

Should I Stay or Should I Go?
Explaining the Exit and Entry of Interest
Groups at UN Climate Summits

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Introduction

There is little doubt that since the end of the Cold War non-state actors have become increasingly active in transnational advocacy and lobbying.¹ To give an example on the magnitude of this phenomenon, in 1990 roughly 20,000 transnational interest groups were registered in the Union of International Associations Yearbook (UIA). In the twenty years since then, the number of transnational interest groups has risen to approximately 56,000 organizations that were registered in the UIA Yearbook in 2011.² However, not all of these organizations are equally engaged in transnational advocacy; some are much more active than others and develop the capacity to sustain a considerable transnational lobby presence over a long period of time. Gaining a better insight in sustained lobby presence is important because interest groups which are able to develop a steady lobby presence have considerable advantages to generate political influence.³ Maintaining political activities over longer periods of time is particular relevant at in international politics because of the inert nature of global policymaking, which implies that policymaking takes much time and that over the course of many years the status quo prevails.⁴ Therefore, to increase the chance to generate some impact on global decision-making it is vital for interest groups to develop a steady lobby presence.

Our core research question is: what explains the fact that some interests establish a sustained lobby presence and become repeat players while the political activities of other organized interests are of a much more haphazard nature? Thus far the literature has not provided a satisfactory answer to this question. On the one hand, quantitative studies of transnational interest group mobilization rely often on a bottom-up mapping of existing transnational advocates and as a consequence measure the *existence* of organizational entities and not the extent to which these entities effectively engage in *political* activity. On the other hand, the large number of case-studies adopt a more top-down perspective whereby some political event in which societal interests were actively involved is taken as a starting point. However, many of the current case-studies in the field of transnational advocacy selected cases where something relevant happened and where transnational advocates showed some substantial activity.⁵ The reason is that the existing case-study research is mostly situated in a broader IR-debate in which the state-centred nature of international politics is a major issue

¹ Evans et al. 1993; O'Brien et al 2000; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse 2007; Bexell et al. 2010; Jönsson et al. 2010; Talberg 2013.

² see also Beckfield 2003; Smith 2005; Smith and Weist 2005; Lee 2010; Florini 2000.

³ Heinz et al. 1993; Zeigler and Baer 1969.

⁴ Scharpf 1997; Odell 2009; Narlikar 2010; Underdal et al. 2012.

⁵ Risse 2007, 274.

and, therefore, one aim of many case-studies is to demonstrate that non-state societal interests *matter* for international policy outcomes. As a result these studies may run the risk to over-estimate the relevance and magnitude of transnational advocacy.

In this paper we demonstrate that it is possible to transcend the shortcomings of previous research by taking a middle ground between these two types of studies. Instead of a bottom-up mapping of existing groups, we analyse all organizations that effectively lobbied at Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (n=6,655; COPs hereafter). In contrast many case-studies do not aim to demonstrate whether these groups are politically relevant and/or effectively gained influence, nor do we aim to contribute to the debate on the state-centred nature of international politics. Rather, we analyse which interests organizations developed a (and which not) a steady lobby presence at the UN Climate Summits or, more precisely why some organized interests discontinue their lobby presence.

One of challenge in studying transnational advocacy is that it concerns political activities in settings where various institutional and political systems interact. A minimal requirement for models aiming to explain the persistent nature of transnational advocacy is that they need to account for sources of explanatory variation situated at multiple levels, more precisely at the national, the global and the level of organized interests. This leads to a set of explanatory factors that can be grouped in three distinct categories. First, we take stock of the organizational features of an interest group whereby we analyse whether some organizational types, such as resourceful or encompassing organizations, develop a steadier lobby presence. Second, we test for factors located at the level of the international organization, such as the density of the mobilized interest community and the salience of the issues on its agenda. Third we analyze the importance of domestic embeddedness by adding domestic factors to the analysis, such as the level of democracy and wealth of the countries where transnational advocates originate from.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next two sections we further clarify the theoretical relevance of the research question, we develop a framework and present a set of hypotheses to be tested. The middle section describes the research design and datasets. This is followed by an event history analysis. We end with a conclusion and provide some avenues for future research.

Stability and volatility in transnational interest group communities

Our aim is to identify factors that explain why different types of societal interests become and stay politically active at international diplomatic conferences. This is important for several reasons. First, volatility, which refers to high exit and entry rates in interest communities, indicates how open a system is to new interests.⁶ Volatility in attendance rates at transnational conferences shows that it is relatively easy for new organizations to enter a policy venue and, as such, it can be might be seen as an anti-dote against the capturing of an interest group community by a small set of specific interests. A system that is completely dominated by a small set of interests or biased in favor of a small number of players is much more difficult to enter by new organizations. However, the volatility of an interest group community may also tell us some important things about the role transnational advocates play. If some groups were to leave an interest group community very early and more often than others do, for instance because they lack the resources to establish a sustained presence, this might indicate that a political venue is more accessible and attentive to some types of interests rather than others.

Further, persistence – maintaining a long-term presence in the interest community – is itself a potentially important advantage for interests wishing to influence public policy. First, a continued lobby presence increases a lobbyist's chance to take stock of crucial resources in the lobby process such as the ability to create long-lasting networks with policymakers or the ability to develop expertise regarding the issue of concern or the political decision-making process, while such resources substantially increase the propensity for a lobbyist to have an impact on political decision-making. In contrast, those who maintain only a temporary presence – for instance, because they exit immediately after their first entrance – are less likely to create these vital resources and, as a result, are more constrained in their search for political influence. As such lobby endurance can be related to how organized interests generate political influence as some early research indicated that lobby endurance generates benefits for influence.⁷ Second, persistence matters also because it may generate a positive impact on organizational development. On average, organizations that show long periods of political activity tend to develop a more robust and stronger organization.⁸ In short, developing a sustained lobby presence at political venues may create some vital advantages for interest groups to exert influence and to foster organizational maintenance.

⁶ Kohler-Koch 1994; Berkhout and Lowery 2011.

⁷ Heinz et al. 1993; Zeigler and Baer 1969.

⁸ Carroll and Hannan 2000; Lowery and Gray 1996; Fraussen 2013.

A steady lobby presence seems even more important for transnational advocacy. Policymaking at the international level is generally slow as often over the course of many years no agreements are established. For instance, during international climate negotiations a renewal of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol has not yet been found and a deal is not expected before 2015. The long time span that international negotiations cover means that interest groups need a long breath and invest resources over the course of many years or even decades. Therefore, it is relevant to understand why some interests maintain a steady transnational lobby presence while other act more as so-called political ‘tourists’.⁹

Currently we can distinguish between two types of studies that deal, either direct or indirectly, with the question which non-state actors are well presented in global policymaking processes. First, we have a set of mapping studies which provide an overview of the scale of interest representation in global politics.¹⁰ One problem with these *mapping* studies however is that organizations are studied based on their existence, but do not account for their actual political activities.¹¹ As a result, organizations that show limited levels of lobbying, as is the case for many organizations, are not differentiated from those that are very active. One notable example is the work by Keck and Sikkink who, in their first chapter, based on the UIA-register, provide an overview of what they call ‘social change organizations’ whereby they observe growing numbers in all issue areas since 1953.¹² In line with Keck and Sikkink, Jackie Smith’s study on the transnational interest group mobilization is one of the few systematic and quantitative efforts to analyze the global population of social movement organizations.¹³ Yet, their reliance on the UIA Yearbook causes that their research tells us more about existing organizations than about whether these organizations are politically active.

