

Read All About it!

A Comparative Media Analysis of Legitimation Arguments Around Minilateral and Multilateral Global Climate Governance Forums¹

Sylvia I. Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Lars Friberg
Wageningen University, Public Administration and Policy Group

Paper presented at the ECPR conference in Bordeaux, 4-7 September 2013

Introduction

International climate change governance has in recent years fragmented to a plethora of forums outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process where climate change and closely related issues are discussed (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee, 2013). Some of them are multilateral forums that are indirectly addressing climate change through addressing energy; in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and the biannual series of International Renewable Energy Conferences (IRECs) starting in Bonn in 2004. Others are ‘minilateral’² forums, like the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Energy and Climate (APP), the G8 or the Major Economies Meetings/Forums (MEM/F), that include only a small number of countries and while addressing climate change directly do so with a much more limited scope compared to the UNFCCC process (focusing for example primarily on technical solutions and mitigation and not adaptation).

These two categories of governance forums that address climate change directly or indirectly outside the UNFCCC regime can be seen as manifestations of fragmentation of this regime.³ Both categories face legitimacy challenges but for different reasons. The multilateral forums that address energy meet considerable resistance towards any energy governance at the global level (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, 2010; Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2012). This resistance means that global governance of energy has low or no legitimacy or justified authority, and the reason is most probably rooted in the historical links between energy and national security. The minilateral forums have met scepticism and resistance because they are seen as obstructing or thwarting the one process many states and civil society observers consider to be the only legitimate forum for addressing climate change, the UNFCCC

¹ This is an early draft where the analysis of the material is not yet finished, neither is interpreting and writing up

² The term minilateralism was coined by Moisés Naím, editor in chief of *Foreign Policy* in his 2009 article “Minilateralism - The magic number to get real international action” He argues that getting close to 200 countries to agree to anything substantial is futile, instead he advocates minilateralism; “a smarter, more targeted approach: We should bring to the table the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem”.

<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/18/minilateralism?page=0,0>

³ For a discussion on the concept of fragmentation in international governance see Biermann et al (Biermann et al., 2009)

(Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee, 2013).⁴ This means that there are issues about the appropriate home for global climate change governance and for global energy governance it is a question of whether it is appropriate at all.

There has been some work done on analysing the role and influence of a few of these forums the 'fragmented landscape' such as the APP (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and van Asselt, 2009; McGee and Taplin, 2008, 2009; Vihma, 2009), the G8 (Karlsson, 2009; Lesage et al., 2009), and the CSD (Kaasa, 2005; Wagner, 2003). Other forums such as the MEM/Fs and the IRECs have received little attention in the literature. However, there is almost no systematic analysis of the legitimacy of these forums, individually or in a comparative sense and yet legitimacy is an important source of influence in global governance, see e.g. (Clark, 2005; Franck, 1990) in addition to being an important normative evaluative criterion (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma, 2009). The only exception we are aware of is a comparative analysis by Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee (2013) of the APP, G8 and MEM forums using a normative framework of legitimacy. What really matters in the practice of global governance, is however, subjective legitimacy, the perception of a forum has having justified authority in the eyes of those whose behaviour they are aiming to influence e.g. states, but also in the eyes of those take upon themselves a role of account holders towards the governments such as civil society observers. Finally, from a democratic perspective, it is the legitimacy of global governance towards the ones whom it is supposed to serve, the global public at large, that should be important.

Normative legitimacy is already a challenging composite concept with many subcomponents (varying with authors and perspective). Subjective legitimacy is in some ways considerably more challenging to analyse, particularly in a global governance context, as the demands for empirical data collection becomes daunting. One can imagine surveys, deep interviews where one asks about perceptions of legitimacy of different governance forums who should be asked? This paper takes a different approach. It uses elite debates in the media as one analytical entry point to such sociological legitimacy. Our primary research questions are:

Does the media play a role in (de)-legitimising specific forums of global governance (and if so does it differ between countries/newspapers)?

What are the major criteria that, explicitly or implicitly, can be found in the material for (de)-legitimising global governance forums and their outcomes?

The empirical basis is a large sample of newspaper editorials and articles from nine leading newspapers in seven different countries (Finland, India, Laos, Norway, South Africa, UK and USA) covering 16 separate unilateral and multilateral climate change meetings from June 2004 to December 2009. We made a quantitative analysis of how much coverage each forum received and a qualitative analysis of argumentation around the legitimacy, or lack of legitimacy, of the various governance forums and their outcomes. As the articles do not explicitly discuss of the concept of legitimacy we had to analyse the material for instances where the text is implicitly linked to this concept and the themes we associate with it.

