On Leaders and Laggards in Environmental Governance and Management: The Case Study of the European Union

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“On Leaders and Laggards in Environmental Governance and Management: The Case Study of the European Union”

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Conventional wisdom has it that Western industrialized democracies are leaders in protecting and managing the environment. Developing countries and emerging economies, by contrast, lag behind. The talk uses the case of the European Union to challenge this view. Börzel argues that the richer member states have tailored European environmental laws to their economic interests and environmental problems. The poorer countries in Southern and Eastern Europe face the challenge of implementing laws that disadvantage their economies in the Single European Market, strain their limited administrative capacities and do not address their most pressing environmental problems either. I will conclude by discussing to what extent the politics of environmental leaders and laggards also apply at the global level. At the conclusion we can discuss how Europe’s model fits with environmental trends in the United States.