Second, the field of transnational advocacy studies is rich in terms of *case-studies* that analyze how non-state stakeholders get involved in global policymaking processes. Much of this case-study research is to be situated in a broader IR-debate in which the state-centred nature of international politics is a major issue. Therefore, one aim of many case-studies is to demonstrate that non-state societal interests matter for international policy outcomes. That is, much research seeks to understand why and whether non-state interests have been influential. As a result the starting point of the researcher is usually the set of politically active

⁹ Berkhout and Lowery 2011.

¹⁰ Smith and Weist 2005; Smith 2006; Beckfield.

¹¹ But see Piewit 2010.

¹² Keck and Sikkink 1998.

¹³ Smith 2005; Smith and Weist 2005; Smith 2006.

organizations. Yet, in these cases scholars are tempted to focus on so-called interesting cases or cases where something relevant happened in terms of an international policy outcome – for instance a norm change, a negotiation breakthrough, some regulatory coordination, and so on – and locate whether societal interests had something to do with some policy change. Thomas Risse recognizes this problem aptly when he argues:

‘Many case studies [on transnational non-state actor] are methodologically problematic, however, since they focus on single cases and/or ‘success stories’ of transnational pressures without specifying the scope conditions of their arguments... This area certainly deserves further scholarly exploration.’¹⁴

Cases where societal interests were active, but did not seek (immediate) influence or instances where policies did not change (or only by a margin), were thereby mostly ignored. However, instances where nothing changes and where the status quo prevails are probably very prominent in international policymaking. An additional down-side of case studies to locate which actors are more dominant in transnational politics is that the focus on one single case does not allow controlling for variation situated at the level an interest community, for instance the density of this community. This could have important repercussions because the density of interest communities, as we will argue, is considered to be an important factor in explaining patterns of interest group mobilization and maintenance.¹⁵

To circumvent the down-sides of both approaches to explain dominant versus haphazard participation of interest groups in transnational political processes we take a middle ground and combine the strong aspects of both approaches in an innovative longitudinal research design. On the one end we map a full community of interest groups. For this paper, we focus on all interest groups that attended one of the UN Climate Conferences (COP hereafter) between 1997-2011. Yet, in contrast to existing mapping studies of transnational advocacy, and more in line with the case-study approaches, we analyse varying levels of political activity. More specifically, we focus on the exit and entry rates of all 6,665 organizations that attended at least one of the COPs. Thereby our goal is to analyse which and why some actors are able to develop a steady lobby presence at transnational conferences whereas others drop out fairly early.

¹⁴ Risse 2007, 274.

¹⁵ Gray and Lowery 1996; Halpin and Jordan 2012.

Hypotheses

One challenge in studying transnational advocacy is the variety of institutional and political systems that interact. A minimal requirement for explanatory models is that they account for sources of variation situated at multiple levels, more precisely at the national, the global and the level of organized interests. To construct our hypotheses we take stock of the most important factors for in- or decreased interest group activity in transnational politics that were identified in the current mapping and case oriented studies. In addition, we include explanatory factors derived from the organizational ecology literature.¹⁶ The set of hypotheses can be structured under three broad headings, namely the organizational features of interest groups, factors related to the context surrounding the interest communities, such as its density and the salience of its policy agenda, and, finally, domestic factors, such as the level of democracy and wealth of the countries where groups come from.

First, from an *organizational perspective* some types of interests are understood to be better equipped to become and stay politically active because of their resources, their organizational structure or the political level where they are active. To begin with, one important feature of transnational advocacy is the *level of mobilization* or, more specifically, where an organization is located in a multi-level setting.¹⁷ Some interest groups are organized to represent domestic constituencies, while others represent a broad set of constituencies in a large variety of countries. The domestic embeddedness of national groups and their critical dependency on domestic sponsors and members, causes that that the international level is, compared to global groups, less crucial for these organizations. Hence, transnational interest group communities are characterized by some labor division where some specialize in domestic politics and others in supranational or global politics. This allows national interest groups to focus on domestic issues and delegate the monitoring of what happens at the global level to global organizations. These global organizations rely on the input of domestic organizations, for instance technical advice on specific policy issues or strategic suggestions on which national policymakers need to be targeted. Sometimes, national interest groups will attend international diplomatic conferences in order to lobby alongside their global counterparts. Moreover, getting the support and endorsement of national groups gives global organizations clout and improves their standing among policymakers. As a representative of the *International Council on Mining and Metals* said in one of our interviews at the Doha COP (2012): ‘What we basically do is bring our clients [read members] in contact with

¹⁶ Hannan and Freeman 1989; Gray and Lowery 1996; Halpin and Jordan 2012.

¹⁷ Eising 2004.

relevant policymakers at this conference in order for them to communicate their demands if needed.’ This particular labor division between national and global interest groups leads us to suspect that global organizations develop a more stable presence compared to national groups.

Second, the *type of an organized interest* matters. More precisely, the organizational form makes that some interest groups tend to specialize in particular strategies and issues, while others cast their net wide and aim to represent a rather aggregate interest. One of the key features of international negotiations and policymaking is that these processes tend to result in complex package deals for which the consent of all member countries is required. As policymakers seek to develop large package deals, more encompassing interest groups who represent a broad and diverse constituency can be very helpful as these are able to supply information that aggregates a diverse set of views.¹⁸ In addition, the inertia decision-making at global policymaking venues leads interest groups, instead of lobbying on highly specialized issues, to monitor the entire policy process at these venues. Encompassing organizations are more suitable to fulfill these tasks and, therefore, we expect that these will keep a more steady presence. In this paper we make a distinction between five organizational types, namely specialized business interests, encompassing business interests, labor unions, citizen groups, and research organizations. We expect business encompassing, labor unions and citizen groups, because of their more encompassing nature, to stay active longer than specialized business and research organizations.

Finally, regarding organizational factors, we expect that the ability to maintain a steady lobby presence depends on organizational *resources*.¹⁹ The importance of resources is possibly even more important at the international level than at lower levels of governance. That is, in order to lobby effectively, organizations need to network with policymakers and other advocates all over the world, they need to rally constituencies in multiple countries, they need to attend transnational conferences which are held in every corner of the globe, and, given the inert nature of global policymaking, they have to maintain these activities over long periods of time. Since such activities exhaust organizational resources, interest groups engaged in transnational advocacy need a considerable amount of material resources.²⁰

In sum, we have three hypotheses related to organizational features:

H1: Globally organized interest groups are more likely to develop a steady lobby presence compared to national groups.