The paper proceeds as follows. The following gives a brief overview of the theoretical context on legitimacy where our inquiry is founded; we then proceed to give a brief description of the energy and climate change governance forums we focus our analysis on followed by a section on our methodology. In the result section we discuss the quantitative and qualitative analysis respectively, followed by an (as yet) short conclusion.

⁴ For example, some of the unilateral forums such as the APP, have been strongly criticized by civil society and many developing countries who judge them as illegitimate governance forums.

Theoretical starting points on legitimacy, accountability and the media

The subjective dimension of legitimacy covers the societal acceptance of political decisions and political orders (Zürn 2004). Legitimacy in a subjective connotation – what is seen as justified authority (Bodansky, 1999) in the eyes of key decision makers in states and other actors (the global public) – is in the areas of global governance of energy and climate change that is the focus of this paper.

Legitimacy, in this subjective dimension, is not static over time. Clark (2005:7) looks at international society “as a set of historically changing principles of legitimacy”. These principles extend beyond international law, do not have to be necessarily expressed in institutions and are often “too informal to be classified as rules” (Clark, 2005:7).

Legitimacy is seen as a major tool to reduce undue dominance of the powerful, principles of legitimacy in the world order created after the second world war stands a counterweight towards power. However, legitimacy and power are still closely intertwined; legitimacy both constrains and enables power. However, it is very difficult to conceptualize the precise nature of this relationship:

“the spectrum of opinion ranges from some absolute opposition between power and legitimacy at the one end (whereby the generation of legitimacy is autonomous from the power relations that it ‘legitimizes’), to the opposite end where legitimacy is reduced to the preferences of those hegemonic forces that are thought to manufacture it in the first place” (Clark, 2005:20).

Whatever endpoint of this spectrum matches reality best, it is clear that the powerful in the international community engage in efforts to change the principles of legitimacy as legitimacy makes power more effective and its maintenance less costly (Clark, 2005).⁵ Indeed, all international actors “are engaged in endless strategies of legitimation, in order to present certain activities or actions legitimate” (Clark, 2005:2).

In the literature that discusses subjective legitimacy in relation to global governance, such as the development of international norms, it is the legitimacy in the eyes of states that stands in focus. The reason for this is that international rules (norms, laws etc.) exert their most powerful pull towards compliance when they are generally perceived to be both legitimate and just (Franck, 1990). In the absence of possibilities of enforcement – which is the case for most international norms - such pull is vital. In Franck’s (1990:44) formulation: “the degree to which a rule is obeyed affects the degree to which it is recognizable as a valid obligation” and “the extent to which a rule is recognizable as a legitimate obligation affects the extent to which it is obeyed”. It is, however, not only the legitimacy of global governance in the eyes of states that matter. It also matters how legitimate this governance is for citizens of those states who in the end will experience the impact of governance, or more often suffer the consequences of its absence, weakness or ineffectiveness. We can argue this from a normative standpoint if we adhere to values of democracy. We can also argue this from an effectiveness standpoint, particularly in areas such as global climate change governance where governments will need the support and cooperation of their citizens and companies to implement international agreements.

Media has become an influential actor between the people and their possibility to legitimize authority and to hold those in authority to account. This means that way that governance is framed, discussed and judged in the media becomes important. This is taken for

⁵ For example, under the Bush doctrine “[p]ower was to become the new legitimacy, and not something that needed to be negotiated into a legitimate order” (Clark, 2005:231).

granted for domestic governance but it is less discussed for global governance.⁶ And yet, in the (academic) discussion of the democratic deficit in global governance (or not), see for example Koenig-Archibugi (2010), Archibugi (2004), and Zürn (2004) For Habermas the major source of legitimacy in law making is “public acceptance of procedural responsiveness, not by the actual responsiveness of pieces of legislation to the substance of public opinion on an issue” (Dryzek, 2001:657). Thus, for Habermas the perception of the public that law-making processes (in this case of international law) are seen as legitimate expressions of authority are more important than that the details of the norms are accepted.

