Transnational Climate Change Governance and the Global South

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Abstract

Alongside intergovernmental climate change negotiations, a groundswell of climate actions by cities, regions, businesses, investors, and civil society groups has emerged. These transnational actors seek to address mitigation and adaptation to climate change; independently, with each other and with governments and international organizations. Many have welcomed transnational climate initiatives as a crucial addition to the formal climate regime, contributing to a growing momentum to act on climate change. However, critics have raised concerns about whether transnational actors are genuinely interested in mitigation and adaptation, or whether they are they are representing business-as-usual as clean and green. Moreover, are transnational climate initiatives appropriately targeted to address needs of both developed and developing countries; do they exacerbate imbalances in global climate governance between the global North and South? This paper explores the multifaceted relation between developing countries and transnational climate governance. It discusses developing country engagement on the basis of their political support for transnational initiatives, their leadership of, and participation in transnational climate initiatives, and the implementation and performance of such initiatives from the perspective of the global South.

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1. Introduction

On the road to the Paris Agreement, the world has witnessed a surge in the number of transnational climate initiatives, which has helped to build pressure on governments to agree on an ambitious political outcome, and shape a new climate diplomacy and politics (Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015, Jacobs 2016, Chan, Bauer et al. fc. 2016). In recent discussions on transnational[2] climate initiatives, scholars and international organizations have emphasized the potential of this groundswell of action to close the global climate change mitigation gap, which remains even if all governments would deliver on their promises (Blok, Höhne et al. 2012, UNEP 2013; UNFCCC 2016). Several studies on the mitigation potential of transnational climate initiaitves confirm that transnational actors could help close the global mitigation gap (Höhne, Dixson-Declève et al. 2014, Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015, Roelfsema, Harmsen et al. 2015).

Within the UNFCCC process, transnational climate initiatives have increasingly been recognized. The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) negotiation process leading up to the Paris Agreement included a Workstream 2 on enhancing action before 2020, which emphasized the need for climate actions by governments, international organizations, civil society and business. Since 2014, Workstream 2 featured a 'technical examination process' (TEP) consisting of in-session thematic 'technical expert meetings' that feature "specific policies, practices and actions representing best practices and with the the potential to be scalable and replicable". These expert meetings have provided a rare interface between state and non-state actors in the UNFCCC process to facilitate an exchange of experiences and solutions (Chan, Bauer et al. fc. 2016).

The most notable international recognition of transnational climate action, however, was witnessed outside of the UNFCCC process. The UN Secretary General's 2014 UN Climate Summit was a culmination point for transnational climate action: while leaders from government, business and investors, civil society launched their climate commitments, an unprecedented 300,000 people took the streets in New York and in other cities around the world calling for global action against climate change.

Successive presidents of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, the governments of Peru and France, and the UNFCCC secretariat subsequently joined efforts by the Office of the General Secretary of the United Naions, to form the 'Lima-Paris Action Agenda' (LPAA). The LPAA continued to develop a platform providing a broad overview of transnational climate initiatives, the 'Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action' (NAZCA), and to moblize new transnational climate initiatives on the road to Paris. At COP21, the LPAA presented over 70 initiatives (Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a). In Paris, the role of transnational climate initiatives, especially in relation to pre-2020

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[2] Our understanding of 'transnational' includes a variety of stakeholders, including business, civil society, cities and regions. We prefer transnational to the widely used term 'non-state', which has also been used to denote the same multiplicity of actors. Cities and regions are governmental actors; therefore designating them non-state seems inaccurate. Arguably, by assuming a role in global politics beyond their traditional localized jurisdictions, cities and regions act as transnational rather than sub-national actors. The UNFCCC refers to 'non-Party' stakeholders, a broad designation to every actor that is not a national government party to the convention. We regard transnational a more suitable term, because governments may act as transnational actors, in particular alongside other types of actors in hybrid arrangements. Moreover, under the UNFCCC, Taiwan and the Holy See are non-Parties, even though they are *de facto* governmental authorities. We acknowledge that distinctions between state and non-state, national and sub-national, and transnational are subject to interpretation, and some actors (e.g. state-owned enterprises) remain difficult to classify.

action was further confirmed. UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.21 extends the TEP, providing a separate process to examine of adaptation policies, practies and and actions. Furthermore, the COP ensured greater institutional continuity to mobilize and strengthen transnational climate initiatives by providing for the appointment of high-level champions with overlapping terms (Chan, Bauer et al. fc. 2016). Arguably more consequential is the fact that the Paris Agreement puts in place a new climate architecture that is more likely to interact positively with transnational climate initiatives on the national level.

The post-Paris climate governance architecture is characterized by a bottom-up approach, based on nationally setermined contributions (NDCs). A bottom-up architecture recasts the relation with transnational climate governance. Where transnational climate initiatives could previously be seen as a means to shift responsibilities to private actors, now such initiatives can provide an opportunity to 'share the burden' at the national level, contribute to the implementation of a Party's NDC, and create room for to ratchet up national commitments in successive rounds of NDC reviews.

Notwithstanding growing international political recognition, improved visibility (for instance through the NAZCA portal), and good prospects to relate the groundswell of transnational climate initiatives to the post-Paris bottom-up governance architecture, the relation between transnational climate governance and developing countries is not well understood (cf. Chan and Hale 2015). This paper explores the multifaceted relation between developing countries and transnational climate governance at multiple levels.

