



The influence of academics as insider-nongovernmental actors in the Post-Kyoto Protocol Climate Change Negotiations: a matter of timing, network and policy-entrepreneurial capabilities

Katharina Rietig

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The influence of academics as insider-nongovernmental actors in the Post-Kyoto Protocol Climate Change Negotiations: A matter of timing, network and policy-entrepreneurial capabilities¹

Katharina Rietig²

Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment
London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Abstract

Nongovernmental actors influence negotiations with insider or outsider strategies. Academics are valued by government delegates for the neutrality and expertise they can provide as policy advisors to facilitate negotiations. This article examines the influence of academics on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations in 2009 and concludes that influence is comparable across issues, but heterogeneous. For academics, influence depends on four qualitatively measurable indicators based on the prerequisite of access to the negotiations and knowledge regarding the current information needs: (1) when in the negotiation cycle academics provide input with the highest influence before the national position is formed, (2) on their personal capabilities like expertise and reputation, (3) on their policy-entrepreneurial activities and (4) their personal network to government delegates and especially the ability to become insiders with access to negotiation text.

Keywords:

UNFCCC, academics, NGO, influence, insider, climate politics, policy entrepreneurs

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² Corresponding author: k.m.rietig@lse.ac.uk

Introduction

Global concern about the consequences of climate change and the hope for a strong, binding international agreement under the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) that would replace the Kyoto Protocol after 2012 and limit global warming to less than 2 degree Centigrade reached an unprecedented peak in December 2009 in Copenhagen. The Bali Roadmap called for a new agreement at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15) and the world expected governments to deliver on this target. Consequently, over 30,000 people including 20,000 members of civil society participated,³ making COP-15 resemble a “global development summit”.⁴ Despite the efforts of climate diplomats who met for negotiations over six to eight weeks annually negotiating a post-Kyoto agreement, governments were unable to deliver on the Bali roadmap. Heads of states discarded the extensive text and compromise proposals prepared and a small group of states drafted the Copenhagen Accords,⁵ which were ultimately acknowledged by COP-15.⁶

Yet, the question arises what effect and influence⁷ the high number of participating nongovernmental actors had on the negotiation process and outcome. The extraordinary extent of nongovernmental actor involvement in the international climate change regime is the result of a participatory process initiated by UN member states

³ UNFCCC 2010a.

⁴ Interview with government delegate from Latin America, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

⁵ Friis, Lykke. Europe in the new energy world order. Public Lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 19/10/2010. Retrieved 16/8/2011 from <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=759>.

⁶ Copenhagen Accords 2009.

⁷ “Influence” does not mean NGO roles or strategies (Betsill 2001, 70) and is separate from tools such as power (Betsill and Corell 2008, 24). It is the fulfilment of negotiation objectives on different levels, e.g. if the negotiation results mirror the negotiation objectives and would not have occurred otherwise (Betsill and Corell 2001, 71). Following Betsill and Corell (2008), this article defines influence as “when one actor intentionally communicates to another so as to alter the latter’s behaviour from what would have occurred otherwise” (Betsill and Corell 2008, 24).

over 20 years ago.⁸ The report “Our Common Future”⁹ marked the beginning of non-governmental actors playing an increasingly important role in the negotiations for international environmental agreements, especially at the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992*¹⁰ and the 1997 UNFCCC conference in Kyoto.¹¹

With reference to the regime theoretical framework for evaluating NGO influence by Michele Betsill and Elizabeth Corell¹² this paper explores the questions of when, how and under what conditions academic nongovernmental actors influenced the 2009 UNFCCC negotiation cycle and contributes to the ongoing academic project of evaluating the influence of nongovernmental actors on environmental negotiations.¹³ The case study focuses on the influence of insiders at the example of academics as they represent an under-researched group compared with other nongovernmental actors.¹⁴

The first section offers a categorization of UNFCCC-nongovernmental actors into four distinct groups who each influence the negotiations differently. The second section discusses factors determining the influence of academics based on the Betsill/Corell framework. Both the roles played and the timing can be seen as addition to the existing issue-focused analytical framework and contribution towards comparability across cases of nongovernmental actors pursuing insider strategies.

⁸ Interview with government delegate 2 from Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), 15/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁹ UNCED 1987.

¹⁰ Jasanoff 1997, 579.

¹¹ Betsill and Corell 2008, 46.

¹² Betsill and Corell 2008, 34ff.

¹³ Andresen and Skodvin 2008; Betsill 2008a and 2008b; Betsill and Corell 2001, 2008, 2008a and 2008b; Burgiel 2008; Corell 2008; Corell and Betsill 2001; Humphreys, 2008; and Vormedal, 2008.

¹⁴ For detailed and central analyses of the influence of academics on environmental negotiations and epistemic communities see Adler and Haas 1992; Auer 1998; Haas 1990, 1992 and 2004; Jasanoff 1990; Stone 2000; and Zito 2001.

Typology of nongovernmental observer organizations at UNFCCC

NGOs are influential actors in international environmental negotiations.¹⁵ As admitted observer organizations at UNFCCC, NGOs are non-profit and not part of government.¹⁶ They organized themselves into nine constituencies with other NGOs who share their norms, values or interests¹⁷ to facilitate communication with the UNFCCC secretariat via focal points and to coordinate information exchange.¹⁸ Based on their objectives, strategies and values, these nine constituencies can be classified into four groups with distinct characteristics.¹⁹ When their delegates join government delegations or closely collaborate with government delegates, they become insiders. Outsiders have no or limited personal contact to government delegates. Each group pursues insider and/ or outsider strategies that influence the negotiations differently.

