

The influence of academics on the political dynamics of international negotiations

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Abstract

How can academics influence the political dynamics of international negotiations towards effective outcomes and improve earth system governance? How can they communicate the policy implications of their research findings effectively to government representatives? Pointing with scientific evidence towards the negative consequences of global problems such as climate change is necessary, but not sufficient to influence international negotiations towards an effective agreement or improve earth system governance. Academics are nongovernmental actors who can influence negotiations by assuming advisory roles with insider-status towards government representatives by either advising government delegations or joining them as scientific advisors and negotiators. Most participating academics remain observers to the process or seek to provide input by presenting their research findings. Thus, their influence on negotiations is not homogenous across issues and negotiation sessions. It depends on the strategies academics use to gain access to the policy-makers on the national and international level. This paper examines the influence of academics on the international climate negotiations between 2009 and 2011. It presents research findings with an analytical framework useful for determining the influence of academics on international negotiations and improving their effectiveness in bringing their message across to policymakers. Academic influence depends on (1) when in the negotiation cycle academics provide input with the highest influence before the national position is formed, (2) on their personal capabilities like expertise and reputation, (3) on their policy-entrepreneurial activities and (4) their personal network to government delegates and especially their ability to become insiders with access to negotiation text.

Keywords: Experts, international negotiations, boundary work, United Nations, climate politics, epistemic communities, advice, UNFCCC

Introduction

Academics acting as experts have been identified as important actors in shaping political decisions in many areas of ‘low politics’ such as environment, climate change, sustainable development, human rights or trade across multiple levels of governance (Andresen and Skodvin, 2000; Biermann, 2001; 2002; Gulbrandsen, 2008; Jasanoff, 1990; Owens, 2010). These global challenges are highly complex without an ‘easy fix’ that could be delivered by one country alone. Consequently, they require international cooperation, evidence-based decision making and especially in-depth specialized knowledge to determine countries’ national interests and enable them to negotiate successfully with other actors - thus making expert input very relevant. Pointing towards the problem of climate change and providing scientific evidence is absolutely crucial, but it is not sufficient to influence policy making towards implementing a solution. Natural and social scientists frequently wonder how they can best present their research findings to maximize the impact of their policy implications (Earth under Pressure Conference, 3/2012). Yet, it is very difficult to navigate the complex decision making structures of environmental governance that are dominated by vested interests, political negotiations and bargaining among stakeholder groups and a social construction of science. This contribution examines how policymakers make use of scientific evidence and the involvement of scientific expertise in international environmental negotiations at the example of the climate change negotiations between 2009 and 2011.

Expert influence on the domestic level is well understood. Especially scientific advisory groups have attracted considerable academic attention with case studies on their influence on environmental and climate policy-making in developing countries,

especially in India (Biermann, 2001; 2002), and in industrialized countries such as Norway and Sweden (Gulbrandsen, 2008); the United Kingdom (Owens, 2010) and the United States (Jasanoff, 1990). There are few studies examining expert influence on the international level (Biermann, 2001; 2002; Skodvin, 2000) although the interdependence between policy-making on the international and the national level has been widely recognized (Keohane, 1984/2005; Putnam, 1988). The literature on non-governmental actors made progress on measuring specific actor's influence on specific negotiation topics in specific environmental conferences, including scientific experts (Betsill and Corell, 2008).

The academic literature identified external factors under which experts are more likely to change the process or outcome of international environmental negotiations. These include the relevance of scientific evidence in relation to the negotiation stage, which matters more when technocratic details are negotiated than on those stages of negotiations when political interests dominate (Andresen and Skodvin, 2000; Humphreys, 2008), if the negotiations are about a general agreement to deal with an arising global problem or about specific, costly implementation measures (Betsill and Corell, 2008) and the level to which scientific evidence is consensual and neutral or contested (Shakley and Skodvin, 1995; Skodvin, 2000).

Between those strands of literature gaps remain that are addressed in this contribution. First, the question arises if not only these outside factors representing a political-institutionalist and political-economy perspective (Gulbrandsen, 2008) matter, but what role internal and thereby individual factors play. How do experts outside scientific advisory groups provide input to decision-making on the international level more directly? And most crucially, are there factors that make their input more credible and relevant to government representatives?

