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When does the structural power of business fade? assessing business privileged access at global climate negotiations

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ABSTRACT

Which non-state actors gain privileged access to policymakers during global environmental negotiations? This paper offers a first systematic answer to this question. I argue that, overall, business non-state actors gain more access to policymakers compared to NGOs. Importantly however, the privileged position of business groups becomes less pronounced – sometimes even disappears – if countries are more developed, less reliant on fossil fuels, more democratic, or the impact of climate change is higher for a country. For the empirical analysis, I first analyzed all business groups and NGOs that participated in country delegations at UN climate conferences between 1997 and 2012 ($n = 3,734$). To evaluate privileged access, I compare actors which gained access to country delegations ($n = 804$) with the organizations that participated during the conferences as observers ($n = 2,930$). The results confirm that business has more privileged access in general but not in all countries.

KEYWORDS Non-state actors; interest groups; climate conferences; global governance; lobbying; advocacy

Introduction

Each year thousands of non-state actor representatives attend the annual climate summits (Nordang-Uhre 2014; Fisher and Green 2004; Fisher 2010, McGregor 2011; Muñoz Cabré 2011). While this has certainly helped certain non-state actors to shape the ongoing negotiations (Hadden 2015, Lucas 2019) at the same time, many organizations and observers have criticized the ‘actual openness’ of the negotiation rounds for the input of *all* non-state actors. As persuasively illustrated by Fisher (2010), many non-state actors were ‘disenfranchised’ at the meetings and played hardly any role in the climate negotiations, despite being present at the meetings (see also Bäckstrand *et al.* 2017; Hanegraaff *et al.* 2020). This raises an important question: from all the thousands of organizations which were active at the

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various climate summits, which groups actually did manage to gain access to policymakers and which groups were standing mostly on the outside looking in?

In this paper, I seek to find an answer to this question by exploring the nature of *privileged access* of non-state actors at the climate summits. Privileged access refers to a situation in which non-state actors have regular access to policymakers at the meetings, which contrasts to situation in which groups can have only situational or no access to key policymakers (Rasmussen and Carroll 2013, Rasmussen and Gross 2015; Fraussen et al. 2015). Analyzing access is critical because, as Betsill and Correll (2001) highlight, it is the first step in understanding the impact of non-state actors in political processes. Moreover, focusing on which groups gain privileged access highlight what the *structural power* of different types of actors across countries is. That is, over time groups with more privileged access to policymakers should see their political preferences attained more often than groups that lack this position. As such, analyzing who gains privileged access provides an important insight about who the most powerful actors in political systems are (Halpin et al. 2017).

In my explanatory model, I focus on the type of access across NGOs and business organizations. NGOs are defined as groups that represent citizens regarding non-material interests, such as climate change or human rights. Business organizations seek economic benefits, such as business associations and firms. My research question is: to what extent do business organizations and NGOs gain privileged access to policymakers at climate summits? The argument I propose is derived from Robert Falkner's (2017) neo-pluralist approach to studying business in global environmental governance. This approach states that business has a privileged position in environmental governance, but this position is not universal but conditional on two key factors: the unity of the business community and the quality of the channels through which citizens can challenge business power. Building on these insights, I argue that the privileged position of business becomes smaller in countries where business is more divided on the implementation of climate policies and where the potential for external challenges to business power in this field is stronger.

To *study* privileged access in the field of global climate governance, I empirically focus on non-state actor access at UN climate summits. The climate summits have been held annually since the mid-1990s. At each conference many non-state actors attend the summits as observers, while only a small set of groups participants via formal country delegations to the conferences. Being included in the delegation provides many advantages to non-state actors to talk to policymakers (Schroeder et al. 2012), both formally (more elaborate access passes at the venue) as well as informally (meeting with negotiators). The combination of these data sources allows

for a unique opportunity to study privileged access during climate summits, namely, to compare the set of actors included in the formal country delegations ($n = 804$) to the set of actors from these countries that participate as observers only ($n = 2,930$). In other words, it allows me to study privileged access of business groups during rounds of global environmental negotiations across a wide range of countries (136 in total).

In what follows, I first develop the theoretical framework and hypotheses. In the second section, the research design is explained, after which I test the hypotheses. I end with a summary of the main findings and provide an avenue for future research.

Privileged access during global environmental negotiations

A focus on privileged access to global environmental negotiations is important for several reasons. Privileged access refers to a situation in which non-state actors have the opportunity to be in direct contact with relevant policymakers if needed, while outsiders face considerable obstacles to get in touch with these policymakers. As argued by Maloney et al (1994, p. 17), there exists ‘an important divide between the relatively few groups with privileged status and the greater number of groups who find themselves consigned to less influential positions’ (see also Dür and Mateo 2016). Who are the groups in close contact with policymakers during climate summits and who are those on the outside looking in?

Finding an answer to this question is important because access patterns matters for the potential influence of non-state actors (Hansen 1991, Truman 1951, p. 264). Patterns of access divide non-state actor systems into insiders and outsiders, where insiders are considered more *powerful* than outsiders (Dür and Mateo 2016). This is not to say that access is a sufficient condition for influence. Influence is often a multidimensional process, where voters, politicians, bureaucrats, public opinion, and external events could all affect the eventual outcomes of a policy process. As a result, access to policymakers does not always lead to influence in a particular case (Lowery 2013, p. 314). Yet, focusing on which groups do gain privileged access highlight who policymakers *prefer* to talk to, i.e. what the structural power of different types of actors in politics is. That is, over time groups with more privileged access to policymakers should see their political preferences attained more often than groups that lack this position. As such, analyzing who gains privileged access provides an important insight into who is represented and who the powerful actors in political systems are (Halpin and Fraussen 2017).

In this paper, I focus on the role of business groups and NGOs as potential insiders to the global climate summits. The question whether or not political leaders favor the input of business groups has a long tradition in studies focusing on domestic politics, starting from Truman (1951), Schattschneider

1960) and Olson (1965) to our time (Lowery 2013). Yet, in studies of global governance, this distinction has been far less studied (but see Tallberg *et al.* 2018). Most studies tend to focus on either NGOs *or* business groups; or make no distinction between both and analyze them as ‘civil society organizations’ irrespective of their economic or social purpose.