Advocacy Nongovernmental Organizations

The largest and most visible group consists of nongovernmental actors pursuing an advocacy strategy targeted at influencing the negotiations in a way that helps them achieve their objectives. It involves *Environmental NGOs* (ENGOS), *Youth NGOs* (YOUNGOS), *Trade Unions* (TUNGOS) and NGOs concerned with the inter-

¹⁵ For detailed discussions and analyses from International Relations and Environmental Governance perspectives see Albin 1999; Arts 1998; Andanova, Betsill and Bulkeley 2009; Auer 1998 and 2000; Betsill and Corell, 2001 and 2008; Biliouri 1999; Bulkeley and Newell 2010; Corell and Betsill 2001; Depledge 2005; Falkner, Stephan and Vogler 2010; Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004; Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger 2000; Jasanoff 1997; Najam 1998; Newell 2000; Princen and Finger 1994; Raustiala 1997; Wapner 1995; Yamin 2001; Yamin and Depledge 2004; and Zürn 1998.

¹⁶ Yamin and Depledge 2004, 58.

¹⁷ UNFCCC 2010b.

¹⁸ UNFCCC 2010b; and Yamin and Depledge 2004, 49f.

¹⁹ The following categorization is based on evidence triangulated from data collected through participant observation as NGO representative in 84 constituency meetings, workshops, working groups, contact groups, plenary sessions and briefings by the chairs to civil society by the author at UNFCCC in November 2009 (Barcelona), December 2009 (Copenhagen), April 2010 (Bonn) and June 2011 (Bonn); 25 semi-structured interviews with NGO representatives, a survey with responses from 51 NGO representatives from all constituencies conducted by the researcher in July 2010 and 21 semi-structured interviews with government delegates to process trace the influence of NGOs.

ests of *women, indigenous people (IPO)* and *farmers*. Advocacy NGOs can influence negotiations with both insider and outsider strategies. They are insiders when joining government delegations, but frequently remain outsiders to achieve their objectives by exerting pressure on democratic governments via demonstrations with support of the media. This strategy aims at influencing government delegates to reconsider their negotiation position. They are partial, action-oriented and frequently organized as a negotiation bloc. Their “shared principled ideas or values (...) [and] strategies aim to use information and beliefs to motivate political action”.²⁰ The Climate Action Network (CAN) is the most visible example of such a transnational advocacy network.

Business and Industry Nongovernmental Organizations

The second group consists of *business and industry nongovernmental organizations* (BINGOs) that advocate their specific position and predominantly engage in lobbying activities. The spectrum ranges from banks and renewable energy companies to airlines and the fossil fuel industry with different interests.²¹ Although they exchange views and sometimes pool resources when sharing objectives, BINGOs are less organized into a negotiation bloc than the first group as they differ significantly from each other in their objectives based on the companies they represent. Individual BINGOs have a strong network to parties and enjoy close links to their national government delegations, thereby providing them with a semi-insider status. Financial capabilities, provision of jobs and the significant role in the implementation of climate agreements provide BINGOs with considerable bargaining power.²²

²⁰ Keck and Sikkink 1998, 30.

²¹ Vormedal 2008.

²² For a detailed analysis of BINGO influence see Vormedal 2008 as well as Burgiel, 2008.

Local Governments and Regional Authorities

Local Governments and Regional Authorities (LGRA) are crucial partners of national governments in implementing climate targets and frequently enjoy a quasi-insider position. They include majors as representatives of cities with more inhabitants than many states. LGRA frequently join government delegations as their NGO-classification hinders them from actively participating in informal negotiations and presents challenges when access for NGO representatives is restricted.

Research and Independent Nongovernmental Organizations

While all above nongovernmental organizations engage in advocacy for their objectives either individually or in close collaboration within their negotiation blocs, the *research and independent nongovernmental organizations* (RINGOs) as fourth group occupy a somewhat distinct position as their representatives are characterized as neutral authorities with frequently powerful advisory roles. RINGO is the third largest constituency, with 98 registered organizations²³ such as universities, research institutes, think tanks and other educational NGOs. Approximately 100 further organizations have RINGO characteristics with their delegates regarding themselves as RINGOs,²⁴ but have not yet formally affiliated themselves with the constituency. Their delegates can be characterized as interested students, researchers, established academics and experts who contribute constructively by providing research input and advice to other delegations, but do not necessarily share the same position on issues.²⁵ The constituency status was granted to RINGOs at COP-9 in 2003, after 35 founding

²³ RINGO 2010b.

²⁴ Survey results for RINGOs; conducted by researcher, 7/2010, London, LSE.

²⁵ RINGO 2010a, and Interview with RINGO delegate 1, 14/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

member institutions formed the RINGO group and submitted a request to the UNFCCC secretariat to be considered as a constituency at COP-8.²⁶

As members of epistemic communities that can influence the coordination of policy when operating through transnational policy networks,²⁷ RINGO delegates possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from other NGO representatives. They are independent organizations whose consensus is on the commitment to and norm of objective peer-reviewed research and the exchange of knowledge to facilitate negotiations, but not to represent a unified position on an issue. RINGO contributions to facilitate negotiations are frequently peer-reviewed research for the IPCC assessment reports.²⁸ Government delegates consider RINGOs an impartial, neutral normative authority since they provide information that is not biased towards serving certain interests, but objective with policy-making implications.²⁹ The next sections argue that academics – like BINGOS - are most influential when they are insiders instead of merely observing outsiders, as the next sections will demonstrate.

²⁶ Yamin and Depledge 2004, 55.

²⁷ Haas 1992, 33; furthermore Adler and Haas 1992; and Zito, 2001 provide an excellent analysis of epistemic communities.

²⁸ IPCC 2007; and RINGO 2009.

