
6. Who profits most from global advocacy?

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INTRODUCTION

Global governance systems have become increasingly relevant in contemporary policymaking, and the number and scope of organized interests that mobilize beyond national borders have also risen dramatically. As a result, transnational advocacy by domestic and global non-state actors has become a key feature of the politics of global governance across different institutional venues (Böhler et al. 2022; Lucas et al. 2019; Beyers and Hanegraaff 2017; Hanegraaff 2022; Schroeder et al. 2012; Smith & Weist, 2005; Tallberg et al. 2013). This trend is not surprising. On the one hand, the nesting of states within increasingly influential sets of global governance systems created obvious incentives for various kinds of non-state actors to mobilize on a transnational basis (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Beckfield 2003). On the other hand, transnational advocacy was further stimulated by far-reaching institutional transformations enabling a systematic shift towards greater involvement of non-state actors in global governance (Tallberg et al. 2013; Hanegraaff and Poletti 2018).

The growing involvement of non-state actors (NSAs) that mobilize on a transnational basis has triggered (at least) two important normative debates (Hanegraaff and Poletti 2022). The first relates to this phenomenon's effects on *North-South inequalities*. A key question is whether the growth of transnational advocacy has made international political procedures – as was hoped for – more inclusive of the interests of the global South as compared to the interests of developed countries. The second key debate is whether the opening up of international organizations (IOs) has led to the merger of vibrant global public sphere where we would observe a rise in global awareness among participants.

With respect to both sets of issues, scholars have taken opposite stances, where some take a positive stand on these normative concerns while others are more pessimistic. The more positive outlook starts from the assumption that IOs can steer patterns of inclusiveness and the social fiber among NSAs: in line with theories of political opportunity structures (Hanegraaff et al. 2017; Tallberg et al. 2013). This is a positive outlook because if political institutional structures are indeed critical forces in shaping patterns of political mobilization of NSAs, it would be possible to steer it in the desired and positive direction. In this case, the opening up of IOs to NSAs could be designed to effectively reduce North-South inequalities in global interest representation or to trigger the emergence of a truly global civil society.

The more pessimistic perspective, instead, emphasizes that NSAs' *capacity* to become politically active is crucially influenced by their capacity to obtain resources for the direct environment in which they operate (Gray and Lowery 1996; Lowery and Gray 2004; Nownes and Lipinski 2005). The logic underpinning this perspective states that political institutions have little control over NSA activity, because the key driver of NSA activity is not institutional, but the resources NSAs have at their disposal. From this view, organizations which are resource-rich – i.e. NSAs from wealthy countries – will eventually find a way to profit most

from the openness of IOs, irrespective of what IOs want to happen (Hanegraaff and Poletti 2020). As a result, we would observe patterns of NSA activity that fit the interests of wealthy states, meaning much more activity of NSAs from developed nations and no emerging of a global public sphere; both of which harm the interests of developing countries.

To see which of these perspectives is closest to the truth, in this chapter we take a very straightforward approach. We analyze whether or not we see any evidence that NSAs are increasingly defending the interests of the global South or not. Moreover, we analyze whether we see any indication that there is a development towards a vibrant global public sphere among NSA participants. While based on these results we cannot definitively answer the question of whether the opening-up of IOs has created more equality in international negotiations, we can attest whether the trends observed fit better with either one of the explanations.

Empirically, we focus on two key IOs. More specifically, we focus on NSAs' participation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). First, we collected and coded information on the participation of NSAs in both venues since such participation was authorized. Second, we rely on additional information on these NSAs obtained through extensive interviews. In total, our data covers over 10,000 unique NSAs: around 2,000 at the WTO since 1995 and more than 8,000 at the UNFCCC since 1997. Third, we rely on interview survey data with around 600 NSA representatives collected at various WTO Ministerial Conferences and UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties; and interview data with almost 400 delegates active at these conferences. Obviously, we only focus on two IOs, which limits the generalizability of our findings. Yet, these are both key IOs in key issue areas (climate change and trade). In what follows, we first analyze the extent to which the interests of the global South are represented at the two IOs and how this develops over time. In the second part, we analyze whether we see any indication that a global public sphere is emerging. We end this chapter with some reflections on the key findings.