While we refer to developing and developed countries, we do not subscribe to a binominal distinction as an accurate social or economic understanding. A close examination of existing studies and samples, however, allow us to reveal patterns of participation, geographic imbalances, performance and also a finer grained understanding between types of developing countries as implementation contexts for transnational climate initiatives.[3]

To do so, we focus our analysis on different aspects of the relationship between transnational climate governance and the global South (Figure 1). First, we seek to better understand developing country engagement on the basis of their political stances: what have been the concerns of developing countries about closer transnational engagement, and to which extent has there been support for transnational initiatives? Second, we examine samples of transnational climate initiatives to examine patterns of participation. In particular, we examine to which extent developing countries are involved in the initiation or leadership of transnational initiatives, and to which extent participants from the global South are engaged in these initiatives. Third, we analyse the extent to which transnational climate initiatives are implemented in developing countries. Lastly, we offer some thoughts on the extent to which transnational climate initiatives bring about results in the developing countries.

By doing so, we offer some preliminary insights into the legitimacy of transnational climate change governance from the perspective of the global South. Specifically, we offer an indication of the *input* legitimacy of transnational climate governance by highlighting the level of participation (including leadership) of actors from the global South. We also offer a rough indication of the *output* legitimacy of transnational climate governance, by examining to which extent such initiatives are implemented in, and perform for, the global South (cf. Gupta and Biermann 2011). However, it should be added that these indications are by no means perfect – legitimacy depends on a range of other factors, such as accountability and transparency (see Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma 2009; Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and

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[3] The distinction between the global North and South, income categories, and level of development is controversial; not in the least because of the fact that the group of 'non-OECD' countries has grown far apart in the last decade (Fantom and Serajuddin 2016). The World Bank is phasing out the use of 'developing world' in its 2016 World Development Indicators (Khokhar and Serajuddin 2015). However, the classification of high/middle/low income countries continues to be used.

McGee 2013). Moreover, as this analysis is carried out by looking at samples of transnational initiatives in aggregate, no conclusions can be drawn about the legitimacy of individual initiatives.
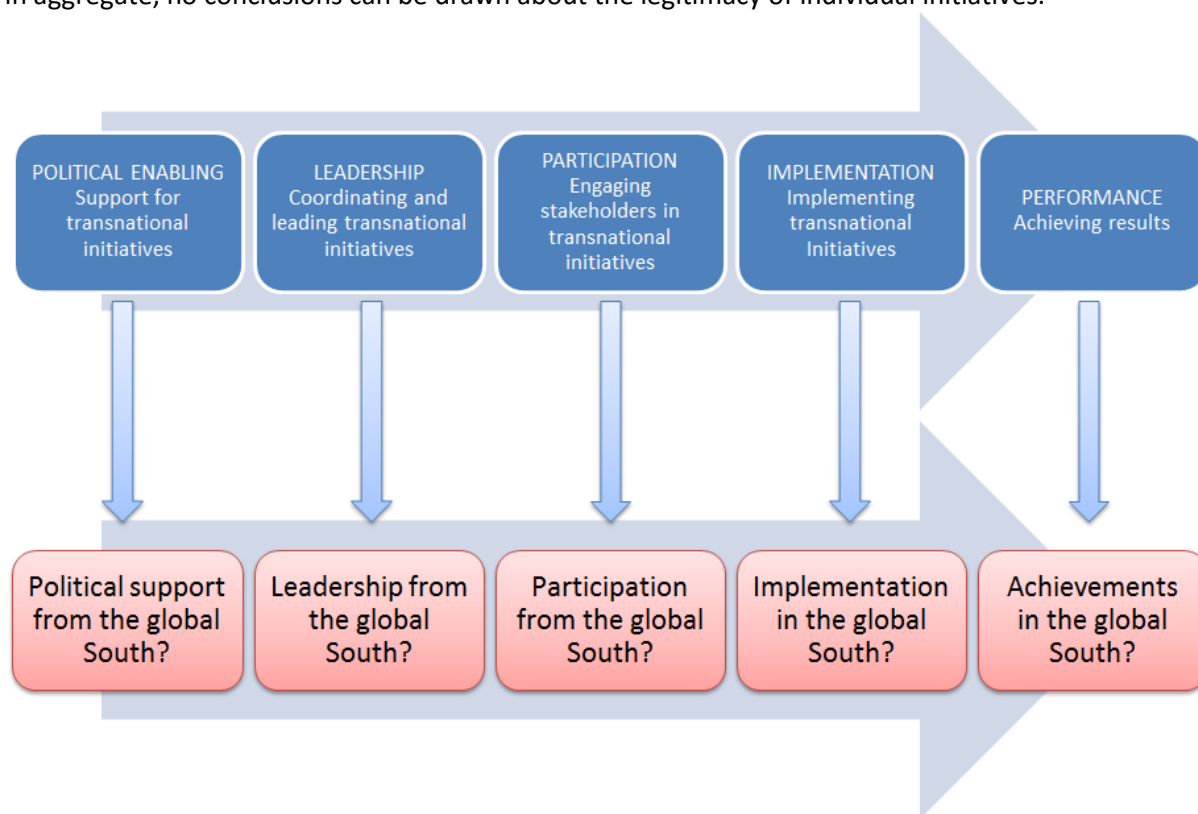
Figure 1. Analytical framework for the relationship between transnational climate governance and the global South

Given the relatively novel developments of institutional linkages between the international climate regime and transnational climate initiatives, our study is limited by a lack of data, for instance on the performance (i.e. effectiveness) of transnational initiatives. In particular, the implications of the COP21 decision and the Paris Agreement are still unclear. Taking into account these constraints, we draw on existing research on samples of transnational climate initiatives.

The paper proceeds to discuss the level of political support on transnational engagement in Section 2. Section 3 discusses in the possible implications of the emergence of transnational climate governance for developing countries, focusing on leadership, participation, implementation and performance. Section 4 discusses evidence from current studies and participatory performance patterns, and geographic imbalances. The concluding Section 5 discusses implications of transnational climate governance for developing countries; point out imbalances between developed and developing countries; and outline opportunities for developing countries in transnational climate governance.