This paper contributes to filling the gap in the literature regarding these individual factors on the international level. The key research question is what individual factors and conditions *enable* an expert to make a contribution to international negotiations that is *regarded* as relevant and useful by government delegates. Consequently, this contribution focuses on the *internal prerequisites*, i.e. the underlying factors and conditions for experts to influence negotiations, not on measuring influence itself. The key finding is that individual factors matter in how well experts communicate their findings to government representatives and as how useful the expert input is regarded. Individual expert input matters if government representatives perceive them as trustworthy and ‘neutral’ actors, if experts make use of their personal networks to government representatives early on in the negotiation process and act as policy entrepreneurs, actively promoting their research findings.

The first sections of this article define who can be regarded as ‘expert’, provide an overview of the relevant literature on the influence of experts and outline the methodology used. The next section presents the empirical findings of the case study on the input of experts in the UNFCCC 2009-2011 negotiations with regard to the central research questions of how exactly experts matter in international negotiations. It discusses being perceived as ‘neutral’ by government delegates as key factor, what stands in contrast to expert advice as involving “social construction, boundary work, and the politics of scientific knowledge” (Jasanoff, 1990: 37).

Understanding the nature of expert participation

Experts are individuals with in-depth knowledge in a defined field based on extensive knowledge accumulation through research, study or work experience. They

are actively engaged in scientific inquiry and contribute to knowledge by disseminating their findings. They work for research institutes or in higher education and are members of an epistemic community related to their specific field (Haas, 1992).

The input of experts in the UNFCCC negotiations can be analyzed from three theoretical angles: by framing experts as members of distinct epistemic communities (Adler and Haas 1992; Haas 1990; 1992; Jasanoff 1990; Radaelli 1995; Stone 2000; Zito 2001), by understanding experts as individual policy entrepreneurs (Roberts and King, 1991; Young and Mendizabal, 2009) and from a global governance perspective that identifies experts as non-governmental actors alongside environmental activists and business councils (Betsill and Corell, 2008; Auer, 1998).

Epistemic communities consist of experts sharing normative, principled and causal beliefs based on consensual knowledge with common notions of validity or a common policy project that draws on shared values, interests and a commitment to produce and apply knowledge (Haas, 1992: 2). Epistemic communities provide input to international negotiations not only on the international, but also on the domestic level (Putnam, 1988) via actively participating in the policy process. The impact of these communities on the national position becomes institutionalized (Haas, 1992: 3). State representatives provide input on the international level reflecting the national position based on values, thereby competing with other states' interests to form the basis of international behavior (Adler and Haas 1992, 373-374).

To understand how individual experts can provide input to the negotiations, it can be useful to frame expert involvement from a policy-entrepreneurial perspective. Policy entrepreneurs are individuals “who work from outside the formal governmental system to introduce, translate, and implement innovative ideas into public sector practice” (Roberts and King, 1991: 152). Individual policy entrepreneurs who are

members of epistemic communities can play a significant role in educating decision-makers on new policy approaches or ideas (Stone, 2000: 51). Characteristics of policy entrepreneurs are their high level of innovation (Roberts and King, 1991) and their pro-activeness in promoting their policy objectives (Schneider and Teske, 1992). They are characterised as “political fixers” with a deep understanding of political dynamics, awareness of the key players and a clear intent to influence the process (Young and Mendizabal, 2009: 2). Policy entrepreneurs make use of their networks (Zito, 2001) in their active endeavor to convince other actors of the importance to agree to the policy proposal (Van der Steen and Groenewegen, 2009). Thus ‘expert’ policy entrepreneurs act as knowledge brokers and ‘teachers’, actively promoting the advantages of the policy proposal (Bomberg, 2007). Unless experts regularly work for governments and thus represent their government delegation at the international negotiation, they are usually individual nongovernmental actors (Betsill and Corell, 2008) participating to influence the negotiations in line with their research findings.¹

Experts play very distinct roles in international environmental negotiations and can be found in most types of negotiation groups: as state representatives, as members of research and independent NGOs or with interest groups such as environmental NGOs (Stone, 2000; Young and Mendiazabal, 2009). In a domestic context, they contribute to policy making in individual capacity or as members of scientific advisory bodies, frequently in response to decisions taken within international negotiations (Biermann, 2001; 2002) such as the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol into European and UK climate policy (Owens, 2010).

To participate as delegate at an UN conference, experts need to join a delegation. The delegation membership stands in direct relation to the potential input as the

¹ At UNFCCC, the vast majority of nongovernmental actors participates to observe the negotiations or to network. These actors are not taken into account as they do not seek to influence the negotiations.

opportunities to communicate the research findings to government delegates are not equally distributed across the categories of government-, intergovernmental- and non-governmental organization representatives based on their different access and participation rights. Among non-governmental delegations experts can either join special interest groups with advisory function (Gulbrandsen and Andresen, 2004) such as environmental NGOs, business councils and trade unions, or represent a university or research institute. Delegation membership is predominantly determined by which organization the expert regularly works for or is affiliated with. If the expert works for a government department, s/he is most likely to represent the respective country. However, if the expert works for an university or interest non-governmental organization, s/he could also join a government delegation.

