that Manchester highly focused on the economic aspects of SEUNs. It might be hypothesised that the prospect of economic benefits deriving from the engagement in European city networks is what appeals the most the city. Likewise, the content of the interview with the respondents from Birmingham mostly pivoted around the economic field, although to a lower degree than Manchester. By way of contrast, the participants from Malmö seem to have little interest on the economic theme, while being more focused on the "concerns" for the city. For Hamburg, the semantic area "policy-making", which groups words such as policy, projects, actions etc., seems to matter the most for the city. Furthermore, the aspect of the participation in the networks plays a relevant role for Birmingham, Torino and Malmö. Another theme identified in the sources is "innovation". This semantic field includes the concepts of "change" and "ideas", in addition to words stemming from innovation. This aspect is not widely discussed by participants, especially by Birmingham, Cremona and Hamburg. The socio-ecological dimension is discussed by all the respondents, although it does not occupy a primary position as one might expect. In particular, the evidence collected from Hamburg and Torino does not count many references to environmental and social sustainability. Finally, the institutional sphere seems to be an important topic for the participants, especially for Hamburg and Lille.

[Figure 3 here]

Figure 3 also helps to examine the type of attitude towards SEUN engagement. Manchester appears to have an instrumental approach to the EU: the city primarily engages in European networks because of the economic benefits they provide. As emerged in the interviews, the city gives importance to both economic (possibility to partner with other cities to bid into EU funding, place promotion etc.) and formative. As the chart shows, the institutional context, especially national, also plays a significant role in the discourse on network involvement. Birmingham seems also to be significantly interested in the economic incentives of SEUNs. Here, the respondents give almost equal importance to the socio-ecological dimension and the economic aspect, suggesting how these two themes are strongly intertwined.

For Malmö network participation is strongly connected to the national context and it is about city's objectives and priorities with networks' work (category "concern"). Similarly, for Hamburg the institutional relationships are a relevant theme, although preceded by the topic "policy-making". This suggests that the city conceives SEUN membership as a strategy to deliver specific policy outputs. The importance of the networks as a means for achieving policy objectives is also important for Cremona, which emphasises the aspect of "participation" in the networks.

The institutional context is pivotal in Lille's discourse on SEUN engagement. This theme is followed by the socio-ecological dimension, indicating how for Lille the environmental discourse is central to their participation in SEUNs. Moreover, the theme "Europe" recurs relatively frequently in the evidence on Lille. As an example, the respondents pointed out the long history of European engagement of the city and one of the interviewees (LLL3) emphasised how the geographical position of the city - at "the hearth of one part of Europe" - has played a significant role in determining the high level of interaction with other European

cities[11]. In this case, the peculiar geographical position of the city has contributed to the creation of a European culture.

The theme "Europe" is even more relevant for Torino, whose European dimension has a long history dating back to the beginning of the 20th Century, and which still characterises its municipal politics (see Marucco and Accornero 2012). This theme is followed by "policy-making", suggesting the use of the European dimension to find policy solutions to tackle local problems. A closer analysis of the evidence supports this claim. TRN1 argued that the city began to engage at European level around the mid-Nineties, in correspondence with its industrial decline. As a result of the management of EU structural funds dedicated to industrial areas in decline, the city worked more with the EU level than with the central level. Actually, it was claimed that the European dimension became very important for the city in terms of innovative and advanced ideas about urban policy. Within the European dimension, the city could learn from and work with other European cities affected by de-industrialisation process.

The evidence seems to suggest that the attitude towards SEUNs changes from one member to another: while some members have a functional approach, using the network to achieve their economic or policy objectives, others have a more value-oriented attitude, whereby SEUN membership stems from institutionalised values, such as a diffuse European culture or environmentalism, embedded in local politics. Finally, noteworthy is the importance that respondents place onto the institutional dimension: although cities autonomously decide to engage at European level, their action is bound to the central governments.

---

[11] An example mentioned by the respondent is the engagement of the city in the creation of Eurométropole, or Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, a European Territorial Cooperation Group of 147 French and Belgian cities.

6.3. Experience

The participation in SEUNs appears to be path-dependent. Some of the respondents asserted that their cities have always been highly engaged in specific networks since they joined, and in some cases, they contributed to the establishment of some networks, such as Birmingham and Manchester in Eurocities. This historical path, based on the recognition of the importance of the European dimension and/or the commitment to sustainability - to various degree marks the present engagement of cities. For example, BGM2 argued that

> "politicians come and go, there will always be recognition in Birmingham - I would hope - that there is an important European dimension to our work, there is an important urban dimension to our work that goes beyond the city boundaries."

