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Does youth participation increase the democratic legitimacy of UNFCCC-orchestrated global climate change governance?

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Abstract
Youth NGOs have participated in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for over a decade, yet research into their experiences is lacking. Drawing upon an ethnographic case study conducted between 2015 and 2018, we ask: does youth participation increase the democratic legitimacy of a UNFCCCorchestrated global climate change regime? Applying the concepts of 'input' and 'throughput' legitimacy, we find that the UNFCCC offers an accessible entry-point for young newcomers into climate governance, but this does not necessarily lead to engagement in orchestrated initiatives. A potential exception to this is Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) which we identify as an overlooked example of UNFCCC orchestration. We thus propose a conceptual distinction between 'exclusive' and 'inclusive' orchestration, the former merely connecting likeminded intermediaries while the latter broadens inclusion and actively redresses power imbalances, urging more proactive pursuit of democratic legitimacy, including youth engagement from the UNFCCC Secretariat and COP Presidencies.

KEYWORDS
Youth participation; democratic legitimacy; UNFCCC; non-state actor participation; orchestration.

Introduction

On 12th December 2015, the final day of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations in Paris, then Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, declared:

> "We must protect the planet that sustains us. For that, we need all hands on deck." (United Nations, 2015)

This underscores the changing logic of the Post-Paris (i.e. Paris Agreement) era of global climate change governance, whereby climate action is no longer the preserve of state actors (SAs) and instead draws in a broad range of non-state actors (NSAs) and sub-state actors

(SSAs). As Hale (2016) argues, this must go beyond allowing NSAs and SSAs access to observe the intergovernmental negotiations to placing them at the heart of the regime. The UNFCCC's role thus becomes that of an orchestrator, facilitating and shaping the initiatives of non-governmental stakeholders in addition to overseeing intergovernmental negotiations (Abbott, 2017, Chan et al., 2016).

Recognition of young people's role in climate change governance has grown as a result of the Fridays for Future movement inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg. In the context of the UNFCCC, young people have been organising since the early 1990s and gained constituency status in 2009 as YOUNGO (youth NGOs), though limited academic attention has been paid to this important group. We address this gap, providing in-depth empirical evidence of how a YOUNGO member organisation, the UK Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC), engages with UNFCCC conferences and orchestration initiatives. Our approach is ethnographic, spanning 2015 to 2018 and addressing a fundamental question in the Post-Paris era of climate governance: *does youth participation increase the democratic legitimacy of a UNFCCC-orchestrated global climate change regime?*

In the following section, we review the literature on orchestration, democratic legitimacy and youth participation in the UNFCCC and provide relevant empirical context to the research. We explain our methods before sharing results relating to our central research question on democratic legitimacy. We propose that Action for Climate Empowerment "ACE" is an overlooked example of UNFCCC orchestration offering insights into how democratic legitimacy could be delivered in other initiatives; offer a new conceptual distinction between "exclusive" and "inclusive" orchestration, emphasising a need for the UNFCCC Secretariat and COP Presidencies to play a more proactive role in redressing power imbalances and draw a formal distinction between NSA participation in UNFCCC conferences and orchestrated

initiatives, highlighting that diverse conference participation does not equate to diverse input into orchestration efforts. We conclude by summarising our contributions and suggesting areas for further research.

Literature review

Orchestration

Our study is guided by Abbott's (2018, pp188-189) description of orchestration which draws together several aspects of his previous work in theorising this concept:

> "Orchestration is an indirect mode of governance that relies on inducements and incentives rather than mandatory controls (Abbott et al., *2015*). It is common in many areas of global governance, where 'governors' – from intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) to transnational initiatives – possess limited authority and power for binding, direct action. An orchestrator (O) works through like-minded intermediaries (I), catalysing their formation, encouraging and assisting them and steering their activities through support and other incentives, to govern targets (T) in line with the orchestrator's goals (O-I-T). An orchestrator can also structure and coordinate intermediaries' activities to enhance ordering (Abbott and Hale, *2014*; Abbott, *2017*)."

As the largest convenor of stakeholders on climate change, the UNFCCC is a pragmatic choice for an orchestrating institution (Abbott, 2017). Tasked with global coordination of the intergovernmental climate change negotiations since 1992, the UNFCCC has recently enhanced efforts to mobilise NSAs to supplement state-led efforts. Opportunities for NSAs to gain authority have increased as the idea of dispersing authority remains popular and the promises of a polycentric regime – whereby multiple centres of authority are guided by a central institution, such as, the UNFCCC – continue to be promoted (Jordan et al., 2018).

Orchestration is particularly attractive to intergovernmental organisations like the UNFCCC who have limited resources and authority yet have access to a wide range of potential

intermediaries (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017). After the failure of COP15 in Copenhagen, the UNFCCC Secretariat was keen to be seen to be "doing something", leading to initiatives promoting NSA contributions to climate governance which have been described as orchestration (Abbott, 2017, Hale, 2016, van der Ven et al., 2017). Examples include the Nonstate Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA): an online portal established by the Secretariat to track pledges from NSAs and SSAs; and the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) and Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (GCA) orchestrated by COP Presidencies (i.e. host country governments) along with the UNFCCC Secretariat and UN Secretary General. These initiatives encourage and promote NSA and SSA action, supported by two "High-Level Champions" appointed by host governments (Abbott, 2017).

