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Youth Participation and Agency in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Abstract

Youth participation in global environmental governance was formally recognised at the 1992 United Nations Conference of Environment and Development which established their position as one of nine Major Groups deemed to represent Nonstate Actors. In the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), this recognition came later, with Youth NGOs, known as 'YOUNGO' gaining constituency status in 2009. This granted youth access to additional modes of participation within the negotiation process. 2015 is a critical year as the UNFCCC reaches the deadline to establish a universal, legally binding agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris, where public participation is expected to be larger than ever. As the global youth population continues to rise and climate change impacts are projected to intensify, there is an increased focus on engaging the young generation who will experience climate change impacts most severely and will be required to adapt their lifestyles in response. In spite of this, academic research has thus far overlooked youth participants in the UNFCCC so the extent to which they are shaping, or are even supportive of, the legacy of international climate change governance which they are set to inherit is currently unknown.

This paper uses 24 interviews, a focus group and participant observation to investigate youth participation in the UNFCCC. It applies the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) Framework to analyse youth agency from the perspectives of both the young participants themselves and the decision-makers they seek to influence. It finds that youth perceptions of their own agency within the UNFCCC shape the ways in which they choose to engage in the process. Positive perceptions of the modes of participation available to them lead to constructive interactions, recognition from individual decision-makers and increased influence in process and policy. In contrast, negative perceptions of participatory processes erode young participants' faith in and support for the process and its outcomes. Findings contribute to a broader understanding of Nonstate Actor agency with implications for other TANs, for the policy fora they operate in and, ultimately, for the long-term sustainability and legitimacy of global environmental governance.

Key words: Youth; Participation; Climate Change Negotiations; Transnational Advocacy Networks

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About the Author

Harriet is currently a PhD Student in the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds. She has an MSc in Sustainability, Environment and Development from the University of Leeds and a BA in History from the University of Leicester. Prior to entering academia, Harriet spent six years managing climate change education and adaptation projects at local and international levels. This included leading delegations of young women at United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on behalf of a large global youth NGO. Her professional experience sparked a keen interest in youth participation and agency which continues to shape her research focus.

1. Introduction

Youth are the closest living relatives to the '*future generations'* which the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) seeks to protect, making up over 50 percent of the global population. It is therefore surprising that youth participants have failed to attract academic attention in the two decades since they were recognised as independent stakeholders in Agenda 21. Consequently, very little is known about how and why youth participate in the UNFCCC and about the level of agency they possess.

This paper examines the participation of youth NGOs (YOUNGO) in the UNFCCC using an agency-based theoretical lens which enables thorough investigation of their values, motivations and constraints. Guided by Keck and Sikkink's (1998, 1999) Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) Framework and recent modifications, it addresses the aforementioned research gap by shedding light upon this under-researched constituency. Findings are of relevance to other small UNFCCC constituencies and to the broader theoretical understanding of Nonstate Actor (NSA) agency in global environmental governance.

This paper takes a first step to address three main research gaps as identified in the literature:

1. How smaller, less dominant and potentially marginalised TANs gain agency, particularly youth NSAs for which there is no empirical evidence.
2. *Whether* and *which* additional modes of participation, designed to create 'more room' for different TANs to operate within the same policy spaces, actually equate to more agency for smaller constituencies.
3. The *ways* that TANs try to use different modes of participation to increase their agency in international negotiations and the implications of their success or failure for the process and for the NSAs themselves.

1.1 Youth Participation in the UNFCCC

Youth have shown an interest in the UNFCCC from the outset (UNFCCC, 2010). Initially they held external conferences where they prepared and presented declarations to the Conferences of the Parties (COPs). As young people began attending negotiations and gaining understanding of the process, they were granted constituency status as YOUNGO in 2009.

YOUNGO membership is open to all, though based on a loose understanding that constituents are under thirty years old. Institutionalisation is soft (Bulkeley et al., 2014), based around common interest with no membership fees and no commitment required to secure membership. Under-eighteens are only permitted to attend once a year, on *'Young and Future Generations Day'* during each COP, though several under-eighteens participate in online discussions and external events. YOUNGO consists of over 2000 individuals, belonging to over forty accredited organisations, based in twenty countries (UNFCCC, 2014a).

Member organisations range from small, voluntary groups such as the UK and Australian Youth Climate Coalitions to student groups including US-based Earth in Brackets and Japanese Doshisha University. The majority of these organisations have fewer than 50 members, though the coalition also includes large international youth organisations such as the World Organization of the Scouting Movement. A handful of government delegations, including the Netherlands and Belgium, have established formal youth delegate programs whose participants often choose to work with YOUNGO.

YOUNGO annually elects two individuals as Focal Points through an online voting system. Focal Points are responsible for liaison with the Secretariat but are unpaid and have no leadership mandate. Equitable representation is a normative concern within the TAN, with regional balance ensured through election of a Global North and a Global South Focal Point. The majority of YOUNGOs are volunteers, investing their own time and money to engage in the UNFCCC. Turnover is high as YOUNGOs move on in pursuit of careers with those who remain engaged in the UNFCCC process usually recruited by other constituencies, national delegations or the Secretariat. Unless they secure employment or sponsorship, most are unable to maintain long-term engagement due to the expense of international travel. Therefore, in spite of a desire to be more representative, most YOUNGOs come from fairly wealthy, Global North backgrounds.