²⁹ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview EU delegate 1, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Japan, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Least Developed Country, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

Analytical Framework and indicators for influence

Many studies on NGOs regard academics and nongovernmental actors in general as influential actors,³⁰ but few provide an analytical toolset to distinguish between different intensities of influence. This helps determine where and when frequently scarce financial resources can be used most effectively. The research and data gathering strategy of this article is based on the analytical framework for measuring NGO influence developed by Michele Betsill and Elizabeth Corell,³¹ which was tested in several empirical studies.³²

The Betsill/Corell framework distinguishes between influence on the negotiation process and the outcome of the conference. Three indicators influence the negotiation process: issue framing (how actors understand an issue), agenda-setting, and influence on the positions of key actors. The analysis gathers evidence of the empirical case and process traces it from the actors' behavior to the communication that occurred between the NGOs and parties. When aggregated, the indicators of procedural and substantive issues determine the NGOs' overall influence.³³ The process tracing analysis reveals whether NGOs have successfully influenced the five indicators. The overall influence is low if NGOs engaged in activities aimed at influencing the negotiations but did not succeed at any of the indicators, medium when they were able to shape the negotiation process in some of the process-indicators, and high if they had

³⁰ See Albin 1999; Arts 1998; Andanova, Betsill and Bulkeley 2009; Auer 1998 and 2000; Biliouri 1999; Bulkeley and Newell 2010; Depledge 2005; Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004; Jasanoff 1990 and 1997; Najam 1998; Newell 2000; Princen and Finger 1994; Raustiala 1997; and Wapner 1995.

³¹ Betsill 2008b; see also Betsill and Corell 2001 for an earlier version.

³² Vormedal 2008.

³³ Betsill and Corell 2008, 34f.

success in shaping the negotiation process and their participation can be linked to the outcome.³⁴ They called for further research to achieve comparability across cases.

The empirical data collected by the author³⁵ according to the framework on the influence of academics in UNFCCC between 2009 and 2011 confirms the usefulness and accuracy of the framework for determining nongovernmental actor influence regarding the process tracing and different levels of influence, however it suggests an extension to examining nongovernmental actor influence on single issues³⁶ with a focus on capabilities, timing and roles for two reasons. First, the climate negotiations are highly complex with their multiple issues being negotiated simultaneously. Second, for a post-2012 agreement to emerge, all issues under consideration need to be resolved. Consequently, an analysis focusing on the influence of one nongovernmental constituency on a single issue provides only limited insight into the overall influence of the NGO constituency on the negotiations.

Actor-based indicators to determine expert influence

To influence the negotiations, four prerequisites need to be fulfilled (Figure 1). The expert needs access to the negotiations.³⁷ Second, there needs to be the opportunity to communicate the information, which needs to be received and recognized by the government representatives³⁸ in the form of publications, position papers, brief-

³⁴ Betsill and Corell 2008, 37f.

³⁵ Participant observation as RINGO representative in 84 constituency meetings, workshops, working groups, contact groups, plenary sessions and briefings by the chairs to civil society at UNFCCC in November 2009 (Barcelona), December 2009 (Copenhagen), April 2010 (Bonn) and June 2011 (Bonn), 13 interviews with academics, a survey with answers from 36 academics conducted by researcher in July 2010 and 21 interviews with government representatives.

³⁶ Betsill 2008b, 184.

³⁷ Betsill 2008b, 192f. examines the importance of access and points out that influence does not decline when access is restricted. However, this is only the case if nongovernmental actors have the necessary capabilities and an existing network of government delegates to circumvent access restrictions.

³⁸ Betsill and Corell 2008, 24.

ings or direct meetings. Third, the expert must be informed about the state of the negotiations and the government's delegations positions to transmit relevant and useful information to them. Fourth, for the input to be considered by the government delegates, international standing, recognition as expert in the field and expertise on the topics government representatives lack is crucial.

Influence corresponds with what would have happened without the involvement of experts, during the negotiation process (medium influence) and on the negotiation outcome (high influence).³⁹

The influence of academics on the negotiation process and the outcome depends on four qualitatively measurable indicators: (1) when in the negotiation cycle they provide input, (2) on their personal capabilities such as expertise and reputation, (3) their policy-entrepreneurial activities and (4) their personal network to government delegates to become insiders by joining government delegations.

³⁹ Betsill and Corell 2008, 31f and 37f.

Figure 1. Indicators to determine influence. Compiled by author.

Indicator	Scale of evidence high/low
<p><i>Prerequisite for influence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to negotiation setting • Opportunity to communicate position and to be heard by government delegates • Be informed about recent developments in negotiations and key government’s positions • Expertise on negotiation topics (have something to contribute), international standing and recognition as expert <p><i>Additional factors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timing: Communication with government before national position is decided - Insider Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of delegation • Access to informal negotiations • Access to negotiation text • Access to and consulting of decision makers before and at high level segment - Policy entrepreneurial strategies (proactive, activate networks, build coalitions) - Personal capabilities (relevant expertise and ability to present it successfully to government delegates) 	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Early/Late</p> <p>High/Low</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p> <p>Active/Inactive</p> <p>High/ Low</p>