As most global governance is made in consensus, thus at least theoretically with each country having a veto, it could be argued that the democratic deficit is irrelevant if most states taking part are democratic. The domestic accountability mechanisms within the democratic system would ensure that citizens indirectly can have a say about e.g. the type of international norms that are developed. However, the accountability of (democratic) states to their constituents on international issues is often not comparable to domestic issues. Scholte (2002) asserts that public participation and public accountability at the national level are generally weak in each area of global policy.⁷ There is at best only sparse consultation between the government and the public or elected representatives about policies on global issues and parliaments have “generally exercised only lax oversight of their state’s involvement in multilateral conferences, transgovernmental networks, and suprastate agencies” (Scholte, 2002:290-291). Zürn (2004) refers to this method of decision-making among governmental representatives (mainly cabinet ministers) from different countries who coordinate their policies internationally as ‘executive multilateralism’.

If this situation of executive multilateralism is going to change into one where there is more open debate about a government’s foreign policy including its contribution to the development of international norms (legal and non-legal) then the media would be a key actor to facilitate this. If the link between the electorate and those who negotiate international norms, that at best, follow instructions from their political leadership is weak then there is a key role for media to fill in the first hand an information gap of what is going on in global governance and then to identify and publicise discrepancies between words and actions and holding politicians responsible for averse consequences of their actions in for example global climate governance. For most citizens (all those not engaged in e.g. international NGOs through which they may receive more information) the media is the main potential information channel on global governance and their own government’s role in that. This means that not only the news reporting of the ‘facts’ of global governance but also the evaluative judgments of that governance, its process and outcome, and their government’s contribution to it could play an important role in to what degree of legitimacy the public ascribes specific parts of that governance. Our analysis of how the media discusses various forums of global energy and climate governance and their outcome examines what we can expect of media in contributing to some kind of (elite) societal discourse on global energy and climate governance and thereby enable at least some citizens (those who read the broad sheet newspapers) be informed sufficiently to form their own views of the legitimacy of global governance

As starting point for searching after components of governance processes or outcomes in global governance that make it legitimate in the eyes of the editors, commentators or

⁶ Moravcsik (2004:344) on the other hand claims even in democracies “individual citizens remain ‘rationally ignorant or non-participatory with regard to most issues, most of the time’”

⁷ In cases of ‘less’ or non-democratic states the situation is of course even less conducive towards such ‘internal’ accountability.

journalists, we use a framework of normative legitimacy of international norms developed by one of the authors by reviewing normative literature on legitimacy in global governance (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma, 2009). This framework identifies nine components of legitimacy in three categories: source based legitimacy (tradition, expertise, discourse), procedural legitimacy (governmental participation, non-governmental participation, transparency, accountability), and substantive legitimacy (equity, effectiveness). The first two categories, source based and procedural legitimacy, comprise input legitimacy while substantive legitimacy comprise output legitimacy in the usage of Scharpf (1999).

Using such a normative framework as a starting point for analysing sociological legitimacy builds on the assumption that is a strong connection between normative and sociological forms of legitimacy, as argued by e.g. Black (2008). On the one hand what is identified as sources of normative legitimacy is often grounded in normative theories that reflect views in society (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee, 2013). On the other hand dominant normative theories of legitimacy should also have an influence on what factors are considered to provide legitimacy in societies.

Multiple multilateral and minilateral governance forums

In the subsections below we give a brief introduction to each of the energy or climate change governance forums included in the analysis. We include some information on what was on the agenda of some of their respective meetings that were covered in the analysis, and end with a brief comparison of the governance forums, their similarities and differences.

The UN-based climate regime

The issue of climate change rose on the global agenda first through the negotiations of the UNFCCC adopted in 1992. The primary aim of which is to stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases “at levels that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system...” (United Nations, 1992). The Convention, however, contains only very general guidelines on how this is to be achieved and this includes references to the energy sector which is just mentioned among several other sectors where Parties should promote technologies, practices and processes which reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions (United Nations, 1992: Article 4.1c). The Convention also contained principles, such as the principle on common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR) that have continued to follow the negotiations on further agreements ever since. The Kyoto Protocol that was adopted in 1997, entered into force in 2004 and had a commitment period running from 2008 to 2012 set out specific obligations in emission reductions for developed countries. These countries are given a lot of freedom in how they achieve these. The Protocol, however, outlines actions for several sectors, including for energy where Parties should elaborate policies on energy efficiency as well as promote renewable energy (United Nations, 1997: Article 2). Annex 1 parties are also given the option to achieve their reduction commitments partly in other countries through the three mechanisms designed to improve the cost-effectiveness of climate change mitigation; joint implementation, the clean development mechanism (CDM) and emissions trading (UNFCCC, 2003). From the 2005 COP in Montreal and onwards the Parties to the UNFCCC and the KP have negotiated on what should come after 2012. A road map for these negotiations was adopted in Bali in 2007 giving a deadline for the 2009 Conference of the Parties (COP) that came to be held in Copenhagen for concluding these negotiations. The Copenhagen COP failed to adopt a formal agreement, the Copenhagen Accord that was negotiated in the last

days and nights by a small group of countries, was rejected by some Parties but in the following year its major provisions were accepted as an official COP decisions and very much framed further negotiations that now have a deadline of 2015 for adopting an agreement with 'legal force' that should come into effect by 2020.