YOUNGOs have established approximately twelve working groups to advocate on policies such as adaptation and UNFCCC Article 6; the latter focusing on climate change education, training, public participation, public access to information and public awareness.[1] Working Groups are not all active every year and depend largely on individuals to maintain activity at UNFCCC sessions and online. YOUNGO also has groups focusing on press releases and demonstrations. These 'insiders' and 'outsiders' come together at daily coordination sessions during negotiations and communicate throughout the year via social media and Google groups. They share resources and collaborate in an attempt to make best use of the participatory opportunities which constituency status provides (YOUNGO, 2014). To ensure that one constituency does not dominate over another, each is given equal opportunity from the Secretariat in the form of additional modes of participation which this paper will identify and analyse.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Nonstate Actors and Global Governance

The number and diversity of NSAs involved in global governance is growing and their role at all levels is becoming stronger and increasingly broad (Andonova et al., 2009; Bulkeley et al., 2012). Global governance can occur without NSAs, though several multilateral processes have elected to include them, creating new modes of participation to support NSA involvement (Andonova et al., 2009). This is attributable to changing perceptions of legitimacy, as belief in absolute state sovereignty has fallen out of fashion (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). It has also been viewed as a power-shift from State Actors (SAs) to NSAs,

[1] In June 2015, this policy was re-branded by the Secretariat as Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) though it remains the 6th Article of the Convention.

though studies highlight that SAs remain dominant, especially in international negotiations (Albin, 1999; Gulbrandsen & Andresen, 2004). As their attendance numbers increase, scholars have deemed it pertinent to investigate how NSAs operate in international negotiations and what influence they may possess (Betsill & Corell, 2008; Gulbrandsen & Andresen, 2004).

The extent to which power has been transferred is difficult to measure and remains a grey area in the literature. SAs still hold the mandate for intergovernmental policy-making, though research has found that agency can be shared and transferred in multi-level governance (Albin, 1999; Dellas et al., 2011). This paper will therefore refer to NSA *agency* rather than to *power.* Recent studies suggest that actors gain agency when they receive recognition for governance roles they can play (Dellas et al., 2011; Nasiritousi et al., 2014). This accommodates the notion that *agency* is transient and dynamic: it can be gained, lost and shared (Bulkeley et al., 2014; Dellas et al., 2011; Nasiritousi et al., 2014).

2.2 Transnational Advocacy Networks.

NSAs possess varying levels of capacity and skill (Boström & Tamm-Hallström, 2010). To increase their agency, diverse organisations form coalitions or networks based on shared beliefs and values. These networks were studied by Keck & Sikkink (1998; 1999) and labelled *Transnational Advocacy Networks* (TANs) in recognition that they work across international borders, call for policy changes based on core principles and refer to themselves as networks, a term which Keck & Sikkink (1998) felt adequately describes the dynamic nature by which NSAs shape and are shaped by their participation in these groups. TANs lack the authority to directly shape policy and must therefore frame their information and perspectives to appeal to policy-makers. Advocacy strategies take distinct forms as identified in Keck & Sikkink's (1999 p.95) four part typology:

(a) information politics, or the ability to move politically usable information quickly and credibly to where it will have the most impact;

(b) *symbolic politics,* or the ability to call upon symbols, actions or stories that make sense of a situation or claim for an audience that is frequently far away;

(c) *leverage politics*, or the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence; and

(d) *accountability politics,* or the effort to oblige more powerful actors to act on vaguer policies or principles they formally endorsed.

2.3 Modifications to the TAN Framework

Nasiritousi et al. (2014) combined the TAN typology with learning from a more recent agency-focused study of environmental standard setting (*Boström & Tamm Hallström*, 2010). They claim that, rather than seeing the TAN typology as strategies, the four elements should be seen as '*Power Sources'* from which NSAs can increase their agency. They therefore modify Keck and Sikkink's 1999 typology by replacing *'Politics'* with *'Power,'* and adding two additional *'Power Sources'* to the existing four, as shown in Table 1. This paper tests the Nasiritousi et al. (2014) modifications and proposes two additional changes: separation of *'Symbolic Power'* into '*Moral'* and *'Representative'* power and addition of another '*Power Source'*, identified as *'Disruptive Power'* also presented in Table 1.

Table 1 '*Power Source'* Modifications to the TAN Framework			
Keck & Sikkink typology	**Nasiritousi et al. modification**	**Author's modification**	**Explanation for Modification**
Information politics	*Cognitive Power*	Follows Nasiritousi et al. (2014)	Based on the assertion that information held by the TAN must be relevant and that they must have sufficient understanding of the policy process to know when and where to present it.
Symbolic politics	*Symbolic Power*	***Moral Power***	Nasiritousi et al. (2014) further define this as the ability to make legitimacy claims based on morality and representation. This paper proposes that representing a large amount of people is not necessarily the same as claiming the moral high-ground separating *'Symbolic Power'* into '*Moral Power'* and *'Representative Power.'*
		Representative Power	
Leverage politics	*Leverage Power*	Follows Nasiritousi et al. (2014)	Substitutes '*politics'* with 'P*ower.*'
Accountability politics	*Accountability Power*		
	Social Power	Follows Nasiritousi et al. (2014)	Having access to networks and the ability to be heard within them (Nasiritousi et al., 2014).
	Material Power	Follows Nasiritousi et al. (2014)	Having financial and material resources to support advocacy efforts (Nasiritousi et al., 2014).
		Disruptive Power	This paper identifies an additional *Power Source:* use of disobedience to indicate dissatisfaction with and cause disruption to the process. Success is dependent upon having sufficient human and material resources to be noticed.
Based on Keck & Sikkink (1999, p.95) and Nasiritousi et al., (2014, p.5)			

Nasiritousi et al. (2014) claim that NSAs use these '*Power Sources'* to gain recognition for certain activities which make up their '*Governance Profiles*.' Recognition has been deemed important in previous studies, such as Dellas et al., (2011, p. 93) who claimed that, for agency: *"the importance of recognition cannot be overstated."* However, research has yet to assess which modes of participation can lead to recognition from decision-makers and whether some *'Power Sources'* are stronger than others in helping NSAs to attain it, which this paper seeks to address, using YOUNGO as a case study.