Moreover, the literature that is there does not speak with one voice. For starters, studies which mapped the entire non-state actor community at climate summits do not find much of a difference in terms of the number of business and NGOs that participate at the climate summits (e.g. Nordang-Uhre 2014; Muñoz Cabré 2011; Hanegraaff 2015a). Rather they observe a rather equal distribution of business organizations and NGOs active at these meetings. However, focusing on the raw numbers only may lead to the premature conclusion that business groups and NGOs have a rather equal chance to talk to policymakers. Indeed, when looking closer one observes that participation is not equal for all; some non-state actors simply have more opportunities to talk to policymakers than others (Bäckstrand *et al.* 2017). Several case studies identify a strong divide in the non-state actor community where many civil society groups were disenfranchised at the meetings. They did not find a way to meaningfully connect to policymakers during several conferences. For instance, Fisher (2010) persuasively illustrates how NGOs during the Copenhagen Cop in 2008 were not able to reach policymakers, among others, because the number of other non-state actors competing for access was simply too large. With over 30,000 non-state actor representatives active at the Copenhagen summit, only a small proportion of groups was able to gain access to policymakers during the conferences (see also McGregor 2011; Fisher 2010). As such, as highlighted by Hanegraaff *et al.* (2020), the system of global environmental governance is starting to show much resemblance with domestic non-state actor systems, where the chances of each individual organization to gain access has become very small due to the increased competition over political attention (Berkhout *et al.* 2018). From a slightly different angle, Sikkink (2005) referred to such trend as the insider-outsider model of global governance, where some organizations operate much closer to (key) policymakers, while the large majority tend to look from the outside in, only sparsely connecting to policymakers.

What is less clear, however, is which non-state actors have gained access to country delegation, while this is critical for effective lobbying during the conferences. Being included in the delegation provides many advantages to non-state actors to talk to policymakers (Schroeder *et al.* 2012), both formally (more elaborate access passes at the venue) as well as informally (meeting with negotiators). Current studies, however, focus on the *general* population of active non-state actors, without differentiating those which have privileged access to negotiators from the actors which are not provided such opportunities. As such, it remains unclear who are on the inside of the

negotiations and who stand outside during climate negotiations: do business groups have the ear of negotiators or can NGOs also provide valuable input? And if so, under what particular circumstances? In the next section, I propose several expected outcomes to these questions.

Hypotheses: privileged access by business groups and NGOs

The argument that is provided in this paper is based on Robert Falkner's introduction of the *neo-pluralist approach* to studying business in global environmental governance (Falkner 2017). The neo-pluralist approach is an alternate view to the pluralist and structuralist perspectives which have dominated much of the theorizing in global environmental governance debates thus far. The pluralist perspective, originating from literature on domestic interest group politics (see Lowery 2007) but applicable to an international context as well (Hanegraaff 2015), was criticized for assuming that international politics offers a level playing field for all interest groups seeking to gain access at this level (e.g. Stroup and Wong 2017). As structuralists have pointed out, business actors play a crucial role in the economy, as sources of employment and providers of economic growth and innovation, and their consent is required if major alterations to the functioning of the global economy are to be realized via global rules and regulations (Bernhagen and Bräuninger 2005, Culpepper 2015, Falkner 2017). Neo-pluralists fall in between the pluralist and structuralist views. On the one end neo-pluralist acknowledge the critical position of firms in global environmental processes; without their support – as argued – it is difficult to enforce change in this field (Bernhagen 2008, Böhmelt 2013, Murphy and Kellow 2013, Hanegraaff 2015). The business community is therefore still considered to have more structural power in environmental political processes, similar as structuralist would predict. This means that overall 'business should gain more privileged access to policymakers in government delegations attending climate summits' (H1).

On the other end – and this is main focus of the paper – neo-pluralists also argue that the structural advantages of the business community can be challenged. Especially under two key conditions, the structural power of corporations becomes less outspoken (Falkner 2017). First, business power can be challenged from the *inside*. If the business community is divided about political goals, this could lead to a loss of their structural power. This also fits broader insights about the importance of unity within interest group coalition for the potential to be successful in lobbying (Junk and Rasmussen 2019). Business power can also be challenged from the *outside*. That is, it can be challenged by the potential of citizens to channel opposition to business power, such as through parliament or via non-state actors (Cheon and Urperlainen 2013, Falkner 2017). In what follows, I apply these insights to develop hypotheses regarding the privileged access of business organizations across countries.

We start with *business unity* across countries. One critical insight that neopluralist have to offer is that the business community is often divided on issues related to international politics. If we want to understand the sources and limits of business power, we therefore need to analyze the potential variety of business actors within a country regarding climate change policies. On this particular issue, the level of *development* of a country should play a critical role for several reasons. Business conflict arises in international environmental politics because of the differential effects that international regulatory measures have on individual companies or industries. Climate change policies vary strongly and include regulation on product standards, regulations on certification schemes, requirements for the documentation requirements for international trade, goals, and timetables for the reduction or elimination of emissions, and many other types of measures (Hughes and Urpelainen 2015). What these measures and regulations share is that they have a diverging effect on business actors, as they benefit or harm specific economic sectors in a different way, but also stimulate new economic markets or change sectors which are already there. Importantly, the precise effect of these regulations varies more as the economy becomes more complex and diverse, such as in developed nations (Prakash and Potoski 2006, Falkner 2017). Consider, for instance, the stark difference in preferences of the energy-intensive industries, the renewable energy companies, and the services industries regarding climate change. Each of these industries have a strong footprint in developed economies, but they are not equally affected by environmental policies. Some economic sectors benefit from stricter environmental rules, while others prosper with less rules and regulations in this field. This leads to many diverging interests in the business community and therefore creates less unity. In contrast, in developing countries, economies are much less diversified. Many low-income countries still depend for the most part on agricultural and energy intensive industrial sectors, which have much more homogenous preferences regarding climate change policies. This unites their political interests and should therefore strengthen the structural position of the business community as a whole. As such, we should see that the structural power of business actors is higher in developing countries compared to in developed nations because the business community has more homogenous interests regarding climate change policies in the former compared to the latter. As a consequence, we should see that 'business gains more privileged access to policymakers in developing nations compared to in developed nations' (H2).

Following this logic, business unity regarding climate change policies should also be higher when the economy of a country is highly *dependent on fossil fuels*. Under these circumstances, the business community has a shared goal to challenge climate change policies being implemented in a country as it would require a major change of their economic activities (Cheon and Urpelainen 2013). The most extreme examples include major oil

producing countries. In such countries, the majority of the business revenue is linked to fossil fuels and climate change policies are a direct threat to the majority of the business community in these countries. This is vastly different in countries where there is a more diverse supply of energy sources and therefore less economic dependency on fossil fuels. In such circumstances, business unity regarding climate policies should be much more divided: some have a strong interest in maintaining the status-quo while others would profit more from stricter climate change regulations. As a consequence, more diverse energy supply in a country should lead to more diversity in policy preferences among the business community. This, in turn, diminishes the structural power of the business community regarding climate change policies. We should therefore observe that ‘business actors gain less privileged access to delegations in countries which are less dependent on fossil fuels’ (H3).