2. Political stances on transnational engagement

The emergence of transnational climate initiatives has been broadly welcomed by Parties to the UNFCCC and observer organizations. (Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015b). At the same time, they have also raised a number of concerns. This section discusses the extent to which transnational climate action has found support in formal submissions, drawing on a review of formal submissions by developing country Parties and groups of Parties to the UNFCCC's Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform on Enhanced Action (2012-2015).

This review shows that there has been broad support for transnational climate initiatives, particularly as a means to bridge the emissions gap (see above). The most vocal supporters from the group of

developing countries have been the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Association of Independent Latin American Countries (AILAC). A proposal made by AOSIS, supported by AILAC, formed the basis for the high-level meeting that ultimately found its way into the Paris Agreement (AOSIS 2014; see also AILAC 2014). Support has also been voiced with respect to specific issue areas of interest to countries in the global South, such as the role of the private sector in providing climate finance and technologies (EIG 2013) and transnational initiatives related to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) (Bangladesh et al. 2013).

However, many submissions from developing countries in relation to 'international cooperative initiatives' usually added an important caveat in their statements acknowledging or supporting such initiatives: such initiatives have to be in line with the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC (see e.g. BASIC 2014). This caveat points to various arguments. First, as argued by, for instance, the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC 2013), transnational climate initiatives should not lead to any new or additional commitments on their part. Second, some Parties argue that such initiatives cannot detract from the obligations of developed countries (e.g. African Group 2013a; India 2013) or countries in general (LDC Group 2012). A third concern, voiced by China, is related to sovereignty. This concern is primarily aimed at transnational governance that involves subnational authorities. For China, "[a]ctions by cities, subnational authorities and sectors in developing country Parties are part of their nationally appropriate mitigation actions" (China 2014). In other words, China argues that even though cities and other subnational authorities may participate in transnational initiatives, any such actions need to be seen as part of China's efforts. Finally, concerns have been raised with respect to the accounting for transnational initiatives, and particularly whether credit can be given for actions outside a Party's territory (South Africa 2014).

To address some of these concerns, some Parties proposed further clarification regarding the actions taken by transnational initiatives. For instance, the African Group (2013b) proposed that Parties should provide information on how such initiatives apply UNFCCC principles; what kind of mitigation and adaptation benefits are delivered; what barriers are encountered, and how to overcome them; and the extent to which finance, technology and capacity-building support is provided.

By 2015, with negotiations on the Paris Agreement shifting into full gear, Party submissions hardly addressed the role of transnational climate action, and by mid-2015 a variety of negotiating groups, including the Group of 77 and China, offered support for a recognition of the efforts of transnational initiatives, as well as their further encouragement (UNFCCC 2015).

In short, developing country Parties in the negotiations in the run-up to Paris were cautiously positive about the role of transnational climate governance, but also raised a number of important concerns about their relationship to the UNFCCC. Notwithstanding such concerns, by the time of COP21 the 'landing zone' for transnational climate action – which was broadly supportive and encouraging, as discussed above – was also embraced by developing country Parties.

3. Transnational climate governance and the global South: current evidence

In this section we investigate different types of geographic imbalances in current studies on transnational climate and sustainability governance. We focus on larger comparative studies, which can render a better, empirically founded understanding of geographic patterns of leadership and coordination; participation; implementation; and performance. However, the comparability between studies is limited for several reasons:

- *Different processes and issue areas:*
  - o Researchers have focused samples related to specific political processes, such as the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012); the 2014 UN Climate Summit (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015, Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015); and

the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a). Others have focused on specific transnational initiatives in certain issue areas, such as health (Buse 2004), cities (Bansard, Pattberg et al. 2016), energy (Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011). Other scholars have sampled sets of transnational climate initiatives that are not related to certain political processes, nor specific issue areas within climate change (e.g. Hoffmann 2011, Bulkeley, Andonova et al. 2014).

- *Different types of initiatives:*
  - o Some researchers have focused on collaborative transnational arrangements, such as partnerships (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012), whereas others have focused on commitments, pledges and promises by transnational actors (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015, Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015); yet others have described individual actions (CDP and The Climate Group 2015).
- *Different sample sizes:*
  - o While we review studies that compare larger sets of transnationational initiatives, there is a very wide range in terms of sample sizes. Some studies describe in greater detail smaller sample sizes (e.g. Bansard et al. 2016 include 13 transnational municipal networks), while Hsu et al. (2016) describe aggregate characteristics of 7069 individual commitments by transnational actors registered in the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA).
- *Different types of geographic imbalances addressed:*
  - o While many studies describe geographic imbalances, imbalances can be found across many dimensions. For instance, several studies refer to imbalances in the leadership, coordination, or initiation of transnational initiatives (Buse 2004; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a); others focus on participating actors in transnational initiatives (Bulkeley, Andonova et al. 2014, Cheng, Hsu et al. 2015)); some investigated where transnational initiatives are implemented (Pattberg 2012; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a; Chan, Falkner et al. fc. 2016); yet others consider the performance of transnational governance initiatives across different geographies (Chan 2009; Chan 2012; Compagnon 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016).
- *Different measures and categories:*
  - o Different categories, units and measurements are used acrossed different studies. While many studies indicate differences between regions and country groups; some refer to individual countries (Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a), continents and world regions (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012), or countries by income group (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016). When estimating performance or effectiveness, a popular measure has been based on output measurement (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015), but alternative performance estimates across geographies are also found. For instance, Eichhorn and Chan (fc. 2016) consider whether initiatives have been awarded.

Although these considerations limit the comparability and aggregate estimates of geographic imbalances across multiple dimensions (e.g. participation, leadership and performance), we consistently found references to differences between developed and developing countries; and often also differences between different groups of developing countries, for instance between emerging economies and least developed economies. Moreover, current studies address one or more of the following questions:

- Who leads or coordinates transnational initiatives?
- Who participates in transnational initiatives?
- Where do transnational initiatives implement?