In any case, experts do not lose their personal qualification and their specialized knowledge on a certain negotiation issue. However, the delegation the expert has joined may require representation of the organization's official position regardless whether it coincides with the expert's research findings or not. Yet, in exchange for the loyalty of representing the official government delegation's position, the expert has better opportunities for communicating research findings to decision-makers within the delegation (Betsill and Corell, 2008). Thereby the expert is in a better position to change the negotiation position than if the expert were to join a research or independent nongovernmental delegation. These allow participating in a personal capacity as expert without an official delegation or research community position, but do not offer the same privileged access to communicate with government delegates.

Many studies regard experts and nongovernmental actors in general as influential actors in international environmental negotiations (Andresen and Skodvin, 2000; Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004; Humphreys, 2008; Stone, 2005), but few discuss

individual factors and strategies how experts are more likely to successfully input their research findings to inform government decisions. The following section presents key findings from the data collection and analysis on how experts provide input and how the decision-makers in the international climate change negotiations between 2009 and 2011 have perceived their input. Four key indicators emerged which suggest that the input of experts was neither homogenous nor unique to specific cases or negotiations, but rather depends on the strategies, capabilities and timing of individual experts acting in networks other than their specific epistemic community.

Input by experts on climate negotiations (2009 – 2011)

Climate change is like environmental degradation a typical field of ‘low politics’ and has emerged as a key challenge of the 21st century on the global agenda next to poverty alleviation (Stern, 2006). The international climate negotiations are a suitable case study choice as they display most central characteristics for expert involvement identified as relevant by the academic literature: scientific evidence plays an important role as basis for decision-making (Skodvin, 2000), it involves scientific uncertainty (IPCC, 2007; Thompson, 2010) and collective action problems as for most public goods with short-term national costs and long-term global benefits (Ostrom, 1990; Stern, 2006; Andresen and Skodvin, 2000). The negotiations are complex and require specialized knowledge given the diverse technical issues involved such as carbon accounting for land use changes, monitoring and verifying of emissions, market-based instruments, climate finance and technology transfer (Depledge, 2005). The UNFCCC can be regarded as typical UN negotiation setting with 194 countries

represented. The failure to agree official rules of procedure has left the UNFCCC with working rules of procedure that effectively grant every country a veto, therefore the need to gain consensus is especially central (Kjellen, 2007).

Methodology

The case study is based on empirical data collected by the author between 2009 and 2011. The dataset includes 48 semi-structured interviews with government representatives on how they perceive and use the input of experts (at least two interviews with representatives from each negotiation bloc), 46 structured and semi-structured interviews with experts participating in the negotiations on how they communicate their findings to government representatives (33 identified themselves as academics, 13 as academics who participated in special interest NGOs) and participant observation of 84 negotiation sessions and instances of interaction between experts and government representatives at UNFCCC such as stakeholder forums. All interviewees were selected randomly based on their visible contribution to the negotiations (participant list and active involvement identified through observation). To encourage the necessary open and unbiased responses, the identity of all interviewees has been anonymized and the information they provided is reported in attribution to their delegation or negotiation bloc.

The UNFCCC climate change negotiations between 2009 and 2011

Despite the efforts of climate diplomats to achieve a comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement limiting the emissions of greenhouse gases to sustainable levels (IPCC, 2007; Stern, 2006), heads of states discarded the extensive but inconclusive

proposals prepared and a small group of states drafted the Copenhagen Accords at the *Conference of the Parties-15* (COP) in December 2009 (UNFCCC 2009). Experts and other nongovernmental actors provided continued input at COP-16 in Cancun/ Mexico and COP-17 in Durban/ South Africa (UNFCCC 2010c; UNFCCC 2011a; 2011b).