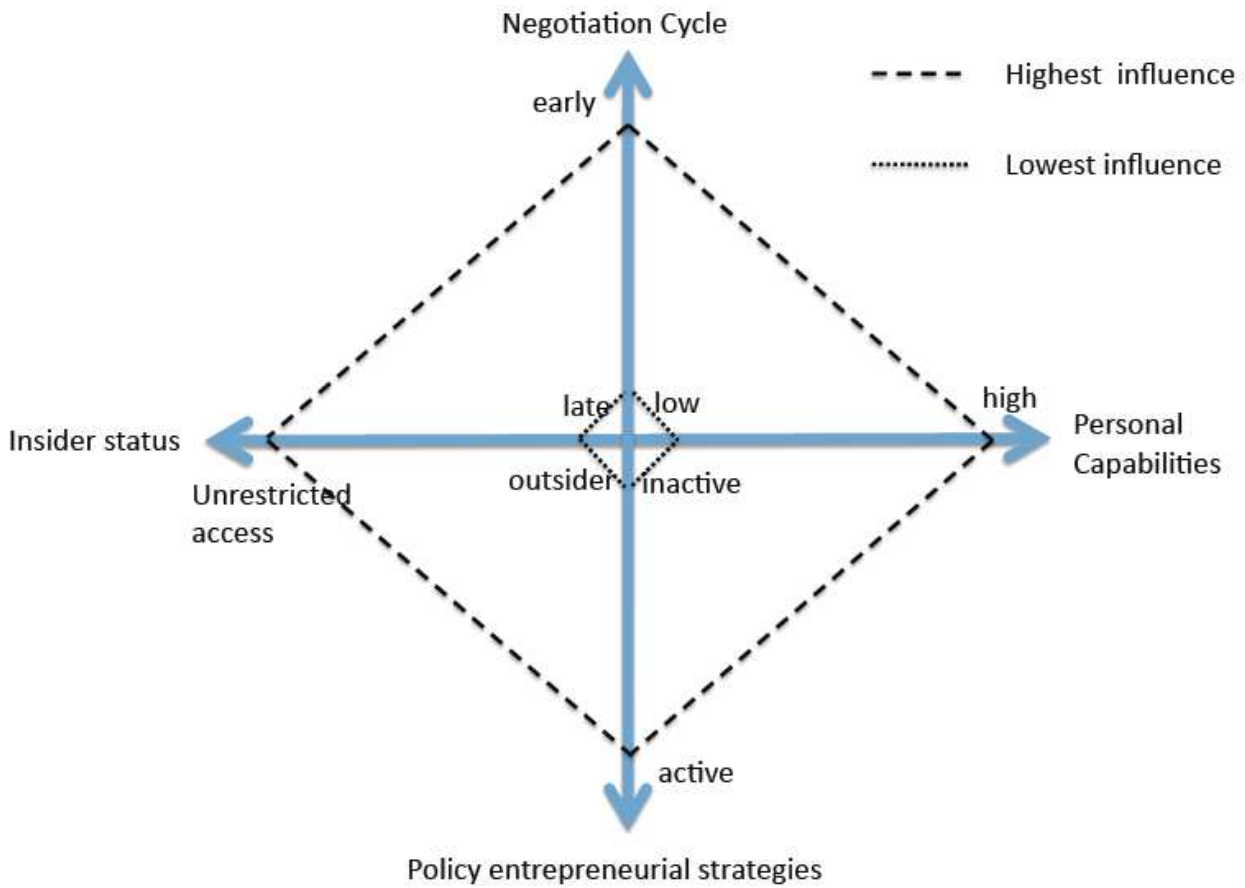
Influence is not absolute, but rather depends on these factors on a scale ranging from low to high influence. The earlier academics are active, the better they influence a government's position. The more expert and established the person is, the higher the influence (personal capabilities). The more active and engaged the expert is in networking and distributing creative ideas, the higher is the influence on the policy entrepreneurial influence indicator. This corresponds with the insider status in terms of the more senior the expert is in a powerful delegation, the better ('high' if all access-indicators are answered with 'yes').

Figure 2 summarizes the qualitative indicators and their position to each other on a scale from low (center) to high influence (outside). The figure below summarizes the qualitative indicators. The higher the overall influence is, the larger the area within the figure and more diamond-shaped the connection between the four indicators is (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Indicators to determine low/medium/high influence:

- Timing in the negotiation cycle (the earlier the better)
- Personal capabilities (the more expert and established, the better),
- Policy entrepreneurial strategies (the more active and engaged networker with creative ideas, the better)
- Insider (the more senior within powerful delegation, the better)

Compiled by the author.



Relevance of roles played by academic non-governmental participants

The influence of academics and experts on government delegations is heterogeneous and depends on the different roles they play. There are four types of RINGO delegates: interested students, researchers, established academics, and experts. The capabilities and motivation of an academic determines their role. The decisive capabilities are the academic network,⁴⁰ excellent preparation, research background, ability to provide expert knowledge on a technical issue in demand, and the personal network between the delegate and government representative.

Participant Observer

The most common position assumed by RINGO delegates is “observer”, the classic role according to the UNFCCC.⁴¹ There are two types of observers. The first is the interested student who primarily visits side events and observes the negotiations without actively participating. The second type is the “researcher” who observes the negotiations for the purpose of gathering data via interviewing delegates, administering surveys or collecting reports/publications. By definition, observers participate potentially for the first time, are not members of government delegations, have very little engagement with parties apart from casual conversations, and are unlikely to have significant existing networks with government delegates.⁴² Although observer access and participation raises the legitimacy and transparency of the negotiations,⁴³ observ-

⁴⁰ Bennett 1992.

⁴¹ UNFCCC 1996.

⁴² Survey of NGO participants, 7/2010, London, LSE.

⁴³ Interview, delegate 2 from AOSIS, 15/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

ers are also the target of criticism by some government delegates, since they “were only observing and taking up meeting space but (...) did not contribute positively or constructively to the negotiations”.⁴⁴ However, one important concern of observers is to learn and gain an understanding of the process to become more involved in the future.⁴⁵ Observers remain outsiders with negligible influence on the negotiations.

Networker with other delegations

Networkers meet with other delegates from NGOs and government delegations to exchange information, establish and strengthen relationships. All delegates usually undertake this activity.⁴⁶

Party Advisors

Advisors, who are also members of epistemic communities,⁴⁷ provide scientific expertise and information to government delegations in the form of speeches at side events attended by government delegates, and frequently engage in capacity building such as training diplomats.⁴⁸ Researchers and established academics frequently assume this advisory role. They remain registered as NGO delegates, but have a high status within their own delegation and a medium engagement with parties.⁴⁹

Depending on their expertise and specific research background, preparation, personality, reputation, academic network, and personal network to parties, established academics frequently join government delegations as advisors on a policy field

⁴⁴ Interview, delegate 1 from Latin America, 14/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

⁴⁵ Survey of NGOs, data for RINGOs, 7/2010, London, LSE; and Bernstein, 2002.