¹⁸ Davis 2004; De Bièvre et al. 2014.

¹⁹ Tarrow 2005; Imig and Tarrow 2001; Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002; Dalton, Recchia and Rohrschneider 2003; Ron, Ramos and Rodgers 2005; Bennett 1999.

²⁰ Tarrow 2005.

H2: The broader the scope of interest groups the more they develop a steady lobby presence compared to more specialized interest groups.

H3: Interest groups that have more resources at their disposal, develop a steadier lobby presence.

A second set of hypotheses relates to the context of the transnational interest group community, in our case at UN Climate Conferences. First, within organizational ecology literature one important factor to explain organizational persistence concerns the *density* of an interest group community at the moment an organization becomes active.²¹ Thereby, it is presumed that those who start lobbying in a more dense environment face more competition, while those who enter when few others are active experience lower levels of competition. When competition increases, it becomes harder for novices to find their way in an already crowded field. A consequence is that groups who lobbied on a topic early in the development of an interest group community, when there were less other interest groups working on similar issues, have several advantages over ‘latecomers’. This advantage stems from the fact that first entrants can achieve control of resources that followers may not be able to catch, and gain vital experiences which newcomers lack. For instance, they can create vital contacts with key policymakers as well as other organized interests, they gain expertise on crucial policy issues and gain experience on how to lobby effectively. As a consequence, interest groups that operate in less dense interest communities are expected to develop a steadier lobby presence, while those who attend conferences that are more crowded, are less likely to develop a steady lobby presence.

The second factor is the overall *salience* of the transnational conferences that interest groups can attend. Generally, we expect that interest group activity is a response to the overall public visibility a diplomatic conference gains in the period before it takes place. In this regard, the magnitude of transnational advocacy reflects the willingness of advocates to invest political energy in what is on the policy agenda of the international organization. Increased salience might be due to the fact that many stakeholders expect that some important policy change or a breakthrough is looming. This energizes those who want to change the status quo, but also those who prefer to keep the status quo. Yet, salience is not just a matter of actors responding to potential changes and the propensity to seek influence. Rather, generating influence in a dense and competitive context is uncertain, which means that, in addition to

²¹ Gray and Lowery 1996; Halpin and Jordan 2012.

influence, some other mechanisms drive transnational advocacy. We believe that the salience of a policy agenda generates a positive feedback mechanism, namely the more actors – policymakers, think-tanks, journalists, interest groups – pay active attention to a policy agenda, the more others start to believe that this policy agenda is indeed relevant. This mechanism creates a powerful incentive for political activity, not necessarily because additional political activity is going to generate political influence, but also because organized interests prefer to be seen as being responsive to what goes on in their immediate environment. That is, interest groups depend on resources supplied from their members, their constituency, their donors or their sponsors. It is their responsiveness on highly salient topics, issues that are high on the political agenda, that attracts the attention of their constituency.²² Being responsive helps organizations to ‘market’ their actions to improve donations and membership subscription fees.²³ Therefore, interest groups are expected to stay active longer when the policy agenda remains salient.

To conclude, we have two hypotheses situated at the international level:

H4: Interest groups who operate in a less crowded transnational context develop a steadier lobby presence than organizations that operate in a denser context.

H5: Interest groups develop a steadier lobby presence if policy agenda of the IO remains salient for a longer period of time.

Finally, explanatory models of transnational advocacy need to test for country-specific institutional variation. The importance of domestic institutions for transnational advocacy has been reported in numerous studies.²⁴ The logic thereby is that key explanatory factors which affect whether or not interest groups increasingly or decreasingly make use of transnational advocacy are primarily situated at the domestic level. In other words, whether a group comes from the United States or Zimbabwe is more important than variation situated at the international level, or whether the organization in question is a business association or an NGO.

First, we look at the level of democracy in a country. The literature is not entirely in agreement about whether or not democracy has a positive effect on transnational advocacy. For instance, while Rohrschneider and Dalton did not find a relationship between democracy

²² Lowery, 2007.

²³ Waters, 2013; Dur and Matteo 2013; Mahoney, 2007.

²⁴ Beckfield 2003; Smith and Weist 2005; Lee 2010.

and overall social movement activity on environmental issues²⁵, other studies on transnational social movement organizations observed that countries with higher levels of democracy tend to be more strongly connected to transnational activism.²⁶ The reason is that organizations in less democratic countries face more problems to mobilize their constituency and the fact that interest groups themselves are confronted with a less lenient and supportive governments. Therefore, it is much harder for organizations from less democratic countries to remain politically active for a longer time.

Second, it matters how wealthy the country of origin of an organized interest is. The reasoning is that in wealthy countries organized interests have higher chances for survival and will flourish better because the size and wealth of their potential supportive constituency increases the supply of necessary resources to sustain political activities.²⁷ As our study spans a long time frame – 15 years – groups that are embedded in a wealthy domestic context are more likely to continue their lobby efforts, in particular transnational advocacy because this type of lobbying is expensive and takes a long breath. In short, we expect transnational mobilization of domestic interest groups to co-vary with overall wealth of their potential domestic constituency.

In sum, we formulate two hypotheses related to the domestic embeddedness of interest groups:

H6: Interest groups that stem from more democratic countries are more likely to develop a steady lobby presence.

H7: Interest groups from more wealthy countries are more likely to develop a steady lobby presence.

Research design

To test these hypotheses, we analyze the exit and entry rates of all interest groups that attended each of the UNFCCC COPs between 1995 and 2011. The data collection strategy we applied is in line with recent large-scale studies on organized interests, namely the systematic mapping of all groups lobbying at a particular policy venue.²⁸ Our analysis involves 16 COPs. The number of unique interest groups that attended these conferences is 6,655 unique organizations at COPs. After having identified all these non-state actors, we conducted a website-search for all these organizations. For most organizations a website could be

²⁵ Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002, 528.

²⁶ Smith and Weist 2005; Lee 2010.

²⁷ Gray and Lowery 1996; Lowery and Gray 2004; Nownes and Lipinski 2005; Nownes 2010.

²⁸ Halpin and Jordan 2012.

identified which offered more elaborate data; for about 20 percent of the organizations we were not able to find a website, but information stored on other websites enables us to code at least some basic features of these organizations. For only a very small number (150) of organizations no information at all was found. The dataset with web-based information gives us a comprehensive insight into the type of organizations, the region or countries where they stem from, their respective areas of interest, their constituency base, and how they are organized.