The continuity of the participation may be influenced by the reputation that a city has built overtime within a network. BGM1 stated that the city, through the work of both officers and politicians, acquired over the years a distinctive reputation in Eurocities for their high level of commitment, especially in the environment forum.

The continuity of network membership may also be motivated by institutional inertia, since some cities continue their involvement because they have always done so. For example, LLL3 argued that network membership is not formally discussed; rather, "sometimes networks are there because they have been there for 30 years" and nobody questions them (LLL3). The respondent reported that the local government was still member of a European organisation grouping cities with a textile industry, although in Lille this sector was dismantled long time ago. Therefore, local governments display different attitudes towards the ongoing participation in networks: while for some cities their active participation is part of a strategic decision to keep their commitments in continuity with the past, for others their lingering membership is the outcome of a non-decision to withdraw from a given network.

7. Discussion and conclusions

In this article, the motivations underpinning European local governments' SEUN engagement were explored by adopting an urban-centred approach. The latter permitted an analysis of the incentives and the political factors prompting European cities to engage in SEUNs. Drawing on a small-N qualitative analysis, this article showed that the involvement of European cities in SEUNs is fuelled by economic, formative and political incentives and is influenced by the municipal political environment, defined by the overall council's political outlook, the presence of political champions and the previous experience in networks.

The evidence showed that the prospect of exchanging information and experience with other European peers constitutes a significant spur for cities to engage in SEUNs, since members have at their disposal a series of policy solutions from which they can take cue to tackle local issues. The importance of networks as a means for information and knowledge sharing and problem-solving has been underscored by various authors[12]. However, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004, 490) found that those member-cities that were pro-actively involved in the CCP network were more interested in the economic and political benefits and in "processes of knowledge creation and norm generation" than in the sharing of experiences and competencies. By way of contrast, the findings of the qualitative analysis showed that learning and knowledge sharing is the most important motivations for cities to join SEUNs.

Another benefit of SEUN engagement valued by members is that they functions as "shop-windows" (Mocca 2017). The place marketing potential of network is also highlighted in the literature (Church and Reid 1996; Ewen 2008; Phelps et al. 2002). For instance, Betsill and

---

[12] See: Acuto (2013); Andonova et al. (2009); Bulkeley and Betsill (2003); Bulkeley et al. (2003); Bulkeley and Newell (2010); Clarke (2012); Ewen (2008); Ewen and Hebbert (2007); Goldsmith (1993); Happaerts et al. (2011); Kern (2009); Keiner and Kim (2007); Kern and Bulkeley (2009); Le Galès (2002); Marshall (2005); Ward and Williams (1997).

Bulkeley (2004) acknowledge the importance of the CCP network in helping some members to develop an environmental profile. In turn, the creation of a positive reputation may increase the financial return of cities by attracting businesses, companies and tourists. Keiner and Kim (2007, 1393) argue that some cities - such as Barcelona - have been able to use transnational municipal organisations to develop a profile as "future-oriented environmentally-friendly liveable cities" and to capitalise on the development of the service sector.

The involvement of cities in SEUNs is also motivated by political incentives, since local governments use the network as a means to widen their political influence on the EU institutions and indirectly on national governments. In this respect, Payre and Saunier (2008) suggest that Eurocities can be conceived as "a pressure group that represents the interests of large cities in and around the European Union's institutions" (Payre and Saunier 2008, 72). Additionally, Kübler and Piliutyte (2007) argue that, by participating in Eurocities, cities have the opportunity to enhance their importance on European issues and fine-tune their knowledge and competences on a particular theme, which in turn allows them to improve their position on the European stage. Furthermore, participation in a network constitutes a shortcut for cities to directly reach the supra-national level. To some extent, SEUN engagement is the expression of a centrifugal localism: cities perceiving the constraining role of the central state tend to be keener to engage in supra-national urban networks. The tension between the local and the national levels has been identified by some authors. Bulkeley and Betsill (2003, 190) found that the CCP programme, on the one hand, has enabled the members to adopt independent decisions and "bypass" central governments; on the other, it is "a state-based organization" inasmuch as the member-cities often collaborate with the nation-state. In particular, Bulkeley and Betsill's (2003, 191) study of the CCP programme suggests that, in the field of environmental policy, the "hollowing out" of the state and the "multilevel governance" turn do not imply the reduction of sovereignty of the nation-state. Le Galès (2002), while analysing

the reduced role of the nation-state as a result of European integration and the devolution of powers to sub-national authorities, also admits that nation-states are an integral part of the European architecture. Similarly, Church and Reid's (1996) study on the Transmanche region found a growing participation of the national level in the Interreg programme.

