

Beyond Regimes: Cities and the Multilevel Governance of Global Climate Change¹

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Introduction

In this paper, we examine the conceptual challenges which emerge in seeking to explain and evaluate the role of the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) programme, a transnational municipal network which is both 'local' and 'global', in the governance of climate change. Global environmental governance is typically discussed in terms of international regimes, transnational networks and sustainable cities. However, we find little conceptual space within these perspectives for considering the impact and implications of the CCP network in environmental governance. Instead, we advocate an alternative, *multilevel*, perspective that more fully captures the social, political, and economic processes that interact across multiple scales to shape global environmental governance.

The arguments presented in this paper are based on research examining the role of cities addressing climate change in which we considered the experience of six cities in the UK, US and Australia with the CCP network (Bulkeley and Betsill 2003; see also Betsill and Bulkeley 2004).

The CCP program

The CCP programme was established by ICLEI in 1993, with the aim of recruiting local authorities whose collective emissions of greenhouse gases accounted for ten per cent of the global total. To become a member, local governments must make a formal declaration of their intention to address the threat of global climate change. Today, the CCP network has more than 570 members worldwide, representing (over) 8 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Once signed on to the programme, members then commit to passing through five 'milestones': conducting an energy and emissions inventory and forecast; establishing an emissions reduction target; developing a local action plan to achieve this goal; implementing policies and measures to this end; and undertaking processes of monitoring and verifying results. In return, ICLEI provides CCP members with technical assistance and training to complete these milestones, including custom made software. The CCP campaign also promotes networking, the sharing of experiences and provides information on best practices, through workshops and the publication of case-studies. Moreover, through membership of the programme, some participants also gain access to additional sources of finances, and gain political legitimacy within their own local authorities.

Conceptualizing global environmental governance

We contend that this transnational network of local governments represents a new form of environmental governance that is not easily captured in terms of concepts of international regimes, transnational networks or sustainable cities through which our understanding of global environmental governance is usually framed (see Table 1).

¹ This is a summary of the presentation given at the conference. A full-length version of this paper is currently under consideration for journal publication. Please contact the authors for further information: m.betsill@colostate.edu or h.a.bulkeley@durham.ac.uk.

Table 1: Conceptualizing global environmental governance.

Approach		Actors	Locus of Authority	Scale/Nature of Governance
Regime Theory	Neoliberal Institutional	Nation-states	Nation-states	International scale; top-down
	Constructivist	Nation-states and non-state actors	Nation-states	Interaction between international/domestic scales; top-down
Transnational networks	Epistemic communities	Scientific experts	Nation-states	International scale; top-down
	Advocacy networks	State and non-state actors	Nation-states	Interaction between global/local scales; top-down
	Global Civil Society	Non-state actors	Multiple sites	Interaction between global/local scales; Multilevel
Sustainable Cities		Local state and non-state actors	Local state	Local scale; bottom-up

For both the traditional and constructivist approaches to regime theory (Hasenclever et al. 1997), the nation-state is seen as the primary locus of authority; and the assumption is that subnational governments act under the (sole) influence and direction of national governments. In effect, governance is conceptualised as top-down, flowing from international to national to regional to local, so that the role of local governments as an important site of global environmental governance in their own right is ignored. Transnational network approaches to global environmental governance include epistemic communities (Haas 1990), transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998) and global civil society (Lipshutz 1996; Wapner 1996). Although epistemic communities and transnational advocacy network approaches have a broader view of power than much regime analysis, the nation-state is still seen as the primary locus of global environmental governance and the assumption that local actors respond to policies from above is maintained. Global civil society approaches move away from hierarchical structures toward an appreciation of multilevel forms of governance, but largely see these networks as non-state in character. Those analyses which have examined sustainable cities as a means of global environmental governance (Houghton and Hunter 1994; see Marvin and Guy 1997 for a critique) tend to see the local as a fixed spatial entity, so that local, and by extension, global sustainability can be achieved through actions within the local level. This ignores the interaction between economic, social and political processes across different levels and systems of governance.