2.4 Global Climate Change Governance

Case Study research on NSAs in the UNFCCC predominantly focuses on the Environmental NGO (ENGO) and Business NGO (BINGO) constituencies (Betsill, 2002; Gulbrandsen & Andresen, 2004; Vormedal, 2008) and therefore runs the risk of overstating NSA influence. For example, Gulbrandsen and Andresen (2004, p.54) state that *"most scholars agree that [E]NGOs do make a difference in global environmental politics."* However, suggesting that this finding is applicable to all NSAs is potentially misleading as the ENGO and BINGO constituencies are larger, more established, better resourced and potentially suffer less from collective action problems (Hanegraff, 2015) than other constituencies. Recent studies of the Indigenous People's Constituency (Betzold, 2013; Schroeder, 2010) have begun to address the research gap concerning smaller, newer constituencies. They highlight that indigenous people are calling for additional modes of participation, such as interventions in the REDD+ negotiations (Schroeder, 2010). Previous studies have highlighted that NSAs use both insider and outsider strategies (Rodrigues, 2004) though little is known about *which* modes of participation NSAs favour and why, and the relationship between these modes and NSA agency.

Quantitative research from Nasiritousi et al., (2014) compliments these case studies. In a survey at COP 17 and 18, they asked over 500 SAs and NSAs to select the constituency which they felt was most significant to nine identified governance activities, such as influencing decisions and policy makers, raising awareness and representing marginalised voices.[2] A limitation of their approach is that survey respondents were only permitted to select one constituency per activity, whereas previous research emphasises that agency can be shared in multi-actor processes (Albin, 1999; Dellas et al., 2011). Additionally, even Nasiritousi et al., (2014), who stress that more attention needs to be directed towards the smaller UNFCCC constituencies, have entirely neglected YOUNGO in their research.

3. Methodology

Data collection consisted of twenty-three semi-structured interviews, a focus group with sixteen participants, and participant observation during the 40th Intersessional of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB40). NSA participation in Intersessionals is smaller and less diverse than at COPs so data collection at a COP would have been preferable, though all interviewees attend both COPs and Intersessionals and referred naturally to both, distinguishing between the two when they felt it necessary. As a participant at COP18, COP19 and SB38, the researcher was also able to draw upon personal experience to recognise any differences. Following Arts (1998), the *Ego and Alter* perceptions method was used to compare YOUNGO's self-perception (ego) with how negotiators and Intergovernmental Organisations perceive them (alter), to assess whether consent is attained from those which YOUNGOs seek to influence. The ego perceptions sample was limited in geographical diversity due to lack of Global South participants at SB40.

[2] Adapted from Albin's (1999) Typology.

Alter perceptions were collected from fourteen negotiators: seven from the Global South and seven from the Global North. This included representatives of the majority of UNFCCC negotiating blocks: the group of Least Developed Countries; the African Group; the Alliance of Small Island States; the G77; the European Union; the Umbrella Group and the Environmental Integrity Group and thus provides a balanced overview of negotiator perceptions. The majority had substantial experience and responsibility, several had been participating for over five years, and a few for over ten, and two were Heads of Delegation.

In recognition that negotiators working on Article 6 may have differing views to their colleagues on matters of public participation, interviews were sought with both Article 6 and non-Article 6 negotiators. YOUNGO have had an active working group on Article 6 since 2009 so it is appropriate policy to consider when analysing YOUNGO agency. Negotiators were asked upfront which policies they worked on and interviews only continued with those working on issues which YOUNGOs have attempted to influence (including Adaptation, Technology Transfer and Forests). Article 6 and non-Article 6 interviewees were selected from the same delegations or negotiating blocks for direct comparison, to determine whether issue context influences alter perceptions of YOUNGO agency. Of the fourteen negotiators interviewed, six worked on Article 6 and eight did not, with equal Global North and South representation. Interviews were also conducted with three experienced key informants from an intergovernmental organisation, all of whom work on Article 6. Interview classifications were allocated as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Classification of Interviewees			
Actor Type	**Representation**	**Policy Focus**	**Code**
Negotiator	Global North	Article 6	A1
Negotiator	Global North	Article 6	A2
Negotiator	Global North	Article 6	A3
Negotiator	Global South	Article 6	A4
Negotiator	Global South	Article 6	A5
Negotiator	Global South	Article 6	A6
Negotiator	Global South	Non-Article 6	B1
Negotiator	Global South	Non-Article 6	B2
Negotiator	Global South	Non-Article 6	B3
Negotiator	Global South	Non-Article 6	B4
Negotiator	Global North	Non-Article 6	B5
Negotiator	Global North	Non-Article 6	B6
Negotiator	Global North	Non-Article 6	B7
Negotiator	Global North	Non-Article 6	B8
Intergovernmental	Global North	Article 6	C1
Intergovernmental	Global North	Article 6	C2
Intergovernmental	Global North	Article 6	C3
YOUNGO	Global North	Article 6	D1
YOUNGO	Global North	Article 6	D2
YOUNGO	Global North	Article 6	D3
YOUNGO	Global South	Non-Article 6	E1
YOUNGO	Global North	Non-Article 6	E2
YOUNGO	Global North	Non-Article 6	E3

In order to collect ego perceptions, six members of YOUNGO were interviewed. This sample was limited to individuals who had attended at least two previous UNFCCC negotiations to ensure sufficient experience. A focus group was also held with sixteen YOUNGOs, enabling assessment of group dynamics whilst YOUNGOs of mixed experience discussed their participation and agency. Ego perceptions were also gained through observation of four YOUNGO meetings, providing insight into how the constituency operates in private and several UNFCCC sessions were observed where YOUNGOs were attempting to influence the discussions. Plenary statements, observer briefings and NSA demonstrations were also observed to permit further triangulation of interview data with conference proceedings. The author's previous participation in UNFCCC COPs and Intersessionals and engagement with YOUNGO since 2012 facilitated deeper understanding of the constituency. Nvivo software was used to allow for easy management, coding and analysis of a rich and fairly large data set.