- How do transnational initiatives perform?

The following meta-analysis of current large-n studies of transnational initiatives, includes samples of climate initiatives (often related to international processes, in particular climate negotiations, and samples underlying comparative analyses). However, climate initiatives are not limited to mitigation efforts, and often climate initiatives are also sustainability initiatives and vice versa. Large samples of sustainable development initiatives, such as 'partnerships for sustainable development' address multiple aspects of climate change, for instance resilience, or renewable energy and energy efficiency. Therefore we have cast our net wider, including studies on sustainability initiatives, when their samples include a sizable amounts of climate initiatives.

3.1 Who leads or coordinates transnational initiatives?

Leadership indicates which types of actors are empowered in coordinating positions, or initiate of initiatives. Playing a role in the initiation of climate actions presumes a better position to define the aims, operations and terms of a transnational initiative; indicating a re relatively powerful voice and influence compared to other participants in transnational initiatives.

The most often used indicators for leadership are the location of secretariats and coordinating partners (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a); the location of individually committing actors (Hsu, Cheng et al. 2016); the types and location of actors in governing boards (cf. Buse 2004), and the centrality of actors in transnational networks (Widerberg and Pattberg 2015, Bansard, Pattberg et al. 2016).

Given the many types of indicators and categories used across different studies, the following figure is for visual representation only, giving a rough overview of estimates of the balance between the global North and South in terms of leadership.
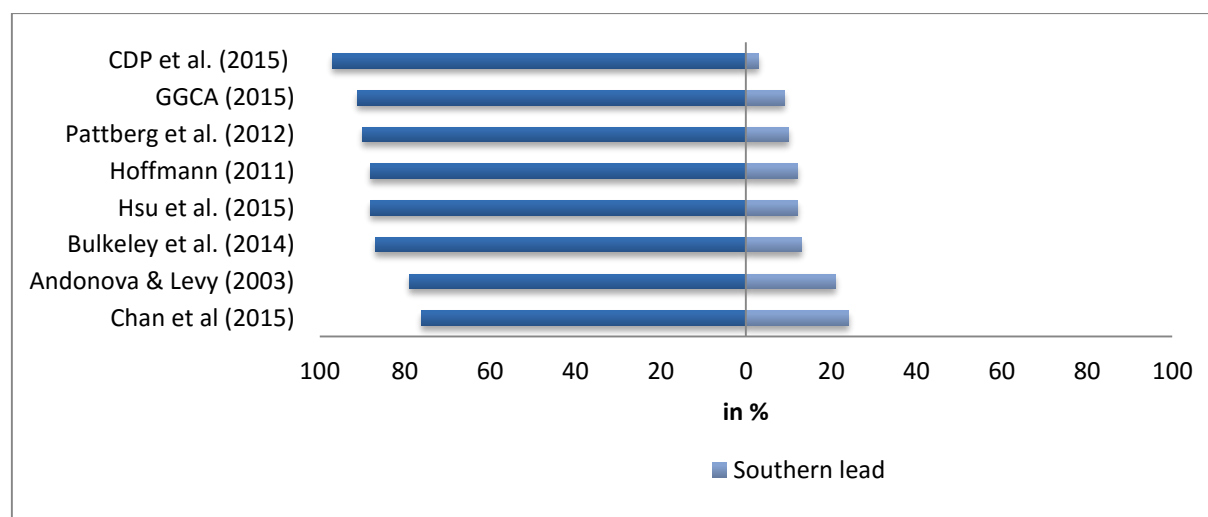
Figure 2. Leadership patterns in transnational climate governance

Notwithstanding the different methodologies used, current studies all show the that geographic pattern in terms of leadership is extremely imbalanced. Developing country-based actors are only leading a very small proportion of transnational initiatives, while most studies put the proportion of initiatives led by Northern-based actors at 70-90%. For instance, in a list of 'top corporate and sub-national climate commitments', CDP and The Climate Group (2015) only list two commitments from emerging economies (China and India) out of a total of 58 commitments.This skewed pattern indicates a systematic underrepresentation of Southern governments and Southern-based organizations in

coordinating positions within transnational arrangements (cf. Buse 2004), giving credence to worries by developing countries that they lack voice in transnational networks (Andonova and Levy 2003). By contrast, formal intergovernmental regimes have institutionalized developing country representation and voice, for instance through the one-country-one-voice/vote principle, or through special consideration of developing country circumstances (e.g. through differentiation in the climate regime; see Rajamani 2006).

A few studies argue that Southern-based leadership may be underestimated. Hsu et al. (2016) argue that stakeholders in the developing world may be overlooked, giving the example of climate actions by Chinese banks that are not captured under the individual commitments in the UNFCCC's NAZCA platform. Pattberg et al. (2012), moreover, find two developing countries among the top 10 of leading governments in partnerships for sustainable development launched at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development, namely Indonesia and South Africa. However, the relative strong leadership displayed in these countries may likely be explained by their reputational stake in making the process around partnerships for sustainable development a success, as both were hosts to WSSD processes.

Finally, many international organizations play leading roles within transnational initiatives (Andonova and Levy 2003; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015)). Although many of them may be Northern-based, they do not exclusively represent actors or interests based in the North. In fact, international organizations may be conducive to developing country participation (Compagnon 2012).

3.2 Who participates in transnational initiatives?

Patterns of participation across various studies show a very diverse array of actor types engaging in transnational initiatives. However, not every type of actor has been as much engaged in these initiatives. For instance, multiple studies indicate that 'traditional' players in global politics, national governments and international organizations, make up a large proportion of partners within transnational initiatives (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012). By contrast, the same studies have found that 'new' players, in particular business and civil society organizations, have been relatively underrepresented. This may be surprising, as most political processes – such as the LPAA, the 2014 UN Climate Summit, and the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development – emphasize business and civil society engagement.