The Commission on Sustainable Development

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was set up in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro and it 'died in the same city in the 2012 Rio+20 conference when governments decided to create another institution at a higher level in the UN system. It was set up as a functional commission under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and was to, among other things, monitor the implementation of the outcomes of UNCED. In its two-week long meetings every year governments worked their way through the chapters of Agenda 21, a few at a time, gathering ministers for placing the final touches on its recommendations. In an effort to give the CSD a re-birth the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 changed its mode of work to some degree including institutionalised regional preparation meetings and reducing the meetings where decisions were formally negotiated to every two years (leaving the other year's meeting for reviewing progress on implementation of passed decisions, learning from each other etc.).

The CSD-9 in 2001 was the first occasion that energy in the broader connotation 'energy for sustainable development' was discussed as a separate agenda item at the inter-governmental level (WEHAB Working Group, 2002). The adopted decision energy accessibility, energy efficiency, renewable energy, advanced fossil fuel technologies, nuclear energy technologies, rural energy, energy and transport albeit all in very general terms providing a long list of options for actions but did not include any targets, implementation mechanism or plan of action (Commission on Sustainable Development, 2001). The topic of 'energy for sustainable development' — together with the air pollution/atmosphere, industrial development and climate change — was again on the agenda in the CSD 'cycle' in 2006/2007. This time the negotiations broke down at 4 am on the last morning. At the end of that day the Chair presented a 'take it or leave it' compromise text which G77/China and USA accepted but which the EU and Switzerland rejected. It was the negotiations on energy that stood to blame for the first CSD without an adopted decision text. The negotiations richly illustrated governments' general reluctance towards institutionalizing global cooperation on energy issues. Even cooperation around the otherwise uncontroversial issue of energy efficiency was highly contentious such as whether there should be "cooperation", "efforts" or even "an international agreement", and whether cooperation should include information and research or also labeling and even regulatory cooperation. The most contentious institutional issue, however, became if and how to review the implementation of the energy related CSD and WSSD decisions. The weak writing on the review in the final compromise text was one of the reasons that the EU refused to accept it.⁸

International Renewable Energy Conferences

Various EU members wanted the UN system to address energy more explicitly, particularly to promote renewable energy. Because of this the EU pushed hard for a strong text on renewable

⁸ For an in depth analysis of the energy negotiations at the CSD, see Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, 2010).

energy in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002. While they achieved a partial success in that the text referred to the goal of a higher proportion of renewable energy in the global energy mix, it was a hard fight and they wanted more. Perhaps partially due to this the EU set up the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition (JREC) after the WSSD in 2002 and Germany initiated the first of a series of international high level political conferences on renewable energy (Bonn 2004, Beijing 2005, Washington DC 2008, New Delhi 2010, Abu Dhabi 2013). These conferences are hosted by each respective country and convened by the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) a multistakeholder organisation promoting renewable energy. The conferences were open to diverse actors interested in renewable energy and the one in Washington D.C included a sizeable fair of renewable energy companies. Both the conference in Bonn and Washington D.C included in their outcome a political declaration and a list of action and commitments (or pledges) by participating states and non-state actors. Initially the implementation of these commitments were followed by REN21.

The Group of Eight

The period after the USA rejected the Kyoto Protocol (KP) in 2001 was a challenging one in global climate governance. The question of how to get the USA back into the multilateral efforts, indeed into any efforts to address climate change, was everyone's concern even more so when preparations for the negotiations on how to negotiate what would come after the first commitment period of the KP started (decisions on this were scheduled for the December 2005 COP in Montreal). This was the backdrop when the UK presidency of the G8 in 2005 was approaching. Prime Minister Blair who had a documented strong interest in the climate change issue saw an opportunity to use the G8 to work on two fronts; enticing the USA to become sufficiently constructively engaged with the issue to come back to the UN based negotiation process on future commitments, and to strengthen the overall position of the issue in global (and national) governance.