4. Results

This paper has thus far established the need for closer analysis of youth participation in the UNFCCC and identified the gaps in the literature on NSA participation and agency where investigation of a new group of NSA participants (youth) could contribute to broader understanding. It has also extended the typology of '*Power Sources'* which Transnational Advocacy Networks use to increase their agency. It will now identify the modes of participation which are utilised by YOUNGO as a TAN in the UNFCCC and analyse, from youth and negotiator perspectives, the ways in which youth use these modes of participation to harness their *'Power Sources'* and increase their agency.

Based on the author's engagement in the UNFCCC since 2012, the following modes of participation which are available to NSAs in the UNFCCC have been identified: Access, Plenary Interventions, High-Level Meetings, Actions, Side Events and Exhibits. These are used below as an analytical blueprint to differentiate between the different activities which NSAs engage in.[3]

[3] Plenary Interventions, High-Level Meetings and Actions are only available to NSAs through registration with an official constituency.

4.1 Ego Perceptions

Access

Accreditation provides access to UNFCCC conferences but does not guarantee agency. YOUNGO working groups increase their collective capacity through material, social, leverage and representative power.[4] At SB40, YOUNGOs most active, policy-focused working group was following Article 6 which they perceive to be particularly open to youth input:

"A6 is a good place for youth influence, youth can really help" (Interview D2).

They see Article 6 negotiators as allies:

"People who work on Article 6 are all friends. They all want the same thing." (Interview D1).

Positive perceptions of their agency encourage newer members to join the Article 6 working group:

"I've been following Article 6 as that is something we can act on" (Focus Group Participant) and more experienced members see it as a good starting point:

"My understanding the depth of the process came from Article 6. It was a good policy to start on as it is easier than the others, there is less conflict. It is a really good school." (Interview D1).

YOUNGOs feel that references to youth and increased participatory opportunities included in the 2012 'Doha Work Programme on Article 6' were a direct result of their lobbying at previous conferences, where they had gained access to and given interventions in negotiation rooms which are usually closed to NSAs.[5] At SB40, YOUNGOs also attended the Article 6 Dialogues where they had been invited to deliver a presentation on an international, youth-led, awareness-raising initiative and to participate in discussions with Parties.[6] These Dialogues are summarised in a report to be considered by Parties when the Work Programme is reviewed in June 2016, representing an extra layer of youth participation which is not common to all UNFCCC policies.

[4] Participant Observations; Focus Group; Interviews: C1; D2
[5] Interviews D1; D2; D3.
[6] Participant Observations; Interview D1.

Plenary Interventions

YOUNGO interventions typically try to use cognitive power, creating powerful narratives using climate science or local knowledge.[7] They often call for increased ambition, such as limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, trying to utilise moral power by referring to human rights, inequitable suffering and the threat to their own futures and to future generations.[8] At SB38, one YOUNGO plenary intervention stated:

"*The IPCC report highlights that climate change is already happening and is exacerbating existing inequalities, with already vulnerable youth being particularly affected. As youth we have the most at stake, therefore we feel we should have a voice on any policies and programs that impact our future".*

YOUNGO also try to harness representative power to increase their agency by highlighting that this youth generation is the largest the world has ever known and, as their so called representatives, YOUNGO should be involved in decision-making.[9]

High-Level Meetings

The Secretariat facilitates meetings between YOUNGO and key individuals such as the UN Special Advisor on Youth and the UNFCCC Executive Secretary. This gives YOUNGO an intimate space where influential individuals can brief YOUNGO and YOUNGO can share their perspectives.[10] Preparation for these meetings is managed online to permit non-attendees to contribute, which YOUNGOs emphasise to increase their representative power. Some see these meetings as a way to develop leverage power by gaining key allies.[11] Others see it as a way to use moral power to put pressure on high-level decision-makers by emphasising their dissatisfaction. [12]

[7] Interviews D1; E1; E3; YOUNGO 2014.
[8] Participant Observations; YOUNGO, 2014.
[9] Participant Observations; Interviews: E1; E2.
[10] Interviews C1; D3; E3; Participant Observations.
[11] Interviews D2; D3.
[12] Participant Observations; Interview E1; E2.

Actions

YOUNGOs perform demonstrations known as 'actions' in the negotiation corridors, designed to attract negotiator and media attention.[13] Actions require material power for resources or props, though YOUNGOs strive for high impact on a low budget[14]. At SB40, YOUNGO tried to use accountability power, drawing attention to ministers who were missing from the high-level summit:

"Here we are, busy planning our over-land journeys to the international conference, mentally preparing for long, overnight bus rides and hastily attempting to learn as many UN acronyms as we can. And yet we will not be granted a meeting with our Secretary of State for Climate and Energy…as he's not even bothering to turn up. Which is strange, really, because this international conference is specifically designed for ministers like him". (UKYCC, 2014).

They also tried to utilise cognitive power, presenting policy positions in a novel format, linked to popular culture such as the Game of Thrones TV series. Actions are captured on camera and shared through social media networks, utilising YOUNGO's social power.

During SB40, YOUNGO supported an ENGO-led action symbolising a return to the negotiations following a 'walk-out' from the previous conference, COP 19, in Warsaw in 2013 involving approximately 800 NSAs.[15] This was an attempt to exercise disruptive and moral power, based on concerns that sponsorship from high-carbon industries (including aviation) was affecting ambition and on the belief that if NSA's were seen to leave, the COP would lose some of its legitimacy. Their departure was not permanent, labelled: *'Volveremos'* which loosely translates from Spanish as *'we will return stronger.'* NSAs returned at SB40, holding the logos of many NGOs worldwide to try to maximise their representative power. In reality, the number of NGOs and their diversity was much smaller due to lack of capacity, particularly for Global South NSAs to attend Intersessionals and impact was minimal.