Estimates of North-South imbalances across the current literature are based on very different measures and methods. Several studies consider the proportion of transnational initiatives in their samples that include at least one or more actors based in different regions (Andonova and Levy 2003; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Bulkeley, Andonova et al. 2014); other studies consider the proportion of types of countries or groups of countries within the total number of participating actors within a sample of transnational initiatives (CDP and The Climate Group 2015; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a). Moreover, some studies only determine the geography of participating governments (Andonova and Levy 2003; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012), while others consider different types of actors across developed and developing countries (Bulkeley, Andonova et al. 2014; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a).

Given the many types of indicators and categories used across different studies, the following figure is for visual representation only, giving a rough overview of estimates of the balance between the global North and South in terms of participation within transnational initiatives.
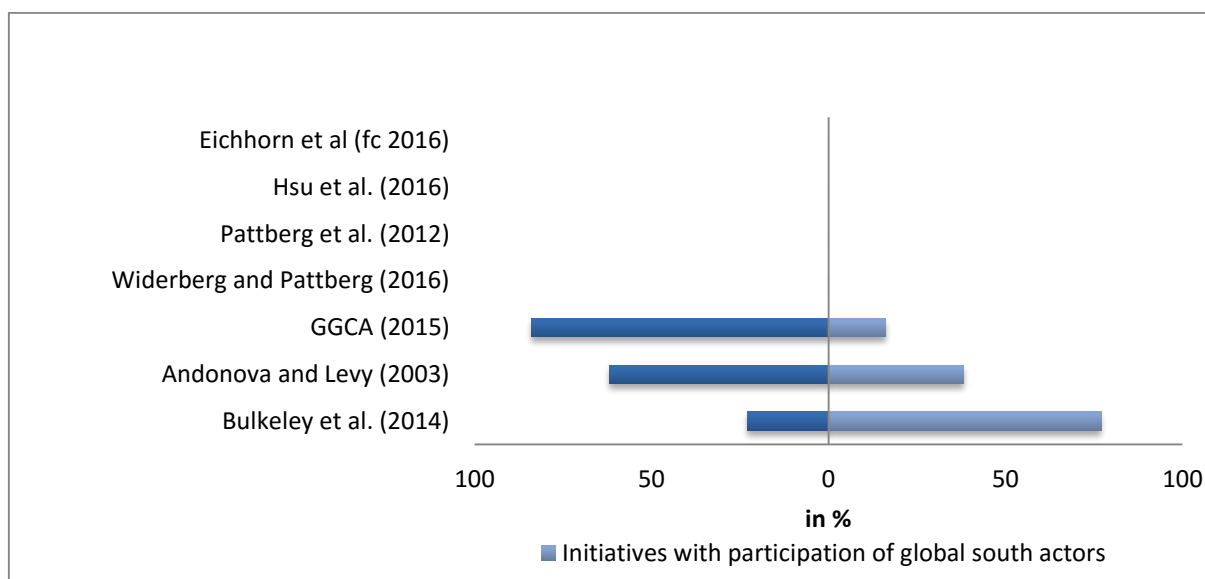
Figure 3. Participation patterns in transnational climate governance

While the comparability between different studies is limited, most studies point to significant engagement of developing country-based actors, especially compared to patterns of leadership. However, the proportion of developing country-based participants varies widely across different samples and studies. Some studies point towards a relatively balanced patterns of participation; Andonova and Levy 2003 – looking at partnerships for sustainable development that involve all major stakeholder groups – count a slightly higher number of participating developing states relative to developed states. By contrast, Pattberg et al. (2012) find that – among partnerships for sustainable development – 56 percent do not include any state partner from the developing world. Bulkeley, Andonova et al. (2014) find that 77 percent in their sample include at least one actor based in the global South, but also find that actors in certain developing regions are especially marginalized, in particular in the Middle East and North Africa, Oceania, and Sub Saharan Africa. Similarly Hsu et al. (2016) identify 'blind spots' in the NAZCA sample of climate commitments, especially in China, Africa and South East Asia. An assessment of 72 initiatives under the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a), reveals that 64-84 percent of participating actors come from developed countries; a sharp bias towards Europe (especially COP21 host France) and North America. The same assessment finds substantial participation across Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, but much lower participation in other large developing countries, particularly India and China.

Generally, most studies show a broad engagement of actors across most countries, for instance LPAA initiatives engaged participants from all countries in the world except Liechtenstein. However, a strong bias towards North-based participants remains. Moreover, the level of participation does not seem to be influenced by the size of developing countries, or their level of development (e.g. emerging and other developing countries).

3.3 Where do transnational initiatives implement?

Patterns of participation and leadership do not necessarily reveal whether developing countries benefit from implementation activities by transnational initiatives. A better understanding of geographic patterns of implementation allows for a better understanding of the geographic focus of climate initiatives, for instance: 'which countries benefit most from investments through climate initiatives?' In the context of global climate governance, this question is extremely relevant because the greatest financial and policy deficits to abate, and to adapt to, climate change are found in developing countries. Nonetheless, relatively few studies with larger sample sizes have assessed geographic patterns of implementation.

The few studies that investigate the geography of implementation by transnational initiatives, mostly consider statements and self-reporting by initiatives on where they (plan to) develop activities (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016). Some studies identify countries where most transnational initiatives are being implemented (e.g. Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a); some studies compares frequencies of implementation across OECD and non-OECD countries (e.g. Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012), and two studies consider geography of implementation by income group (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016).