TOWARDS MORE (IN)EQUALITY IN GLOBAL POLITICS?

The growing importance of transnational interest group populations has triggered an interest in trying to ascertain whether Schattschneider's (1960: 65) oft-quoted claim that "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus often sings with a strong upper-class accent" equally applies to global advocacy. This debate – as argued – has largely focused on the question whether transnational lobbying communities are biased in favor of wealthier countries. Is there a bias in global interest communities favoring more developed countries at the expense of poorer ones? And, does the growth of transnational lobbying populations bring about ever-growing patterns of inequality and exclusion along socio-economic lines in global governance?

As stated, two broad sets of arguments have been advanced on the mechanisms that connect countries' wealth and their representation in global interest group communities. The first suggests that the population of NSAs active at the global level should have a more equitable character than the distribution of global wealth would suggest. The so-called world polity theory, for instance, suggests that NSAs' integration in the world polity thus generates a positive dynamic that further strengthens world polity ties and ultimately contributes to evening out North-South differences in global interest communities (Barnett and Finnemore 2004;

Beckfield 2003; Boli and Thomas 1997). Scholars in the so-called neopluralist tradition reach similar conclusions when they argue that interest communities are characterized by balancing mechanisms which ensure that, over time, representational participation in such communities becomes less skewed (Falkner 2017; Lowery and Gray 2004).

The second argument supports the view that developed nations will profit most from the opening up of IOs. This argument is based on the assumption that organized interests' capacity to be politically active is a function of their capacity to obtain resources from the direct environment in which they operate (Gray and Lowery 1996). This view also fits views which conceive of the world system as a hierarchical network of nation states bound by competitive and unequal relations between core and periphery states (Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000). But scholars who analyze patterns of transnational advocacy through the lenses of standard collective action theory reach similar conclusions when they highlight that more resourceful NSAs can further strengthen their position within interest communities by institutionalizing control over resources, experience, and contact with policymakers and other stakeholders (Heinz et al. 1993). In order to adjudicate between these contending views, we offer two different sets of evidence: one focused on who the NSAs claim to represent in general, and one which analyzes these trends over time.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE BETTER REPRESENTED?

First, we start by *mapping* of the geographical interests that NSAs active in global governance represent. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the distribution of NSAs active in the two venues

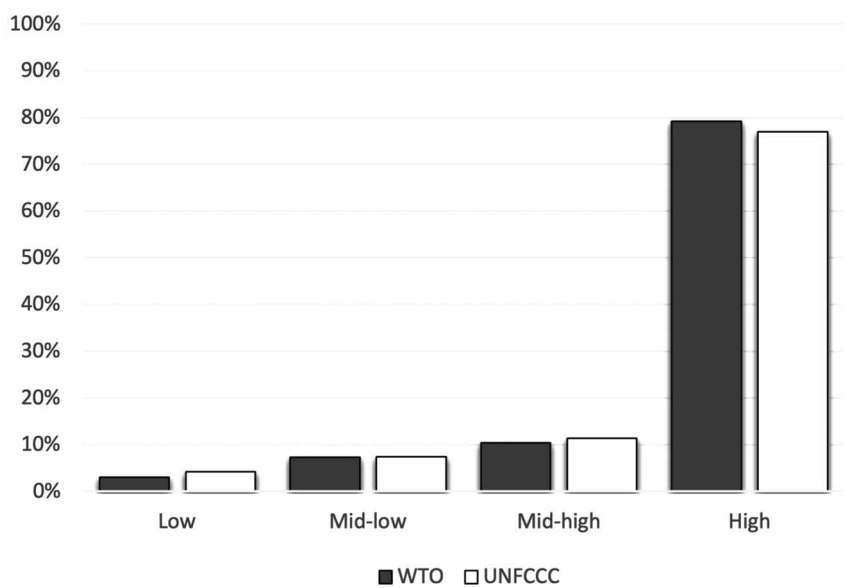


Figure 6.1 Which geographical interests are defended at the conferences – by level of development of country of origin?

considered (the UN Climate Summits and the WTO Ministerial Conferences (MCs)) by the level of development of the country of origin. We coded interest organizations according to the World Bank classification of income countries, making a distinction between four income groups, as defined by the World Bank.¹ More specifically, Figure 6.1 presents the proportion of organizations representing either one of the four income groups. The black bars refer to the WTO MCs, and the white bars refer to the UN Climate Summits.