Democratic Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a notoriously "fuzzy" concept with multiple definitions (Bekkers and Edwards, 2007; Buchanan and Keohane, 2006; Dingwerth, 2007; Schmidt, 2013; Tallberg et al., 2018). Studies fall into two broad areas, being concerned with either 1) *sociological/popular* legitimacy i.e. the extent to which a decision-maker's authority is accepted by others who will therefore comply with decisions made; or 2) *normative/democratic* legitimacy i.e. whether a decision-making process meets certain standards or principles (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006; Tallberg et al., 2018; Tallberg and Zürn, 2019). Whilst both are important, we focus on the latter, following Dingwerth (2007, p15) in defining democratic legitimacy as *"a normative concept that primarily refers to the input and throughput dimensions of legitimacy"* (see Figure 1). In addition to "input" and "throughput" legitimacy (our foci, as explained in more detail below) Figure 1 also highlights "output" legitimacy which refers to the quality decision-making results or the effectiveness of policy outcomes "for the people" (Scharpf, 1999). This is an important consideration but falls beyond the scope of our argument here.

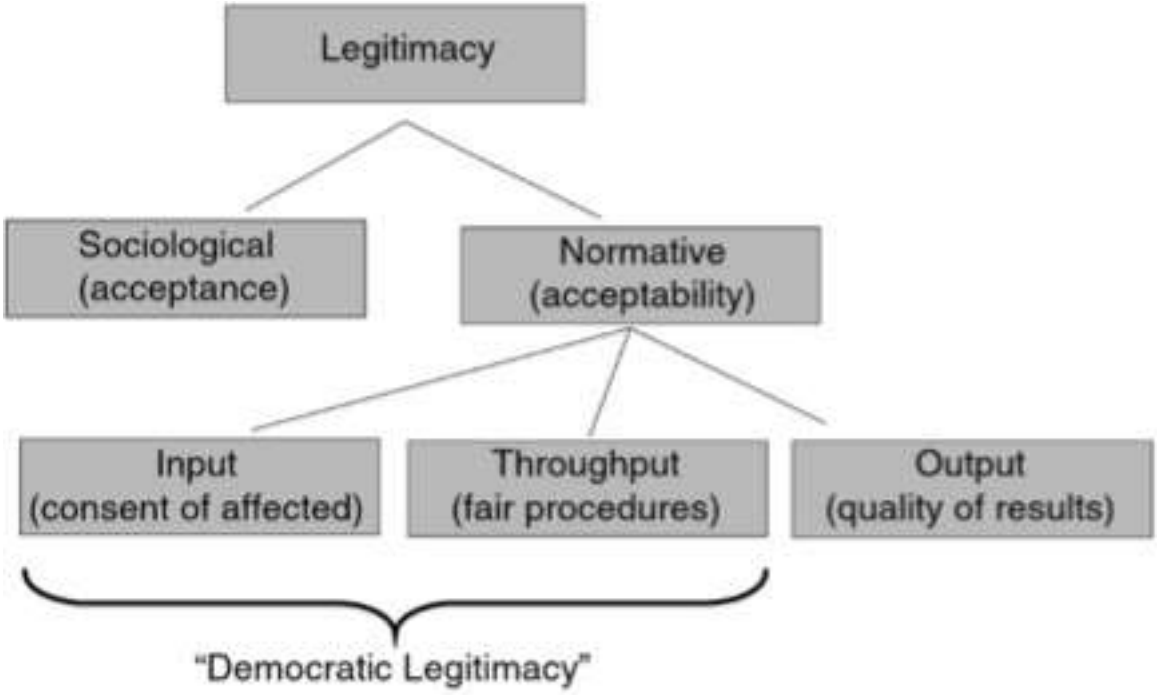

Figure 1. The Concept of Democratic Legitimacy. Dingwerth (2007, p 14).

Scholars have argued that orchestrators should increase "input legitimacy" by widening participation to enhance diversity (Bäckstrand et al., 2017). They should also maintain a healthy balance of power, increasing "throughput legitimacy" by ensuring that orchestrated initiatives are transparent, include opportunities for deliberation and enable participants to hold one another to account for decisions taken (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017; Dingwerth, 2007). Some argue that, beyond bringing people together, an orchestrator should actively manage initiatives: *"reducing transaction costs, mistrust, and other bargaining problems amongst private actors; and assisting weaker partners when differences in power amongst parties are high"* (Hale and Roger, 2014 p.64). However, whether the UNFCCC is performing this role remains unclear.

There are both intrinsic and instrumental reasons for ensuring democratic legitimacy in climate governance at global level. Bäckstrand and Kuyper (2017) emphasise three key reasons why

UNFCCC-led orchestration must be democratically legitimate: (1) the UNFCCC uses public authority to create rules for orchestration, shaping the actions of its intermediaries as well as how it dispenses public resources; (2) not all Parties to the UNFCCC are democratic and even within democratic states it is not always evident that international bureaucrats have authority to make certain decisions, meaning it is not possible to claim that everyone affected by UNFCCC decisions has the potential to shape them; and (3) orchestration breaks the chain of electoral accountability between citizens, states and IGOs. They therefore suggest that NSAs should have more control over how public authority is used by the UNFCCC to legitimate private actions and should be able to hold those wielding this authority to account.

Increased NSA participation in UNFCCC conferences and orchestration initiatives may be uncritically regarded as boosting democratic legitimacy. However, some UNFCCC-orchestrated initiatives have specific criteria for participation, seeking to engage those with the highest mitigation potential (Hale, 2016). Furthermore, initiatives are designed around specific themes rather than aiming for broad inclusivity and the pursuit of diverse solutions. Bäckstrand and Kuyper (2017) find input legitimacy in NAZCA is low, dominated by Global North businesses and city representatives, suggesting that the UNFCCC could do more to increase inclusion. They argue that Action Events initiated by the LPAA, which have continued under the Marrakech Partnership, have higher input legitimacy due to being held at COPs, offering access to all UNFCCC constituencies. Despite this, they highlight that some NSAs, such as women and indigenous peoples' groups, have called for more diverse participation, suggesting some constituencies still feel underrepresented despite having access to UNFCCC conferences.

