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ABSTRACT

As the enlargement of the European Union (EU) draws close, democratic concerns remain as to the institutional and procedural design of this emerging polity. This contribution explores this concern by investigating how the informal politics of environmental policymaking shape both public involvement and democratic legitimacy. Interviews with officials from the EU suggest that a top-down, technocratic approach to policymaking increases the gap between Brussels and publics in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. EU officials view environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as recipients of policy information, rather than as potential sources of public opinion and knowledge. This contribution demonstrates that while formal mechanisms may provide symbolic access, the influence and access of NGOs that do not possess technical or scientific expertise is limited. As integration continues, CEE states will become part of a Eurocratic policymaking and administrative tradition that compounds democratic deficits in both CEE countries and the EU.

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