The negotiation process of the UNFCCC evolves around the major annual meeting, the COP, and three to four preparatory meetings. In these meetings, diplomats and national experts meet on the technocratic level discussing negotiation topics in their specific sub-fields of expertise within their given negotiation mandate. Between 2009 and 2011, the UNFCCC negotiation process was organized into four major negotiation streams with issue-related sub contact groups: the *Ad-hoc working group on further commitments for Annex-I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol* (AWG-KP), the *Ad-hoc working group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention* (AWG-LCA), the *Subsidiary Body for Implementation* (SBI) and the *Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice* (SBSTA). Each group, which is further split into contact groups, works on negotiation text relating to the tasked specific issues such as climate finance, technology transfer, forestry and measuring, reporting and verification of emissions. This negotiation text is forwarded to the political level, the meeting of the ministers or heads of states at the COP. Many observers regarded COP-15 as a failure with negative predictions for the future of the climate regime (Thompson, 2010) as evolving towards a more disintegrated regime complex or building blocks (Falkner et al., 2010; Keohane and Victor 2011) given the failure to negotiate the expected comprehensive, legally binding post-2012 climate treaty capable of limiting global warming to 2°C. Others are more optimistic and see the Copenhagen Accords as first step towards a climate treaty taking effect in the coming years (Jacobs, 2012).

‘Neutrality’ as key to expert input being regarded as relevant

While some nongovernmental constituencies within the UNFCCC such as Environmental NGOs or Business and Industry NGOs engage in advocacy for their objectives either as organization or in close collaboration within their negotiation blocs, experts as members of Research and Independent NGOs occupy a distinct position given that government delegates characterize their representatives as impartial, neutral normative authorities (48 interviews, 2009-2012). The information they provide is regarded as unbiased towards serving certain interests (Interview with delegate from AOSIS 10/4/2010; EU1 10/4/2010; EU2 7/11/2011; Germany 12/12/2009; Ireland 12/12/2009; Japan 12/12/2009; LDC1 11/4/2010). Thus, government delegates attribute the highest credibility to input by ‘neutral’ experts who represent a university or research institute as compared to experts representing an interest group such as an Environmental NGO (Interviews with 48 government representatives, 2009-2011):

We regularly consult with researchers from think tanks and universities, at rare occasions also from environmental NGOs. The problem with environmental NGOs is that they are often biased, and therefore the information they are providing is not as useful as the information provided by experts representing research and independent NGOs, who are neutral.

(EU1, 10/4/2010)

This empirical research finding of government delegates’ positivist view regarding experts does not match the academic literature on the issue. From a constructivist point of view knowledge is frequently contested and its presentation is influenced by underlying values and shared beliefs among members of an epistemic community (Haas 2001; 2004). Knowledge is not necessarily objective or neutral (Jasanoff, 1990; Young and Mendizabal 2009), especially in its policy implications (Sharman and

Holmes 2010). Some epistemic communities frame nuclear power, carbon capture and storage, geo-engineering and biofuels as solutions. How well risks, uncertainties and costs to other generations, populations or ecosystems are communicated and framed in the discourse can have a major impact on how politically viable and socially acceptable these approaches are perceived. Furthermore, experts need to be aware that their research findings may be framed as politically favorable by environmental activist groups, industry or governments as they may scientifically underpin and legitimize political objectives (Haas 2004; Gulbrandsen 2008), thus potentially leading to an uneasy relationship (Underdal, 2000). Consequently knowledge is not necessarily objective and neutral, but can also be contested and used strategically to advocate certain solutions favored by an epistemic community (Haas, 2004; Jasanoff, 1990).

Combined with the finding that experts at UNFCCC do not form one epistemic community, but are rather individual representatives of different epistemic communities, questions of accountability and transparency need to be addressed (Mason, 2005; Jasanoff, 2012) as the line towards lobbying and advocacy (Gulbrandsen and Andreassen 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998) may be blurred. This may happen intentionally in the case of experts working for government, industry or special interest NGOs (Jasanoff, 1997) as the experts have to represent the official position of their employer, or unintentionally in the case of experts who participate via research and independent NGOs in their personal capacity (Jasanoff, 1990).

The self-understanding of the interviewed experts who participated at the UNFCCC negotiations between 2009 and 2011 was closer to the constructivist, political-institutional perspective of science that is framed in a certain way and rarely exists in a 'neutral' vacuum (Jasanoff, 1990). In the structured and semi-structured interviews 28 percent of experts identified themselves as both academics working at an

university or research institute, and as engaged with environmental NGOs or other interest groups. However, most experts also regarded themselves as personally convinced holding underlying beliefs coinciding with the expertise they contribute to the negotiations (Interviews with 46 experts, 2009-2011).