We use the concepts of input and throughput legitimacy to evaluate the democratic legitimacy of the UNFCCC as an orchestrator, focusing on youth participants as a case study. It is

relatively rare for studies of legitimacy to focus on the participation of one interest group, Bekkers and Edwards (2007) being a notable exception. However, looking beyond institutional structures to focus on the quality of participation is necessary to determine legitimacy (Schmidt, 2013). Furthermore, *"whether all relevant stakeholders…actually had the opportunity to participate [and whether]…'weak' interests were properly heard and represented"* (Bekkers and Edwards, 2007, p38) remains a key question which we seek to address. We focus on youth participants as a "weaker" example of a UNFCCC constituency (discussed further below).

Youth participation in the UNFCCC

The UNFCCC attracts a growing number of NSAs to its conferences, enhancing perceptions of its inclusivity (Cabré, 2011, Neeff, 2013, Rietig, 2016). Over 8000 NSAs attended COP21 in 2015 (Lövbrand et al., 2017) and the process currently recognises nine civil society constituencies. However, this has not always been the case. In 1992, the UNFCCC only recognised business and industry non-governmental organizations (BINGO) and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO) overlooking youth, women, farmers, indigenous peoples, local government actors, researchers and trade unions who then had to seek recognition within the UNFCCC to gain formal participatory rights. For youth (as well as women and farmers) it took 19 years to receive the same participatory opportunities as BINGO and ENGO (UNFCCC, 2017b).

Youth have engaged with the UNFCCC since the 1990s, first meeting outside of the process to share best practice, build networks, deliberate over policies and present statements to the COPs. In 2004, they requested the creation of a UNFCCC constituency of youth NGOs (YOUNGO) (UNFCCC, 2010) which was created in 2009 and fully confirmed in 2011 (YOUNGO, 2017). The most recent data lists 72 YOUNGO affiliated organisations (UNFCCC, 2019a), ranging

from large transnational networks such as the World Alliance of Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations to small voluntary groups such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and Cameroon League for Development, although organisations from the Global North dominate. The amount of YOUNGO accredited organisations has almost doubled since 2014 (Thew, 2018) and the number of youth participants attending COPs is also growing. At COP 22, youth represented 5.2% of NSA observers, making them the fourth largest constituency, though still a way behind ENGOs (37.6%), researchers (27.1%) and BINGOs (15.8%) (UNFCCC, 2019b).

Nevertheless, YOUNGO has received little academic attention. Thew (2018) took a first step in exploring youth participation and agency in the UNFCCC, utilising ego and alter (i.e. youth and non-youth) perspectives and finding that youth participants engage in a range of activities facilitated by the Secretariat including side events, exhibits, demonstrations and interventions but struggle to utilise them to their best advantage due to a lack of material resources. YOUNGO experience high turnover (the majority are volunteers and struggle to fund repeat attendance) and due to the transient nature of their age-based categorisation: they "grow out of" being a youth participant. As a result, youth often struggle to navigate the complexity of UNFCCC conferences, relying on the Secretariat to direct their participation (Thew, 2018). This renders their experiences of UNFCCC orchestration particularly interesting for questions of inclusion and legitimacy, making them a good candidate for studying how a "weaker" (Bekkers and Edwards, 2007) constituency engages with orchestration initiatives. Furthermore, Thew et al. (2020) highlight that power dynamics between NSAs exacerbate the difficulties which youth face in articulating justice claims on behalf of their generation in UNFCCC conferences, challenging assumptions that NSA experiences are homogenous and warranting further investigation into less powerful constituencies.

Applying the concepts of democratic legitimacy and orchestration to UNFCCC participation has precedence. Bäckstrand and Kuyper (2017) assess NAZCA and the LPAA, arguing that whilst democratic legitimacy could certainly be improved, conference access does increase input legitimacy in the LPAA by widening participation, making the LPAA inclusive of the nine NSA constituencies. We expand upon their helpful endeavour by exploring the extent to which young people participate in UNFCCC-orchestrated initiatives and identifying barriers to their inclusion.

Materials and methods

We draw upon an ethnography of UKYCC conducted between June 2015 and March 2018. Data were collected in 32 interviews, over 900 hours of participant observation at COPs 21, 22 and 23 as well as three intersessional conferences and UKYCC's team meetings in the UK. This rich, qualitative approach enabled deep exploration of how youth experience the UNFCCC, focusing on 20 UKYCC members who participated in climate governance activities in or around UNFCCC conferences, a typical number of participants for an ethnographic study. All participants are aged between 17 and 29 years, mirroring the age range of YOUNGO though the constituency lacks official upper and lower age limits.

We selected UKYCC as an appropriate case study as one of the longest serving member organisations of YOUNGO, having been sending delegations to the UNFCCC since 2008 (i.e. a year before YOUNGO was created). As one of the longest established groups in YOUNGO, UKYCC's participatory challenges are less easily dismissed as inexperience: a challenge often levelled at newcomers to global environmental governance processes (Clark et al., 1998) as well as at young people in general. Studying a group based in the same country as the lead researcher enabled regular engagement and immersion in the group as they prepared for and reflected on their participatory experiences. This established trust, enabling observation of their

private discussions and providing insights which would have been unachievable with less time-intensive research methods. In addition, the lead researcher has been actively engaged with YOUNGO since 2012, participating in six COPs and five intersessionals to date. She subscribed to YOUNGO mailing lists and used blogs, social media content, online documents and observation of broader constituency activities to contextualise the interviews and observations (Hodkinson, 2005; Madden, 2010). Triangulation between interviews, participant observation and document analysis, enabled reflection on inconsistencies and on researcher interpretation of the data (Gaskell and Bauer, 2000).