⁴⁶ Survey of NGOs, data for RINGOs, 7/2010, London, LSE.

⁴⁷ Haas 1992a.

⁴⁸ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate1 from Least Developed Country, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; Survey of NGOs, data for RINGOs, 7/2010, London, LSE.

⁴⁹ Interview with delegate 2 from AOSIS, 15/12/2009; interview with delegate from Germany, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate from Ireland, 11/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

or even as negotiators on behalf of a country that is not necessarily their home country. Within the government delegation, they either act as advisors or negotiators and have high engagement with government representatives. The higher their status within the government delegation based on their expertise, reputation and need for capacity building within the delegation, the more likely academics are to become lead negotiators on their area of expertise with direct access to the negotiating text.⁵⁰

Academics who gained insider status with government delegations and are thus representing a certain country at the negotiations frequently build bridges to non-governmental actors with outsider status in workshops, at side events and in consultative processes. They interact with observers and carry their perspectives into their government delegation. Thereby, they can help academics with outsider status to influence the negotiations from within.⁵¹

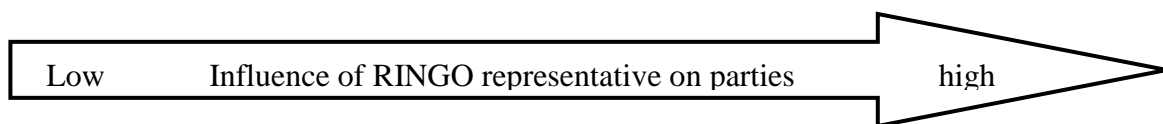
Consequently, a connection exists between the type of delegate, roles available to them, network to draw upon, and their influence. Figure 3 provides an overview of the connection between academic's roles, activities, network and influence on parties.

⁵⁰ Survey of NGOs, data for RINGOs, 7/2010, London, LSE.

⁵¹ Participant Observation by author, 12/06/2011, Bonn, UNFCCC.

Figure 3: Overview on connection between role, activities, network and influence of academics (compiled by author)

Role	Observer		Networker with other NGOs/Parties		Lobbyist	Party Advisor		
Type of RINGO delegate	Interested Student (IS), Re-searcher	Re-searcher (R)	IS, R	Established Academic (eA), Expert (E)	IS, R, eA, E	R, eA, E	eA, E	eA, E
Activities	Observation, Visiting side events	Observation, research	Meeting/ exchange with other delegates		Lobby parties: change positions	Provide re-search input, capacity building/ training	Negotiate on behalf of party, direct influence on and access to negotiating text	
						Secondary negotiator	Lead negotiator	
Status towards party delegates	Outside delegation					Inside delegation		
Engagement with parties	Very limited		Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Very high



Importance of personal capabilities and network to government delegates

Influence depends on academic's policy entrepreneurial strategies and if they achieve insider status with government delegations. Academics usually act as individuals and are not bound by a common advocacy goal or delegation position. As academics or experts they remain impartial and neutral observers of the negotiations, what gives them high credibility with government delegates. These value academics and experts as RINGO representatives for their expertise on certain topics and the neutral, scientific input they can provide to the negotiations.⁵² The networks with government delegates determine if they pursue an outside- or insider-strategy.

Academics support government delegations with research in the form of expert briefings and published material. Developing countries with limited resources rely heavily on research input and capacity building to form their national position and prepare for the negotiations.⁵³ The reason for the influence of academics is frequently based on their positive contributions:

RINGOs have definitively a very large input, since they can actually contribute something. BINGOs and ENGOS lobby, they want to have something from government delegates but do not have much to contribute. RINGOs, on the other hand, provide scientific input governments desperately need. When I walk through the NGO and government stalls here at Bella Center and waive a report with data on ocean warming and biodiversity studies and say: 'hey, do you want to have data?' – No Government representative says 'no'! They need the research input and use the data as arguments for their position. On the other hand, you can also convince them to do more and raise their targets with convincing and methodologically sound information.⁵⁴

⁵² Interview AOSIS delegate 1, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview EU delegate 1, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview delegate from Ireland, 11/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview delegate from Japan, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Latin America, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Nigeria, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with RINGO delegate 37, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC and interview with RINGO delegate 36, 14/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁵³ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 2 from Least Developed Country, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; participant observation/ statements of RINGO and state representatives at contact group on Arrangements for Intergovernmental meetings, 15/6/2011, Bonn, UNFCCC.

⁵⁴ Interview with RINGO delegate 37, 14/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

Consequently, academics' contributions to UNFCCC negotiations are significant and central to forming national positions and influencing the negotiations towards an objective target of necessary mitigation and adaptation efforts. The tactics they use to communicate their contributions to government delegates can be categorized as transmitting and receiving information, networking with delegates, capacity building and joining government delegations. The distinctive feature of academics as members of epistemic communities is their constructive contributions and supportive role for governments and other NGOs. They gain their legitimacy and recognition from this neutral, normative authority.⁵⁵

Joining government delegations grants academics access to the informal negotiations and the negotiation text as well as access to senior decision makers. To achieve this level of access, they need to be proactive, build networks with government delegates and establish themselves as neutral experts providing useful policy knowledge in demand:

For technical details, we have RINGO advisors in EU delegations, especially where the ministries do not have the specialized expertise. (...) We also do not necessarily beg them to help us. We have a good relationship that is built on trust and personal relations with a number of experts, who frequently offer their opinions on proposals, provide us with data and policy recommendations. Usually they approach us with the information they have to offer, and we look at the information and use it to decide on our position.⁵⁶

Academic policy entrepreneurs had the highest influence on COP-15 and share a number of characteristics. They are established academics or experts from think tanks, have an excellent network to government delegations and a high reputation as

⁵⁵ Interview with RINGO delegate 36, 14/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Least Developed Country, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011, UNFCCC, Bonn.