Side Events and Exhibits

YOUNGOs can also host side-events and exhibits. Whilst they do not directly feed into negotiations, they often share policy-relevant information and enable participants to increase

[13] Focus Group; Interviews: D2; E1; E2; E3.
[14] Interview E3, Participant Observations.
[15] Participant Observation; Interviews E1; E2; Focus Group.

their social and cognitive power through networking and narrative building. This gives NSAs potential to influence other attendees and to gain media attention.[16] Side-events rely upon the TAN having sufficient social power to attract attendees, whilst exhibits require material power to have resources to display, and financial means to transport them to the conference. Only one YOUNGO side-event and one exhibit were held at SB40, both by the United Nations of Youth Network. They promoted Nigerian tree-planting and formal education on forest management and shared publications on similar initiatives (UNFCCC, 2014b). In previous years, YOUNGO have made more use of these participatory opportunities, promoting youth-led mitigation and adaptation projects and campaigns such as fossil fuel divestment. [17]

Findings reveal that YOUNGO utilises all available modes of participation to try to harness all *'Power Sources.'* However, ego perceptions also identify real and perceived barriers which affect their ability to do this effectively. YOUNGO suffers from internal barriers including lack of capacity and perceptions of inefficacy and external barriers including current rules of procedure and the impact of other constituencies. These barriers will now be identified using YOUNGO's ego perspectives.

Barriers to Youth Participation and Agency.

Access

Conference access is gained through accreditation, though this does not guarantee access to every negotiation. Some sessions are closed due to space limitations, with Parties given priority access. In these instances, two secondary passes are granted per constituency per session. Secondary passes may be taken away if not utilised and pass holders are required to sign to confirm their attendance. Observers are not permitted to speak and YOUNGOs do not prioritise this opportunity, seeing it as less exciting than other activities. [18] One interviewee reported being the last to be seated when attending a session with a secondary pass, perceiving that she had been: *"treated like a second class citizen".*[19] There is a danger that if YOUNGO fail to use these passes due to lack of capacity or interest they may lose their access, which could limit their cognitive power by diminishing their understanding of the negotiations.

[16] Participant Observation; Interviews D2; E3.
[17] Focus Group; Interview E3.
[18] Focus Group.
[19] Interview E1

Plenary Interventions

Civil society interventions usually take place at the end of plenary after all Parties have spoken. This is a perceived as a barrier, as one Focus Group Participant expressed:

"Interventions show our interest but Parties don't listen. The format isn't interactive, they don't even listen to each other's and ours are at the end when everyone has left."

As a result, only a third of Focus Group participants had contributed to YOUNGO interventions. Additionally, if sessions run over time, which is common,[20] then NSA interventions may be cancelled (YOUNGO, 2014).

High-Level Meetings

During High-Level meetings at SB40, YOUNGO were only permitted to ask three questions which had to be submitted to the Secretariat for advance approval, [21] potentially limiting YOUNGO's freedom to make use of this opportunity in the way they deemed best (though no submitted questions were rejected). Internal friction also affected YOUNGO's agency as there was much debate over which questions to submit. This differed from other modes of participation in that there was significant virtual participation from non-attendees. [22] . This was predominantly more radical youth who wanted to question the Executive Secretary's allegiance following her attendance at a recent coal summit. Tensions between radical and moderate groups led to some more moderate, newer attendees deciding not to attend and to the submission of weaker questions which all could agree on, paralleling the negotiations themselves. [23] There is a danger that internal fractures will decrease the agency of individuals who choose non-participation over conflict, through lost time spent on internal debate and missed opportunities to gain high-level allies to increase YOUNGOs leverage power.

Actions

Actions must be requested twenty four hours in advance, must avoid personal attacks and should not name individual countries or use their flags (UNFCCC, 1996). Infringement of

[20] Participant Observation
[21] Interview D3; YOUNGO 2014,
[22] YOUNGO, 2014; Interview E3.
[23] Participant Observation; YOUNGO, 2014; Interview D1.

these rules can lead to loss of accreditation[24]. Many actions are framed positively, but negativity breeds when YOUNGOs perceive that they cannot affect the process in another way.[25] Actions were discussed in the Focus Group where participants highlighted several concerns:

"I would prefer not to do that type of thing; I would rather talk to people directly."

"I don't think they help at all but what else can we do?"

Focus Group participants discussed this, unprompted by the researcher, concluding that as negotiators would not listen to them as a result of their youth they resorted to actions to gain media attention to apply external pressure. However, less than one third had ever attempted to speak directly to a negotiator.

Another perception was that YOUNGO's agency was limited by negative influence from BINGO, the business constituency. [26] This provoked some to try to harness disruptive power by engaging in *"civil disobedience"* (Interview E1). Those who perceive their agency to be weak see their participation as a battle against decision-makers.[27] This leads to actions such as the aforementioned walk-out which attempt to disrupt the negotiations:

"We needed to do something drastic. There is a system problem. This is a flawed process." (Interview E1).

"One of the reasons why civil society and youth walked out was because of massive corporate lobbying. We need to collaborate but we can't collaborate with other actors who are on a path to destroy our future." (Participant Observation).

Many YOUNGOs dedicated a substantial amount of time attending preparation meetings and creating paper windmills to hand out during the walk-out. [28] However, their input to content was limited:

[24] Interviews E2.
[25] Interview E1; Focus Group.
[26] Interviews E1, E2; Participant Observation; Focus Group
[27] Interview E1; E2.
[28] Interview E1, Focus Group.

"I don't know who organised it. Presumably some of the big ENGOs, I don't know if youth had any input to the messaging or method, all we were asked was how it could be catchy." (Interview E1).