There has been much debate over the advantages and disadvantages of insider and outsider status in ethnographic research (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Hodkinson, 2005; Madden, 2010). However, many see this as a continuum rather than a binary (e.g. Macrae, 2007; Miled, 2019). The lead researcher was aware of UKYCC before embarking upon this research but the vast majority of participants were unknown to her. There were many occasions when aspects of her intersectional identity resonated with theirs, enabling quick rapport and increasing participants' willingness to discuss sensitive issues and personal concerns, and enabling access certain spaces without arousing suspicion (MacRae, 2007; Miled, 2019). However, the very nature of her presence as a researcher marked her as an outsider, as did her need (and eagerness) to comply with ethnical processes which included identifying herself as such at the beginning of every interaction. Reflexivity was a necessity, with ongoing attentiveness to whether personal experience was clouding her interpretation and a deep commitment to representing the research participants accurately and fairly (MacRae, 2007; Madden, 2010; Miled, 2019).

The UK is not the only country in which voluntary youth groups have been created to participate in the UNFCCC. Similar groups attend from across North and South America,

Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia. As a case study of a UK-based organisation, we do not claim that our findings are universally applicable. For example, youth from the Global South may experience UNFCCC participation differently, particularly when interacting with their own governments who may share feelings of marginalisation. They may also find more challenges in engaging with orchestrators who are unequally situated in the Global North (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017). Nevertheless, it is well-established that global environmental governance processes are heavily dominated by Global North participants (Newell et al., 2012) which, based on the lead author's experience, can also be said to apply to the UNFCCC and YOUNGO. Our findings are thus likely to have relevance beyond our case study.

All interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility, lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours and taking place at UNFCCC conferences or on Skype shortly afterwards. Interviews were transcribed and coded in Nvivo to makes sense of this large, complex data set. Themes were identified by zigzagging between the data and the literature (Emmel, 2013) i.e. following a process of "abductive" coding whereby codes are identified iteratively drawing upon both theory and data. We thereby identified orchestration and legitimacy as key concepts of relevance and took a reflexive, critical realist approach to enable a more thorough consideration of context, as appropriate for the ethnographic methodology (Madden, 2010). All participants have chosen pseudonyms, which may not match their gender identities. Data have been anonymised though it may be possible for youth participants to recognise themselves and their peers in their quotes and description of activities.

Results

Opportunities offered by conference access

Our results show that the UNFCCC's recognition and facilitation of YOUNGO motivates young participants to engage in climate governance, mobilising them to pursue collective goals.

The formal platform for youth participation provides a non-threatening avenue into climate governance (in contrast with activist opportunities which some find off-putting), whilst the UNFCCC's prestige dismantles some logistical barriers, helping young people to obtain permission from their employers or educators for short-term absences for volunteering, enabling them to attend conferences. In addition to observing the intergovernmental negotiations, it is broadly assumed that youth participants are made aware of and have the opportunity to engage in orchestrated initiatives through conference attendance. However, the extent to which this actually happens requires closer investigation.

Youth engagement with orchestrated initiatives

Despite providing an accessible entry point into global climate change governance, our results show that youth participation in UNFCCC conferences can be exceedingly repetitive. As a UKYCC member and a former YOUNGO Focal Point describes:

> Toby: From all of the briefings and things YOUNGO seem to ask the same old question: how can we involve youth in this?...I've had visibility of all of these different sessions because I've had to coordinate them [and] that seems to be constantly what we ask...It is raised by different young people [but] it just seems to be the same question.

It appears that if you ask a repetitive question you receive a repetitive answer, though whose responsibility it is to learn from this and experiment with a new script remains unclear:

> Toby: The response seems to be the same, it's well, if you let us know how you want to be involved then you can be…no one seems to be trying to shut us down, it's just how to fit it in around the current system. I'm not sure whose responsibility it is to get young people involved, whether it's the people organising it or the young people themselves to make a space. I think that's one of the problems with the high turnover in YOUNGO is that you go and ask that question but aren't really around to follow it up, so the next people don't know what the answer is so they ask the same thing.

This suggests that youth participants struggle to utilise their conference accreditation to build

their capacity, expand their networks and to pursue their preferred solutions. YOUNGO's high turnover makes it difficult for youth to be held accountable for implementing governance tasks and, as a result, authority is not readily delegated to them. A double-edged sword, this also prevents them from holding others accountable for previous conversations and commitments.

UNFCCC orchestrated initiatives could support young people to overcome these challenges by offering regularly scheduled opportunities for input which could be prepared for in advance, and formally documented to enable newcomers to hold decision-makers accountable for issues raised in previous meetings. However, our observations suggest that youth participants are only engaging with orchestrated initiatives on a limited basis. For example, in a 2016 consultation from the High Level Champions only one of over 50 NSA submissions came from a youth organisation. UKYCC endorsed this submission, prepared by French youth organisation "CliMates" (CliMates, 2016). They thank the Champions for conducting a wide consultation, lending weight to arguments for input legitimacy, though they subsequently challenge this by highlighting the dominant focus on businesses and local authorities, calling for increased inclusion, particularly of youth and indigenous representatives in the "Roadmap for Pre-2020 Climate Action".