In the multivariate analysis we make use of event history analysis with which we model the chance of exit after an interest groups attended the COP for the first time. One of the main methodological issues is to properly define and conceptualize entry and exit-rates. Basically, we are interested in what causes the highly un-regular pattern of attendance or the high levels of volatility over time. To put it differently, why do some entrants exit early while others remain active during multiple transnational conferences in a row? Conceptually we are confronted with types of events, entry and exit. *Entry* is the event when an organization shows up at a transnational conference. In principle, we might estimate the probability that an organization enters, for instance, at multiple times since 1995. Yet, as we cannot estimate the magnitude of left-censoring, due to the fact that we have no idea what the population is from which the 6,665 actors are drawn, we cannot model adequately who in the population does not experience entry and for which reasons. But as soon as an organization enters, i.e. start attending a COP, it becomes at risk for exit, but as long as the organization keeps attending this risk does not materialize. All 6,665 actors at COP experience entry at some point and most experience the risk materialized at some point. *Exit* is an instance of discontinued participation after entry. Our research question is why some interest groups exit immediately after their first attendance, while others active at multiple conferences in a row. Here we face some right censoring, namely there is a group of entrants who came back at each conference after participating for the first time, and this until the last observed conference (718 organizations). For this group we cannot calculate exit-rates as the risk of discontinued participation did not materialize. Risk is the chance of exit given the fact that there has been some experience at some point in time, i.e. the event of entrance. This exit can only be assessed for those actors that enter (i.e. entering the risk set).

Table 1 – Overview of dependent, independent, and control variables

	Variable	Measure	Source
DV	Entry-exit	Survival analysis: exit and entry.	COP/MC website
X1	MOBILIZATION	Global or national	Website coding
X3	GROUP TYPE	Business specialized, business encompassing, NGOs, research organizations and labor unions.	Website coding
X3	RESOURCES	Staff size – logged.	World Bank
X4	DENSITY	Number of organizations that represent a similar economic or social interest – logged.	COP/MC website
X5	SALIENCE	Number of articles dedicated to COP in FT	Financial Times
X6	DEMOCRACY	POLITY IV index: -10 to 10.	POLITY IV
X7	WEALTH	GDP/Capita – logged.	World Bank
C1	ALIGNMENT	Issues that are closer aligned to agenda of TC.	Website coding
C2	SIZE	GDP of country – logged.	World Bank
C3	DISTANCE	Distance to conference in thousands of km.	GeoDist database

The actor-event dataset implies that an organization only enters the analysis at the moment of its first entrance. The basic idea thereby is that some experience may trigger future participation and that we do not account for non-attending behavior in the past. The latter would be problematic for various reasons, one of which is that the organization might simply not have existed. However, exit is a materialized risk, which means that it needs to be tied to an experience of entrance. Therefore, we presume that the occurrence of exit should be measured immediately after an instance of attendance. For instance, in 1995 an organization attended the COP in Japan, but the organization does not show up at the next conference one or two years later (in 1996 in Argentina or 1997 in Germany). This implies that non-events that take place later cannot be considered as instances of exit. The non-participation in 2013, for instance, cannot be seen as equivalent to not showing up in 1996, which is immediately after the first risk took place. Therefore we estimate only immediate exit and compare that to the number of times (in a row) that an organization attended COPs before that exit. Furthermore, consecutive conference participation and exit are considered as repeatable. In other words, organizations may participate for a certain period (minimally 1 conference), followed by an interruption and subsequently participate again. Each of these ‘participations in a row’ are defined as episodes, i.e. a continuous period during which the organizations are at risk of experiencing exit²⁹. The number of episodes in our dataset ranges from a minimum of 1 (each observed organization participates at least once) to a maximum of 4.

Duration, or time, accounts for the crucial variable at the side of the independent variables of the analysis. The event history analysis essentially models the duration of the

²⁹ Steele 2005.

occurrence of the exit (i.e. a failure time process). When an organization starts attending a COP a new episode begins and duration is reset to zero. The potential duration to the exit lies between minimally 1 conference (the organization refrains from attendance after one participation) to a maximum of 15 (the organization attends all conferences in a row). The analyses draw on a discrete measurement of time since the observation period concerns coarse intervals (conference occurrence).³⁰ The parametric duration modeling necessitates an accurate estimation of the discrete-time hazard, i.e. the conditional probability that an organization will experience an exit in the observation period (given that it did not experience the exit event earlier in that episode). The models therefore include a piecewise linear time transformation of time.³¹ Nodes are implemented by the use the statistical software package STATA 12.1: at time point 1, 2, 4 and 10. The spline effects estimated by the models hence represent the effect time gauges on the exit event between two consecutive nodes. Spline 2 (the estimated time effect between 2 and 4) represents the reference category. These spline functions hence present unobserved variables generating event occurrence. Put differently, the model thus attempts to provide a suitable representation of the hazard based on the observed relationship between time and the exit event.

Subsequently, other independent variables of interest are examined to verify whether the hazard function (i.e. the spline functions) relatively differs across groups. In other words, the models investigate whether the relationship between duration and exit event proportionally (i.e. variable effects are here assumed to be constant over time) diverge by the categories of the predictors.³² The first three hypotheses assess the importance of *organizational factors* for entry and exit rates. To test hypothesis 1 we include the level at which an organization retrieves its resources from (MOBILIZATION). Each organization was coded as being a subnational, national, regional or a transnational actor depending on the level at which the supportive constituency (members, sponsors, donors...) of an organization is located. For hypothesis 2, regarding the organizational form, we make a distinction between five groups (GROUP TYPE): business associations, specialized business organizations, NGOs, research organizations, and labor unions. To make a distinction between both types of business organizations, we coded these groups according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) with 1 or 2 digits were coded as encompassing business associations, whereas organizations representing, the more specific 3

³⁰ Singer et al. 2003.

³¹ Suits et al. 1978.

³² Singer et al. 2005.

or 4 digit level were coded as specialized business organizations. For hypothesis 3 we use staff size as a measure for organizational resources (RESOURCES). Staff size was retrieved from the website. As this was not available for all organizations we analyse this factor on a smaller subset of the entire database (i.e. 2,667 organizations).

The second group of hypotheses relates to the *IO-context*, in this case the climate conferences, in which the interest groups operate. For hypothesis 4 we developed a measure of the size of each sector related interest community at the COP at the moment an organized interest attended the conference (DENSITY). We constructed this variable by summing the amount of interest groups active at a certain conferences which represent a similar economic or social issue. Due to its skewed distribution we log-transformed this variable. For hypothesis 5, salience, we created a count variable measuring the number of newspaper articles that dedicated to a specific conference (SALIENCE). More specifically, we use the number of times the COP in question was mentioned in the Financial Times six months up to the conference. Again, due to a skewed distribution, we log-transformed this variable.