Challenges to business power, however, does not only come from the inside of the business community; it can also come from the existence of strong *countervailing interests*. This may come in two forms. First, it is reflected in the ability of citizen to challenge their interest via the parliamentary system (i.e. via a diversity of political parties) thereby allowing citizens to challenge the power of business actors. Moreover, non-state – such as NGOs – can challenge the legitimacy and authority of business actors in a society. Indeed, (transnational) networks of NGOs and labor unions have empowered citizens, even though they often have fewer financial means or are less included in the structure of power (Bernauer *et al.* 2013, Hadden 2015). Especially in field of environmental governance, NGO campaigns have challenged the legitimacy of firms and changed the environmental behavior or firms such as through corporate social responsibility practices (Hale 2020). In other words, if countervailing forces to business power become stronger in a country this should limit the structural power of business organizations and therefore the ability to gain privileged access.

I see two country features in which such countervailing forces should be the strongest. First, in *democratic* societies, we should see more countervailing forces to business power. Indeed, the voice of citizens is channeled through the democratic process, in which all citizens vote on a variety of parties with diverging relations with business actors. This should limit the structural power of the business community. Moreover, in democratic societies NGOs are much more active and prominent (Andonova *et al.* 2017). This especially applies to the field of climate governance, where we see the highest number of NGOs establishments and activity in the Western world (see Berkhout *et al.* 2017). In contrast, in less democratic states the position of opposition parties is severely limited (or even non-existence). The role of NGOs is also often undermined in less democratic countries, sometimes implicitly via lack of funding; but sometimes explicitly in case NGOs are not

allowed to enter/stay a country (Henderson 2002, Brook and Frolic 2015). All this should lead to a less outspoken structural impact of business actors in democratic states, considering that both political parties and non-state actors can challenge business power; compared to in less-democratic states where these countervailing forces are less developed and strong. This leads me to expect that ‘business groups gain more privileged access in countries which have lower democratic standards compared to countries with high democratic standards’ (H4).

Furthermore, the extent to which countries are *affected* by climate change should also affect the strength of countervailing forces in a country. Some countries are highly affected by climate change, while other countries have less to fear in the short and long term. For instance, countries directly exposed to the ocean tend to be in more danger than landlocked countries; while countries where temperatures are already high are more vulnerable to climate change than countries where temperatures are more modest (Ahmed *et al.* 2009). This variation in environmental vulnerability across countries should lead to the emerge of countervailing forces, such as in Parliament and via NGO mobilization. On the one end, political parties advocating for stricter climate policies should receive more votes in countries where the threats of climate change are more severe. Likewise, mobilization theories show that non-state actor mobilization is strongest when the stakes are high (see Junk *et al.* 2021). In other words, when climate change affects a country more, there are more challengers to business power. This means that the ‘privileged access business groups gain to delegations should be lower in countries which are more vulnerable to climate change’ (H5).

Research design

The case I rely on in this paper is all non-state actor participation at the UNFCCC climate summits. The climate summits provide an excellent case to test my hypotheses because there is data available regarding organizations seeking access (organizations active at the conferences) and organizations which governments provided explicit access to participate at the conferences (the non-state actors active in the delegations). Regarding the first, climate summits are among the most open international venues that exist (Fisher 2010; Hanegraaff 2015a). At first glance, one might think that the accreditation requirements of the UNFCCC do restrict participation to certain types of organizations, as one formal prerequisite to attend the conferences is that an organization is a non-profit establishment. Yet, this does not mean that firms do not attend. Quite the contrary; firms cope with these official requirements by registering as a member of an official observer delegation (see Appendix 1). This means that almost all organizations that *want* to participate, *can* participate as an observer.

The criteria to participate in a country delegation are however much higher. For each conference, countries select a few organizations to include in their delegation. This inclusion is highly sought-after as it provides great benefits (Böhmelt 2013). These organizations acquire country badges, which allow them to attend closed meetings at the conferences. Moreover, they tend to regularly meet with negotiators prior to, during, and after the conferences (Hanegraaff 2015b). The selection of organizations to participate in country delegations is made *within* countries by national politicians who need to approve the formal delegations and send these names to the UNFCCC secretariat. This makes it possible to compare the *preferences* of national policymakers in terms of who they provide access to. Combined, the link between a *low* threshold to participate in the summits as an observer and the *high* threshold to attend as part of a delegation makes the climate summits a great venue to test who gains privileged access to policymakers.

More specifically, I compare the general participation of non-state actors at the conference as an *observer* with those attending as members of the country *delegations*. This data is gathered via coding of websites. First, I mapped all business groups and NGOs that attended any of the climate summits between 1997 and 2012 as observers ($n = 6,665$) (available via the website of the UNFCCC). Second, based on the same source, I mapped all organizations that were included in the official country delegations at the COPs ($n = 1,231$). Third, all these organizations were coded using information available on websites. Only for a small number of organizations no information was found at all (less than 1%). The assistants coded information about the region or countries from which they stem, the issue areas in which they are active, their constituency base, and how they are organized. In case of doubt, the assistant flagged the organization and I made the final decision. An extensive overview of the coding procedure is provided in Appendix 1.

To give an indication of the distribution across delegations and observers, [Figure 1](#) summarizes the number of non-state actors per conference separated into observers (white bars), and those that were part of the delegation (black bars). The figures show that only a fraction of all the organizations which participate at the conference have access to the delegations.

We turn to the operationalization of the variables used in the analysis (see [Table 1](#) for a summary of the variables). The *dependent* variable in my study is being active at a conference as an observer (=0) or being active in a country delegation (=1). This way the population active at the climate conferences in general serves as a benchmark for the inclusion of a particular organization in a country delegation. Because the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable, I rely on logit regressions. Due to the hierarchical structure of the data, I include random intercepts at the level of the country where the delegations stem from (for more details on design see empirical section).