The G8 as forum of leaders of economically powerful nations, currently comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the US Heads of state of the G8 countries have met annually since the mid-1970s to discuss issues regarding the global economy. It is a forum that takes its pride in its informality allowing leaders to discuss issues in private. The outcomes are in the form of declarations outlining commitments for action of the members individually and jointly and occasionally initiate short-term task forces to investigate particular issues. The G8 is not institutionalised, it has no constitution, no secretariat, nor a common communication tool, such as a website (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee, 2013).

The G8, then G7, discussed climate change as early as 1989 in their Paris summit where they “strongly advocate common efforts” to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (G8, 1989) and energy conservation had already been on the agenda in several summits particularly in the 1970s due to the oil crises. The early G8 references to climate change were very general and mostly referring to the development of international law within the UN system. They did not see their own group — the G8 — as an additional actor on the issue.⁹ The context was quite different at the first G8 summit where climate change moved to the top of the agenda under the UK presidency in 2005. The summit was held at Gleneagles on 6-8

⁹ More detailed discussions could of course take place at the ministerial, rather than Head of State, level. The environmental ministers of the G8 countries met first in 1992 and then regularly since 1994, while energy minister's meetings started only in 1999 (Bailin, 2005).

July, and was in addition to the G8 leaders attended by, for certain sections of the meeting, the leaders of the so called +5 countries (China, India, Mexico, South Africa and Brazil) and an additional six African countries as well as the leaders of the African Union, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Tragically, much of the focus shifted away from the climate change agenda point due to the terror attack in the London Subway that happened during the G8 Gleneagles summit. The documents that came out included a Communiqué on Climate Change, Energy and Sustainable Development with a shorter ‘declaration’ part that summarizes the actions to be taken, and a longer and more detailed Plan of Action (PoA). The text weaves the concerns of energy security and climate change together and the mitigation actions they commit themselves to do, and urge other actors to take on, revolve largely around making energy production and consumption cleaner through a variety of measures such as promoting innovation, technology transfer, regulatory frameworks and educate energy users (G8, 2005). The actions which the G8 leaders commit themselves to include both rather general and very specific ones, some of them are clearly envisioned for national policy in each G8 country, but quite a number of them implicate in one way or another international actors, primarily the IEA and WB but also international partnerships (G8, 2005).

The UK host was pushing for the climate change work of the G8 to go beyond the one off summit Communiqué and rather make it into a process. They managed to secure agreement for starting a three-year Dialogue on Climate Change, Energy and Sustainable Development, later called the Gleneagles Dialogue to which other countries were invited. Its mandate was to (G8, 2005).

- a) address the strategic challenge of transforming our energy systems to create a more secure and sustainable future;
- b) monitor implementation of the commitments made in the Gleneagles Plan of Action and explore how to build on this progress; and
- c) share best practice between participating governments.

Blair offered to host the first of its meetings later in 2005. Environment and energy ministers and senior officials attended that meeting as well as the subsequent ones from the G8 countries, the +5 countries, and a few others. In addition, international organizations like the WB, UNFCCC, IPCC, IEA and UNEP were represented. Subsequent meetings of the Dialogue took place in Mexico (2006), Germany (2007) and Japan (2008). In parallel the G8 moved on to new presidencies, with Russia in 2006 focusing on energy security rather than climate change, Germany in 2007 managing to push the outcome language on climate change a notch higher and Japan in 2008 receiving the report from the Dialogue and keeping a high focus on climate change in the agenda of the Hokkaido Toyako summit.

The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Energy and Climate¹⁰

The APP was launched in 2005 with six member countries: Australia, China, India, South Korea, Japan, and the US (Canada joined in 2007) who described the partnership as an “innovative and a fresh new development for the environment, energy security and for economic development in the region.” It aimed to have voluntary goals that would be determined domestically. Eight industry-based task forces were set up with representatives from government, research organizations, and corporations. The job of the task forces was to formulate plans projects on technology development and information sharing. By 2009, the total number of approved projects was 175. but by 2008, the APP had received only US\$200

¹⁰ This section and the following draws heavily on Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee (2013).

million in public funding from its partner governments, the expectation was that the private sector should provide significant funding for the implementation of APP projects. In April 2011, it was announced that the partnership would cease and that its unfinished projects being transferred to other forums.