The submission also raises several issues relating to transparency, calling for transparent monitoring of pre-2020 action, asking that high-level events use simple language that youth and all others can understand, and requesting creation of an online platform, similar to NAZCA, to document and monitor initiatives relating to climate change education. They emphasise the importance of including "social" aspects of climate action, broadening the focus beyond actions delivered by business and local authorities. To our knowledge this has not been created, nor has education been included in NAZCA, though the UNFCCC Secretariat does promote education under the umbrella of "Action for Climate Empowerment" which we will discuss

shortly.

Whilst the CliMates submission indicates that some young people were aware of NAZCA at this time, our lead researcher did not observe any conversations within UKYCC or YOUNGO meetings about engaging with NAZCA and contiguous to data collection there were no youth organisations listed as participants on the platform. A more recent search in 2020 found just one: Young Power in Social Action Bangladesh, which committed to a cooperative initiative to build resilience to support vulnerable social groups (UNFCCC, 2019a). Their website emphasises their commitment to transparency, accountability and justice, indicating that youth involvement in NAZCA has potential to enhance its democratic legitimacy. However, this isn't currently being realised due to lack of youth awareness of and engagement with the platform. Similarly, observations suggest that young people did not perceive events held under the LPAA or Marrakech Partnership to be different to any other UNFCCC side event, aside from one comment during a YOUNGO meeting that they were *"even more formal and political and unlike youth events",* suggesting a lack of willingness to engage.

Barriers to youth engagement with orchestrated initiatives

Our data show that many young participants remain focused on influencing SAs to shape the negotiations rather than engaging with orchestrated initiatives for NSAs. During COPs 21 to 23, YOUNGO working groups (including many UKYCC members) tracked negotiations, wrote policy briefs and arranged meetings with negotiators to discuss incremental policy amendments. YOUNGO has actively pursued the "pink badges" of governmental accreditation for several years and continues to request this as a priority whenever they meet with the Secretariat and High Level Champions. This is telling. Youth participants appear to believe that the best way to improve NSA participation is to enable more of them to be treated by the

process as SAs; the legacy of two decades of casting NSAs as observers maintains a hierarchy within the UNFCCC with SAs at the top.

Youth participants who are financially secure enough to maintain participation over several years often seek governmental accreditation. As a result, within YOUNGO a pink badge has become a status symbol associated with experience. Some use this to maximise their individual authority, unconsciously reinforcing a hierarchy which undermines the collective authority of NSAs and frames youth participation as an apprenticeship for something more prestigious.

At COP23, a member of UKYCC secured a pink badge to support a government from a developing country. In addition to having more access and thus being able to follow the negotiations more effectively, Katrina noted a change in how others responded to her on account of the government accreditation:

> Katrina: It was definitely a jump you know…the difference between [how] people treated me in Marrakech and how they treated me now was just so big!

She described how other participants (both NSAs and SAs) requested updates on the negotiations, were more polite to her in the corridors, how an embarrassed academic apologised for dismissing her after noticing the pink badge. Another youth participant also perceived the power dynamics between NSAs as a particular challenge:

> Euan: It's very hard for your voice to be louder than the voice of business…and the biggest problem is if people are prioritising engaging with business and financial concerns above engaging with young people and the welfare of humans…if people are having ten other conversations with someone who has more power and does not share your interests then that's not going to help. It's all power in the end.

This demonstrates that youth participants perceive there to be hidden power dynamics cementing their position in the UNFCCC's hierarchy, which may be why many continue to

focus on trying to influence SAs rather than engaging with orchestrated initiatives for NSAs where they perceive they will be particularly weak compared to others such as businesses.

Another example of UNFCCC orchestration?

The differentiation between orchestrated and non-orchestrated UNFCCC initiatives is somewhat ambiguous. On its website, the Secretariat states that *"As part of our vision to spur ambition, we directly orchestrate, convene or support a number of key 'moments' throughout the course of the year. The intention behind engaging in these events is to build a new form of inclusive multilateralism that is vital to achieving our goals, specifically with regard to the urgent implementation of the Paris Agreement"* (UNFCCC, 2020). Thus, although youth participants have limited engagement with NAZCA and the Marrakech Partnership, this does not necessarily infer they are not involved in UNFCCC orchestration initiatives, broadly defined.

One long-standing initiative which youth participants are highly engaged in is Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). ACE is a rebrand of Article 6 of the 1992 UNFCCC Convention pertaining to six elements: climate change education; training; access to information; public awareness; public participation and international cooperation on these matters. The UNFCCC Secretariat has proactively engaged young people in this policy area for several years. However, since 2015 they have contributed additional time and resources to the promotion of ACE within UNFCCC conferences and online, facilitating a series of activities which bring SAs and NSAs together. ACE is listed under Climate Action on the UNFCCC's website and could potentially be seen as a UNFCCC-orchestrated activity, as depicted in Figure 2, though has not yet been identified as such in the literature.

Figure 2. Orchestration of Action for Climate Empowerment.

Further justifying its credentials as an example of orchestration, ACE includes individual commitments and cooperative initiatives, its primary function being Implementation of Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement (which re-emphasises the importance of the six elements mentioned above). Individual activities encouraged by the meta intermediary (Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017) and engaged in by targets include nominating National ACE Focal Points, identifying opportunities for international and cross-sectoral collaboration, and mainstreaming Climate Change Education. Cooperative initiatives include participating in annual ACE Dialogues, creating green jobs and developing public awareness schemes. Soft inducements are used such as public promotion of successes, ACE funding sources and networking opportunities (UNFCCC, no date).