The government delegates' point of view could be understood as engaging in 'boundary work'. Scientists involved in the policy-making process are known to resort to boundary work, which refers to ascribing their work in a binary science-policy continuum to the science-end as purely scientific to shield it from political interests and being used as justification for pre-existing political objectives at the policy-making end of the continuum (Haas, 2004: 571; Jasanoff, 1990; 1997). Within the UNFCCC government and experts alike emphasize boundaries. Both distinguish between the technocratic expert level where civil servants from the relevant government departments represent the country in specialized working groups (EU5, 7/12/2011; EU6, 6/12/2011) and the negotiations on the political high-level where ministers or heads of states themselves represent their country on the overall political objectives.

By emphasizing the importance of 'neutral' experts as advisors and taking a positivist point of view, government representatives are engaging in similar 'boundary work' (Jasanoff, 1990; 1997). One end of the continuum are the (from other governments or interest groups) independent experts without their own negotiation objectives providing reliable, 'true' scientific input as credible, unbiased authority. The other end of the continuum are 'lobbyists', representatives of interest groups who may have expertise on the issue or not. Their input is regarded as biased in support of their specific negotiation objective and usually treated with special caution. The interviewed government representatives decisively framed the key factor for defining someone as an expert with accordingly high impact on their position as an individual, usually an aca-

demic working for an university or research institute, who has ‘neutral, scientific knowledge to contribute’ (Interviews with government representatives, 2009-2012).

In conclusion, the key factor for experts to be regarded by government representatives as providing input to the international climate negotiations is according to government representatives their status as ‘neutral’ experts providing advise and support to the national delegations or negotiation blocs. Thereby they set up a binary boundary between the ‘neutral’ and trustworthy experts and the ‘biased’ lobbyists from special interest groups. Yet the experts themselves hold a more balanced view and understand themselves as individual actors with a certain expertise, which is inherently socially constructed (Jasanoff, 1990). The following sections analyze further key factors that determine whether and how scientific input is used by government representatives in international climate negotiations. To this end, they provide a detailed insight into the strategies of experts used in the UNFCCC negotiations between 2009 and 2011. The results point towards the importance of how experts present their findings to government representatives and when they approach them, i.e. their strategies, capabilities and timing.

Input as epistemic community or individual experts?

There are two ways for experts to contribute to the negotiations, either via submitting research findings to the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) process or by direct involvement into the negotiation process. The IPCC’s Fourth Assessment report (IPCC, 2007) had a high impact on the climate negotiations between 2009 and 2011. The research findings of scientists regarding climate change

and recommendations to keep global temperature increase below 2°C to avoid tipping points leading to irreversible environmental changes was received by governments. Countries agreed on the 2°C target in the Copenhagen Accords, Cancun Agreements and Durban Outcome (UNFCCC, 2009; 2010c; 2011a; 2011b), referring in their speeches in various contact groups under the AWG-LCA, but especially the AWG-KP frequently to this target as ‘the needed emission reductions recommended by science’ (ENB 2009; 2010; 2011). To reduce the negative consequences of climate change for vulnerable regions such as small island states, the IPCC report recommended limiting GHG concentrations to the equivalent of 350ppm CO₂ in the atmosphere, corresponding with a 1.5°C target. Small island states and poor developing countries used this scientific advice to form their position on limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C (ENB 2009; 2010; 2011). Consequently, experts provided input to the negotiations via the IPCC, which informed the negotiation positions of states and demands for strong mitigation targets, thus becoming a central outcome of the negotiation texts in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

However, it remains difficult to transfer the politically agreed targets into legally binding agreements and to raise individual countries’ ambition to meet this political target. Here direct expert involvement into the decision-making process can play a facilitating role. The remainder of this article focuses on direct involvement of experts (who are not regularly working for governments) into the negotiation process by communicating with government delegates on the national or international level.

Most experts who directly participate in the negotiations are affiliated with the Research and Independent NGO constituency, while some are also affiliated with interest NGO constituencies. The Research and Independent NGO constituency at UNFCCC is the third largest constituency. Its members are universities, research in-

stitutes and think tanks. Their delegates can be characterized as interested students, researchers and established experts predominantly observing and networking with each other. Many established experts contribute by providing research input and advice to government delegations. Delegates of Research and Independent NGOs do not represent a unified position on an issue as members of one epistemic community would (Participant observation Copenhagen 2009 and Bonn 2011; structured interviews RINGOs 1-46 6/2010). Experts providing input to the climate negotiations neither necessarily belong to the same epistemic community that shares norms and beliefs regarding a specific issue area (Haas, 1992: 2) nor act as explicit representatives of their epistemic community by communicating a common position (RINGO 2010a; RINGO 1-46 6/2010; RINGO 39 11/12/2009; and participant observation, Bonn 6/2011). They participate as representatives of their university or research institute as means of gaining access to the negotiations.