The third set of factors relate to the *domestic context* in which organizations operate. First, for hypothesis 6, level of democracy, we rely on the Polity Index one year prior to the COP which ranges from -10 to 10 whereby a high score refers to a full-democracy and a low score to an authoritarian regime (DEMOCRACY).³³ Because the distribution of this variable is highly skewed (70 percent of the organizations score a 10 on the Polity index) we recoded the variable in three categories: full democratic (Polity score 9 and 10), medium democratic (Polity score 6-9), and limited or non-democratic (Polity score 5 or lower). For hypothesis 7 we rely on a measure for the wealth in a country in terms of the GDP per capita in a country in the year prior to a conference (WEALTH). The data is retrieved from the World Bank database.

Finally, our models contain three *control* variables. First, we include a measure for how the policy portfolio of an organization aligns with the agenda of the COP (ALIGNMENT). For this, we compare fields that have a direct link to COP meetings with fields that are less directly connected to the COPs.³⁴ For instance, environment has a direct link with COPs, whereas human rights NGOs are more distantly aligned with the COP agenda. Second, we include a measure of the size of a country in terms of its GDP (SIZE). Third, based on the GeoDist database we include a control for the distance of conferences to the country

³³ See <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.

³⁴ Aligned: Economic, ISIC B-F (mining and production sectors); Societal sectors, environment. Non-aligned: Economic, ISIC A (agriculture) and H-U (services); Other societal sectors.

organizations stem from (DISTANCE).³⁵ It is likely that conferences that are held closer to an organizations standing place will be attended more easily.

Multivariate analysis

Multilevel discrete-time event history models are used to model the impact of different covariates on the exit of consecutive conference attendance. The models draw on the logit link function to accurately assess the effects on the dependent variable (exit).³⁶ Moreover, we consider different episodes of conference participation jointly (cfr. supra). To correct for shared frailty, episodes (level 1) are hence nested within organizations (level 2). This approach deals with the potential correlation between the duration of episodes from the same organization. It is likely that unobserved characteristics affect the organization’s exit risk in all episodes and thus bias the estimations for the explanatory variables effects. The models thus include a random-intercept at the organization level to assess different episodes statistically independent.³⁷ Subsequently, the multilevel structure nests organizations (level 2) in countries (level 3) to allow for country effects.

Figure 1 – Survivor function (N=6,655)

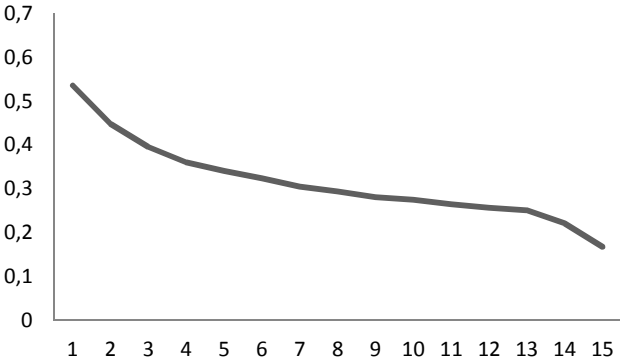


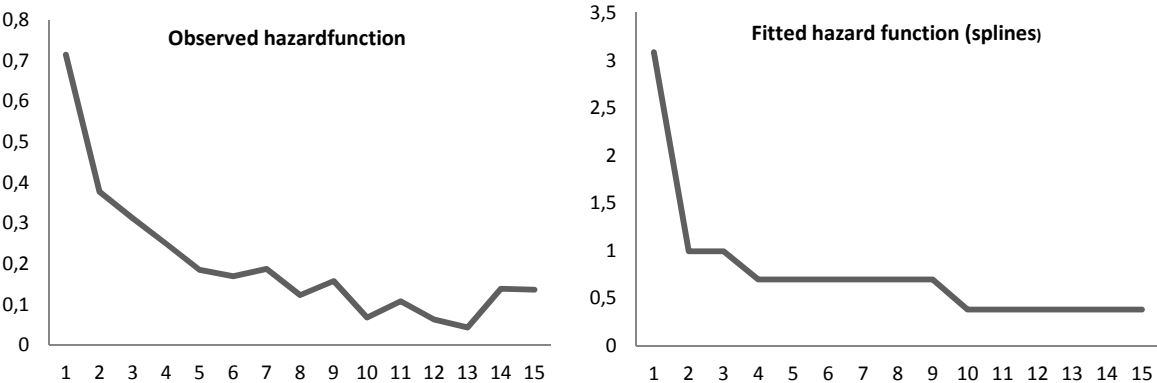
Figure 1 provides the (overall) survivor function for all organizations. This figure hence presents the probability that a random individual organization does not experience the exit event in a respective time interval or any earlier time intervals.³⁸ What is clear is that the system is quite volatile. That is, almost half of the organizations drop out after one attended conference. Moreover, exit remains high over the first, relatively short, time intervals

³⁵ Mayer and Zignago 2011.
³⁶ Allison 1982.
³⁷ Steele 2005.
³⁸ Hinde 1998.

indicating that many organizations attend the conferences for a short period of time, while only a small group is able to attend three or more conferences in row.

To provide a more accurate picture, Figure 2 provides an overview of the observed and fitted hazard function of all interest groups. The left panel presents the non-parametric hazard function. The right panel of Figure 2 is a visualization of the hazard function estimated by the model (i.e. the spline functions) not distinguished on the basis of any predictor (see also model 1, table 2). Again, the overall tendency is that the COP interest group community is quite volatile. Both the observed as well as the fitted function show a rather steep drop over the first set of spells (i.e. period that interest groups attend conference subsequently). For instance, if we look at the fitted hazard function, we see a steep drop between attendance sequences 1 and 2, after which the line slowly drops for longer sequences. This means that most interest groups have only short sequences of attendance, while a much smaller group is active a larger set of conferences.

Figure 2 – Observed and fitted hazard function



For the multivariate analysis we run 5 models. First, we analyze all organizations in one model to test the hypotheses related to level of mobilization. In the second and third model we focus only on global organizations. In model 2 we run the analysis without the resource variable. In model 3 we run the analysis with the resource variable. Finally, in model 4 and 5 we run analyses for domestic organizations only. Again we specify one model without the resource variable (model 4) and one with the resource variable (model 5). The outcomes are presented in Table 2.