ACE could be seen as a good example of how orchestration can deliver on input and throughput legitimacy. Participation is diverse, ACE Dialogues facilitate deliberative, non-hierarchical discussions between stakeholders; and transparency is encouraged through various mechanisms including the publication of nominated National ACE Focal points including their contact details on the UNFCCC website which currently lists Focal Points for 119 Parties (UNFCCC, 2020b). Furthermore, the encouragement of monitoring and reporting with established key indicators to measure progress in National ACE strategies increases

accountability and the Secretariat has produced ACE guidelines (UNFCCC, no date), encouraging engagement with marginalised stakeholders, including youth.

However, there is room for improvement. Youth participants often comment that in ACE Dialogues, presentations take up the majority of the time, hindering opportunities for deliberation:

> Mona: The overall feedback was that people [in YOUNGO] were quite disappointed, but also didn't want to say that they were too disappointed because it was a first step and it was at least trying to reach out towards us a bit.

Furthermore, many young people feel frustrated that their contributions are restricted to these softer elements of climate change governance, wishing to contribute to more tangible adaptation and mitigation actions which they see as more urgent. This problem is partially attributable to an overfocus on education in ACE rather than on the other five elements, particularly participation. For example, ACE networks could be used to raise awareness of upcoming opportunities for NSA participation in the Marrakech Partnership; ACE events could include deliberation on how its dedicated intermediaries could better engage in other aspects of climate action and how lessons learned from ACE could be replicated to increase input legitimacy within orchestrated initiatives under the GCA. This would benefit from recognition of ACE as a positive (though not perfect) example of orchestration, at least in terms of democratic legitimacy, something we believe is an original contribution to the literature.

Discussion

UNFCCC youth participation and legitimacy

Our results build upon Thew's (2018) investigation of UNFCCC conferences from the perspective of youth participants, contributing empirical data to improve understanding of young people's lived experiences of UNFCCC participation. Our results indicate that

UNFCCC accreditation mobilises young newcomers to climate change governance as the UNFCCC's prestige enables them to overcome logistical barriers to their participation. This lends weight for arguments for its input legitimacy. However, we find that youth participants are not being adequately supported and lack capacity hindering their ability to hold other actors to account for discussions and commitments made in previous interactions. This limits opportunities for genuine deliberation and hinders youth engagement in mutually beneficial collaborations. In turn, this reinforces an underlying hierarchy between SAs and NSAs, and between youth and other NSAs, whereby young people come to see themselves as less powerful: an erosion of their self-recognition which, as Thew et al., (2020) establish, has implications for justice as well as for democratic legitimacy.

An exception to this is within ACE. We propose that this *could* be seen as an example of orchestration, and a fairly democratically legitimate one at that, which isn't currently recognised in the literature. Our argument here is indirectly supported by a recent paper by Kolleck et al (2017) which identifies that the UNFCCC Secretariat plays an influential role in ACE (though they focus specifically on education), by establishing links between SAs and NSAs, establishing goals, raising ambition, creating an "enabling environment" for discussions (p119) and "providing tools for the enhanced coordination of actors" (p120). While they do not connect this to orchestration or legitimacy, given these qualities we believe it supports our case that ACE is an example of orchestration. Furthermore, using a social network analysis of Twitter discussions on education at COPs, they identify five key actors shaping the debate, including the Secretariat, an international environmental NGO, one African youth NGO and two individual participants (one young activist based in Nigeria, another a former member of UKYCC now working with ENGO). This demonstrates that the UNFCCC are broadening NSA

input beyond engaging businesses and city actors, though these contributions are siloed and as a result receive different levels of attention from both academics and policy-makers.

We now turn to the concepts of input legitimacy and throughput legitimacy (Bäckstrand et al., 2017). Input legitimacy refers to the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders in orchestrated initiatives i.e. *who* participates, whereas throughput legitimacy refers to the democratic quality of orchestrated initiatives: focusing on transparency, deliberation and accountability i.e. *how* they participate (Bäckstrand et al., 2017, Bäckstrand and Kuyper, 2017; Dingwerth, 2007). Our results show that despite rising youth attendance at UNFCCC conferences, this does not equate to participation in all UNFCCC orchestrated initiatives for NSAs and thus enhanced input legitimacy. For instance, most research participants were unaware of NAZCA and although they could attend GCA events at COPs the majority did not. UNFCCC orchestration therefore has the potential to improve input legitimacy but lack of proactive engagement of diverse actors inhibits this. As a result, youth remain primarily focused on influencing SAs or in protesting what is happening within the negotiations rather than engaging with orchestrated climate action initiatives.

We find that throughput legitimacy is also limited, at least from the perspective of youth inclusion. Their lack of awareness of opportunities for NSAs through the GCA suggests a lack of transparency, or at least a lack of targeted communication. Our results also indicate a lack of possibilities for deliberation and highlight that high turnover in YOUNGO hinders both their ability to hold others accountable and to be held accountable themselves. This calls for a different way of looking at orchestration. We argue that, as orchestrators, the UNFCCC Secretariat and COP Presidencies could do more to balance power dynamics in NAZCA and the Marrakech Partnership (as they do in ACE) to increase inclusion of marginalised actors. Proactive engagement of better resourced actors within ACE with careful attention to power

imbalances would also be beneficial.