The following visual representation gives a rough overview of estimates of the balance between the global North and South in terms of implementation.
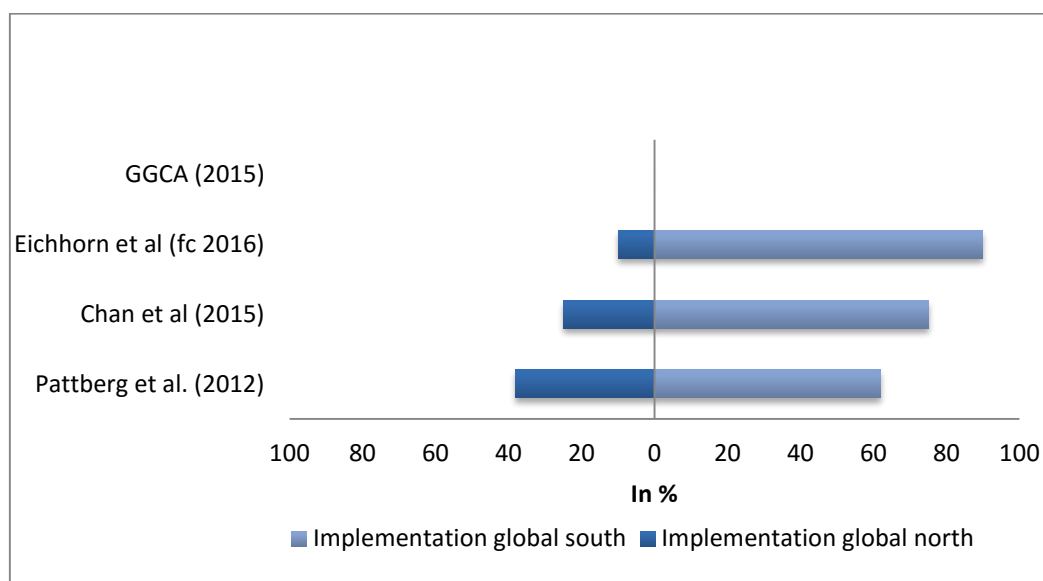
Figure 4. Patterns of countries of implementation in transnational climate governance

Most studies reveal a relatively balanced focus on implementation in developing countries. Pattberg et al. (2012) find that almost 80 percent of countries of implementation are in the developing world; Chan et al. (2015) similarly find that 75 percent of countries of implementation are in the developing world. A study of initiatives that are part of the UNFCCC's 'Momentum for Change' campaign (Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016) even find that 90 percent of implementation activities are in developing countries. However, these studies also suggest significant differences between developing countries. Most implementation occurs in middle-income countries (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016), which raises the question whether transnational initiatives cater to the needs, for instance, of least-developed countries or countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. Moreover, certain regions see much more implementation activities than others; transnational initiatives disproportionally target developed countries, and Asia, while implementation activities are slightly underrepresented in Latin America and Africa (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012).

An important shortcoming in most research is the fact that the determination of countries of implementation is based on self-reporting by initiatives, often at the moment of their launch. As a consequence, data on geographic patterns of implementation reflects what transnational initiatives plan to do, rather than what they are doing. A recent study compared reported countries of implementation' with 'actual countries of implementation' of 52 climate initiatives launched at the 2014 UN Climate Summit (Chan, Falkner et al. fc. 2016) and finds a reasonable balance of countries of implementation across low-income, lower-middle-income, upper-middle-income, and high-income economies. However, actual implementation patterns suggest a stark imbalance, revealing greater

implementation gaps in low- and lower-middle income countries. This finding suggests that transnational initiatives initially respond to urgent needs in developing countries, but run into practical problems when implementing activities; they find it easier to implement in advanced economy contexts.

Current studies indicate that transnational initiatives – at least initially – have a relatively balanced focus across the global North and South. This pattern contrasts starkly with Northern biases in terms of leadership and participation. A large proportion of transnational initiatives aim at implementation in developing countries, although there seems to be a slight preference for implementation in emerging developing countries. Recent data, however, suggests that actual implementation patterns are again biased towards high-income countries.

3.4 How do transnational initiatives perform?

The legitimacy of transnational initiatives is based on the claim that they deliver 'on the ground' – a claim that is often contrasted with the slow and incremental progress made by multilateral processes that often focus on rule development and coordination. For instance, at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development, the overall complaint was that many of the agreed international outcomes since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro have not been effectively implemented, and the greater engagement from civil society and the private sector would contribute to more effective implementation (Mert and Chan 2012). However, few studies have assessed the actual performance of transnational initiatives. A performance assessment of transnational initiatives is complicated by the great variety among them, complicating measurement by the same standards. Therefore, a relative large number of recent studies focus on the *ex ante* assessment of transnational climate initiatives and their mitigation potential (Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015; Roelfsema, Harmsen et al. 2015, UNEP 2015). However, mitigation potential does not reveal much about what transnational actors actually achieve, and a focus on *ex ante* potential alone may lead to an unwarranted and overly optimistic estimation of the performance of transnational initiatives. *Ex post* comparative studies assessing the performance of transnational initiatives, however, are rare. Moreover, from the proxy indicators used for effectiveness or performance it is difficult or very difficult or even impossible to derive environmental impacts. Nonetheless, these *ex post* assessments of transnational initiatives indicate minimal effectivenss. Most *ex post* performance assessments have considered whether transnational initiatives are active and produce relevant outputs (Chan 2009; Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012' Chan, Falkner et al. 2015)). Other studies have considered whether transnational initiatives accrue more funding (Hale and Mauzerall 2004; Andonova 2010), and whether they have been awarded in a competitive environement (Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016). In addition, only a few studies consider geographic imbalances in terms of performance (Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011; Chan 2012; Compagnon 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016).

The following table provides an overview of some of the findings in studies that consider geograhic imbalances and performance.