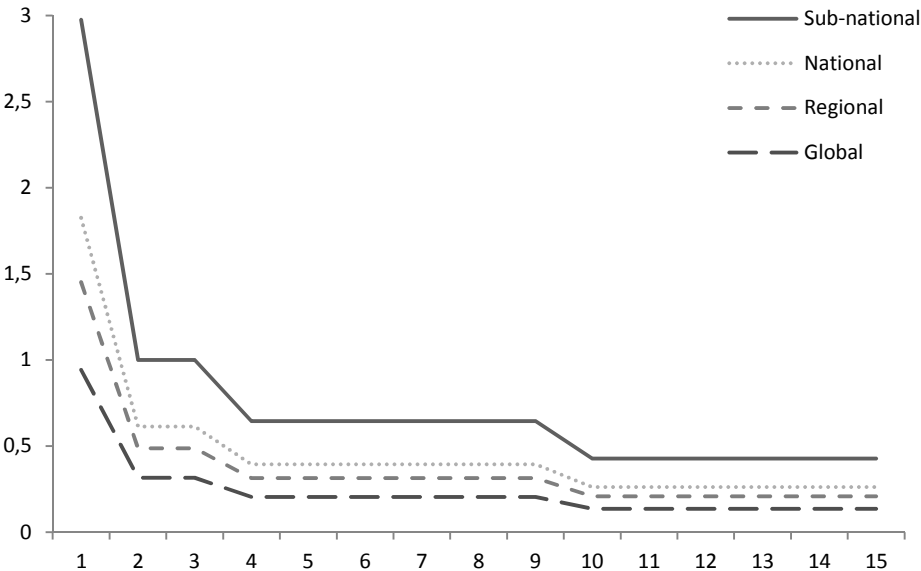
Table 2 – Effects (odds ratios) of independent variables on exit of conference attendance episode (COPS between 1997 and 2011)

	Model I (all)	Model II (only global)	Model III (only global)	Model IV (only national)	Model V (only national)
Constant	.750 (.216)	.248*** (.080)	.118*** (.078)	2.870* (1.578)	2.918 (2.910)
Hazard function					
Spline 1	2.976*** (.143)	3.023*** (.222)	2.531*** (.405)	3.519*** (.219)	3.966*** (.497)
Spline 2 (ref.)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Spline 3	.644*** (.041)	.510*** (.050)	.590** (.124)	.606*** (.055)	.634** (.114)
Spline 4	.428*** (.061)	.260*** (.052)	.299*** (.127)	.323*** (.076)	.320** (.151)
Organization-level					
Subnational (ref.)	Ref.			Ref.	Ref.
National	.613*** (.106)			.578*** (.093)	.558** (.158)
Regional	.488*** (.092)	Ref.	Ref.		
Global	.317*** (.056)	.622*** (.052)	.663*** (.106)		
Business specialized (ref.)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Business association	.407*** (.037)	.449*** (.063)	.472** (.163)	.372*** (.044)	.378*** (.133)
NGO	.613*** (.037)	.736*** (.061)	.788 (.231)	.531*** (.044)	.471** (.147)
Labor	.485*** (.170)	.645* (.158)	.770 (.415)	.398*** (.068)	.325*** (.133)
Research	.711*** (.046)	.861 (.093)	.827 (.260)	.625*** (.050)	.457** (.145)
Resources			.893*** (.038)		1.003 (.031)
Context-IO					
Density - log	.883*** (.022)	.870*** (.031)	.916 (.062)	.898*** (.064)	.927 (.053)
Salience - log	1.003** (.015)	1.068*** (.023)	1.005 (.047)	1.031 (.020)	.977 (.036)
Country-level					
Wealth - log				.864*** (.044)	.996 (.072)
Full democratic (ref.)				Ref.	Ref.
Partial democratic				1.276 (.226)	.890 (.337)
Limited/non democratic				.965 (.201)	.477* (.190)
Control					
Alignment	.922 (.054)	1.001 (.088)	.940 (.181)	.857** (.064)	.592** (.087)
Distance - log	1.240*** (.027)	1.243*** (.038)	1.343*** (.084)	1.281*** (.038)	1.155** (.062)
Population - log				.902** (.040)	.958 (.039)
Diagnostics					
Variance country	.173 (.045)	.096 (.040)	N.A.	.123 (.040)	N.A.
Variance organization	.210 (.037)	.073 (.048)	.105 (.105)	.130 (.046)	.065 (.082)
N	12,764	4,852	1,181	7,889	1,789

Note: The coefficients are estimated using multilevel regression. Significance levels: *.1 **=.05 ***=.01;

What are the main findings? First, model 1 present the results related to *level of mobilization*. The outcomes show that there is a substantial difference between globally oriented organizations and domestically oriented organizations and their propensity to stay active at COPs. First, subnational organizations are least likely to return at another conference after a first attendance, followed by national, regional and global organizations. The exit rates of each of these organizations are also portrayed in a function plot of the fitted hazards function for each type of mobilization (see figure 3). The graph shows that no matter the size of a spell (i.e. whether an organization has attended 1, 2, 3, or more consecutive conferences), exit is highest among organization that are organized at a lower level of governance. These findings lent considerable support for hypothesis 1.

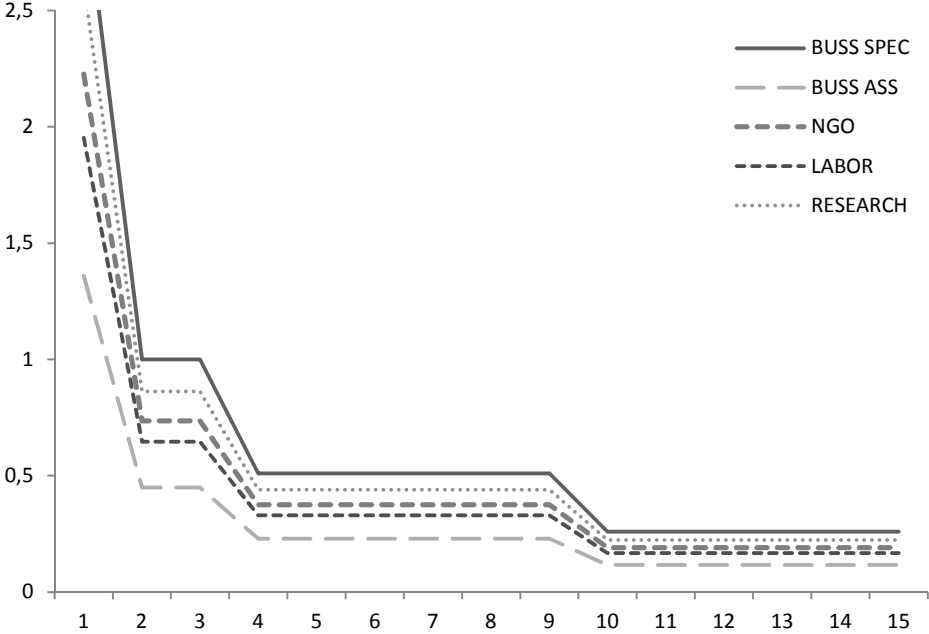
Figure 3. Fitted hazard function by level of mobilization (model 1)



Model 2 and 3 present the results related to *global* organizations only, in which model 2 provides the outcomes without the resource variable, while model 3 shows the results with the resource variable. First, there is a clear difference between types of organizations and their propensity to stay active at COPs. Specialized business organizations remain active the least often, followed by research organizations, NGOs, and labor unions, while the more encompassing business associations develop the most stable lobby pattern at climate conferences. Two things are especially noteworthy. First, there are significant differences between the two types of business organizations. Specialized business organizations are the

least likely to return after an initial appearance, while non-specialized and more encompassing business associations are the most likely to return to COPs. Second, NGOs, which are most often depicted as the type of organizations to have profited the most from the opening up of international organizations, are only third in this ranking, meaning that their attendance is significantly less stable compared to other organization types. Even labor unions, organizations that are only marginally represented at COPs (see also chapter 3), are able to develop a steadier lobby presence than NGOs. Again, we plotted the fitted hazards function (model 2) for each type of organization to see whether there is a difference between the length of spells and the ability to stay active, yet this is not the case. Irrespective of how often interest groups have attended COPs, exit rates remain similar for each type of organization.