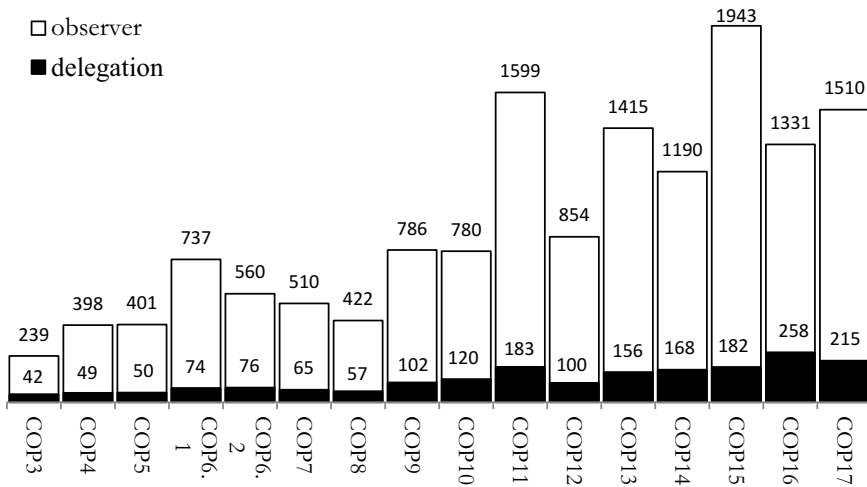


Figure 1. Number of NSAs active at COP and included in delegations (1997–2011).

Table 1. Summary table of variables.

Variable	Description	Mean	Minus	Max	S.D.
DV: Bias	Being included (=1) in delegation or not (=0)	0.20	0	1	N.A.
H1: Group type	Business (=1); NGO (=0)	0.54	0	1	N.A.
H2: Wealth	GDP per capita in country (World Bank)	34.3	0.35	82.4	23.4
H3: Fossil fuel dependency	Alternative and nuclear energy indicator (World Bank)	11.28	0	49.1	9.68
H4: Democracy	Level of democracy in country (Polity4 index)	8.42	-10	.10	3.67
H5: Env. Vulnerability	Environmental vulnerability (UNEP)	308	181	428	49.8
C1: Economic output	Gross Domestic Product (World Bank)	3332	1.861	16,768	5533
C1: Size of government	Government expenditure per total GDP (World Bank)	0.31	0.05	0.57	0.13
C3: Saliency	Active at COP3 (Kyoto) or COP15 (Copenhagen)	0.22	0	1	N.A.

The first *independent* variable in this study is ‘group type’, whereby I make a distinction between business groups and NGOs. Business organizations include business associations (sometimes referred to as peak-level business organizations) as well as individual firms. NGOs include all organizations that rely, either directly or indirectly, on support from individual citizens and/or defend interests that transcend the individual economic interests of the supporting constituency. Overall, there are more NGOs than business groups active at the conferences.

As for the *conditional* effects, I look at four country characteristics. *First*, the level of ‘development’ of a country is indicated by a country’s GDP per capita (retrieved from the World Bank statistical division). *Second*, I analyze the dependency of countries on fossil fuels vis-à-vis more renewable sources of energy. The business communities in countries which rely on more

diverse energy sources are less likely to have a unity voice, hereby limiting their structural power. I rely on the World Bank alternative and nuclear energy indicator, which is measured as the percentage of ‘clean energy’ of total energy use in a country. Clean energy is ‘noncarbohydrate energy that does not produce carbon dioxide when generated. It includes hydropower and nuclear, geothermal, and solar power, among others’ (see: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.USE.COMM.CL.ZS>). *Third*, the level of ‘democracy’ of a country is provided by the Polity IV index (see <https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>), which ranges from 10 (=fully democratic) to -10 (=not democratic at all). *Fourth*, I include a measure for the societal impact of the climate change for a country. I rely on the environmental vulnerability index developed by the ‘South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and UNEP’ (see <http://www.vulnerabilityindex.net>).

I *control* for three factors. First, I control for the size of a country as indicated by its *Gross Domestic Product*. Larger countries may include a broader set of actors considering that they can afford a larger delegation to attend the conferences. This may lead to the inclusion of more NGOs. I rely on the World Bank indicators for GDP. Second, I control for the *size of government*. The size of a government provides an indication of the ability of government to gather information on their own. Relatively smaller governments are more in need of input by non-state actors, which may affect the type of organizations they prefer to include in the delegation. I use the World Bank’s indicator, which is the ‘general government final consumption expenditure as a percentage of GDP’. Finally, I control for the *saliency* of the conferences. It may be that governments include more NGOs for COPs which attract much public attention to increase the legitimacy of the decision-making procedures. The two most salient conferences in this time span are COP3 (Kyoto 1997) and COP15 (Copenhagen 2009). Organizations active at either one of these conferences are coded with a ‘1’, the others with a ‘0’.

Empirical analysis

Descriptive analysis

I start with some descriptive statistics. [Figure 2](#) summarizes how the privileged position of NGOs and business organizations varies across the countries in the analysis. The figure is a combination of two scores. First, for each country the percentage of business groups active as observers is calculated. Second, the same calculation is made, but then applied to the percentage of business groups present in the country delegations. To highlight privileged access to delegations, the percentage of businesses as observers from a country is subtracted from the percentage of businesses in the delegation.