Finally, the possibility to build project partnership with other network members constitutes a motivation for cities to participate in SEUNs. The opportunity for members to set up project partnerships with other European local authorities is also highlighted by some authors, as discussed in section 3.1. Conversely, the economic incentives do not seem to be a direct motivation for joining SEUNs. EU funding can be obtained only through the establishment of partnerships with other cities and the submission of a winning application for funding. Similarly, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) note that network engagement does not ensure the provision of funding, which is conditioned to the submission of a successful application. By way of contrast, Payre (2010) observes that for local authorities in the Midlands (UK), economic benefits constituted a primary motivation for their involvement in supra-national initiatives, seen by local politicians and economic actors as an opportunity to address the problems derived from the decline of the industrial sector and to boost the tourism sector. Therefore, the prospect of economic benefits constitutes a second-level explanation to inter-urban cooperation.

The evidence seems to partly lend support to the assumption about the influence of the political milieu. If political agency as well as past experience in networks appear to be important in determining the engagement in SEUNs, the role of party politics is not completely clear: while for few respondents some aspects of SEUN engagement seem to be affected by political positions of the members, for others SEUNs are not influenced by political views. The role of local politics in determining the engagement of cities in European networks has been

acknowledged by some authors. For instance, Payre and Saunier (2008, 72-73) see "the political affiliations and worldviews of mayors and councillors, the existence of knowledge-based transnational networks amongst municipal technicians, and the adaptation or resistance to changes in the urban world order" as "important mitigating factors" affecting cities' choice to participate in an urban organisation. By way of contrast, Church and Reid (1996) found that the diverging political leaning of the two members of the Transmanche Metropole did not hinder their collaboration, partially due to their availability to reach an agreement.

Through a more in-depth analysis of the evidence, it was possible to infer that institutionalised values and attitudes towards European networks may play a role in explaining cities' international commitment. In addition to pragmatic economic motivations, SEUN engagement appears to be determined by a blend of institutionalised values and attitudes incorporated in local politics, such as environmentalism, international openness and pro-EU attitudes. Since participants' positions on European integration or on ecological matters were inferred from an in-depth analysis of the evidence, the impact of values and attitudes on SEUN engagement should be treated with some caution.

To summarise, the findings presented in this article show that European cities' engagement in SEUNs is motivated by the selective incentives provided to the members. However, SEUN engagement should not be seen as purely dictated by instrumental reasons, in that the choice as to whether engage in these networks is not made in a value-free environment, but is embedded in a political and institutional context. In other words, political factors "load" the perception of the expected benefits of SEUN involvement: a municipal political milieu favourable to inter-urban cooperation weights in local governments' decision as to whether and how much to engage in SEUNs.

While this article sought to provide an empirical contribution to research on transnational municipalism, some limitations have to be acknowledged. Firstly, the small-N research design, given the considerable number of cities involved (and not) in SEUNs, may be seen a weakness. Nonetheless, a wider sample including small and capital cities would have made it difficult to undertake an intensive analysis. Furthermore, the sample of cases used in the qualitative analysis is justified by the selection of cases drawing on previous large-N research, which has made more robust and reliable the case selection process. Finally, the focus only on SEUN members and the parallel exclusion of non-members was motivated by the goal of providing an exhaustive overview of the potential motivations underlying cities' engagement in these organisations. The comparison between members and non-members' choice would be better addressed by quantitative research. Secondly, as with any qualitative studies, the conclusions reached by this article may not apply to other forms of sub-national mobilisation or for other types of networks. Nevertheless, the confirmation of the findings of the qualitative analysis provided by previous research in the realm of transnational municipal networks and in tangent fields seems to suggest that a certain degree of inference is possible, especially with regard to the importance of the incentives.

References

Acuto, Michele. 2013. "City Leadership in Global Governance." *Global Governance* 19 (3): 481-498.

Andonova, Liliana B., Betsill, Michele M. and Bulkeley, Harriet. 2009. Transnational Climate Governance. *Global Environmental Politics* 9 (2): 52-73.

Bennington, John and Harvey, Janet. 1994. "Spheres or tiers? The significance of transnational local authority networks." In *Contemporary political studies*, edited by Patrick Dunleavy and Jeffrey Stanyer, 943-961. Belfast: Political Studies Association.