Other than *Environmental NGOs* (Interview with YOUNGO1 11/6/2011; McGregor 2009), experts who are Research and Independent NGO representatives usually do not meet beforehand in their delegation or epistemic community to coordinate their input or agree on a common position to represent throughout the negotiations. In June 2011 the Mexican and South African UNFCCC presidencies organized a series of dialogues with stakeholders around the Bonn Climate Talks on mitigation, adaptation and other issues. The stakeholder dialogue on mitigation resulted in the key messages that public-private climate financing, involvement of local governments and increasing Annex-1 parties' ambition for GHG reduction were central to mitigation (Yamin and Rambharos 2011). The workshop included diplomats from different negotiation groups and representatives of each NGO-constituency. The three Research and Independent NGO representatives were selected by the constituency's

steering committee based on their willingness to participate and the contribution they could make to the discussions, while there was no need to get a negotiation mandate from either the expert's institution or the wider Research and Independent NGO community besides the understanding to act as neutral facilitators (Participant observation 6/2011; Yamin and Rambharos 2011).

There is no hierarchical structure as in government delegations or other non-governmental constituencies such as the highly organized *Climate Action Network*. Every delegate from a research institution can participate in the regular meetings of the Research and Independent NGO constituency organized by the steering committee. These meetings serve the purpose of exchanging information about the negotiations and organizational issues, providing contact points to the UNFCCC secretariat and function as forum for open invitations to participate in working groups such as the formulation of a statement or representation of the constituency in stakeholder forums. Even these representative functions are ad-hoc inputs of individuals who share the objective to be neutral observers of the negotiation process, driven by individual initiative and pro-active involvement (RINGO 39 11/12/2009; participant observation Copenhagen 12/2009 and Bonn 6/2011). In conclusion, experts participating as delegates within the Research and Independent NGO constituency share the values and norms of objective, peer-reviewed research and commitment to scientific inquiry out of their self-understanding. They do not coordinate while participating in the UNFCCC negotiations as an epistemic community with shared objectives and issue areas would. Experts at UNFCCC are individual actors pursuing their own scientific interests.

Why timing matters

Experts can influence different levels of the negotiation cycle (see Adler and Haas 1992; Putnam 1988), which can be described as five central segments and has similarities with the policy cycle (Everett 2003). The first step in the negotiation cycle is recognition of the problem and agenda setting on the national level. After the consultation and capacity building phase, the national position is formed. Once decided, this position is very difficult to change (Interview AOSIS 10/4/2010; EU1 10/4/2010; Germany 12/12/2009; Ireland 12/12/2009; Latin America 11/4/2010). Governments carry their national position into the regional organization meetings, where a negotiation bloc position is formed, such as within the EU, African Union, *Alliance of Small Island States* (AOSIS) or the Umbrella Group. Most join a larger negotiation bloc like the G77+China group, where they form a common position in complex negotiations (LDC2 11/4/2010; Umbrella Group 11/4/2010; Vanuatu 17/12/2009).

The negotiation cycle demonstrates how crucial it is *when* experts communicate their input to government delegates. Expert input can be most easily taken on before the government formed its position on an issue and the national parliament ratified it. In the EU this happens via informal consultations with experts in workshops and conferences such as the ‘Engaging with Africa’ conference organized by the European Commission in October 2011. This roundtable meeting focused on long-term perspectives and offered a non-negotiation setting for exchange among European and African negotiators to more freely explore common positions and receive input from experts based at Sciences-Po Paris and Bonn University (European Commission, 2011). Ministries frequently commission studies from

research institutes on specific negotiation topics such as climate finance or adaptation and invite leading experts to serve on national climate change advisory committees such as the Indian Expert Committee (Biermann, 2001; 2002; EU1, 10/4/2010; EU12, 26/7/2012; Japan, 12/12/2009; Latin America, 11/10/2010; RINGO 45,3/10/2012).

Expert input is more likely to be useful in these early stages of the negotiation cycle on the domestic level as their input is taken into account for formulating the national position. Interviewees identified a number of factors that can hinder the expert input from being taken on by governments. Complex domestic decision-making structures can result in inter-institutional bargaining. High existing negotiation expertise and scientific capabilities within the government institutions can reduce the need for external input. Contradictory political interests can also result in governments ignoring evidence (Sharman and Holmes, 2010; Interview AOSIS 10/4/2010; EU1 10/4/2010; Germany 12/12/2009; LDC1 11/4/2010; Umbrella Group 11/4/2011; Vanuatu 17/12/2009):

We especially need their input early in the process, directly after the last COP when we sort out the negotiation results and try to decide on our position for the next year. This position is then discussed with other governments in the European Council and then we agree on an EU position.