The results clearly show that the overwhelming majority of the NSAs active at these venues represented the interests of developed countries: no less than 79% of all NSAs active at the WTO MCs represented the interests of developed nations, while only 3% of NSAs represented the interests of the least developed nations (the middle-low income countries represented 7% of NSAs and the middle-high income countries represented 11%). Results concerning UN Climate Summits are almost identical: 77% of NSAs represented developed countries, only 4% represented low-income countries, 7% and 12% represented, respectively, low-middle income and medium high-income countries. Interestingly, the distributions are almost identical across the two institutional venues despite the fact that the criteria for attending the two negotiations differ substantially. This indicates that the distribution is quite robust across different institutional settings and would likely be similarly observed in other institutional contexts.

The results clearly show that by far most of the organizations stem from highly developed nations: almost 80% of all activities stem from organizations which have indicated that they defend the interests of developing nations. Developing nations and especially LDCs (low-income countries) see hardly any NSAs which represent their interests at the conferences. These trends fit most with the view that resources matter. They do not seem to fit the idea that IOs have much influence on which NSAs participate at the conferences. Indeed, if IOs had more leverage they would surely have tried to increase the participation of NSAs which seek to help the countries which are most in need of such help.

WHICH COUNTRIES DISPLAY HIGHER LEVELS OF CONTINUED REPRESENTATION?

Second, we conduct an analysis of *volatility* within these global communities of NSAs with a view to assessing whether there are differences across NSAs from different countries in terms of their ability to maintain their lobbying efforts over time in global governance. An analysis of volatility is important in this context because continued participation could reinforce or remedy any existing representational skewness in the early composition of the global interest communities. In order to assess continued participation, i.e., the extent to which NSAs are able to maintain a continued presence in global negotiations, we constructed three categories that highlight the continuous attendance rates of individual organizations at the conferences. More specifically, we categorized NSAs that attended only one conference as “tourists”, NSAs that mobilized for up to 50% of the conferences after initial attendance as “incidental participants”, and NSAs that attended more than 50% of the subsequent conferences after initial attendance as “regular participants”. For the analysis of NSAs’ volatility, we excluded all organizations that were newcomers at the last three conferences, as we could not (meaningfully) predict their participation rates over a substantial number of (future) conferences. We then analyzed the extent to which NSAs representing the interests of developed and developing countries fall in

each of these categories. Again, we distinguished between the WTO Ministerial Conferences (Figure 6.2) and the UN Climate Summits (Figure 6.3).

The results concerning survival rates at the WTO Ministerial Conferences show that of all NSAs representing the interests of developing countries, the vast majority were tourists, i.e., they only attended one conference. More precisely, no less than 73% of all NSAs representing the interests of developing countries attended only one WTO MC. Moreover, 21% of these NSAs were incidental participants, i.e., once they mobilize for the first time, they attended fewer than 50% of the subsequent meetings. Finally, just 6% of all these NSAs attended more than 50% of the meetings after their first participation. In contrast, NSAs representing the interests of developed countries display higher levels of regular participation. While still modest, 14% of the NSA actors representing the interests of developed countries come back at least at 50% of the subsequent conferences, 31% were incidental participants, while 55% were tourists.

The results concerning the UN Climate Summits are even more marked (Figure 6.3). The vast majority of NSAs from developing countries were tourists (66%) while roughly one third (29%) were incidental participants, and only 6% were regular participants. In contrast, NSAs representing the interests of developed countries display higher levels of continued participation: 16% were regular participants, 49% were tourists, while 35% were incidental participants.