Figure 4. Fitted hazard function by type of organization (model 2; global)

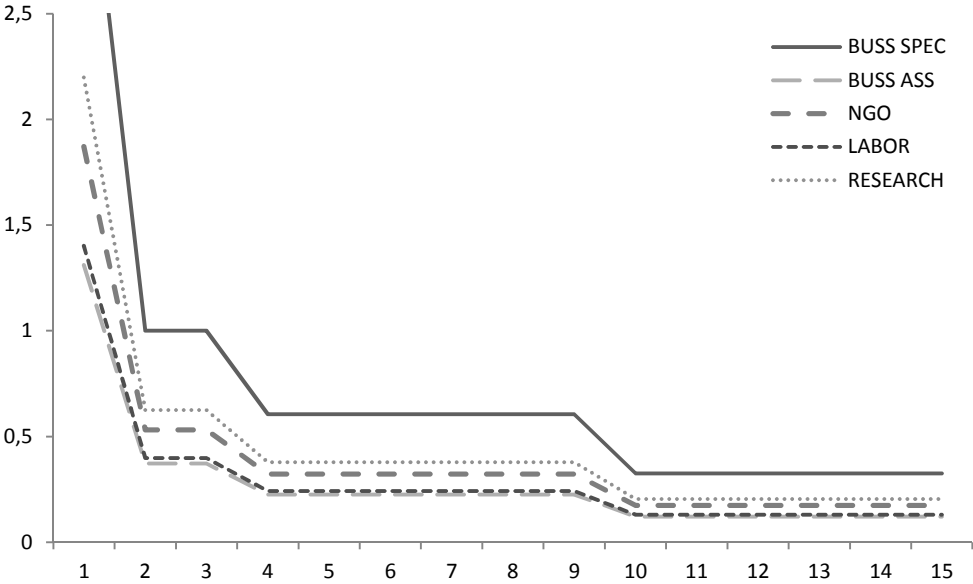


A second notable finding relates to the importance of the density of interest communities. In line with findings of organizational ecologists in other political systems³⁹, density is also an important predictor of lobby endurance of global interest groups at climate summits. More specifically, it means that when organizations mobilize at a conference where many organizations advocate on the same issue, the chance of repeating the lobbying efforts by attending the next conference decreases significantly. In contrast, organizations that mobilize at conference that harvest only a few organizations with similar interests are more

³⁹ Gray and Lowery 1996; Fisker 2013.

likely to repeat their investment and attend during the next COP meeting. Another factor that could affect lobby endurance at the conferences is salience. Our findings demonstrate that this factor also affects the propensity of global interest groups to stay active at COPs. This shows that when certain issues gain more prominent media attention global interest groups will stay active over longer periods of time. Finally, for global organizations we also tested the importance of resources (model 3). Because we were only able to retrieve the staff size of one third of the organizations, the effect of resources is only based on a sample of the entire interest group community. Although we are confident that the outcomes are representative for the entire interest community, some caution is warranted here. That is, although the odds ratios for all variables remain rather similar, some variables lose significance (i.e. density, salience, group type). The results indicate that being resourceful has a substantial and positive effect on lobby endurance of global interest groups at COPs, which confirms hypotheses 3. In other words, whether or not global interest groups are well endowed with material resources matters to develop a steady lobby presence as well.

Figure 5. Fitted hazard function by type of organization (model 4; domestic)



Going further, model 4 and 5 show the results for *domestic* organizations only. Again, due to data availability, we run a model without (model 4) and with resources (model 5). What are the main findings? First, with respect to group type we find a consistent pattern as we did for global organizations. That is, specialized business organizations stay active the

least long, followed by research organizations, NGOs, labor unions and business associations. The fact that lobby endurance shows the same pattern for domestic and global organizations showcases the importance of group type for the ability to develop a steady lobby presence. Moreover, for domestic interest groups we also plotted the fitted hazards function for each type of organization (figure 5). The results show that the ability to stay active does not vary according to the length of attendance spells. The findings related to domestic as well as global organizations lend us to confirm hypothesis 2, namely that group type is an important predictor of lobby endurance. Yet, we need to add that it matters a bit different than we anticipated; especially the fact that NGOs exit more often from COPs than business associations and labor unions was unexpected.

Moreover, similar as for global interest groups, density is also an important predictor of organizational maintenance for domestic interest groups (see model 4). It is important to stress that the density of interest communities in our analysis was measured at the level of field in which an organized interest is active. This means that domestic interest groups react to the attendance rates of interest groups from other countries or from global interest groups who are working in a similar area. This indicates that it is not only domestic politics that drives domestic interest groups, but that the extensiveness with which similar groups were presented at an earlier COP predicts the likelihood that of future attendance raters. Or, domestic groups keep an eye on the overall political mobilization when deciding on whether or not to stay or to go. All in all, our findings convincingly show that density is an important predictor for organizational maintenance, and this is so for both domestic and global interest organizations at COPs. As a result we can confirm hypothesis 4.

In contrast to global interest groups, however, salience, i.e. the level of public attention for the COP, does not affect the propensity of domestic interest groups to remain active at the UN climate summits. In other words, whether or not the policy agenda gained prominent media attention does not affect the persistence of lobbying by domestic individual interest groups. This result is somewhat in contradiction with other research outcomes in this dissertation that show that salience affected the total number of domestic interest groups that mobilize at MCs (see chapter four). Although these findings were reported at another political venue, this indicates that salience does stimulate a lot of new domestic organizations to become active at transnational conferences, yet does not stimulate repeat appearances.⁴⁰ A

⁴⁰ We need to provide a precautionary note here, namely our reliance on the Financial Times to assess the salience of COPs. While many representatives of global organizations probably read this newspaper, domestic organizations probably rely more on local news outlets for news about climate change negotiations.

possible explanation could lie in the fact that at salient conferences the interest community is also most dense. As a result, more interest groups might drop out irrespective of the salience of the subsequent conference. In other words, the causal mechanism between salience and exit rates could be: salience causes increased interest community density which causes higher exit rates. However, we need some more fine-grained analyses to explore these relations further. In short, looking at the effect of salience on both domestic and global interest groups, we can partially confirm hypothesis 5. Global organizations clearly respond to high levels of salience, whereas national seem to be less not affected by additional media attention.