During the action, ENGOs were shouting slogans which YOUNGOs were repeating, though several slogans were not in English so the researcher (and likely some YOUNGOs) could not be sure of the meaning. [29] YOUNGOs also expressed reservations about this action:

"I was hesitant about the walk-in. I thought it might not be fair [as] here there are fewer Global South so it is less representative" (Interview E1).

One YOUNGO raised concerns that this action involved photographs with certain ministers saying:

"It seems like we are supporting them and they have an awful human rights record." (Participant Observation).

This suggests that if YOUNGOs turn to 'outsider' strategies and attempt to wield disruptive power due to perceived lack of agency, it can actually reduce their agency if larger constituencies dominate and draw upon YOUNGOs resources without incorporating their views.

Side Events and Exhibits

The primary reason for lack of YOUNGO side-events and exhibits at SB40 was low capacity. YOUNGO attendees were few in number and most were new to the process, focusing on learning rather than on sharing information. [30] During the opening plenary, the Executive Secretary announced that a fee of $1000 per side-event and exhibit was to be introduced as cost-recovery for the Secretariat which was struggling to manage applications which have quadrupled over recent years.[31] YOUNGO and Indigenous People's Organisations were to be exempt: *"to safeguard their representation"* though YOUNGO were keen to support others, particularly ENGO with whom they identify with most closely, to overturn this decision. [32] Following an outcry from NSAs supported by several Parties[33] the decision was overturned

[29] Participant Observation.
[30] Focus Group; Participant Observations.
[31] Participant Observation.
[32] Participant Observation.
[33] Participant Observation,

(UNFCCC, 2014c). However, YOUNGO spent much time discussing this, giving them less time to pursue their own agenda.

4.2 Alter Perceptions

Alter perceptions were also collected, permitting further consideration of YOUNGO agency from the perspectives of those they seek to influence. Interview data have been triangulated with participant observations to compare negotiator testimonies with their behaviour. Due to access restrictions it was only possible to observe Article 6 negotiators in official sessions. For Non-Article 6 negotiators, attitude towards the researcher as a young person has been considered for triangulation, in lieu of observation of their behaviour in official sessions which were closed to NSAs (and therefore to the researcher). These are presented in relation to each mode of participation, for easy comparison with ego perceptions in the previous section.

Access

All negotiators and IGOs interviewed were aware that youth participate and have constituency status. They invariably stated that this was important, though their reasoning differed. Several said that youth participation was crucial for the legitimacy of the process[34] and some stated importance for the future of the negotiations. [35] However, as a young researcher, this may have been influenced by positionality, as this sentiment was expressed in personal terms:

"It is good for you to be here, I will die and you will take over" (Interview B7).

"It is your future not ours" (Interview B4).

In spite of enthusiastic agreement that youth are important, several negotiators did not acknowledge that youth may bring unique insights to the process[36] a sentiment perfectly encapsulated in this interaction:

Researcher: *Have you noticed any youth participants here?*

[34] Interviews A1; A3; B7
[35] Interviews: A3; A4; B4.
[36] Interviews B4; B5; B7,

Negotiator: *"Not really but it is worth them coming. I saw youth make a comment in plenary but I couldn't listen."* (Interview B7).

Some referred to a need to reach a global climate agreement for, but not with young people[37] expressing well-meaning sentiments which failed to acknowledge that youth could play an active role:

"I have children; I know we need to do more" (Interview B6).

However, over half of the negotiators interviewed valued youth participation more highly, noting their ability to bring fresh ideas to the process. [38]

"An innovative youth movement with always have an impact, we expect new ideas from them" (Interview A3).

"A lot of negotiators have been doing this for 20 years. They aren't adding anything new" (Interview A4).

Official youth representatives were particularly valued:

"Youth from my country cover issues to increase our capacity. They participate actively all day. Youth have more patience; they stay longer, take good notes, they coordinate things really quickly." (Interview A4).

This was more common amongst Global South negotiators, though finding funding for official youth delegates was a common problem. [39]

Positive alter perceptions were more commonly expressed by those working on Article 6, complimenting ego perceptions that they are more open to youth input. Most Non-Article 6 negotiators had never had a conversation with a member of YOUNGO (B1; B3; B5; B6; B7). The value of direct contact was succinctly expressed by one:

"Researcher: *Have you been influenced by youth in this process?"*

[37] Interviews: B4; B6; B7
[38] Interviews A1; A2; A3; A4; A5; B1; B2; C1.
[39] Interviews: A4; A5; B1; B2.

"Negotiator: *No but they have never tried to talk to me."* (Interview B3).

In contrast, those working on Article 6 had met YOUNGOs at SB40 and previous conferences. They offered examples of YOUNGO influence:

"Having heard the youth statements and seen connections in the text I think it is safe to assume that youth influence on Article 6 was adopted by the COP" (Interview C1).

"In an area where I didn't have a firm view, a good suggestion from YOUNGO about the Doha Work Programme influenced my position and we have that now" (Interview A1).

"In some issues we see more references to and from YOUNGO in the text, especially on Article 6. Article 6 is still alive partly because of YOUNGO" (Interview A2).

Article 6 negotiators and YOUNGOs have developed relationships over time, leading to greater respect for, and interest in youth input:

"[Name removed] is a good lobbyist. He came to see us with clear suggestions 2 or 3 years in a row. The points he made today [listed each point] were very helpful, we will take them on board." (Interview A3).

"Youth can really have an influence, like today in the Dialogue. Some of their messages were very focused, like the one about involving psychologists to create behavioural change." (Interview A5).