These findings further lend support to the view that global advocacy is strongly dependent on the availability of resources at the domestic level: sustained lobbying activity at the global level is costly and organizations from the developing world, disposing of far fewer resources than those from developed ones, find it more difficult to maintain a sustained presence over multiple conferences. To put it bluntly: there is no sign whatsoever that the inclusion of NSAs at the WTO or the UNFCCC has empowered developing country's positions. Rather, the opposite seems true: it has strengthened the position of those which were already strong: the developed nations.

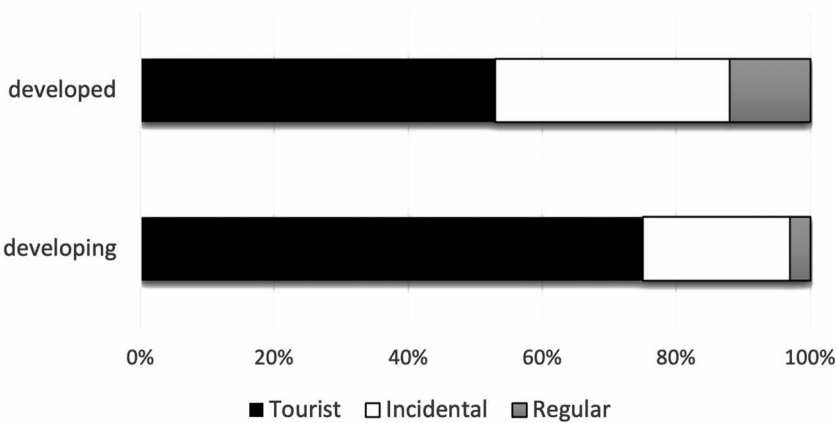


Figure 6.2 Representation of developed and developing countries at WTO MCs over time

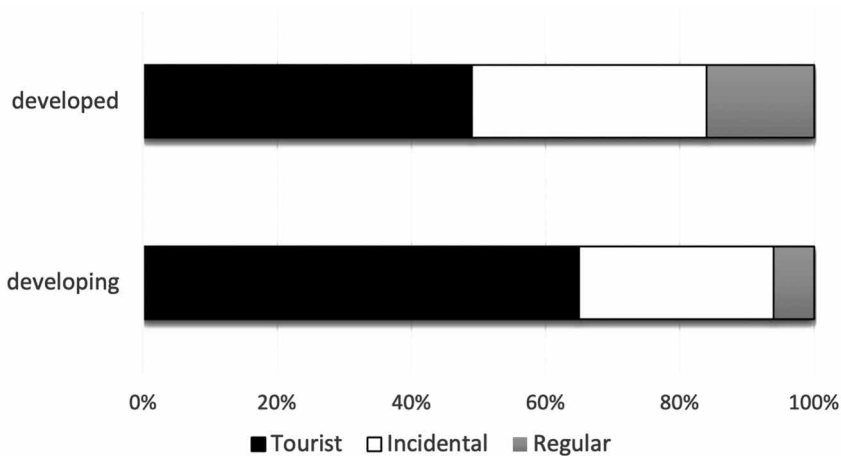


Figure 6.3 Volatility of developed and developing countries' interests at UNFCCC

TOWARDS A GLOBAL PUBLIC SPHERE?

A second important normative question related to the rise of transnational advocacy concerns its potential to trigger the emergence of a truly global public sphere, i.e., an institutionalized arena for deliberative political participation beyond the limits of national boundaries. The argument that a flourishing global public sphere is a necessary condition for global governance to become truly democratic is central in many normative discussions. For instance, the stakeholder model of democratization of global governance suggests that, since structures of decision-making increasingly transcend national boundaries, meaningful international deliberation requires new forms of participation of the very transnational interests affected by those political decisions (Macdonald 2008). Others have argued in a similar direction, suggesting that democratic legitimacy in global governance requires things such as enhancing broader transnational debates that do not remain defined by the realpolitik of the nation-state (Held 2004), truly international deliberative participation by NSAs (Nanz and Steffek 2004), overcoming nationalist structures of community and giving meaningful representation to cosmopolitan bonds and trans-border solidarities (Scholte 2002), and giving voice to stakeholders with a global or international frame of reference in their actions and goals (Bohman 2007; Dryzek 2006;).