⁵⁶ Interview with delegate from Ireland, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

neutral and unbiased scientists. Furthermore, as experts in topic areas under discussion with a considerable publishing record, they provide technical input with policy implications. Their influence on the negotiations can be medium or even high if they join government delegations:

I myself work for a Research NGO and I managed to get the government to invite me to represent them here at the negotiations (...). Thereby I can make a big contribution to influence the negotiation process. I have been out there, done research in the field and know the data very well. I know what I am talking about and I can directly introduce the research results into the negotiation process and thereby convince other governments I am negotiating with to do more. (...) I have direct access to the negotiation text. When I make a proposal in my contact group, the chair asks me how I would like to phrase the proposal, which should be agreed with other members of the Umbrella Group.⁵⁷

With their proactive approach academics offer expertise, further develop their networks between researchers/policy experts and governments, and establish research groups with potential policy implications.⁵⁸ Their intrinsic motivation is frequently the desire to contribute to climate change mitigation. Hence, academic policy entrepreneurs are at the heart of RINGO influence.

⁵⁷ Interview with delegate 1 from Japan, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁵⁸ Interview EU delegate 1, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview delegate from Japan, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with delegate1 from Latin America, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with RINGO delegate 37, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

Why timing matters – different levels of influence

When in the negotiation cycle academics communicate their input to government delegates is crucial. The influence is largest before the government has formed its position on an issue and the national parliament has ratified it. Once the position is formed and confirmed by common positions inside the negotiation bloc, it is extremely difficult to change a government's position.⁵⁹

We especially need their input early in the process, directly after the last COP when we sort out the negotiation results and try to decide on our position for the next year. This position is then discussed with other governments in the European Council and then we agree on a EU position. Once the EU position is set, there is a very small margin to maneuver away from it anymore.⁶⁰

Academics can influence different levels of the negotiation cycle.⁶¹ The first step in the negotiation cycle is recognition of the problem and agenda setting on a national level. After the consultation and capacity building phase, the national position is formed. Once this position has been decided, usually on the parliament or government level, it is very difficult to change.⁶² Governments carry their national position into the regional organization meetings, where a negotiation bloc position is formed, such as within the EU, AOSIS, African Union or the Umbrella Group. Most join a larger negotiation bloc like the G77+China group, where they form a common

⁵⁹ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate1 from EU, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Germany, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Latin America, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011, UNFCCC, Bonn.

⁶⁰ Interview with delegate from Ireland, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁶¹ For references to different phases of negotiations see Adler and Haas 1992; Haas 1992a; and Putnam 1988.

⁶² Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate1 from EU, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Germany, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Latin America, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

position in complex negotiations.⁶³ During the *Ad-hoc Working Group*-level (AWG-level) negotiations, countries meet frequently in their constituencies to discuss new proposals, leaving room for further input and changes in the bloc position.

The process tracing of RINGO influence on the key indicators of shaping issues, agenda setting and influencing the positions of key states⁶⁴ results in a very diverse assessment of influence depending on the stage of the negotiation cycle, with higher influence on the domestic level and declining influence towards the COP. This finding correlates with Andresen and Skodvin's conclusions on the importance of the domestic level for the influence of nongovernmental actors.⁶⁵ Influence on state positions also depends on how many ministries are involved in the process,⁶⁶ the states' capabilities⁶⁷ and membership in certain negotiation blocs, how homogenous these blocs are and how legally binding their common negotiation position is.⁶⁸ These determinants explain the variations in the influence of academics on different national and/or bloc positions (Table 4).

Academics can have high influence on the national position early in the negotiation cycle, which declines towards the High-Level Segment and thereby the outcome.⁶⁹ They provide scientific input and can set targets, since they are regarded

⁶³ Interview with delegate 2 from LDC, 11/4/2010; Interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Vanuatu, 17/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁶⁴ Betsill and Corell 2008.

⁶⁵ Andresen and Skodvin 2008, 143f.

⁶⁶ Interview with delegate 1 from Latin America, 11/4/2010.

⁶⁷ Interview with delegate 1 from LDC, 11/4/2010.

⁶⁸ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate1 from EU, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Germany, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate 1 from LDC, 11/4/2010; interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011, UNFCCC, Bonn.

⁶⁹ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; interview with delegate from Germany, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate 2 from LDC, 11/4/2010; interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011, UNFCCC, Bonn; UNFCCC, 2009.

as normative authorities.⁷⁰ Governments invite them to contribute, provide a scientific basis and play a consulting role during the agenda-setting stage.⁷¹ In *Least Developed Countries* (LDCs), academics frequently assume an even more active role in capacity building when they train government delegates on technical details and backgrounds such as *Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation* (REDD), methodology for measuring emissions, technology transfer, and negotiation tactics.⁷² They often join their government delegations later in the process as policy advisors and skilled negotiators on their behalf, e.g. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Sudan and Gambia. They influence the government position longer into the negotiation process, since they are deeply integrated with the delegation and can also contribute to forming the regional bloc position. The negotiations leave little opportunity for academics to influence the regional bloc position, which is frequently a politically bargained compromise between controversial state interests⁷³ or even legally binding decision.⁷⁴

In conclusion, the conditions resulting in reduced influence on key actor positions are complex decision-making structures, political bargaining and legally binding pre-agreed bloc positions. A lack of expertise in ministries leads to demand for capacity building, presenting opportunities for academics to join government delegations as policy advisors and increasing their influence even after the national position is formed (Figure 4).