The Major Economies Meetings/Major Economies Forum

The George W. Bush administration of USA announced in 2007 that it would organise the Major Economies Meetings (MEM), that would include fifteen of the major greenhouse gas emitting economies. The MEM meetings were to “complement” the UN process. Their purpose was to develop a long-term global goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Each country could then establish mid-term national targets and programs based on national circumstances. The meetings proposed that its participating countries develop national commitments to promote clean energy technologies. The USA was then prepared to facilitate international financial institutions providing low-cost financing for this. The MEM adopted the APP approach of facilitating meetings of representatives from industry sectors such as power generation and energy production. The MEM process concluded with a meeting following the 2008 G8 summit in Japan in which it produced a declaration indicating that developed nations would implement economy-wide mid-term goals and actions to achieve absolute emission reductions. There was still an option, however, for countries to focus on “stopping the growth” of emissions rather than achieving absolute emission reductions. In March 2009, the Obama administration re-launched the MEM process as the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF).

Comparing governance forums

The governance forums on energy and/or climate change described above share that they have an intergovernmental character at their core, that is it is states which are the major actor as is traditionally expected in global governance. They also share the objective of addressing climate change whether directly or indirectly by promoting low-carbon energy options (these alternative energy options can also provide a number of other benefits). But here the similarities end. The forums differ along several dimensions; the most obvious are the following. First, the number of states that are taking part varies from the almost universal multilateralism of the UNFCCC and the CSD¹¹ to the highly selective unilateralism of the MEM, APP and the G8. Secondly, some of the forums are purely intergovernmental such as the UNFCCC, the CSD and the G8, while others bring in a significant role for the private sector such as the APP and the IRECs. Thirdly, they differ significantly in their openness to civil society observers and more generally in the transparency of their decision-making process from the highly intransparent G8 meetings via the UN based meetings where observers can be admitted to the proceedings yet usually not to the most sensitive negotiations, to the IREC where both governmental and non-governmental actors are ‘made equal’ in the implementation plans. Fourthly, they differ in the type of outcomes they produce including their ‘hardness’ on the hard-soft law continuum and thus vary in their degree of precision, obligation and delegation.¹² The only process that can generate international hard law is the UNFCCC, while the other processes rely on developing soft law in some form or

¹¹ Formally the CSD has 53 member states on a rotating basis but in practice can all states take part in the meetings and the negotiations.

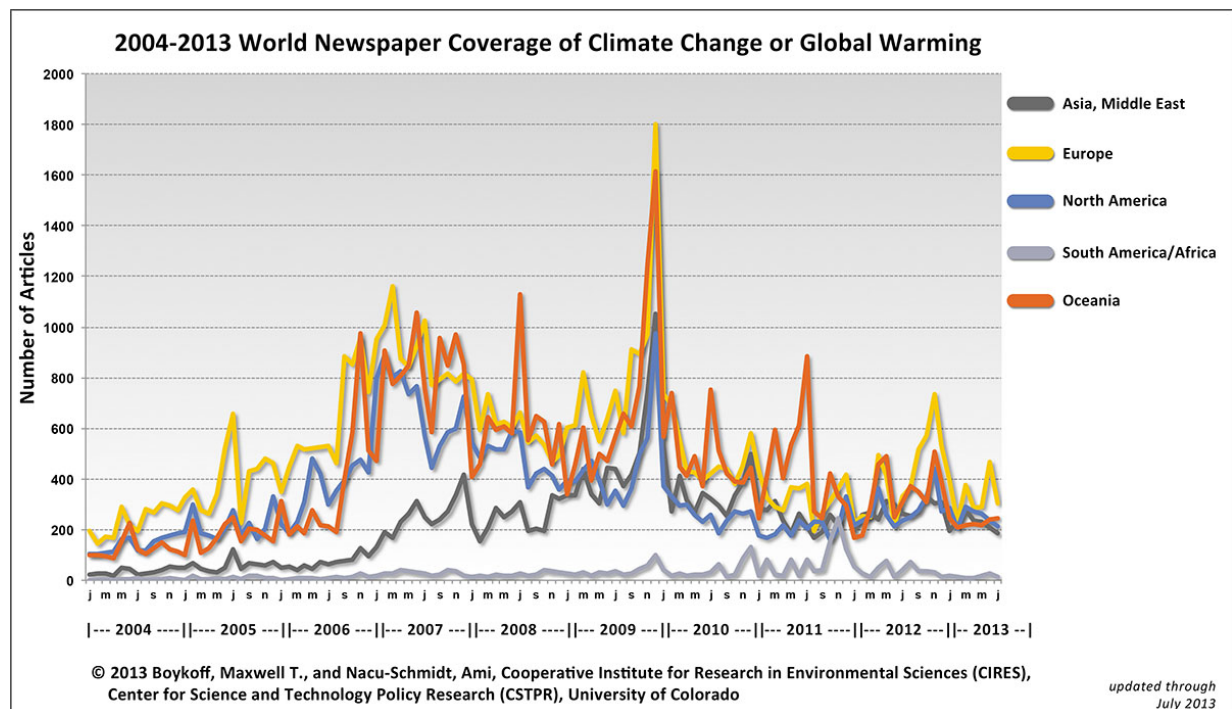
¹² For a discussion on the hard-soft law continuum see Abbott and Snidal (2000), Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma (2009) and Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (2011).