Given that the notion of a global public sphere is central to such normative debates about how to make global governance more democratic, we try to assess empirically whether growing NSAs' involvement in global governance has indeed triggered the emergence of a global public sphere. To do so, we define a conceptual benchmark for carrying out a meaningful empirical assessment. In our view, existing discussions suggest that global interest communities should meet at least two *criteria* in order to lend support to the view that they triggered the emergence of a global public sphere. The first criterion concerns the *geographical scope* of the constituencies that actively participate in global political processes embedded in global governance fora: whether the rise of transnational advocacy stimulated the emergence of a global

public sphere would seem conditional on the fact that global interest communities provide a fair representation to relevant global constituencies as opposed to national ones. The second criterion concerns global NSAs' ability to establish *long-standing relations* with policymakers and other stakeholders. In line with what was argued in the previous section, in order to understand whether a global public sphere is emerging in global governance, we also need to get a grasp of whether there are differences across global and national NSAs in their ability to maintain a continued presence in global interest communities. A sustained activity by NSAs representing global interests can increase their chance of being politically influential and has long-term benefits in terms of their organizational maintenance (Gray and Lowery 1996; Heinz et al. 1993). But, perhaps more importantly in the context of this discussion, it seems plausible to argue that a global public sphere can only emerge when global NSAs are able to participate *regularly* in different conferences and build long-lasting networks with similar and different NSAs. In the end, how could NSAs effectively contribute to global deliberations if they are not able to maintain a sustained presence in these global negotiations?

ARE GLOBAL INTEREST COMMUNITIES TRULY GLOBAL?

To assess whether global constituencies are well represented in global interest communities, we start by offering some descriptive evidence on the evolution of national and global NSAs over time for both venues of our analysis. To do so, we distinguish between national NSAs, i.e., NSAs representing sub-national or national interests, and global NSAs, i.e., NSAs defending regional or global interests. To give an example, on the 'about' page of Greenpeace European Unit, it is stated that 'the organization is based in Brussels, where we monitor and analyze the work of the institutions of the European Union (EU), expose deficient EU policies and laws, and challenge decision-makers to implement progressive solutions.' Clearly, the organization sets out to defend the interests of multiple EU countries, and therefore the organization was coded as a global organization. In contrast, the 'about' page of the Canadian Steel Producers Association (CSPA) states that the organization 'is the national voice of Canada's \$14B steel industry'. In this case, the organization is undoubtedly defending the interests of stakeholders in only one country and was therefore coded as a national organization. This procedure was replicated for all the interest organizations included in our dataset, allowing us to trace whether the amounts of global or national NSAs that attended the conferences changed over time. We analyzed the extent to which NSAs represent national or global interests at the IOs in the next sections.

We start with UN Climate Summits. Figure 6.4 shows that national NSAs are more active at these conferences compared to global NSAs. More specifically, an average 60% of NSAs were national across all conferences, while 40% were global. While one can debate whether this distribution is in itself telling of the existence of a global public sphere, what is clear is that the relative weights of national and global NSAs do not become more evenly distributed over time. If anything, we see a slight decrease in the attendance rates of global NSAs. Regarding WTO MCs (Figure 6.5), we observe a similar, and perhaps even more marked, trend. On average, national NSAs constitute 66% of all active NSAs, while only 33% are global. Moreover, similarly to the case of UN Climate Summits, we observe that global NSAs have not become more active over time relative to national ones.