These findings indicate that certain YOUNGO strategies are more likely to lead to recognition. This was explored further with the researcher asking negotiators and IGOs to make one recommendation for the improvement of youth participation. These showed remarkable similarity and can be summarised into four points:

1. Give clear, constructive policy suggestions[40]

2. Focus on certain policies rather than trying to cover everything[41]

3. Make direct contact and build relationships[42]

[40] Interviews: A3; A4; A5; B1; B2; B3; B7.
[41] Interviews: A1; C1; C2; C3.

4. Increase diverse representation of attendees[43]

One negotiator indicated that these suggestions may be based on experience of other TANs:

"Have working groups on certain issues. Prioritize. Take a targeted approach. Develop relationships, really focus…this is what BINGOs do" (Interview A1).

This supports the finding that there is a relationship between issue-context, behaviour and agency, which in the case of Article 6 has extended agency to influence. This will be further explored after additional modes of governance are considered from the alter perspectives.

High-Level Meetings

As decision-makers who participated in high-level meetings were too few in number, the author has decided not to include the collected data, as doing so would jeopardise the anonymity of the participants.

Plenary Interventions

Only two negotiators had heard YOUNGO interventions at SB40[44] .One was chairing the meeting and so had to stay until the end[45] the other had made special effort:

"They only got two minutes. Most delegates just left. I sat and listened and heard them talk about adaptation, mitigation, participation and gender" (Interview A4).

Several said they found past interventions too negative: [46]

"Sometimes youth can be too aggressive, they should push the limits creatively, not just say you need to think about the future. Sometimes we find that arrogant. We have children too; of course we care about the future." (Interview B8)

"When I see youth taking biased positions I think they don't understand well enough. They should stay away from blaming." (Interview B7)

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[42] Interviews A1; B6; B8.
[43] Interviews: A2; A5; B5.
[44] Interviews: A4; B2.
[45] Participant Observation.
[46] Interviews: A2; B7; B8

An IGO interviewee (C1) commented that interventions are shared with Parties, so those not present still receive the information. However, even the more sympathetic negotiators said it was uncommon for Parties to discuss civil society interventions. [47]

Actions

Most interviewees had noticed YOUNGO actions during SB40 and at previous conferences but were unable to recall the content.[48] This was also the case for *'Volveremos'* which largely went unnoticed/unheeded:

Researcher: *"Did you see the action this morning?"*

Negotiator *"Yes, what was it about? I just walked through; I don't have time to look at their faces"*

(Interview B7).

Researcher: *"Did you see the action this morning?"*

IGO: *"No, what was it about?"*

Researcher: *"The walk-out from Warsaw"*

IGO: *"Oh yeah, they came back the next day when they realized no-one noticed. I don't know their reason for leaving."*

Researcher: "They came back today"

IGO: *"Haven't they been here anyway?"*

(Interview C3).

This indicates that attempts to wield *Disruptive Power*, although popular with the YOUNGO and ENGO constituencies, can easily be overlooked by negotiators and success of this strategy is dependent upon having sufficient human resources to cause a disruption.

[47] Interviews: A4; A5.
[48] Interviews: A3; A6; B2; B4; B5; B6; B7.

In contrast, an Article 6 negotiator from the Global South highlighted that actions help him to understand aspects of negotiations which he does not follow personally. He stated that under limited capacity, actions help by drawing attention to important issues, recalling all of the messages from a YOUNGO action and stating:

"When you see a message it prompts more thoughts. I will share these thoughts with my delegation. The messages from youth help us, we treasure them" (Interview A5).

The Head of Delegation from the same country later voiced the same sentiment, confirming that the Article 6 negotiator had indeed shared YOUNGOs messages. [49] This suggests that actions can be perceived as constructive as well as disruptive and when NSAs gain recognition from one decision-maker, with effective use of cognitive power they may indirectly influence others.

Side Events and Exhibits

No research participants had attended YOUNGO's side-event at SB40. Only five negotiators and the three IGO representatives had ever attended a YOUNGO side-event. [50] Some claimed they were willing but lacked the time[51] others just did not see it as a priority.[52]

5. Analysis

These findings suggest that issue-context (the policies which YOUNGOs choose to focus on), affects strategies chosen and behaviour exhibited. When YOUNGOs perceive to have little agency they favour outsider strategies and disruptive power but these can lead to further disenfranchisement for youth, exacerbating negative perceptions. This contrasts with the ego perceptions of the Article 6 Working Group where issue-context contributes to positive perceptions, constructive strategies and collaborative behaviours.

It could be that individuals who elect or are selected to work on the policy on public participation are predisposed to be more open to youth suggestions. However, as alter perceptions emphasise use of cognitive and social power rather than moral or representative power, it seems it is their behaviour rather than their youth which has led to recognition and then to influence. There were two anomalies to this hypothesis: Interviewee A6, did not value youth

[49] Interview B1.
[50] Interviews: A1; A2; A3; A4; A5; C1; C2; C3.
[51] Interviews: B2; B6
[52] Interviews: B4; B7.

participation, nor recognise their contribution. On further investigation it was discovered that whilst she had been negotiating on the Kyoto Protocol (the subject of many YOUNGO actions and interventions) for three years, she had only been assigned to Article 6 for SB40. The other anomaly was Interviewee B8. She spoke positively of youth participation and was aware of many YOUNGO advocacy messages. She negotiated on mitigation and stated that youth had never spoken to her directly about this. However, during post-interview discussion it transpired that she had previously worked on Article 6 for a couple of years. This further corroborates the evidence that issue-context plays a role and that through engagement with YOUNGOs working on Article 6, alter perceptions have improved, increasing recognition from decision-makers directly involved.