⁷⁰ Interview with delegate 1 from AOSIS, 10/4/2010; Interview with delegate 1 from EU, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate from Japan, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁷¹ Interview with delegate from Ireland, 11/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; Interview with delegate from Nigeria, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

⁷² Interview with delegate 1 from LDC, 11/4/2010; Interview with delegate 2 from LDC, 11/4/2010; Interview with delegate from Nigeria, 12/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC; Survey with RINGO answers, 7/2010, London, LSE.

⁷³ Interview with delegate 1 from EU, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC; interview with delegate 1 from Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011, UNFCCC, Bonn.

⁷⁴ Interview with delegate from Ireland, 11/12/2009, Copenhagen, UNFCCC.

Figure 4: Influence of academics on government positions (compiled by author)

Negotiation Bloc (based on country data) Negotiation cycle	EU (EU1, Germany, Ireland)	Umbrella Group (Japan, Umbrella Group1)	AOSIS (AOSIS1, AOSIS2, Vanuatu)	LDC (LDC1, LDC2, Nigeria)	G77+China without AOSIS/LDC (Latin America1, UAE)	Overall influence
Recognition of problem/agenda setting	High	High	High	High	High	High
Consultation, capacity building	High	High	High	High	High	High
Formulation of national position	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium
Formulation of negotiation bloc position	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Change national position on AWG-level	None	Low	Low	Low	None	Very low
High-Level Segment meeting	None	Low	None	None	None	None

Conclusion on the influence of Academics in the 2009 UNFCCC negotiation cycle

Academics had the highest influence very early in the 2009 negotiation cycle when the results from COP-14 were analyzed, the agenda set, issues framed and the national position decided, frequently between several ministries. The influence decreased closer to COP-15 as regional bloc positions were formed. A late window of opportunity only presented itself when RINGO delegates had direct access to the negotiation text as negotiators on behalf of a country.

Academics were able to influence the negotiations as they are considered normative authorities, contributing to capacity building with unbiased scientific research input and frequently training delegates on technical issues. Some established academics and experts were especially influential because, as members of epistemic communities, they possessed very solid networks to government delegations. The use of these networks enabled them to directly influence the national position before it was formed and to later join government delegations as policy advisors or negotiators. Academics were influential if they were able to provide the required research expertise, effectively communicate their findings to government delegations, and maintain the status of an established academic or expert with a high reputation.

External conditions include the overall character of the negotiations and the issues at stake. COP-15 was an “economic and development summit”⁷⁵ with negotiations on a post-agreement protocol that required behavioral changes from states. Those make it more difficult for states to agree⁷⁶ as technical details and concrete proposals require commitment and difficult domestic implementation paired with un-

⁷⁵ Interview with delegate from Latin America, 10/4/2010, Bonn, UNFCCC.

⁷⁶ Betsill 2008b, 194ff.

popular decisions instead of open, principled political statements that can be interpreted and ignored. Hence, academics had less leverage to exercise their influence due to short-term economic interests. However, it also increased the demand for neutral, scientifically based advice on technical details from established academics.

Overall, academics had a medium influence⁷⁷ as they made changes to the status quo on the process indicators of issue framing, agenda setting and partly changing the positions of key actors, however they were unable to influence the outcome (Copenhagen Accords) as this was negotiated by the heads of states. Figure 5 summarizes the maximum influence established academics had on the 2009 negotiation cycle if they got involved early after COP-14 working proactively to provide government departments with their expertise and if they later on joined the delegation as negotiator. Their influence was only medium and not high (dotted line; high influence is symbolized by a large diamond-shaped area) since they were excluded from the high-level segment drafting the Copenhagen accords. If academics were only participating as interested students/observers or researchers, their influence remained low, symbolized through a small diamond (Figure 6). They remained outsiders to the negotiations and as they joined late, their contribution remained limited, even if they used their expertise and policy entrepreneurial strategies.

⁷⁷ Criteria at Betsill and Corell 2008, 38.

Figure 5. Medium influence of established academics and experts at COP-15; dotted line shows high influence. Compiled by author.