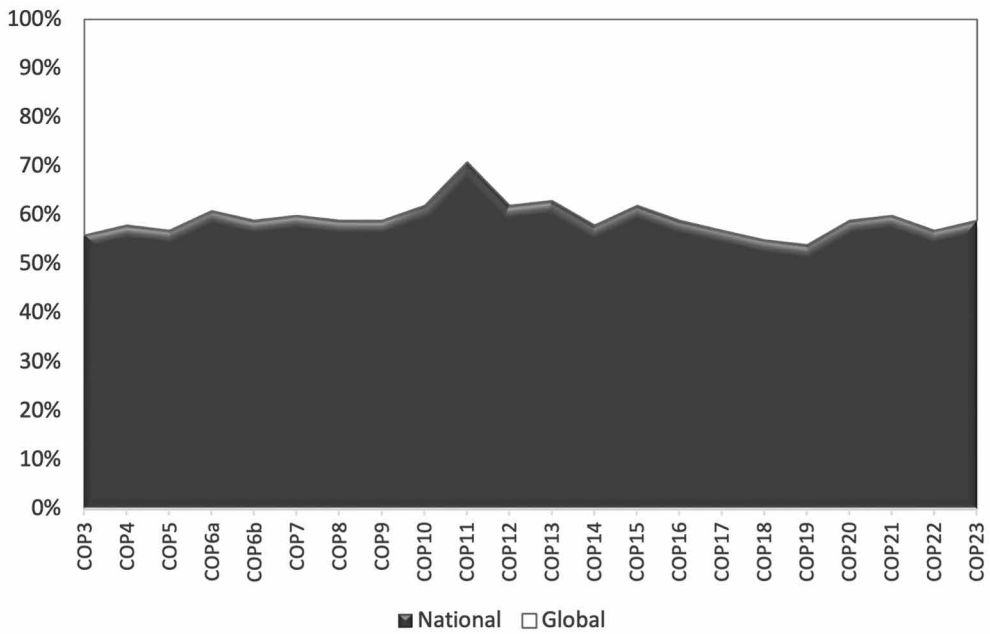


Figure 6.4 Percentage national versus global per UNFCCC-COPs

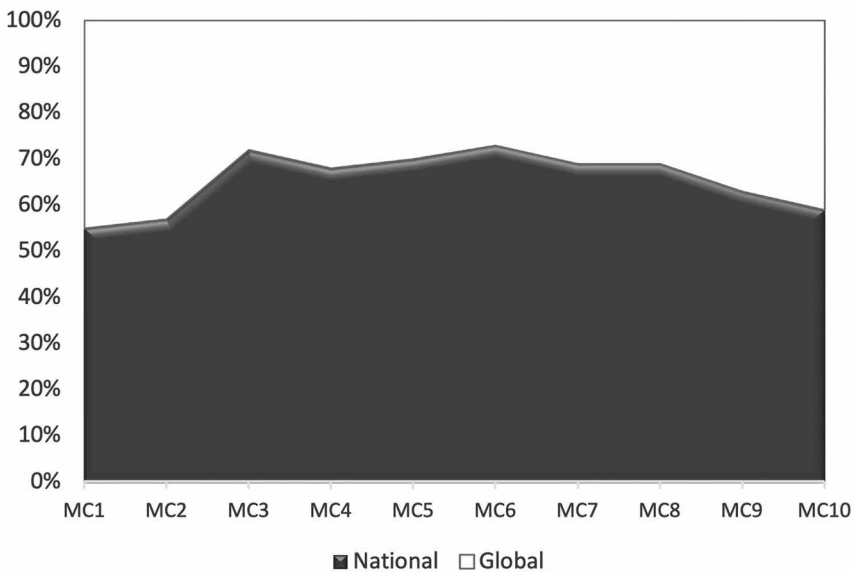


Figure 6.5 Percentage national versus global per WTO-MCs

Overall, both trends observed do not support the view that the rise of transnational advocacy has triggered greater mobilization of global NSAs. If anything, we see more national level activity, and these trends increase over time at both IOs. This means that national interests are more dominantly defended at the global conferences, and this becomes even more outspoken over time. This does not fit with the notion that increased activity at IOs leads to a global public sphere. In this case, we should observe an increasing trend towards more globally oriented NSA activity.