Table 1. Performance of transnational climate initiatives

Transnational initiatives perform *better* in developing countries	
Chan 2012	Partnerships for sustainable development in emerging economies, India and China, performed 'much higher than average' (125) in terms of producing relevant outputs.
Compagnon 2012	Partnerships for sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa perform above average in terms of producing relevant outputs (145).
Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016	Initiatives under UNFCCC's 'Momentum for Change' campaign that received rewards are overwhelmingly implemented in developing countries. Only 4 percent of countries of implementation of awarded initiatives involved high-

	income countries, with 24 percent involving low-income, 43 percent lower-middle-income, and 29 percent upper-middle-income countries.
Transnational initiatives perform *worse* in developing countries	
Szulecki et al. 2011	The least effective transnational energy partnerships (in terms of output performance) include 'weaker and poorer African countries' (731). By contrast, the presence of industrialized countries and private for-profit partners correlates strongly with output performance.
Chan et al. 2015	Transnational climate actions that specifically address resilience focus on low-income economies (26), but perform far below average in terms of output performance (28).

Current scholarship does not provide a conclusive answer as to whether transnational initiatives in the global South perform better or worse than transnational initiatives implemented elsewhere. Chan (2012) and Compagnon (2012) suggest that transnational initiatives in developing countries perform above average; which may come as a surprise given the fact that many developing countries are seen as 'areas of limited statehood' (Risse and Lehmkuhl 2006). Studies that specifically focus on transnational climate initiatives indicate lower performance in developing countries (Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015)), especially low-income countries. By contrast, an overwhelming majority of awarded Momentum for Change initiatives are implemented in developing countries, in particular lower-middle-income countries. Awarded initiatives have been evaluated positively on their practicality, scalability and replicability (Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016).

Not only do scattered findings remain inconclusive on the relation between performance and the geography of climate initiatives, many intervening factors influence the performance of transnational initiatives and their location. For instance, according to Compagnon (2012), the somewhat surprising finding that Sub-Saharan transnational initiatives perform better may well be due to the active role UN organizations play as leading partners in these initiatives. Another factor influencing performance relates to the specific issue areas transnational initiatives address. For instance, the low performance of transnational resilience initiatives may relate to the fact that the resilience issue area is relatively novel, and initiatives need more time to become more effective, rather than the fact that they focus on low-income countries (Chan, Falkner et al. 2015). Similarly, patterns of performance among transnational energy initiatives may be sector-specific rather than related to the country or region of implementation.

4. Explaining geographic imbalances

As the previous section illustrates, the geography of transnational climate and sustainability governance is highly unequal. Our meta-analysis of existing research on transnational climate and sustainable development initiatives shows that existing scholarship – notwithstanding the use of different methods and categories – seems to agree on geographically uneven patterns in transnational climate governance. Scholars agree on the initiating role of North-based partners and international organizations. The North/South imbalance is starkest in terms of leadership; transnational initiatives rarely have Southern-based actors as initiating or leading partners. In terms of participation, the geographic balance is slightly less skewed, if still imbalanced, indicating at least the willingness of Northern-based partners and international organizations to include partners in developing countries. In terms of where transnational actions plan to implement activities the North-South imbalance is least pronounced. The large majority of existing studies show a relatively balanced focus on countries in different income categories. An initial focus on implementation in developing countries, however, does not preclude failure to actually develop activities. At least one study indicates that the implementation gap is greater in developing countries. Finally, the relation between geography and performance of transnational initiatives is highly tenuous. Current studies do not agree whether transnational initiatives in developing countries are more or less effective. Multiple factors determine performance,

and whether activities are implemented in developing countries may or may not be the decisive factor. Differences in performance have been most pronounced across different issue areas and sectors.

What accounts for the stark geographic imbalances, especially in terms of leadership, participation, and implementation? In the following, we briefly consider three explanations: selection biases, agency-based outcomes, and the perpetuation of a political economy that marginalizes developing countries.

4.1 Selection bias

A direct explanation of observed North-South imbalances relates to selection bias. Online presence and presence at international conferences, and communications in English improve the visibility and recognizability of transnational initiatives, often at the expense of smaller, locally operating initiatives. Subsequently, observed geographic imbalances may be due to a selection bias, both in international political processes and in scholarship.

Policy outreach to non-state and sub-national actors on the road to Paris mainly focused on initiatives with 'high mitigation potential', also fitting into the narrative of an 'emissions gap' that needed to be bridged by transnational actions (UNEP 2013). Initiatives that gained a high-profile included actions that were initiated by (mostly Northern-based) multinational corporations, while smaller-scale and community-based resilience and adaptation actions primarily based in developing countries largely remained under the radar.

Hale and Roger (2014) note that intitiatives that involve less prominent transnatioanal actors are often underrepresented, for instance at international conferences. This leads to a biased sample, which is further perpetuated in cumulative research, as researchers tend to focus on cases that have been studied before, creating a path dependency within current studies. Indeed, the analytical community seems to be mainly concerned with mitigation-oriented initiatives (Blok, Höhne et al. 2012; UNEP 2013; Hsu, Moffat et al. 2015; Roelfsema, Harmsen et al. 2015; The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate 2015; UNEP 2015). Very few studies take into account other sustainability impacts, although climate actions have been studied in a context of sustainable development governance (Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012).

Our meta-analysis does not give conclusive evidence on selection biases throughout accumulative studies. However, there are indications that many transnational actions in developing countries are overlooked. For instance, while most processes and research focus on initiatives with high-impact potential, the UNFCCC's Momentum for Change campaign highlights almost 300 initiatives mostly implementing in developing countries (Eichhorn and Chan fc. 2016). This suggests that more efforts should be made to map transnational initiatives in the developing world (Chan and Hale 2015), and for internationational organizations to engage actors based in the global South.