For the domestic organizations we also tested the impact of specific country level factors. The reason that we included specific country level variables is because former research showed that these factors have a substantial effect on transnational interest mobilization and the ability to overcome collective action problems. The results are, however, rather mixed. On the one end, the wealth of a country affects the steadiness of lobby efforts positively and confirms the importance of the availability of resources in the direct environment for lobby endurance. Apparently, a wealthy context, whether or not this directly affects the organization, has a general positive impact on whether or not interest groups remain active. On the other end, the level of democracy in a country does not affect lobby endurance of domestic interest groups. While democracy does have a substantial impact on first mobilization of interest groups, as reported in other studies (see for instance chapter four for such a findings at the MCs), once collective action problems are solved, interest groups from less democratic countries are seemingly equally capable to stay active at COPs as interest groups from more democratic countries.

Finally, we also tested the importance of the endowment with resources for domestic organizations and the outcomes show that, in contrast to global organizations, resources do not affect lobby endurance for domestic organizations. This means that it doesn't matter whether domestic groups have few or limited staff for their ability to stay active at COPs. Again, however, we need to provide a cautionary note here because this analysis is based on a sample of the entire population. Especially because some other variables loose significance from model 4 to model 5 (i.e. density and wealth) it could be that the sample we draw from is biased. We therefore urge future research to include this variable and see whether our finding is valid. Nonetheless, given the mixed findings for domestic and global organizations in our analysis we can partially accept the resource endowment hypothesis. For global organizations it does seem to matter, whereas for domestic organizations it does not seem to matter much.

Table 3 – Summary of results

Hypotheses	Expected effect	Global	National
1 LEVEL	More global, more active	Confirmed	Confirmed
2 GROUP TYPE	More aggregate constituency, more active	Partially confirmed	Partially confirmed
3 RESOURCES	More resources, more active	Rejected	Confirmed
4 DENSITY	More dense community, <i>less</i> active	Confirmed	Confirmed
5 SALIENCY	More media attention, more active	Confirmed	Rejected
6 WEALTH	More wealthy country, more active		Confirmed
7 DEMOCRACY	More democratic country, more active		Rejected

Discussion and conclusion

Interest groups are an ever-growing and essential part of global policymaking. Despite growing mobilization, however, we have remarkably little systematic studies that focus on the ability of interest groups to stay active in transnational political processes. Instead, most studies either map all interest groups without taking notice of their political activity or focus on political activity without taking notice of the size of the interest group community. In this study we combined the strengths of both research approaches – i.e. mapping a full interest community and analyzing political activity – by modelling the propensity of individual interest groups to stay active at UN climate summits between 1997 and 2011. This helps us to assess which and why interest groups are more dominantly present in international policymaking processes.

The results show, first, that the COP interest community is highly volatile. Over 50 percent of the organizations that participate at the conferences only attended once. Yet, volatility is highest at early conferences and the COP interest system is becoming more stable over time. This observation shows that there is a growing group of interest groups that is increasingly able to develop a steady lobby presence at COPs. Regarding our hypotheses, we find a clear effect of level of mobilization, group type, the density of the interest system, and, in the case of domestic groups, the wealth of a country. More precise, global organizations develop a steadier lobby presence at COPs (compared to national organizations). While earlier findings (see chapter one and three) indicated that domestic interest groups mobilize more often at transnational conference, at the individual level this does not lead them to be more active. Quite the contrary, they are the least active at COPs. Our findings also show that business associations are most active at COPs. NGOs, on the other hand were only the third (out of five) most active organizations (in terms of showing up regularly). In addition, the density of the interest system affected who stays active and who exits from the COP interest

community. This is an interesting finding as it suggests that also the strategic interactions, and not only the emergence of interest groups, between interests groups and the political venues they address is density dependent. Finally, interest groups from wealthier countries develop a steadier lobby presence compared to interest groups from development countries. Apparently, a less demanding context in terms of resources, leads interest groups to mobilize more often at COPs. In contrast, we have only partial confirmation that the resources owned by individual organizations matter for the extent to which organization develop patterns of repeat playing. That is, resources matter in the case of global interest groups, yet have no effect on the potential to stay active for domestic interest groups. Moreover, salience affects the propensity of global interest groups to stay active at COPs, but it did not affect the lobby endurance of domestic interest groups. Finally, the level of democracy did not affect the organizational maintenance potential of domestic interest groups. This is an interesting finding because other analyses (see chapter four) indicate that the institutional setting severely limits the potential to get mobilized for the first time. Yet, it seems that when this first hurdle has been taken, additional attendances are not restricted by democratic opportunities or constraints for interest groups.

The findings have important implications for the study of transnational advocacy and international policymaking. Most importantly, we have shown that there are severe limitations to mapping studies that focus predominantly on existing organizations. That is, such studies do not analyze how initial collective action problems may feed into the ability to stay politically active. This research has clearly shown that these are two different processes. For instance, while NGOs are often depicted as to have profited most from the opening up of IOs, the analysis in this paper shows that business associations and labor unions, despite a considerable lower level of mobilization in terms of the number of active organizations, are actually better able to develop a steady lobby presence.

We acknowledge that there are still some limitations that need to be addresses in future research. First, we analyzed patterns of organizational maintenance at only one political venue, the international climate conferences, which makes that we cannot not claim that our findings are representatives for other international venues. We therefore suggest replicating this type of research for other political venues. Second, we showed the importance of the density of the interest group system for the exit and entry rates of individual interest groups. However, for the analysis in this paper, we included only one density measure. It might very well be that interest groups respond to other types of competition, for instance with other types of interest communities. The fact that NGOs are apparently ill-able to develop a steady

lobby presence at COPs might have to do with the fact that there are already so many NGOs present at the conferences, even though they often advocate on different issues. Moreover, the fact that organizations from less democratic countries are able to stay active as often as those from democratic countries could be due to the fact that number of groups from less democratic countries is rather low. Therefore, such groups face less competition and this could lead them to stay active longer. Therefore, we would expect that as the number of attendees from less democratic countries would increase, the ability to remain active should become more restricted. This leads us to urge future researchers to include a broader set of density measures to test these hypotheses. Furthermore, other country specific or organizational characteristics should also be investigated in future research. For instance, it might be important whether interest groups that oppose or defend the status quo at transnational negotiations develop a steadier lobby presence. Yet, the population perspective we adopted does not allow the coding of more than 6,000 organizations for such variables. Or, whether or not interest groups from countries that have an interest in negotiating a deal or interest groups from countries that seek to maintain the status quo are better able to stay active. These perspectives might be important because they could shed some light on why the negotiations at climate conferences are so inert. Finally, future research could address whether or not lobby persistence at global climate negotiations has indeed led to more influence on its decision-making, as it does in other political systems. The findings in this paper provide a first step in linking lobbying presence with measuring influence in global policymaking.

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