"Exclusive" and "Inclusive" orchestration

Building again on Thew (2018) which emphasises that youth participants' agency is hindered by lack of material resources, we suggest that because youth participants struggle to maintain participation over longer periods of time (due to financial constraints and because they "grow out of" being young), YOUNGO struggles to develop the institutional memory needed to best utilise participatory opportunities during UNFCCC conferences and within orchestrated initiatives. Their difficulties relate to both their engagement with negotiators and with orchestrators and intermediaries. Although Toby attributed YOUNGO's challenges to high turnover, it is worth noting that youth are not having these conversations in isolation. This raises a question as to why UNFCCC Secretariat staff are repeatedly having the same conversation with youth participants without taking steps to enhance YOUNGO's capacity. Whilst noting the Secretariat's lack of resources, we echo Bäckstrand and Kuyper (2017) in arguing they could do more to engage all NSAs in a broader range of governance tasks in pursuit of diverse solutions. This is important for justice as well as for legitimacy.

Whilst the argument for UNFCCC orchestration is pragmatic given their convening power, we also argue that COP Presidencies and the Secretariat could do more to promote to YOUNGO (and other constituencies) the full range of initiatives being orchestrated for NSAs. They could increase transparency and inclusivity by encouraging youth (and others) to engage with all orchestrated initiatives, helping conference newcomers to understand that a role exists for NSAs beyond observing and influencing negotiations. Whether youth participants chose to utilise orchestration events to pledge their own commitments, raise concerns regarding how pledges from other actors may affect them, or hold more powerful actors to account, they would contribute to input and throughput legitimacy (Bäckstrand et al., 2017, Bäckstrand and Kuyper,

2017) whilst potentially making initiatives more effective, though further research into output legitimacy is needed to evaluate this latter claim.

Our findings resonate with Abbott's (2017) conclusion that climate governance could benefit from more active orchestration, leading us to make a conceptual differentiation between "exclusive" and "inclusive" orchestration as depicted in Figure 3, the latter going beyond initial establishment of an initiative to proactive, ongoing management of its implementation with the explicit purpose of balancing power dynamics and supporting weaker partners as encouraged by previous studies (Bekkers and Edwards, 2007; Hale and Roger, 2014). We argue that *inclusive* orchestration is particularly crucial to building trust and dispersing authority which are necessary if global climate change governance is to reap the benefits of polycentricity by engaging diverse actors in a range of solutions (Jordan et al., 2018). In contrast, despite showing promise in some areas, the current approach taken by the UNFCCC can be described as exclusive orchestration. This may hinder the transformation of the global climate regime towards a truly polycentric form by narrowing rather than broadening input over time and, with it, narrowing what are deemed "acceptable" policy solutions (Ostrom, 2010).

We suggest that inclusive orchestration refers to a proactive strategy to improve input legitimacy by engaging a wider range of stakeholders in orchestrated initiatives, as well as throughput legitimacy i.e. the ability of participants to enhance accountability, transparency and deliberation within orchestrated initiatives to improve their democratic quality (Bäckstrand et al., 2017). In contrast, exclusive orchestration seeks only to engage likeminded partners in pursuit of a shared goal, seeking effectiveness without striving for inclusion, i.e. focusing only on output legitimacy at the expense of input and throughput legitimacy, thereby undermining the ability of a polycentric regime to *"ensure that no one is left behind"* (Jordan et al., 2018 p.13).

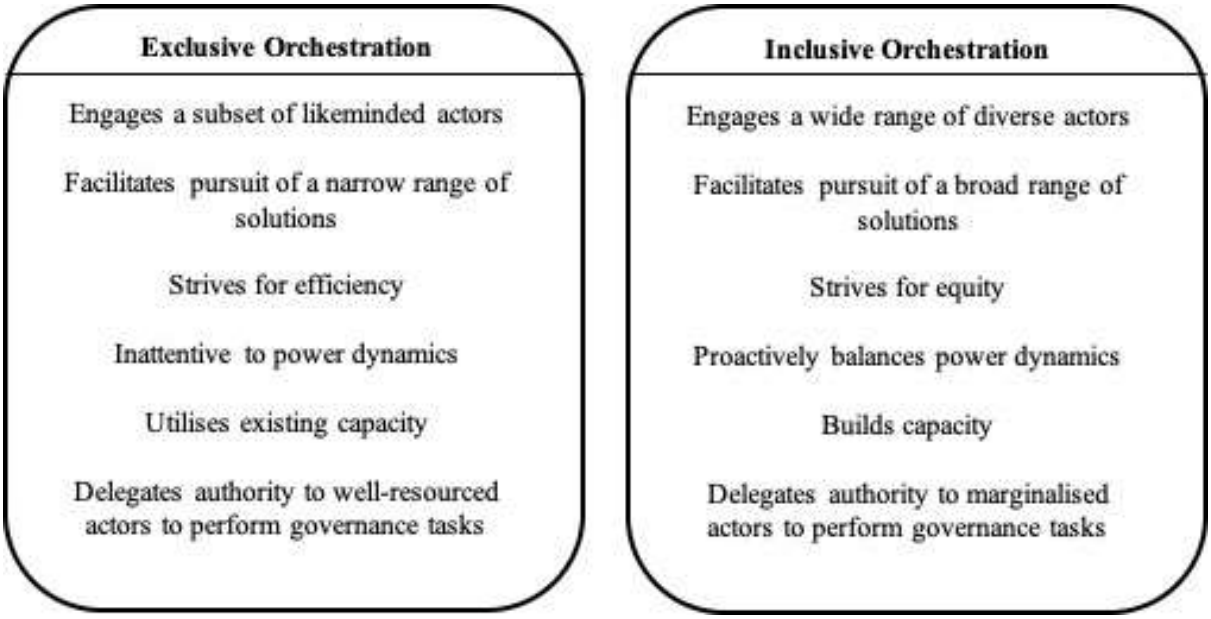

Figure 3. Characteristics of exclusive and inclusive orchestration.