Betsill, Michele M. and Bulkeley, Harriet. 2004. Transnational networks and global environmental governance: The cities for climate protection program. *International Studies Quarterly* 48(2): 471-493.

Betsill, Michele M. and Bulkeley, Harriet. 2006. Cities and the Multilevel Governance of Global Climate Change. *Global Governance* 12(2): 141-159.

Blok, Anders. 2012. Greening cosmopolitan urbanism? On the transnational mobility of low-carbon formats in Northern European and East Asian cities. *Environment and Planning A*, 44(10): 2327-2343.

Bomberg, Elizabeth, and Peterson, John. 1998. "European Union decision making: The role of sub-national authorities." *Political Studies* 46(2): 219-235.

Borraz, Olivier and John, Peter. 2004. The Transformation of Urban Political Leadership in Western Europe. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28(1): 107-120.

Bulkeley, Harriet. 2005. Reconfiguring environmental governance: Towards a politics of scales and networks. *Political Geography*, 24(8): 875-902.

Bulkeley, Harriet and Betsill, Michele M. 2003. *Cities and climate change: Urban sustainability and global environmental governance.* New York: Routledge.

Bulkeley, Harriet and Betsill, Michele M. 2005. Rethinking sustainable cities: multilevel governance and the'urban'politics of climate change. Environmental politics, 14(1), pp. 42-63.

Bulkeley, Harriet, Davies, Anna, Evans, Bob, Gibbs, David, Kern, Kristine and Theobald, Kate. 2003. Environmental Governance and Transnational Municipal Networks in Europe. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 5(3): 235-254.

Bulkeley, Harriet and Newell, Peter. 2010. *Governing Climate Change*. Routledge: London and New York.

Church, Andrew and Reid, Peter. 1996. Urban Power, International Networks and Competition: The Example of Cross-border Cooperation. *Urban Studies* 33(8): 1297-1318.

Clarke, Nick. 2009. In what sense 'spaces of neoliberalism'? The new localism, the new politics of scale, and town twinning. *Political Geography* 28: 496–507.

Clarke, Nick. 2012. Urban policy mobility, anti-politics, and histories of the transnational municipal movement. *Progress in Human Geography* 36(1): 25–43.

Etzioni, Amitai. 1967. Mixed-scanning: a 'third' approach to decision-making. *Public administration review* 27(5): 385-392.

Etzioni, Amitai. 1988. Normative-affective factors: Toward a new decision-making model. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 9: 125-150.

Ewen, Shane. 2008, 'Transnational municipalism' in a Europe of 'second cities': rebuilding Birmingham with municipal networks. In *Another global city. Historical explorations into the transnational municipal moment 1850-2000,* edited by Pierre-Yves Saunier and Shane Ewen, 69-85. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ewen, Shane and Hebbert, Michael. 2007. European cities in a networked world during the long 20th century. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 25(3): 327.

Gibbs, David. 1997. Urban sustainability and economic development in the United Kingdom: exploring the contradictions. *Cities* 14(4): 203-208.

Giest, Sarah and Howlett, Michael. 2013. Comparative climate change governance: lessons from European transnational municipal network management efforts. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 23(6): 341-353.

Goldsmith, Mike. 1993. The Europeanisation of local government. *Urban Studies* 30: 683-683.

Happaerts, Sander, Van den Brande, Karoline and Bruyninckx, Hans. 2011. Subnational governments in transnational networks for sustainable development. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 11(4): 321-339.

Happaerts, Sander, Van den Brande, Karoline and Bruyninckx, Hans. 2010. Governance for Sustainable Development at the Inter-subnational Level: The Case of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD). *Regional & Federal Studies* 20(1): 127-149.

Heinelt, Hubert, and Niederhafner, Stefan. 2008. Cities and Organized Interest Intermediation in the EU Multi-Level System. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 15(2): 173-187.

Kallos, Nicolae, and Ovidiu Trasnea. 1982. Political values Their Status and Social Function. *International Political Science Review* 3(2): 182-189.

Keiner, Marco and Kim, Arley. 2007. Transnational City Networks for Sustainability. *European Planning Studies* 15(10): 1369-1395.

Kern, K., 2009. Cities in a European Setting. Paper submitted for presentation in Enschede, April 2009.

Kern, Kristine and Bulkeley, Harriet. 2009. Cities, Europeanization and Multi-level Governance: Governing Climate Change through Transnational Municipal Networks. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47(2): 309-332.

Kübler, Daniel and Piliutyte, Jolita. 2007. Intergovernmental relations and international urban strategies: constraints and opportunities in multilevel polities. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 25: 357-373.