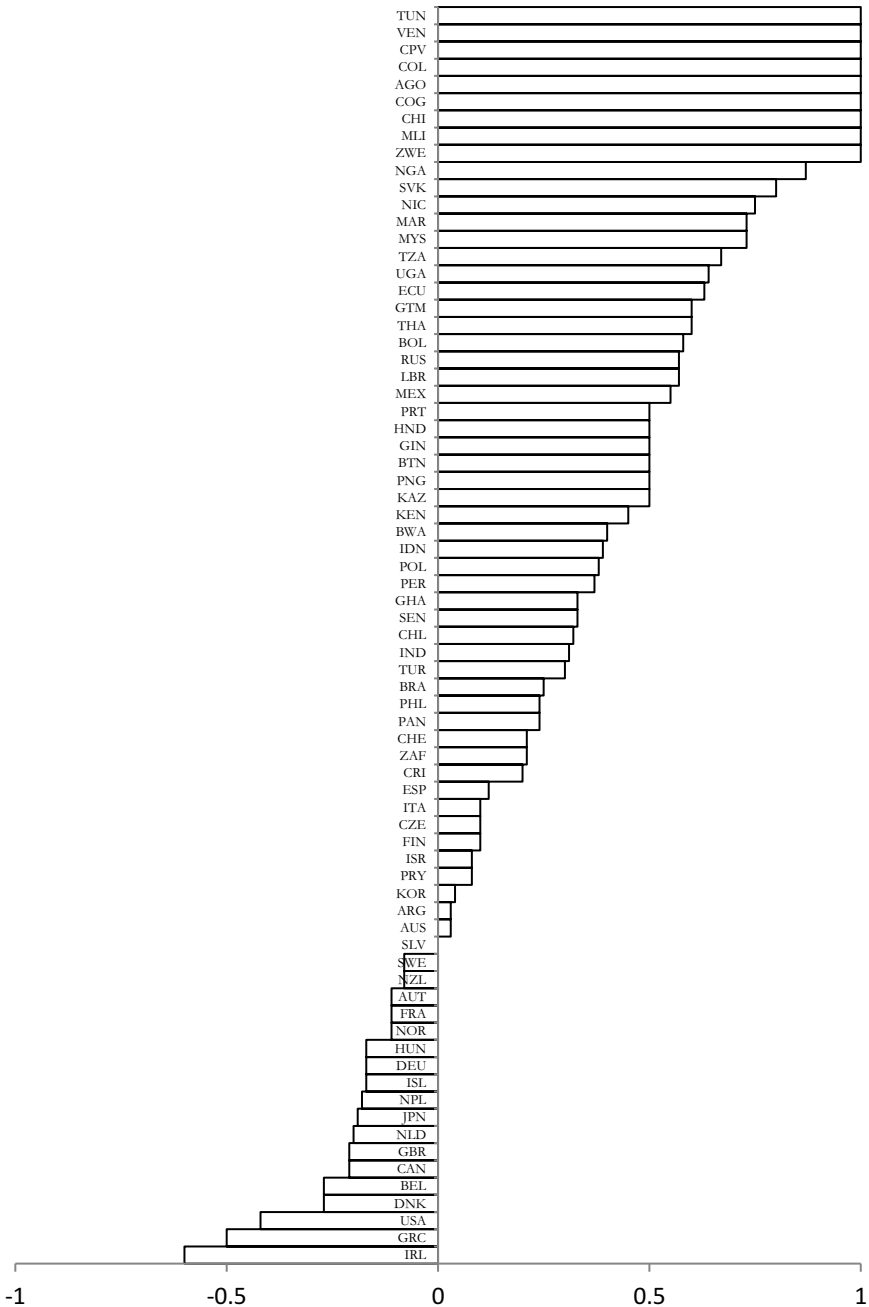


Figure 2. Business bias across countries (n = 72): positive score means there is business bias; negative score highlights an NGO bias. The scores are calculated by subtracting the percentage business in the delegation from the percentage business as observers per country

Simply put: the results illustrate whether business groups or NGOs gain relative more access to delegation compared to the broader population of groups active at the conferences. A positive score indicates that business groups gain more access to country negotiators compared to their share in the observer population, while a score under zero means NGOs gain more access to delegations.

Overall, the figure clearly demonstrates that business groups are over-represented in delegations compared to their participation as observers. That is, the surface on the right side of the y-axis is much more pronounced than the surface on the left side. More precisely, on average delegations contain 29% more business groups than the observer community. In the observer community only 26% is a business group; in the delegations this figure is 58%. In other words, in general there are less business groups as observers than there are NGOs, but this is reversed in the delegations.

What is also clear, however, is that there is much variation across countries. Some countries *only* host business groups in their delegation; other countries distribute access quite evenly; while some even include more NGOs as compared to how many NGOs there are active as observers. Some notable examples which favor business groups to a large extent are Venezuela, Tunisia, Qatar, Columbia, Burkina Faso, and Angola (all include only business groups). Countries that include many NGOs are Ireland, Greece, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. In the next section, I systematically explore this variation in a multivariate analysis.

Multivariate analysis

The dependent variable in this study is dichotomous (being included or not in the delegation). For this reason, I opted to run logit analysis. Logit estimation is most appropriate owing to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, and the high occurrence of zero values. Of the 3,666 organizations, only 806 are included in the delegations. This means there is a high concentration of zeros, and logit models are more appropriate to such distributions (Liao 1994, p. 25). Moreover, the data is hierarchical, with access and participation at the conferences clustered by countries. To account for this, the logit regressions were conducted with random intercepts for the countries from which the decision-makers originate, using mixed-effects estimation models. Table 2 provides the results of the four logit regression analyses. Model 1 includes all variables without the interactions. Models 2–4 show the results of the interaction of group type with the wealth of a nation (Model 2), dependency on fossil fuels (Model 3), the level of democracy (Model 4) and the environmental vulnerability of a country (Model 5).

Table 2. Logit analysis predicting likelihood of an organization participating in a country delegation at the COPs.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Main effects					
Group type					
<i>Citizen</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
<i>Business</i>	0.345*** (.106)	1.563*** (.171)	0.941*** (.150)	2.418*** (.326)	1.692** (.665)
GDP/cap	-0.008 (.006)	0.026*** (.006)	-0.008 (.006)	-0.003 (.006)	-0.007 (.006)
Fossil fuel dependency	-0.006 (.014)	-0.004 (.014)	0.017 (.014)	0.001 (.014)	-0.006 (.014)
Democracy (Polity)	-0.027 (.025)	-0.033 (.025)	-0.020 (.002)	-0.135*** (.037)	-0.025 (.025)
Environ. vulnerability	-0.005* (.002)	-0.006** (.002)	-0.004* (.002)	-0.004* (.002)	-0.003 (.002)
Interactions					
<i>Business (=reference)</i>		Ref.			
GDP/cap *Citizen		-0.039*** (.004)			
Fossil depend.*Citizen			-0.053*** (.009)		
Democracy*Citizen				-0.248*** (.035)	
Environ. Vuln.*Citizen					-0.0043** (.002)
Control variables					
GDP	-0.000*** (.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (.000)
Size of government	-0.162 (1.075)	-0.293 (1.099)	-0.340 (1.076)	-0.9119 (1.102)	-0.0675 (1.077)
Saliency	-0.790*** (.142)	-0.786*** (0.804)	-0.807*** (0.143)	-0.789*** (0.144)	-0.789*** (0.142)
Diagnostics					
Constant	0.929 (0.787)	0.906 (0.804)	0.676 (0.790)	-0.155 (0.831)	0.328 (0.843)
Country level intercept	0.981 (.220)	1.020 (.232)	0.979 (.219)	1.009 (.228)	0.981 (.220)
Log-likelihood	1449.68	1404.45	1433.37	1418.32	1447.68
N	3,552	3,552	3,552	3,552	3,552

The model is a mixed-effects logistic regression which estimates a random intercept for all 136 countries.

The dichotomous dependent variable is being included in delegation or not. Logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Significance are presented, whereby: *P < 0.1; **P < 0.05; ***P < 0.01.