Ego and alter perceptions highlight that having access to UNFCCC conferences enables young NSAs to use cognitive power in conversation with negotiators to increase their agency. This increases their social power through the development of relationships with key actors who then become allies, helping to create further participatory opportunities for the whole constituency. By cooperating as a TAN, youth have gained recognition from the Secretariat in the form of constituency status. This is not enough. To transition from actors to agents, YOUNGOs must also gain recognition from the individual decision-makers they seek to influence. Negotiators suffer from time pressure and capacity constraints, forcing them to prioritise what and who to pay attention to. If they don't recognise youth as a valuable contributor they will not attend youth side-events, listen to their plenary statements, or visit their exhibitions. If YOUNGOs engage only in outsider strategies they may decrease their agency through negative impact on alter perceptions. This can cause YOUNGOs to lose faith, presenting a risk to the sustainability of climate change governance if the future generation of decision-makers does not support the UNFCCC process and policy outcomes. On the reverse, findings show that those who have had positive contact with individual YOUNGOs are more likely to pay attention to the efforts of the wider constituency, thus increasing the agency of the TAN. This agency extends to different policies and across different levels of climate change governance:

"Youth could influence capacity-building if given the opportunity. They are much more creative and in touch…they can use technology…youth are much better placed than us to raise awareness." (Interview A5).

"Other colleagues don't see the value of working with youth but if there was more youth participation they would benefit from it. I am applying for funding to bring more, I would bring all youth if I could!" (Interview A5).

6. Discussion

6.1 Empirical Contributions to the Literature

This section considers the extent to which this case-study aligns with previous research and the contributions it makes to the broader research agenda on NSA agency in global environmental governance.

Firstly, based on ego and alter perceptions, this case-study supports the assertion that agency can be gained, lost and shared between SAs and NSAs (Dellas et al., 2011; Schroeder, 2010). Youth have formed a TAN to increase their agency. Similar to other TANs, it brings together large transnationals with small voluntary organisations, uniting radical and moderate 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Rodrigues, 2004). As found in previous research, this increases their numbers and capacity, though it can be seen as a marriage of convenience which creates friction and threatens fragmentation, diminishing their agency (Avant et al., 2010). As found in other areas of transnational climate change governance (Bulkeley et al., 2014) Global South representation is limited and Global North actors dominate.

Secondly, multiple TANs can be seen to operate in the UNFCCC. Findings support Albin (1999) in the assessment that, even with equal participatory rights, powerful groups can dominate, as seen in YOUNGO's relationship with ENGO. Although collaboration is important, YOUNGO should remain mindful of their own objectives and preferred strategies. Where multiple TANs operate in the same policy fora, there is potential that collaboration with more powerful groups (perceived as a way to increase their agency) can lead to weaker TANs becoming dominated, diminishing their agency even within the modes of participation which have been specifically designed to prevent this from happening.

6.2 Broader Theoretical Contributions

This paper makes four further theoretical contributions to the understanding of agency and recognition, based on comparison of ego and alter perceptions:

Firstly, findings support Nasiritousi et al. (2014) in their proposal that NSAs are empowered when they receive recognition for certain activities. This case study supports their modification to the TAN framework, finding that YOUNGOs try to use all *'Power Sources'* in different situations depending upon available expertise and resources. The additional modification proposed by this paper to separate 'moral' and 'representative' power has been empirically tested and found to be helpful. YOUNGOs regularly invoke moral claims and refer to the large youth generation which they claim to represent. The two may be used simultaneously but are not interchangeable. Moral claims tend to be more emotionally driven, often framed around prevention of human suffering such as reference to forced migration from small island states as a result of sea-level-rise. In contrast whereas representative claims are more numerical and based on population statistics such as claims that, as under 30's make up over half of the world's population, YOUNGO should play a greater role in the negotiations. The addition of 'Disruptive Power', also proposed in this paper, has been found to be highly applicable to YOUNGO and may be of use in future studies of the UNFCCC and NSAs in other policy fora.

Secondly, the modes of participation which the UNFCCC Secretariat facilitates to increase NSA agency are ultimately unhelpful unless recognition has already been secured. Without recognition, decision-makers, struggling with time and resource constraints, are unlikely to pay attention to NSA modes of participation as they do not see the value in doing so.

Thirdly, failed attempts to transition from actors to agents (often following sole use of indirect modes of participation) can lead to negative advocacy strategies and rejection of decision-making processes, creating a downward spiral for NSA agency due to the negative impact it has on ego and alter perceptions.

Fourthly, cognitive and social power, expressed constructively through direct conversation with decision-makers are the most likely to lead to recognition. This creates an upward spiral for NSA agency as they gain recognition, giving them allies which increases their leverage power and

unlocks their potential to use additional modes of participation to effectively channel their other *'Power Sources'.*

7. Conclusion

This paper begins to address the three research gaps as identified in the introduction. It sheds light upon a previously un-researched TAN and provides insight into the agency of smaller constituencies. It identifies the five main modes of participation available to YOUNGO in the UNFCCC, offering an analytical blueprint which could be used in the study of other constituencies. It tests and develops the *'Power Source'* modification (Nasiritousi et al., 2014) to consider the ways in which YOUNGO try to use these modes of participation to try to increase their agency and finds that their success or failure depends upon recognition from each individual they seek to influence. As global environmental change looms large, decision-making processes are becoming increasingly complex, attracting growing numbers of diverse NSAs. As new modes of participation are being developed to create space for new voices it is a pertinent moment to assess whether these modes are successful and under what circumstances. The answers to these questions have significant implications for environmental decision-making processes which increasingly depend upon diverse public participation to support their legitimacy and implementation. Further research should assess the extent to which these findings are applicable to other policy fora, with specific focus on small constituencies and particularly on youth.

As a parting thought it seems pertinent to note that this paper has found several examples of meaningful youth participation in UNFCCC negotiations. Youth are highly capable and can offer unique knowledge and insight which can lead to stronger policy outcomes with positive engagement benefitting both the youth participants and the governments who engage with them. As one interviewee expressed:

"As the youth population is growing worldwide, those Parties who involve youth upfront will have a head start." [53]

[53] Interview C1

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