Labaeye, Adrien and Sauer, Thomas. 2013, City networks and the socio-ecological transition. A European inventory, WP 27, WWWforEurope.

Laver, Michael. 1997. *Private Desires, Political Action: An Invitation to the Politics of Rational Choice*. Thousand Oaks and London: Sage. Lever, William F. 1993. Competition within the European urban system. *Urban Studies* 30(6): 935-948.

Lee, Taedong. 2013. Global Cities and Transnational Climate Change Networks. *Global Environmental Politics*, 13(1): 108-127.

Le Galès, Patrick. 2002. *European Cities: Social Conflicts and Governance: Social Conflicts and Governance*. OUP Oxford.

Leitner, Helga and Sheppard, Eric. 2002. "The City is dead, long live the net': harnessing European interurban networks for a neoliberal agenda." *Antipode* 34(3): 495-518.

Mahoney, James. 2000. Path dependence in historical sociology. *Theory and society* 29(4): 507-548.

Marshall, Adam. 2005. Europeanization at the urban level: Local actors, institutions and the dynamics of multi-level interaction. *Journal of European Public Policy* 12(4): 668-686.

Marshall, Adam. 2005. Europeanization at the urban level: Local actors, institutions and the dynamics of multi-level interaction. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 12(4): 668-686.

Marucco, Dora and Accornero, Cristina. 2012. *Torino città internazionale: storia di una vocazione europea*. Donzelli Editore.

Mocca, Elisabetta. 2017. City networks for sustainability in Europe: An urban-level analysis. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1-20.

Munoz-Erickson, Tischa A. 2014. Co-production of knowledge–action systems in urban sustainable governance: The KASA approach. *Environmental Science & Policy* 37: 182-191.

Niederhafner, Stefan. 2013. Comparing functions of transnational city networks in Europe and Asia. *Asia Europe Journal* 11(4): 377-396.

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The logic of collective action*. Cambridge - Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Payre, Renaud. 2010. The Importance of Being Connected. City Networks and Urban Government: Lyon and Eurocities (1990-2005). *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34(2): 260-280.

Payre, Renaud and Saunier, Pierre-Yves. 2008. A city in the world of cities: Lyon and municipal associations in the 20th century. In *Another Global City. Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment 1850-2000,* edited by Pierre-Yves Saunier and Shane Ewen, 69-85. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pearsall, Hamil, and Pierce, Joseph. 2010. Urban sustainability and environmental justice: evaluating the linkages in public planning/policy discourse. *Local Environment*, 15(6): 569-580.

Phelps, Nicholas A., Mcneill, D. and Parsons, Nicholas A. 2002. In Search of a European Edge Urban Identity: Trans-European Networking among Edge Urban Municipalities. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 9(3): 211-224.

Pierson, P., 2000. Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics. *American political science review* 94(02): 251-267.

Sabatier, Paul A. 1988. An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-oriented learning therein. *Policy sciences* 21(2): 129-168.

Saunier, Pierre-Yves and Ewen, Shane. 2008. *Another global city.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Taylor, Michael. 1987. *The possibility of cooperation*. Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Robert W. 2012. Urbanization, local government, and planning for sustainability. In: Sustainability Science, pp. 293-313. Springer: New York.

Temenos, Cristina and McCann, Eugene. 2012. The local politics of policy mobility: learning, persuasion, and the production of a municipal sustainability fix. *Environment and Planning A*, 44(6): 1389-1406.

Toly, Noah J. 2008. Transnational Municipal Networks in Climate Politics: From Global Governance to Global Politics. *Globalizations*, 5(3): 341-356.

Vion, Antoine. 2001. "La constitution des enjeux internationaux dans le gouvernement des villes françaises (1947-1995)." PhD dissertation, University of Rennes 1.

Ward, Stephen and Williams, Richard. 1997. From Hierarchy to Networks? Sub-central Government and EU Urban Environment Policy. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 35(3): 439-464.

Wheeler, Stephen M. 2013. *Planning for sustainability: creating livable, equitable and ecological communities*. Routledge.

White, Dave D., Corley, Elizabeth A. and White, Margaret S. 2008. Water managers' perceptions of the science–policy interface in Phoenix, Arizona: Implications for an emerging boundary organization. *Society and Natural Resources* 21(3): 230-243.

Zborel, Tammy, Holland, Brian, Thomas, Gregg, Baker, Lawrence, Calhoun, Koben and Ramaswami, Anu. Translating research to policy for sustainable cities. *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 16(6): 786-788.