Given that the CCP is simultaneously a state and non-state actor, and one which engages in activities of governance across multiple sites and scales, it does not fall neatly into any of these frameworks. In turn, this suggests that these frameworks are missing some important dimensions of the governance of global environmental issues.

Multilevel Governance

The concept of ‘multilevel governance’ may provide an alternative approach for understanding the ways in which environmental problems are governed within and across scales. In its original formulation, the argument was made that the role of national governments within the EU was diminishing, and in their place a new, multilevel, system of governance was taking shape (Hooghe and Marks 1996; Jordan 2001). Proponents argue that decision-making competencies are increasingly shared between actors operating at subnational, national and supranational levels of governance. Within a growing, and diverse, literature on new forms of governance, Hooghe and Marks (2001, 2003) argue that two different, and not necessarily exclusive, approaches to multilevel governance have emerged since its original conception (see Table 2). The first (Type I), is a nested approach, where the focus is on how competencies are being reallocated among multiplying levels of authority, particularly between different levels of ‘government’. Here, the nation-state retains the central authority in negotiating between the domestic and international levels. However, local governments and domestic interest groups have a degree of independent agency at the EU level through the formation of transnational networks and associations, and can outflank the nation-state in order to pursue deeper levels of policy integration (Fairbrass and Jordan 2001). A second model of multilevel governance (Type II) takes a polycentric approach and examines the proliferation of different spheres of authority with overlapping and less clear cut competencies (Bulkeley et al. 2003). If the first vision of multilevel governance focuses on the distribution of authority to supranational and subnational levels, the second is equally concerned with the interactions between state and non-state actors, and emerging new forms of governance. Rather than vertical relations of government, this approach places emphasis on the complex relations between different spheres of authority and the proliferation of horizontal networks through which such connections take place. Hooghe and Marks (2001) suggest that it is at the boundaries of formal politics, in relations between state and non-state actors, and between national and international politics, that such forms of governance are emerging.

Table 2: Types of multilevel governance

Type I ‘Nested’	Type II ‘Polycentric’
Tiers of government	Spheres of authority
Sharing competencies between levels	Overlapping and contested competencies
Focus on ‘government’	Focus on ‘governance’
Nation-state as central	Complex relations between spheres
Processes of ‘by-passing’ the nation-state	Horizontal networks

The governance of climate change, with the proliferation of levels and spheres of authority, shared and overlapping competencies, and various new forms of governance arrangements, can be conceptualised in terms of multilevel governance. The CCP programme is one element in this emerging system, but how can it be characterised?

On one hand, the CCP programme could be conceived in terms of ‘nested’ multilevel governance. It articulates between defined levels of government. It allows local authorities to ‘by-pass’ the nation-state in representing their views within international forums, frequently

taking positions which differ from the 'national' view (e.g. the differences between local responses to climate protection and national government policy in the US and Australia). However, the CCP does not only function as a conduit for interaction between the formal arenas of local government and the global climate regime, but has created its own arena of governance through the development of norms and rules for compliance with the goals and targets of the network. The CCP network is also taking on functions that are typically presumed to rest with national governments, such as setting greenhouse gas emissions targets for participants as well as requirements for reporting and monitoring emissions. Nevertheless, the activities of the CCP programme are frequently dependent on nation-states in terms of funding and political opportunity, and the impact in particular places depends on complex relations between state and non-state actors operating at a variety of scales. This suggests that spheres of authority can not be seen as separate from, or alternative to, state-based power, but are inextricably bound up with it.

Conclusion

The governance of climate change is a complex, multilevel process. Traditional analytical divisions between international and domestic politics, local, national and global scales, as well as state and non-state actors, no longer suffice. The CCP programme is but one illustration of how our familiar scales of analysis – international, national, regional and local – are disrupted by emerging forms of environmental governance which transcend or operate beyond these boundaries. The struggles for authority and legitimacy which characterise global environmental governance (Paterson et al. 2003) are taking place within, across and between spheres and tiers of governance. In order to understand the dynamic of global environmental governance, we need to move beyond these fixed spatial imaginations, towards an analysis of the multilevel and multi-scalar politics of environmental governance.

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