4.2 Agency-based outcomes

Geographic imbalances have often been explained as agency-based outcomes. According to Bulkeley et al. (2014: 127), "[f]rom an agency-based perspective, differences in capacities and interest explain [...] inequality of participation". Developing countries, long sceptical of greater non-state and subnational engagement (see Section 2), have not only withheld political support for transnational engagement in international processes (Mert and Chan 2012), at times they actively contest transnational initiatives domestically (Quark 2011).

Moreover, the ability of South-based actors to engage in transnational initiatives has also been questioned (Fisher and Green 2004; Green and Chambers 2006). Actors in developing countries may lack resources, expertise, means of communcation, or information to effectively engage. Lower transnational capacity in the global South, especially among public middle managers, limits the

possibilities to act and connect in an intercultural (international, intersectoral) environment, negatively impacting on the emergence of cross-sectoral, and collaborative governance arrangements (e.g. Koehn 2007). On the contrary, according to Andonova (2006: 44-45) "the more countries are involved in foreign aid transactions, the more their governments and development agencies are likely to have interests and political skills to participate in public-private institutions".

Transnational initiatives may also choose to focus on emerging countries such as China or India instead of smaller and least-developed countries (Chan 2014), especially when they seek impacts at scale. Compared to regulatory governance, transnational initiatives are highly transient governance arrangements, prone to shifting commitments, coalitions and relatively unbound by promises, for instance to implement in certain countries. In the course of an initiative's operation, it might withdraw from certain developing countries when they find out their environment is not supportive or too complicated for transnational linking. This might also account for the relative wide implementation gap within initiatives, between planned implementation and actual implementation (Chan, Falkner et al. fc. 2016).

In our meta-analysis, some evidence can be found towards greater presence in emerging countries (Szulecki, Pattberg et al. 2011; Chan 2012), while imbalances are found along multiple dimensions, leadership, participation, and implementation. Moreover, the strong presence of international organizations as leading partners and initiators of transnational action (Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015; Galvanizing the Groundswell of Climate Actions 2015a) suggests that a large part of transnational governance is actually driven by international organizations. International organizations increasingly act as 'orchestrators' of transnational climate action (Abbott and Snidal 2010; Hale and Roger 2011; Chan and Pauw 2014; Abbott, Genschel et al. 2015; Chan, van Asselt et al. 2015). International organizations, often lacking the means to fulfill their mandates, need to reinvigorate, leverage influence and seek alternative resources through engaging transnational actors (Zammit 2003; Abbott et al. 2015).

4.3 Continued marginalization

An alternative explanation for observed geographic imbalances relate to a political economy which consolidates powerful actors, in particular Northern-based governments and corporations, at the expense of marginalized communities and developing countries. In this view, transnational governance helps to entrench and even aggravate patterns of hegemony and marginalization (Clapp 2008), while operating through a language of governance and civil society participation (O'Brien et al. 2002). Transnational initiatives subsequently become neo-liberal instruments, reinforcing market environmentalism while shifting power away from multilateral institutions to the private sector (Levy and Newell 2002; Matthews and Paterson 2005). Although transnational initiatives claim to be equitable and inclusive, in many countries they operate under conditions of limited statehood; therefore, as they assume public functions, they practically contribute to a further rollback of the state (Miraftab 2004).

Our meta-analysis indicates that transnational initiatives do not necessarily benefit developing countries. Decision-making power largely resides with North-based actors, perpetuating and perhaps aggravating North-South asymmetries. While a large majority of transnational initiatives claim to work in – and benefit – developing countries, evidence on performance and actual implementation suggests that benefits do not accrue to developing countries, especially least-developed, low-income countries. However, the generally low participation of business actors across many research samples (Andonova and Levy 2003; Pattberg, Biermann et al. 2012; Chan, Falkner et al. 2015) also does not vindicate transnational initiatives as instruments for corporate take-over or privatization of sustainability and climate policies.

5. Conclusion

Our analysis shows a highly unequal geography of transnational climate and sustainability governance. Although governments from developing countries have grown more favourably disposed towards engaging transnational actors in the formal climate regime, there is no evidence that they, or communities in their countries will be the main beneficiaries of transnational climate governance. Especially worrying is the stark imbalance in terms of transnational leadership. Northern-based actors initiate transnational initiatives, design operations, and set the terms. While this may lower the cost of participation for South-based actors, they lack voice and influence in shaping the transnational sphere of governance. Even when participatory patterns are slightly less skewed, benefits do not accrue to developing countries and actors based in developing countries. Notwithstanding a widely shared focus on implementation in developing countries, the implementation gap in especially low-income countries is much wider than in advanced economies.

Geographic imbalances, political, leadership, participatory, and implementation gaps in the South are not easily remedied, or explained away through a mere selection bias. For instance, initiatives under the Momentum for Change campaign seem to be an outlier that focus and implement on developing countries. However, the Momentum for Change campaign is a concerted effort by the UNFCCC secretariat to reach out, for instance, to initiatives that contribute both to mitigation and adaptation efforts, and improvement of livelihoods. Similarly, the organizers of the 2014 UN Climate Summit made an effort to broaden its climate action areas beyond mitigation by including resilience as an action area. This shows that orchestration, especially by international organizations, matters (Hale and Roger 2011). International organizations have an important role to play in recognizing transnational actions in developing countries. However, there are limits to the role they can play, as they have limited mandates, and limited financial and non-financial means (Mert and Chan 2012; Chan and Pauw 2014). Moreover, a centralized orchestrating framework that forces a deeper transnational engagement with the global South would also be contrary to the voluntary nature of transnational initiatives and possibly drain resources from traditional development assistance (cf. Hale and Mauzerall 2004). Instead, a wider network of orchestrators (both governmental and non-governmental, from developing and developed countries) would be better positioned to ensure a wide of participation and a truly global focus, effectively addressing many geographic imbalances.

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