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**NGO**

Introduction Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have long been recognized as crucial actors in global environmental politics. With their involvement in issues such as biodiversity and conservation, desertification, transboundary air pollution, and climate change, NGOs have become significant actors on the global stage (Betsill and Corell 2007; Finger and Prince 1994). The burgeoning literature on NGOs has highlighted their different roles in global environmental politics. For instance, they have been described as “agitators for environmental action, architects of governance solutions, and entrepreneurs for new sorts of initiatives” (O’Neill 2014: 26). Similarly, Betsill (2015: 251) describes NGOs involved in climate change governance as “activists raising awareness and calling for action; as diplomats working with governments to craft climate policies; and as governors developing new mechanisms for steering society towards a low-carbon future”. More generally, Nasiritousi (2016: 2) describes their roles as “shapers of information and ideas, brokers of knowledge, norms and initiatives, and doers of implementing policies and influencing behavior’s”. What all these accounts of NGO activities in the environmental field have in common is that NGOs are political actors with important roles to play in the governance of environmental issues (see also Burgiel and Wood 2012). What is sometimes not adequately highlighted, however, is the diversity in the types of actors that make up the NGO community seeking to address environmental issues. With some of the literature on the roles of NGOs mainly focusing on describing influential NGOs that work for the public good, it is often easy to forget that NGOs come in many shapes and sizes. Nasiritousi (2016) criticizes the often rosy view of NGOs in the literature and points out that different types of

NGOs fulfill various roles to different extents. This chapter examines NGOs that play a role in addressing environmental issues. While NGOs work at many levels, from the local to the global, the focus in this chapter will be on those that work at the international level. The definition of NGOs used in this chapter will thus be broad and follow the approach adopted by the UN when admitting observer organizations (see section below on Major Groups). The aim of the chapter is to provide an overview of categories of NGOs in this field, and to outline the range of approaches adopted by such NGOs, the strategies used, and their influence. Hence, the chapter discusses the plurality of NGOs involved in global environmental governance and the main paths through which they seek to influence outcomes. While the chapter examines NGOs involved in the area of environment and sustainable development in general, its empirical focus will be on NGOs that work in the realm of climate change governance. The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows. The next section outlines milestones in international efforts to address sustainable development and negotiate multilateral environmental agreements, and provides an overview of NGO involvement at these events. Next, the different types of NGOs are discussed, highlighting the diversity of NGOs and in general terms describing the range of approaches adopted by such NGOs. Subsequently, a more detailed analysis of the roles of NGOs in global climate change governance will be provided, with a discussion of NGO strategies used and their influence.

***NGOs in global climate change governance***

Governing climate change represents a defining challenge for the twenty-first century. Climate change has been depicted by scholars as a wicked problem, meaning that the problem resists resolution because of its complex nature and lack of simple solutions (Levin et al. 2012; Hoffmann 2011). Because the issue of climate change includes discussions about other political domains, such as energy, finance, food security, and health, it has attracted the involvement of a myriad of actors that “are operating across various scales, in different regions, and are seeking to mobilize a wide range of discourses, tools, techniques and practices in order to govern” (Bulkeley et al. 2014: 38). The defining features of global climate change governance are thus that it includes a range of actors, requires cooperation across multiple levels, and is transnational in scope. The governing of climate change therefore represents a microcosm of wider global environmental governance (Green 2013). Moreover, relevant for the purposes of this chapter, NGOs have had important roles to play in climate change governance from the start. While the history of climate change science dates to the 1800s, it was not until the latter parts of the twentieth century that this problem reached the international political agenda. Environmental as well as research-oriented NGOs, such as the Beijer Institute, the Environmental Defense Fund, the World Resources Institute, and the Woods Hole Research Center, were instrumental in placing climate change onto the international policy agenda (Betsill 2015). Through the organization of conferences where policy action to address the emerging consensus on climate change was called for, such NGOs managed at the end of the 1980s to prompt the international community to come up with a policy process to address climate change. In 1988, the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environment Program set up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in order to provide policy-makers with an assessment of the science on climate change.5 The IPCC allows for NGOs “qualified in matters covered by the IPCC” to participate in its sessions.6 Currently there are eighty-seven NGOs accredited, among which include such disparate organizations as the Third World Network, Wetlands International, and the World Coal Institute.

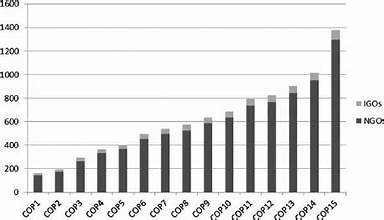


Figure 23.1 Cumulative admission of observer organizations

Having succeeded in raising awareness of the climate change problem, NGOs also got involved in the policy process to address the issue. At the Earth Summit in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was opened for signatures. Being tasked to formulate an international policy response to address climate change, the UNFCCC has turned into a key venue where the multilateral (state-centric) and the transnational (including NGO) arenas meet (Bäckstrand et al. 2017; Libran et al. 2017; Betsill 2015 and in terms of serving as a platform for the exchange of views and ideas amongst a range of stakeholders.