ARE GLOBAL NSAS MORE CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING A CONTINUED PRESENCE IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE?

In order to further understand whether a global public sphere is emerging in global governance or not, we also need to get a grasp of whether there are differences across different subsets of Ns in their ability to maintain a continued presence in such global interest communities. Indeed, for a global public sphere to emerge, NSAs need to stay in contact and develop social ties. This in turn could help in creating a social atmosphere which transcends nationalistic interests towards more global understanding. To get an idea of whether this is a possibility, we analyze the willingness of NSAs to return to subsequent conferences. If we see many organizations coming back, this could definitely lead to long-lasting ties among NSA representatives. If organizations hardly come back, this potential is very limited.

We start with the attendance rates at the UN Climate Summits. Figure 6.6 plots the number of times all NSAs attended the UN Climate Summits between 1997 and 2017, clearly demonstrating a high degree of volatility. To give a few examples, 59% of the NSAs attended the conferences only once, whereas only 0.1% of non-state actors (n=19) attended all UN Climate

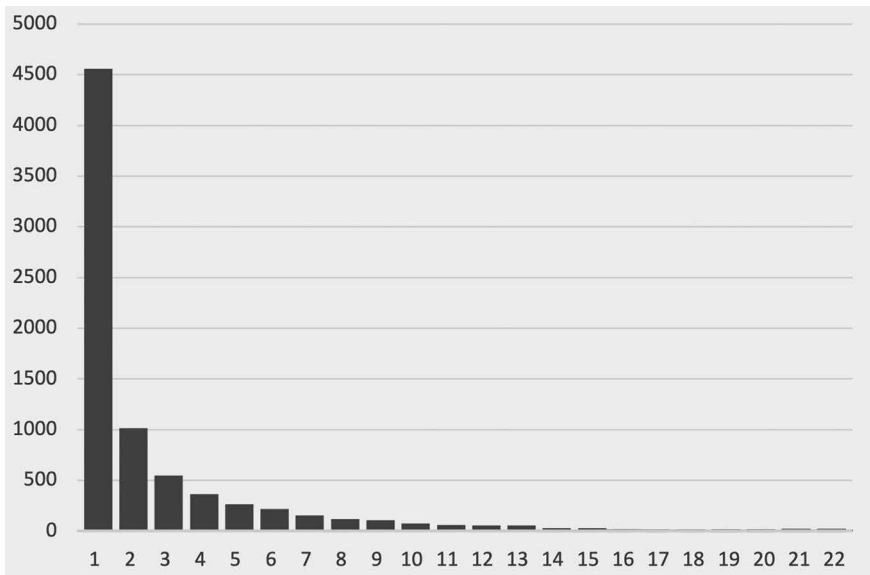


Figure 6.6 Frequency of attendances per organizations at UN Climate Summitss

Summits. The latter NSAs include the usual suspects: NSAs representing broad business interests such as BusinessEurope, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the International Gas Union, and prominent NGOs such as Greenpeace, the US Climate Action Network (CAN), the World Council of Churches, and The Nature Conservancy. There are no firms among these top 100 attendees, although firms appear frequently among the most frequent attendees (more than 10 appearances) and include firms for which there is much at stake, such as Shell, ExxonMobil, E.ON UK, DuPont, The British Petroleum Company, Chevron Corporation, and the Dow Chemical Company. The NSAs that attended a large number of conferences constitute a fraction of the entire community (NSAs that attended more than 10 conferences constitute only 3% of the entire community) while NSAs that attended only one or two conferences constitute no less than 72% of the total.

Results concerning the WTO MCs are very similar (see Figure 6.7). By far, most organizations attend only one conference, namely 58%, while 19% of the NSAs attend only two conferences. These findings clearly indicate that MC attendance rates are also very volatile, with only a fraction of the organizations attending more than a few conferences. In general, this observation lends support to further pessimism with regards to the potential of rising transnational advocacy to trigger a global public sphere: high volatility in attendance makes it generally difficult to create the long-lasting networks or relationships between stakeholders that can support meaningful deliberation.