(Ireland 12/12/2009)

Once the position is formed and confirmed by common positions inside the negotiation bloc, it is extremely difficult to change (AOSIS 10/4/2010; EU1 10/4/2010; EU2, 7/11/2011; Germany 12/12/2009; Ireland 12/12/2009; Latin America 11/4/2010; Umbrella Group 11/4/2011). Thus expert input early on in the negotiation cycle is regarded as most useful by government delegates as they can more readily incorporate it into their negotiation position.

Personal capabilities, policy entrepreneurial strategies and networks

How effectively experts communicate their research findings to government representatives depends on their personal capabilities and the strategies they pursue. The majority of experts who attend UNFCCC negotiations only observe, network or conduct research.² This section focuses on experts seeking to have an impact on the negotiations. Objectives and motivations are most commonly facilitating an outcome that contributes to limiting the negative consequences of climate change to levels recommended by the IPCC in their specific areas of expertise, which can include market mechanisms, peat lands, capacity-building for developing countries, climate justice or nationally appropriate mitigation actions. Furthermore, experts try to change government's position on an issue or contribute to the negotiation text (RINGO 2, 5, 7, 17, 20, 24, 28, 30, 35, 6/2010).

Input to the negotiations can be most obviously provided through side events, publications and engaging in capacity-building activities with governments, especially from developing countries. Many experts and their institutions distribute hard copies of their publications at exhibition booths such as the World Resource Institute and the University of California or are engaged in side events such as the Overseas Development Institute on the effectiveness of climate financing; the University of Leeds on the economics of low carbon cities; and the University of Oxford on climate vulnerabilities in island states (UNFCCC, 2011c). The effectiveness of side events depends on the stage of the negotiations as government delegates rarely find time to attend except if progress in the negotiations is slow (participant observation 12/2009; 6/2011).

² RINGOs 1-46, 2009-2012; the ratio of observers to advisors among experts depends on size and profile of the conference. COP-15 2009 experienced a peak in attending observers while smaller, lower-profile conferences such as the Bonn Climate Talks in 2010 and 2011 were predominantly attended by researchers and advisors; UNFCCC, 2010a, 2010b; and participant observation Bonn 4/2010, 6/2011.

Government delegations especially value expert input as means of capacity building,³ both before and during the negotiations. While also developed countries use experts as advisors, especially developing countries with limited resources rely on research input and capacity building to form their national position and prepare for the negotiations. Countries that lack domestic expertise such as smaller developing countries and island states especially profit from capacity building. Experts train government delegates on technical details and background knowledge such as accounting of land use changes, technology transfer and negotiation tactics (Interview AOSIS 10/4/2010; LDC 1 11/4/2010; LDC 2 11/4/2010; Nigeria 12/12/2009; RINGO 4 6/2010; RINGO 17, 6/2010; RINGO 40 10/4/2010; and RINGO 41 14/12/2009).

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

For technical details, we have expert advisors in EU delegations, especially where the ministries do not have the specialized expertise. We do not beg them to help us. We have a good relationship that is built on trust and personal relations with a number of experts, who frequently offer their opinions on proposals, provide us with data and policy recommendations. Usually they approach us with the information they have to offer, and we look at the information and use it to decide on our position (Ireland, 12/12/2009).

To influence government delegations, experts must proactively engage with the delegates in their policy network, either through capacity building, contributing to commissioned studies or consulting with government departments on other issues and

³ These experts are for example professors in country delegations from Boston University (Pakistan), Columbia University (Papua New Guinea), Greifswald University (Belarus), University of Lisbon/University of Southampton (European Community), Lund University (Netherlands), University of Western Australia (Australia), University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), University of Alberta (Canada), Tsinghua University (China) and Seoul National University (Republic of Korea), UNFCCC 2010a, 2010b.

networking at UNFCCC conferences.⁴ Influencing the negotiations based on their scientific findings also requires the use of windows of opportunities and building coalitions with like-minded government delegates. Experts that are most useful to government delegates are thus policy entrepreneurs who identify problems through their research, develop solutions in the form of policy implications and communicate those to the decision makers by brokering their ideas and entering into alliances via joining government delegations (Roberts and King, 1991; Roberts, 1992). This strategy requires a good understanding of the policy-making process, clear policy objectives and engagement with the policy-making community (Young and Mendizabal, 2009). While even those strategies do not guarantee that the input is taken on by government delegates, expert policy entrepreneurs can achieve the highest direct impact when they negotiate on behalf of a key actor and gain direct access to the negotiation text, such as this expert in the Japanese delegation at COP-15:

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

(Japan 12/12/2009)

While joining government delegations is the most effective way of influencing negotiations as individual expert, their neutrality is being contested when having to represent a national position that may lead to conflicts of interest with research findings. An alternative approach is contributing to the negotiations without joining government delegations. The Meridian Institute is a research institute that provides negotiation training and mediation to government delegates while its experts remain inde-

⁴ Interviews with EU1, 10/4/2010; EU2, 7/11/2011; Germany, 12/12/2009; Japan, 12/12/2009; Latin America, 11/4/2010; Umbrella Group, 11/4/2011; RINGO17 6/2010; RINGO27 6/2010; RINGO36, 6/2010; RINGO 41, 14/12/2009 confirm this conclusion.

pendent from the government delegations. This model allows individuals to act as policy entrepreneur with the required close policy networks and also to introduce negotiation text such as at COP-17, when delegates from the Meridian Institute were involved in drafting a ‘Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the CONGO Basin between Central African and Donor Countries’, which ultimately was supported by the European Union and other countries (EU7 7/12/2011).

Conclusion

The case study on expert influence on the UNFCCC negotiations between 2009 and 2011 illustrated the strategies of experts and the factors when government representatives regard their input as most useful and relevant to them. These individual factors are prerequisites that, depending on how well they are fulfilled, allow an expert to have a higher or lower impact on the negotiations via a research NGO, special interest NGO or government delegation. Individual impact of experts is determined by timing, personal capabilities, if they achieve ‘insider’ status as trusted member of a relevant government delegation and their policy-entrepreneurial capabilities. Yet, their main source of relevance as being regarded as ‘neutral’ by government delegates may place them into an uneasy relationship to these and other governments as they lose their status of ‘neutrality’ as soon as they become involved in the policy-making process by joining a government or special interest NGO delegation.

The findings point towards the importance of early on in the negotiation process before national positions are formed, re-visited or re-framed following the last major conference. Especially in this early phase decision-makers wonder what to do and

are grateful for expert advice if it is offered to them proactively, given the time constraints in their daily work. They may also call upon experts that provided sound and useful advice in the past. Once the national position has been formed, political interests dominate over technocratic expertise and the position becomes increasingly difficult to change before or during the international negotiations. This is made even more difficult if the national position needs to pass a parliamentary vote or a negotiation bloc position needs to be agreed.

Individual conditions and circumstances matter to increase the probability of the input being taken on by governments and carried into the international climate negotiations. Especially relevant are personal capabilities and policy-entrepreneurial strategies such as proactively and persistently approaching government delegates, offering expertise on relevant questions, forming personal networks and being ‘in the loop’ of information flow. Actively promoting research findings is crucial. This includes the obvious ways of information dissemination at side events and booths, but especially bringing the research findings closer to the government representatives via peer-reviewed open source publications that include executive summaries and policy implications, thus catering to their needs of precise and time-saving yet science-based and reliable information.

Expert advice is rather used by government representatives than input of interest NGOs because they are regarded as ‘neutral’ authorities by government providing ‘true’, scientific findings and useful support in the form of capacity building to the government delegations. This key research finding on how expert input is used is especially relevant given the different and perhaps on the side of experts unexpected engagement of government representatives into this kind of ‘boundary work’ (Jasanoff, 1990; 1997). Experts can quickly jump from one extreme of being regarded as

as ‘neutral’ advisor to a biased representative of special interests when they represent non-academic NGOs or governments with opposing interests and objectives.

Three points for further discussion emerge from this finding. First of all, how can the accountability of experts be improved given the tendency of government representatives to engage in boundary work and use scientific information to bypass deliberative processes and underpin their position as ‘what science demands’ (Jasanoff, 2012)? Secondly, experts need to find a balance between understanding themselves as actors with interests from a constructivist point of view (Jasanoff, 1990) and government’s tendency to boundary work. The peer-review process (Jasanoff, 2012), openness regarding diverging research findings and underlying assumptions certainly play a central role in this debate. Finally, the prerequisites for individual expert influence could be analyzed in other ‘low politics’ case studies to test the hypothesis that these factors matter across policy fields and are not specific to climate change negotiations.

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