Conference participation vs. participation in orchestration initiatives

Finally, our results identify a series of challenges that youth face in UNFCCC conferences which may be acting as barriers or deterrents to their participation in orchestrated initiatives. This includes the finding that a hierarchy remains between SAs and NSAs, reinforced by youth and the other NSAs they interact with, meaning that many youth participants still prioritise attempts to influence the intergovernmental negotiations (either through lobbying or protest) rather than participating in orchestration initiatives (with the exception of ACE which we propose is an overlooked example). Our results indicate that youth participants have limited awareness of, and engagement in, most UNFCCC orchestrated activities and no involvement in their design. They continue to regard themselves as observers on the side-lines rather than occupying a central role at the heart of the Post-Paris regime as some scholars have suggested (Chan et al., 2015, Hale, 2016). This may exacerbate feelings of powerlessness, increasing eco-anxiety which is already prevalent among younger generations, stifling ongoing engagement (Ojala, 2012; Threadgold, 2012). Whilst we recognise that youth experiences may not be

representative of all NSAs in the UNFCCC, our results suggest that the unspoken hierarchy our participants speak of shapes the behaviour of others and likely has wider impact.

Our final contribution is therefore to suggest a formal distinction between the celebrated rise in NSA initiatives orchestrated by the UNFCCC (e.g. Hale, 2016) and the rise in NSA participation in UNFCCC conferences (Cabré, 2011, Neeff, 2013). These two phenomena, easily conflated on account of their similar timescales, shared spaces, and to some extent shared participants, should be differentiated so as not to obfuscate where authority actually lies in the global climate regime. This challenges the assumption that diverse participation in UNFCCC conferences equates to diverse input into and legitimacy of orchestration efforts. Previous work has warned that NSA activities can detract from state accountability, facilitating neoliberal roll-back from states striving to minimise their governance profiles (Okereke and Coventry, 2016). We thus draw attention again to the accountability of SAs for delivery of the Paris Agreement, rather than passing the burden onto youth and/or other NSAs.

Conclusion

Drawing upon deep ethnographic engagement with youth participants in the UNFCCC, we address an empirical gap in the literature relating to this largely overlooked NSA constituency. We find that the prestige of UNFCCC conference attendance mobilises young newcomers to climate change governance and helps them overcome barriers to their participation. However, within the UNFCCC, youth participants face several constraints including lack of institutional memory, high turnover and power asymmetries. We suggest the UNFCCC could do more to empower youth and other marginalised NSAs to better engage with the intergovernmental negotiations and with initiatives orchestrated for NSAs.

Informed by contemporary debates in environmental governance, we also explore whether the input and throughput legitimacy of the UNFCCC as an orchestrator of the global climate

governance regime is increased by NSA participation in UNFCCC conferences, drawing upon youth participants as a case study to answer this question. We find that youth participants have limited engagement with UNFCCC orchestrated initiatives, challenging the assumption that the UNFCCC pluralises input into orchestrated climate action by including its diverse conference attendees, and calling into question its throughput legitimacy i.e. how decision-making processes occur. These findings are important because, just as the diversity of conference attendees lends input legitimacy to UNFCCC negotiations (Rietig, 2016), it also bolsters the sociological legitimacy of initiatives orchestrated by COP presidencies and the UNFCCC Secretariat.

As the largest convenor of actors interested in global climate governance, the UNFCCC is a logical and pragmatic choice to take on the orchestration of NSA initiatives. However, our results suggest that youth, and perhaps other marginalised NSA groups, need additional support to engage with these initiatives on a level playing field. We thus make a conceptual distinction between exclusive and inclusive orchestration, the latter going beyond establishing an initiative to proactively balancing power dynamics between participants and enhancing opportunities for transparency, deliberation and accountability. This is necessary to ensure that less powerful actors are not further marginalised by the narrowing of policy solutions around contributions that only well-resourced NSAs actors can make. An inclusive approach to UNFCCC orchestration could help to overcome power dynamics between states as well as between NSAs and to establish a fairer, more democratically legitimate climate change regime.

Echoing the youth submission to the High-Level Champions (CliMates, 2016) we recommend, as a starting point, that orchestrators take greater steps to communicate upcoming opportunities for NSAs, with timely information shared with all constituencies in language which is easy to understand, making initiatives more accessible for conference newcomers. Again, echoing the

wishes of youth participants, we urge that orchestrators consider social as well as economic and environmental aspects of climate action, recognising the importance of pursuing diverse solutions and diversifying input. For this to be a success, orchestrators, such as the Secretariat and COP presidencies, need to be more proactive in maintaining a healthy balance of power and building capacity of "weaker" constituencies.

Further research should assess whether other marginalised NSAs are participating in UNFCCC orchestrated initiatives with fuller consideration of what input and throughput legitimacy should look like in the Post-Paris climate regime (Bäckstrand et al., 2017), whilst also exploring output legitimacy and possible tensions between efficiency-oriented and inclusive approaches to climate governance. We also argue that increased granularity (e.g. through ethnographic, qualitative methods) is needed to determine whether *all* NSAs in the UNFCCC are experiencing an enhanced role in global climate governance in the Post-Paris era. Finally, we propose that COP Presidencies and the UNFCCC Secretariat could do more to improve democratic legitimacy by actively supporting less well-resourced NSAs and redressing power imbalances to ensure that no one is left behind in the Post-Paris era of global climate governance.

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