Overall, what this means is that there are only very few organizations which participate more than two times; and this is true for both IOs. By far, most organizations attend only once and never return to the next meeting. It is a stretch to assume that this could lead to sustainable and close linkages between organizations active at the IOs, a critical condition to come to a truly vibrant global public sphere. In other words, the extreme volatility of the NSA community does not provide much confidence that a global public sphere is emerging.

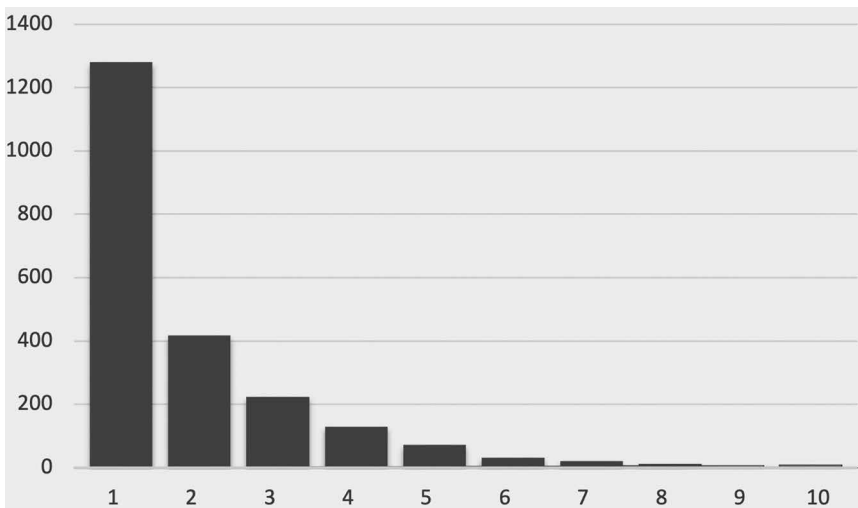


Figure 6.7 Frequency of attendances per organizations at MCs

CONCLUSIONS

The findings we presented in this chapter support two broad sets of observations, both of which lend credence to a “supply-side” perspective that conceives of the development of transnational NSAs as a function of the underlying differences in the resources available at the national level. First, our analysis supports the view that cross-national differences in global interest representation strongly favors the mobilization of wealthy countries, as we would expect based on the underlying national resource base. More specifically, our analysis shows that (i) global interest representation almost perfectly reflects differences in countries’ relative economic power and (ii) NSAs from the global South drop out en masse from global interest communities and are less capable of maintaining a continued presence within them. This leads us to conclude that the opening up of global governance to the input of NSAs does not seem to have contributed much to even out existing representational biases favoring wealthier countries and is not likely to do so in the future. Second, our investigation suggests that global interest communities have been characterized by greater political activism by NSAs defending domestic, rather than global, interests. In particular, our examination shows that increased openness of two key IOs did not make such communities more globalized in nature. Both findings provide little evidence in support of the hope that the rise of transnational advocacy could go hand in hand with the emergence of a global public sphere.

In general, we thus conclude that many of the optimistic expectations regarding the opening up of IOs have not been achieved. Rather, those who are already powerful (developed nations) are better able to make use of new political opportunities (increased activity of NSAs at IOs) and therefore maintain their powerful position. We acknowledge that our analyses are not definitive though. We show trends which are more consistent with a view on resource dependencies shaping patterns of global advocacy compared to theoretical views which ascribe much power to institutions, in this case IOs. Future research should include studies which seek to more directly link the outcomes of international negotiations to variation in NSA activity at the IOs. This way we can more concretely see whether the inclusion of NSAs leads to different outcomes compared to when they are denied access or when their participation is more closely managed. Such studies are necessary to definitively assess what the effects of the opening of IOs is and who has profited the most.

NOTE

1. As of 1 July 2016, low-income economies (or least developed countries – LDCs) are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of \$1,025 or less in 2015; lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,026 and \$4,035; upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$4,036 and \$12,475; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,476 or more.

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