are used to support the development of hard law in the UNFCCC. The implementation plans of the IRECs can hardly even be called soft law as they are all self-defined voluntary commitments although they form part of a collective action plan by aggregation. The degree of monitoring and follow-up of commitments vary from zero in the G8 (in the MEM no commitments are made) to obligatory regular national communications under the UNFCCC (and the KP where they are also peer-reviewed).

Analyzing media coverage of climate governance: context, objective and methodology

William Ruckelshaus – first US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator – has said, “[i]f the public isn’t adequately informed [about climate change], it’s difficult for them to make demands on government, even when it’s in their own interest” Ruckelshaus (2004) quoted in Boykoff and Roberts (Boykoff and Roberts, 2007). But *how* this information is interpreted and translated into decisions and potential behavioral change is complex, dynamic and contested.

Studies have found that the public learns a large amount about science through consuming mass media news (Wilson, 1995). The daily political agenda in democracies is influenced to a large degree by what mass media writes about, it is of course a symbiotic relationship where journalists depend on access to top politicians and politicians depend on favourable media coverage. In the case of climate change, mass media coverage of the issue of climate change is very fluctuating; coverage tends to rise when there is some noteworthy event such as the Al Gore documentary or the release of the Stern report or a climate negotiation meeting, with the amount relating to the importance of the meeting in question in the negotiation process. The Copenhagen COP was exceptional in building up media attention on the issue as seen in the graph below. Max Boykoff is the researcher that with his team has dedicated a sustained effort to track mass media coverage of climate change (Boykoff, 2011).



Painter (2010) has done a thorough analysis of the media coverage of the Copenhagen COP, analysing which journalists attended and what their coverage focused on. According to Painter's report 3880 journalists from 119 countries were registered to attend the UN meeting, an unprecedented number in the history of the climate negotiations (Painter, 2010). Notable was also the substantial number, some 600, journalists from developing countries attending the negotiations.

Most media studies of how climate change is portrayed have looked on English language, primarily print media in the US with a focus on the bias of the 'balanced approach' to the coverage of the science of climate change has had. One explanation to the lack of studies is that radio and TV dominates the media landscapes in developing countries and that is inherently harder for researchers to collect and analyse data, especially if it is in non-English language. There are studies from other countries, see for example Boykoff's (2010) study of how Indian mass media portray climate change. The focus, however, of these studies is again on how climate change science is depicted. The only studies we have found global climate governance process is the center of the analysis is a paper on the coverage of the COP meeting in Cancun in US media (Boykoff, 2012). Our study thus contributes to a considerable gap in this respect.

The guiding research question for our paper is, as mentioned above:

1. Does the media play a role in (de)-legitimising specific forums of global governance (and if so does it differ between countries/newspapers?)
2. What are the major criteria that, explicitly or implicitly, can be found in the material in the media for (de)-legitimising global governance forums and their outcomes?

In order to answer these two questions we analyse editorials and articles which wrote about major global climate change and energy governance events that were collected from a total of seven newspapers published in six different countries (see Table 1). The countries were selected to cover different socio-economic, geographical and political differences. However, the sample is still limited, confined to Nordic languages and English and narrowed by archive availability.¹³ The sample can therefore not claim by far global representativity.¹⁴ In five countries one major morning daily was selected based on wide circulation with the exception of Laos where due to language we had to select the Vientiane Times that has a relatively small circulation. In two countries, USA and UK, two morning daily newspapers were selected covering different political profiles (liberal and conservative).