What are the main findings? We first look at Model 1, without the interactions. As expected, business organizations are most preferred in delegations, while NGOs are less likely to be included in country delegations. The results are significant ($p < 0.01$). To visualize these effects, I plotted the predicted probabilities of being included in a delegation by group type (see Figure 3, based on Model 1 of Table 2). Here, one can see that almost a quarter of all business organizations are part of the country delegations, whereas only 17% of the NGOs has been able to gain such privileged access. This means that the first, more general, hypothesis is confirmed: business groups indeed gain more privileged

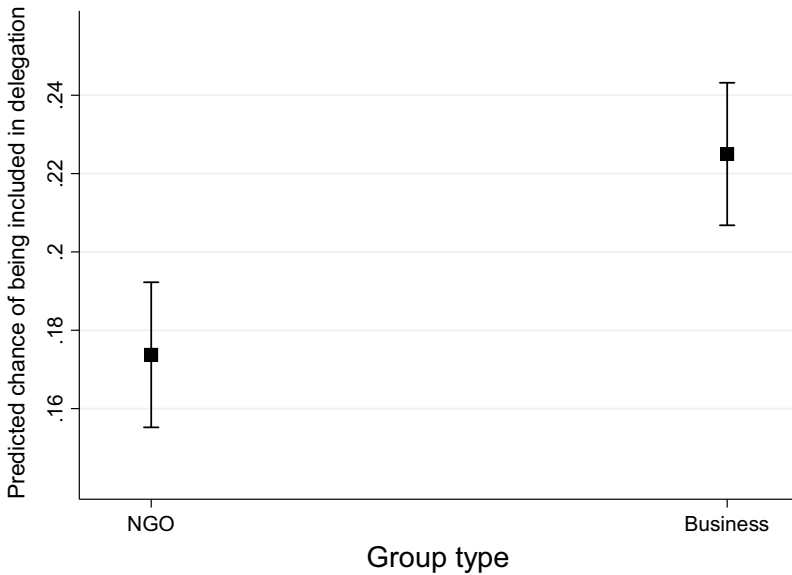


Figure 3. Predicted chance of being included in the delegation by group type (business & NGO). Predicted chance for being included in delegation per group type, based on Model 1. Significance: * = 0.05;

access to policymakers during climate summits than NGOs. Moreover, the differences are not trivial, but point to a vast overrepresentation of business groups in country delegations.

In the remainder of the paper, I add the *conditional* effects. We first focus on the two hypotheses related to business unity: the wealth of a nation and its dependency on fossil fuels. First, Model 2 of Table 2 provides an interaction between group type and the *wealth* of a country (i.e., GDP per capita in U.S. dollars). The interaction is significant ($p < 0.01$) as can be seen in Table 2. To see how the variables interact, I plotted the marginal differences between businesses and NGOs per level of development of a country (see Figure 4). The findings confirm hypothesis 2. That is, in developing countries (left of Figure 4) we see that many more business groups are included in the delegations compared to those active as observers. However, in highly developed countries we see that NGOs have a (slightly) higher chance of being included (far right end of Figure 4). More specifically, at low levels of development, the chance of a business group being included is almost 50%, whereas the chance of an NGO being included in a delegation is around 15%. In other words, privileged access to business groups is only apparent if a country is not (fully) developed. Overall, the results provide a strong support for hypothesis 2: the more developed a country is, the less we observe a privileged position of business groups in country delegations.

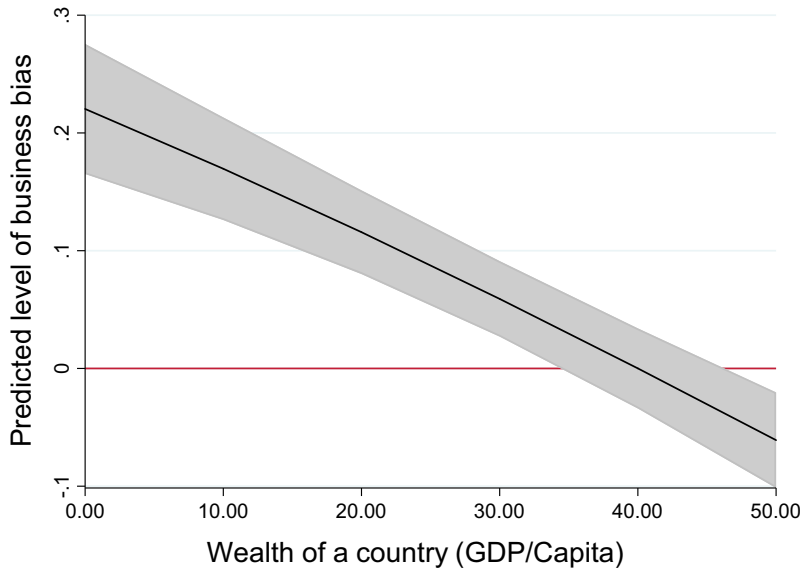


Figure 4. Average marginal effects of being included in the delegation by group type and a country's wealth (GDP/capita). Marginal difference in business bias per level of wealth, based on Model 2. Significance: * = 0.05;

Next, we analyze a country's *dependence on fossil fuels*. As argued, in countries which are highly dependent on fossil fuels the business community is less divided compared to countries which rely on more diverse energy sources. In the former, we should expect all business actors to oppose (too stringent) climate policies. In the latter only business which rely on fossil fuels should oppose such regulations, while organizations active in economic sectors which are 'clean' should have an incentive for stricter regulation. The results are presented in Model 5, Table 2 and highlight a significant interaction. To visualize the effect I again plotted the marginal effects (see Figure 5). The results are striking. In countries which are for the most part dependent on fossil fuels (up to 15% of their energy supply is not provided by fossil fuels), we see that business actors gain more privileged access to policymakers. Yet, once we observe more diverse energy supply (25% or more of the energy supply comes from clean energy sources), we see that NGOs gain more privileged access. While this applies to a small set of the countries in the dataset, it does highlight how important business unity is for privileged access. Once business becomes less united in their interests, they gain substantially less access to delegations. This is in line with hypothesis 3.

In the final section of this paper, we focus on the hypotheses related to the existence of *countervailing forces* to challenge business power: the level of democracy in a country and a country's vulnerability to climate change. First,

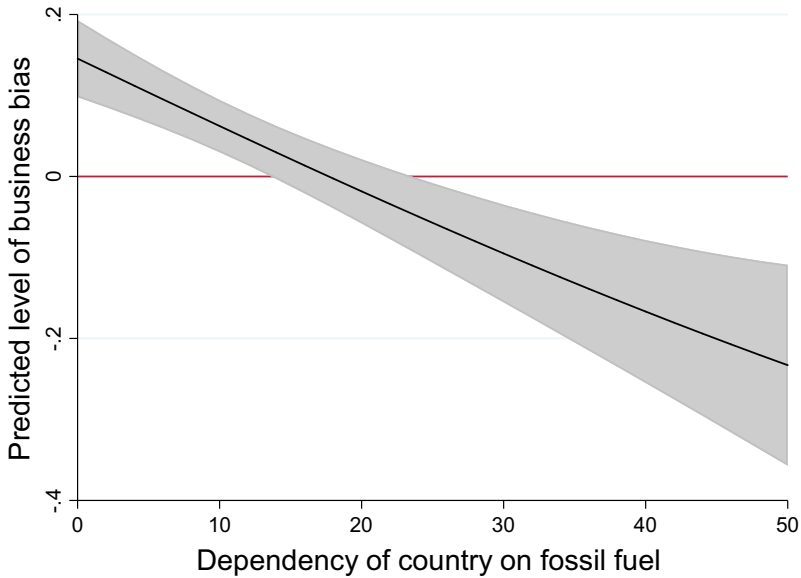


Figure 5. Average marginal effects of being included in the delegation by group type and a country's dependence on fossil fuels (World Bank).