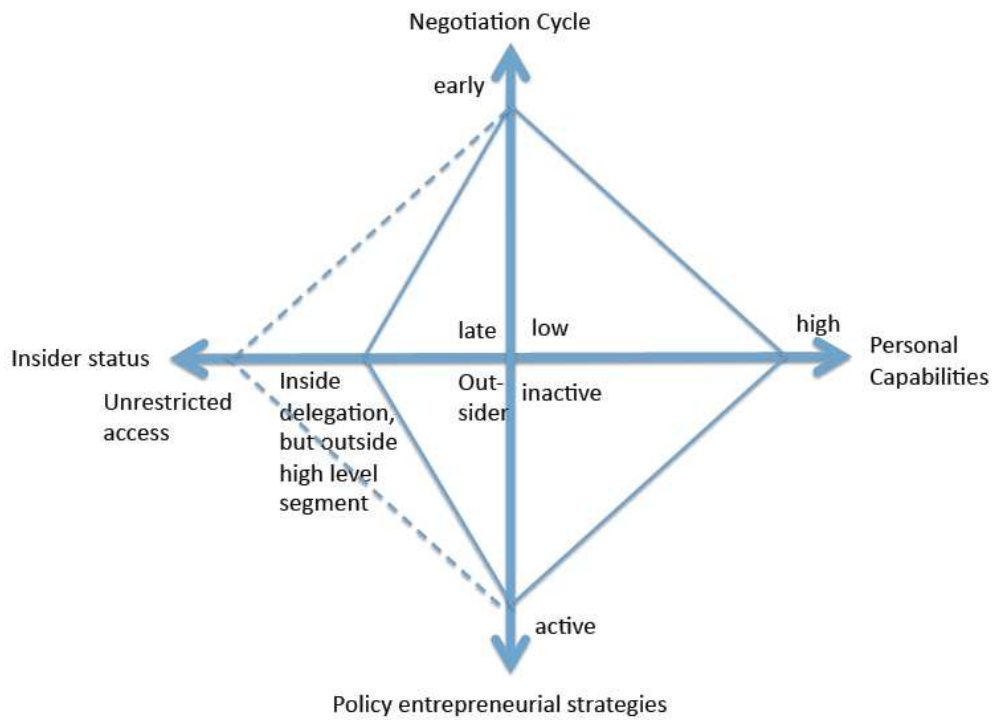
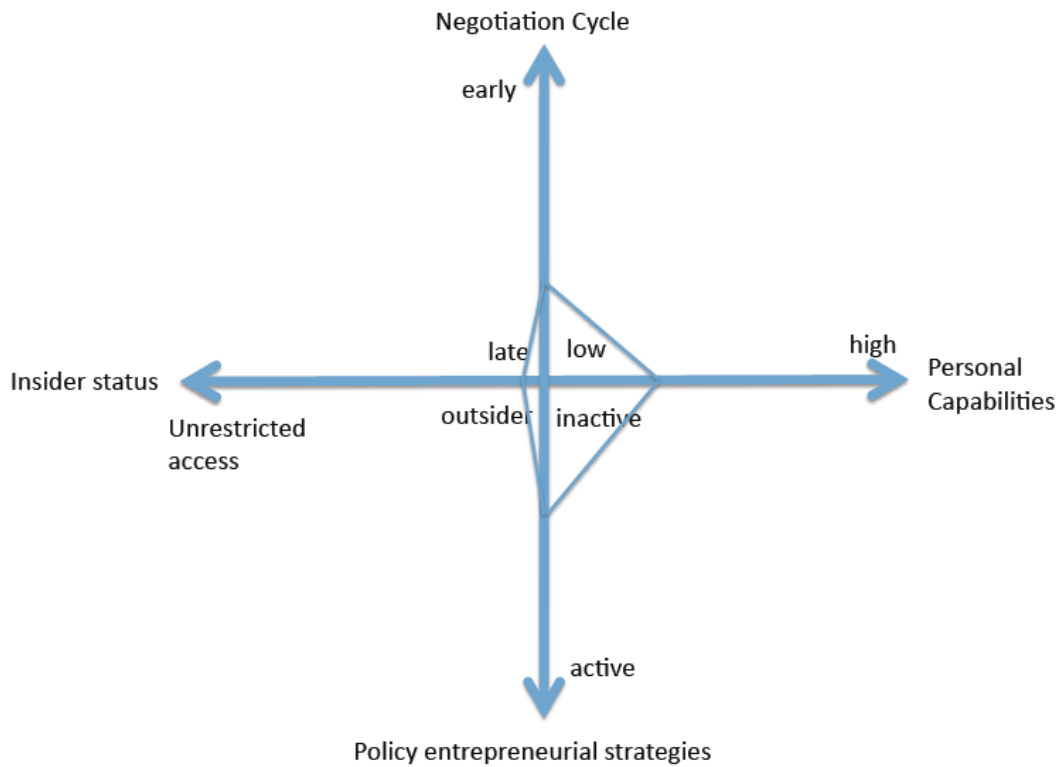


Figure 6. Low influence of observers (interested students, researchers) at COP-15. Compiled by author.



Towards comparability of academic influence across issues

This article examined when, why and under what conditions academics are able to influence international climate change negotiations at the example of UNFCCC COP-15 and contributes to the ongoing research project of achieving comparability of NGO influence across issues and cases. First, it provided a characterization of four different types of nongovernmental actors involved in the UNFCCC. Nongovernmental actors can be categorized as Advocacy NGOs or Business and Industry NGOs determined to convince government delegations of their positions, sub-national actors who are especially concerned about implementation and academics, who are regarded as the only neutral actors and therefore especially valued by government delegates for their expertise and evidence-based contributions.

The article then presented four indicators of influence as extension to the existing issue-focused analytical framework of Betsill and Corell. The level of influence of academics can be determined by examining their activities according to their personal capabilities and expert knowledge, their policy-entrepreneurial strategies, how early in the negotiation cycle they are active and if they gain insider status within a key government delegation, what can enable them to contribute to forming the national and even bloc position as well as access the negotiation text.

The research results on nongovernmental influence with a focus on academics hold further implications for theory development: Individual nongovernmental delegates pursue either the insider- or the outsider strategy, depending on their capabilities and network to government delegations independent from their constituency or organization. In the case of academics, only the insider strategy with close contact to

government delegates leads to influence on the negotiations, which is determined by their role, personal capabilities and timing. Mere participation in the negotiations as observer does not increase their influence. Research results and the list of participants⁷⁸ further suggest that especially sub-national actors like local governments, business representatives and experts working for environmental NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and Oxfam also frequently join government delegations. Shell International representatives, McKinsey consultants and representatives of national industry associations were equally granted full access to high-level decision makers as members of the delegations of Indonesia or Papua New Guinea.⁷⁹ Delegations taking on nongovernmental actors as insiders included powerful countries such as Brazil, France, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico or South Africa, what gives nongovernmental actors comparably high influence on the negotiations if they additionally pursue policy-entrepreneurial strategies to convince their heads of delegation, form broad coalitions and convince veto-actors; advise early in the negotiation cycle and have high personal capabilities demonstrated by expertise on negotiation topics.

This conclusion implies the comparability of nongovernmental actor influence across issues, cases and constituencies in environmental negotiations along their status as either insiders or outsiders. While individuals with certain capabilities can become influential insiders, outsider influence may be based on other factors such as their ability to mobilize mass demonstrations in cooperation with media to pressure democratic governments from outside the conference centers demanding climate justice and a fair, legally binding and strong post-2012 agreement on climate change.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ UNFCCC 2010a.

⁷⁹ UNFCCC 2010a.

⁸⁰ Survey, answers from ENGOs, 7/2010, London, LSE and 21 semi-structured interviews with government delegates to process trace the influence of ENGOs.

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