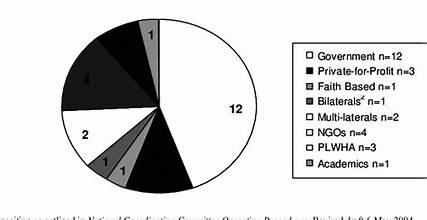


Figure 23.2 Constituency affiliation of admitted NGOs (as at December 2017)

***NGOs in climate diplomacy and beyond***

The literature has identified three broad paths through which NGOs can influence policy outcomes despite lacking legislative powers. First, NGOs can play a role in shaping policy outcomes by carrying out tasks mandated to them by states or by partnering with states to carry out governance activities. Second, NGOs can try to influence state policy through lobbying or advocacy. Third, NGOs can be entrepreneurial through independent action on the ground, for example by forming transnational governance initiatives with other non-state actors (Nasiritousi2016; Bulkeley et al. 2014; Green 2013). The area of climate change governance offers many examples of NGOs trying to pursue these paths. For example, forty-six NGOs have partnered with states and intergovernmental organizations to join the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) with the aim to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. Such NGOs include the Bellona Foundation and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.8 Another example of NGO involvement in a state-led climate change initiative is the NDC Partnership, which is a coalition of countries and international organizations that seek to drive ambitious climate action by mobilizing support for effective implementation of climate goals. This Partnership is hosted by the World Resources Institute and has ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability as an associate member.9 By partnering with states and intergovernmental organizations, NGOs obtain the opportunity to develop voluntary initiatives and contribute to implementing policies. This type of engagement, however, usually requires competencies or resources and is therefore not a path that is open to all types of NGOs.

Examples of the second type of path through which NGOs can influence policy outcomes are numerous. Both at the international climate change negotiations and beyond, many NGOs seek to lobby policy-makers and influence other actors through advocacy. Lobbying and advocacy take place at many levels (i.e., local, regional, international) and involve a range of strategies. According to Keck and Sikkink (1998), strategies range from information politics (i.e., generation and dissemination of relevant information), symbolic politics (i.e., the use of symbols and narratives to connect with various audiences), and leverage politics (i.e., putting pressure on or allying with stronger actors), to accountability politics (i.e., monitoring actions and holding actors to promises made, for example through naming and shaming tactics).

The third path through which NGOs can influence outcomes is by taking entrepreneurial action by establishing their own forms of climate initiatives together with other transnational actors. This type of activity thus does not rely on working with or influencing states, but has instead been described as “agency beyond the state” (Betsill 2015: 257). An example of such an NGO initiative is the Science-Based Targets Initiative, which is a collaboration between CDP, World Resources Institute, WWF, and the UN Global Compact and works with companies to set science-based targets for emission reductions.15 Another notable example is the GHG Protocol, which is the world’s most widely used standard for greenhouse gas accounting and was developed by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council on Sustainable

***References***

* **Constituency affiliation of admitted NGOs**
* **Cumulative admission of observer organizations**

***Conclusion***

This chapter has shown that NGOs are important actors in global environmental governance. NGOs contribute to global environmental governance in different ways and to different degrees by offering knowledge and expertise, moral arguments, and new ideas, and by taking action on implementing policies and assuming the role of stakeholders. The approaches used by NGOs, and ultimately their influence, depend in some part on their resources and their comparative advantages in terms of, for example, expertise, access to policy-makers, or the ability to join networks. The overall landscape of NGOs involved in global environmental governance is hence characterized by plurality, inequality, and contradictions. NGOs pursue different causes to varying degrees of success which raises important questions about the implications of the growing participation by NGOs in global environmental governance for issues of legitimacy and effectiveness. With the growing prominence of NGOs in global environmental governance, a key question that this chapter highlights is whether this development strengthens already strong actors or whether it provides opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard. The results from Nasiritousi et al.’s (2014) study indicate that mainstream voices dominate at the climate change conferences but that the plurality of actors ensures that some marginalized perspectives are heard that otherwise would risk being left out, perhaps showing that these two scenarios are not mutually exclusive. Further empirical work is, however, required to better understand the implications of the involvement of NGOs in global environmental governance on the legitimacy of evolving governance arrangements. Another important issue that remains unresolved is the implications of the growing participation by NGOs in global environmental governance on environmental outcomes.

The additional ideas, knowledge, and resources that NGOs bring to the table arguably contribute to enhancing environmental outcomes. On the other hand, the high degree of contestation within the NGO community (Betsill 2015; Nasiritousi et al. 2014; Duffy 2013) means that NGOs do not all pull in the same direction. While this may benefit global environmental governance in terms of adding to the plurality of voices, the high degree of contestation may also mean that different NGO efforts undermine each other, thereby reducing overall effectiveness. This is thus an issue where further empirical work is required. Given the considerable participation of NGOs in the contemporary global environmental governance landscape, the question concerning their effectiveness is not a yes or no issue.