I provide an interaction between-group type and level of *democracy* measured by the Polity index, revision 4. To reiterate, the scores range from -10 , which is the lowest possible score (such as Qatar and North Korea), to 10 , which is the highest score (includes full democracies such as the U.S., Switzerland, and Sweden). In Model 4 of Table 2 you see that the interaction is again significant ($p < 0.01$). To understand how the variables precisely interact, I plotted the marginal differences between businesses and NGOs and their chance of being included in a delegation (see Figure 6). The results show much similarity with the former figures on development, but there are also some important differences. As expected, we see that as the democratic-level increases, privileged access of business groups drastically decreases (see decreasing dark line, Figure 4). Yet, the differences between low and high levels of democracy are even more significant than for level of development. More specifically, at low levels of democracy no less than 60% of the business groups are included, while less than 5% of the NGOs are included. At higher levels of democracy, we see an increase of NGOs being included to a likelihood of roughly 25%, while the chance of a business group being included significantly drops. Yet, only at the *highest* level of democracy (Polity score is 10) do business groups and NGOs have an equal predicted chance of being included in country delegations. For every lower score, even a score of 9 on the Polity index, businesses have a higher chance of being included in a country delegation. This confirms hypothesis 4: business gains much more privileged access to country delegations when these

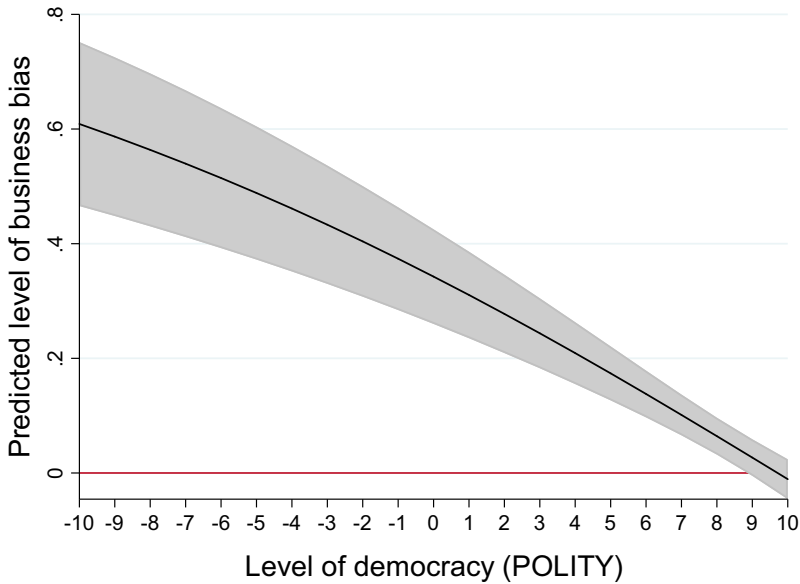


Figure 6. Average marginal effects of being included in the delegation by group type and a country's level of democracy (POLITY index). Marginal difference in business bias per level of democracy, based on Model 3. Significance: * = 0.05;

countries are less democratic.¹ Moreover, the effect is very substantial, with hardly any NGOs being included at low levels of democracy, while only at very high levels of democracy business does *not* gain more access than NGOs to country delegations.

Finally, I hypothesized that *climate vulnerability* could affect the outcomes. To test this, Model 5, Table 2, provides an interaction between-group types and the vulnerability of a country to climate change (ranging from 174 = low risk to 424 = high risk). The interaction is again significant ($p < 0.001$). To better qualify the differences, I again plotted the marginal difference between business groups and NGOs in their chance of being included in delegations (see Figure 7). The figure shows that as countries become more vulnerable to climate change, the difference between business groups and NGOs strongly decreases from 25 percentage points difference at low levels of environmental vulnerability, to no difference at high levels of environmental vulnerability. This reflects the need of countries at risk of climate change to not only consider the business side of the debate, but also the environmental impact of the negotiation as reflected through NGO participation in delegations. Yet, and this is also notable, there is no climate threat high enough to favor NGOs over businesses. Apparently, the input of business groups is too valuable even when faced with significant opposition by other parties and actors. Overall, the results are in line with hypothesis 5.

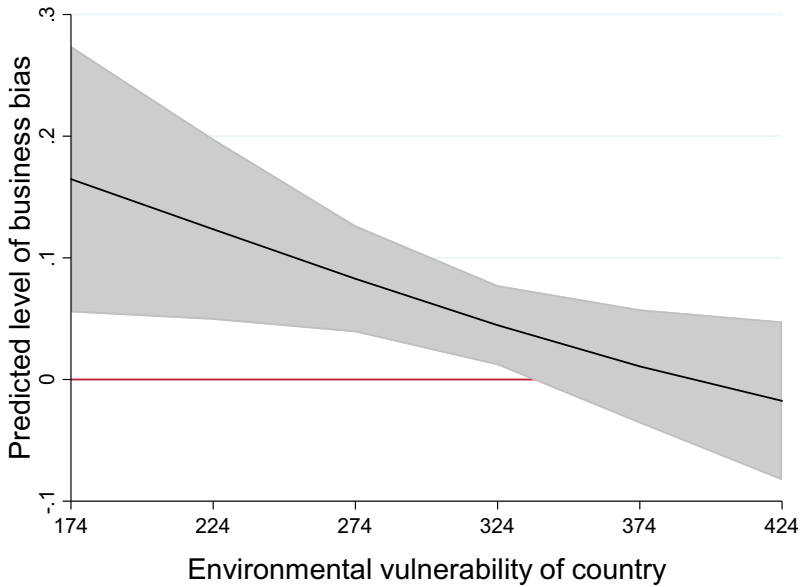


Figure 7. Average marginal effects of being included in the delegation by group type and a country's vulnerability to climate change (UNEP). Marginal difference in business bias per level of environmental vulnerability, based on Model 4. Significance: = 0.05;

Conclusion

The field of global climate governance is one of the most inclusive policy fields for non-state actors to participate. Literally thousands of non-state actors have participated at the various climate summits over the past decades. This does not, however, mean that all groups have equal opportunities to meaningfully interact with policymakers at the negotiation conferences. Everyone who has ever attended any of the climate summits knows that some groups interact with policymakers directly and on a regular scale, while others never see or hear from a policymaker while attending the conferences (Fisher 2010). In this paper, I sought to systematically analyze to what extent business groups gain privileged access to policymakers compared to NGOs.

The paper provides a substantive and theoretical contributions to the literature. *Substantively*, two main findings stand out. First, business groups are much more likely to gain privileged access to policymakers during climate summits. That is, a business organization has almost double the chance of being part of a country delegation as an NGO. This is an important insight as it highlights – for the first time – that governments on a global scale prefer the input of business groups over NGOs in the field of climate change. Moreover, the differences are

not trivial. Business groups gain *substantially* more access to most countries in the world confirming the structural power they possess in the field of climate governance.

Second, and perhaps more surprising is that the overall privileged access of business groups is not universal, but highly conditional on the level of development and democracy of a country as well as the environmental threats countries face. Countries which are wealthier, more democratic, and face more environmental challenges, provide less privileged access to business groups than countries which are less developed, less democratic and for which climate change is less threatening. Perhaps most importantly, in countries which score very high on these indicators, business has *no* privileged access at all: in these countries access is equally distributed to business groups and NGOs. This suggests that NGOs *can* play an important role in global climate negotiations and that their structural positions of power is indeed growing in wealthy democratic countries.

The paper also provides an important *theoretical* contribution. This paper demonstrates that the neo-pluralist view of business power in global environmental governance is highly useful to explain access patterns of non-state actors to policymakers in global politics (Falkner 2017). Businesses have more structural power in (international) politics, but the extent to which they can effectuate this power into access depends strongly on the unity within the business community and the existence of countervailing forces in a country. Moreover, considering the importance this theory ascribes to the *context* in which policymakers and non-state actors operate, it seems especially relevant when trying to understand non-state actor behavior in a global comparative perspective.

Despite the contributions to the literature, there are also *limitations* to this study that require further exploration. A first limitation is that there is obviously no guarantee that policymakers will listen to non-state actors being included in the delegation each and every time. However, while access is indeed not a sufficient condition for influence, access is an important asset for non-state actors in this process (Lowery 2007, 2013). It highlights who have the ear of policymakers when things matter most (Dür and Mateo 2016). This provides such insider groups a running start each and every time policy is made, increasing the likelihood to have an impact on policymaking. Still, a next step would be to link the findings regarding access in this paper to policy outcomes in order to locate the more exact effect of privileged access for influence.

Second, in this paper, I made a rather crude *distinction* between business groups and NGOs. It is clear, however, that not all NGOs and business groups are the same, act the same, and want the same (Allen and Hadden 2017, Bäckstrand *et al.* 2017). First, there are rich NGOs and poor business groups. Second, not all business groups stand on the same side of the political debate: some may want to see more stringent climate regulation, while others prefer no regulation at all. Third, for NGOs, some may prefer to be outsiders to

maintain an independent position for their constituency. The large-scale nature of the data unfortunately did not allow for more specified analysis, but I recognize that further specification could shed further light on the question who gains access and why. I therefore hope future analysis will provide more nuance to the rather broad patterns identified in this paper.

A third limitation relates to the *case* selection. In this paper, I focused on the climate summits, but the question is how generalizable these findings are to other cases. On the one hand, it may be that in policy fields which attract less non-state actors, the privileged position of business will be lower as policymakers have more time to talk to a wide variety of groups (i.e., limited supply leads to more balanced access). On the other hand, climate change is a viable threat to most countries. As we have seen, this limits the preferential position of business groups in politics. On issues which have less societal impact, it may be that the position of business groups is even stronger, and perhaps even extends into very wealthy and democratic nations. This all goes beyond the focus of this paper, but future research should shed more light on how and why privileged access varies across countries *and* policy fields.

More generally, I hope this study spurs more research into the (privileged) position of different types of non-state actor in global governance. I especially I hope future studies will focus more on access patterns in a *comparative* perspective, preferably beyond our 'normal' Western point of view. This is not only important for a broader perspective on the nature of access across countries but also to have a deeper understanding about why policies are developed the way they are across countries as well as in global agreements.

Note

1. I also rely on a different indicator of democracy: Freedom House Civil Liberties Indicator (see Appendix 2). The results remain the same.

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Appendix 1. Project details

In this paper, I rely on an extensive dataset of interest group mobilization at climate conferences or, more specifically, the annual Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC. In this way, I provide a unique quantitative measurement of interest group mobilization in the field of climate policy. More precisely, all the interest groups that attended COPs between 1997 and 2015 were mapped and coded. The dataset includes over 6,300 unique organizations that have attended one or more of the COPs since 1997.

The count of interest groups active at UNFCCC conferences is much larger than other studies have documented (see for instance Nordang-Uhre 2014; Böhmelt 2013). This is because both participants and their affiliated organizations are coded, while former studies have coded official observers only. This makes a big difference, because many organizations are included in the delegations of formally accredited organizations, without being official observers themselves. To illustrate, firms are formally not allowed to

become observers at the UNFCCC as they are for-profit organizations. Yet, they do attend the conferences as part of the delegation of a non-profit organization. All these individual participants are coded in this project, which makes this account much more elaborate than other databases. Moreover, former studies have focusses either on observers (e.g., Nordang-Uhre 2014) or participants of state delegations (e.g., Böhmelt 2013). This project includes both, which provides an overview of all interest groups active in COPs.

All identified organizations were coded based on their individual websites. The large majority of these organizations had an original website or we could easily retrieve information about them via secondary sources. Only for about 5%, no information at all was found regarding the organization. These are excluded from the analysis. The coding includes basic information about the organizations' headquarters, whether or not they have members in multiple countries, what type of issues they are advocating for, what type of organization they are (business, NGO, labor union, etc.), and so forth. Combined, this constitutes the largest database on interest group activity in the field of global climate change governance.

In this paper, I rely on all national interest groups. This is coded as groups which explicitly stated that their objective was to influence the political processes of their country of origin, not other countries. This excludes organizations such as Greenpeace and Oxfam, because they have members across the globe and aim to influence policy-making across different countries. In this paper, I am only interested in the mobilization of interest groups which can be linked to one particular country, and I define these as national interest groups. Importantly, the majority of the interest groups active at the UNFCCC is such a national interest group, and, according to Berkhout *et al.* (2017), this is a consistent trend among other transnational interest group population as well.

Appendix 2. Predicting business bias by Freedom House Democracy Indicator