¹³ For example, initially we had planned to have at least two newspapers with different political colours from each country but for small countries one paper was overly dominating in circulation and/or it was difficult to identify an obvious political antagonist among the morning papers. Yet in other cases the candidates for a second paper could not be accessed through the internet or available library sources.

¹⁴ For this version of the paper we have not yet analysed the material from the Helsingen Sanomat (Finland) and the Times (UK).

Table 1. Countries and newspapers included in comparative media analysis of global climate governance commentaries

| Country | Newspaper | Main characteristic | Comments |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Finland | Helsingin Sanomat (HS) | Right-wing Leading broadsheet newspaper by circulation | In this draft version of the article, the articles from Helsingin Sanomat have not been included. |
| Norway | Norway Aftenposten (AP) | Leading broadsheet newspaper of the country. | The morning edition was used since the evening edition is closer to a tabloid than a broadsheet |
| India | The Times of India (ToI) | Conservative. Leading broadsheet in the country | The Delhi edition of the paper was used. |
| South Africa | The Johannesburg Star (JS) | Leading newspaper of the country by circulation | Due to changes in availability the articles for the 2009 meetings were collected only from the paper's Late Issue and from the Saturday Star edition. Articles for COP14 are missing due to technical problems. |
| UK | The Guardian (Gu) | Left-wing | Articles from the Sunday edition The Observer were included. Online only articles excluded. |
| | The Times (TI) | Conservative | In this draft version of the article, the articles from The Times have not been included. Also, for reasons of availability the sample does not include The Sunday Times. |
| USA | The New York Times (NYT) | Liberal | |
| | The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) | Conservative | Articles were collected via Pro Quest as full text |
| | Vientiane Times (VT) | Available and in English | The CD ROM for the dates of the Poznan COP could not be obtained. |

Note: The political 'colour' of the news paper could not always be established.

Table 2. Meetings in global energy or climate change governance analysed during 2004-2009 in chronological order.

| Meeting name, place and major characteristic | Date |
|--|-------------------|
| International Conference for Renewable Energies (Renewables 2004) Bonn, Germany The first of what become biannual multistakeholder international conferences on renewable energy | 1-4 June 2004 |
| G8 Summit (G8 2005) Gleneagles, UK The first G8 summit that put climate change high on the agenda and launched the three year Gleneagles Dialogue | 6-8 July 2005 |
| Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP 0) The announcement (not meeting) of an intergovernmental partnership focused on working with the private sector partnership made during an ASEAN meeting in Vientiane, Laos. | 27 July 2005 |
| 11th Conferences of Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 11) Montreal, Canada Launch of the discussions on what should come after the first commitment period of the KP | 28 Nov-9 Dec 2005 |
| Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate: Launch and Inaugural Ministerial meeting (APP 1) Sydney, Australia | 12 Jan 2006 |
| 12th Conferences of Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 12) Nairobi, Kenya | 6-17 Nov 2006 |
| The 15th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, (CSD 15) New York, USA The CSD addressed climate change and energy but negotiations failed, there was no outcome document. | 1-11 May 2007 |
| G8 Summit (G8 2007) Heiligendamm, Germany Climate change high on the agenda. | 6-8 June 2007 |
| Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change (MEM I) Washington DC, USA The first in a series of meetings initiated by President G. W. Bush | 27-28 Sep 2007 |
| The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate: Second Ministerial Meeting (APP 2) New Delhi, India | 15 Oct 2007 |
| 13th Conferences of Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 13) Bali, Indonesia Adoption of the Bali Action Plan; the negotiation mandate for a post 2012 agreement when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period expired. | 3-14 Dec 2007 |
| Major Economies Process on Energy Security and Climate Change Honolulu, USA (MEM II) | 30-31 Jan 2008 |
| Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC) Washington DC, USA | 4-6 March 2008 |
| Major Economies Process on Energy Security and Climate Change Paris, France (MEM III) | 17-18 April 2008 |
| The Ministerial Meeting of the Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development (Gleneagles ministerial) Chiba City, Japan Final meeting of the Dialogue adopting the final report. | 14-16 March 2008 |
| G8 Summit (G8 2008) Hokkaido Toyako, Japan The report of the Gleneagles Process was received at this Summit and climate change was a key agenda item. | 7-9 July 2008 |
| 14th Conference of the Parties (COP 14) of the UNFCCC Poznań, Poland | 1-12 Dec 2008 |
| 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the UNFCCC Copenhagen, Denmark The meeting where a post 2012 agreement was scheduled to be adopted but which only "noted" the Copenhagen Accord | 7-18 Dec 2009 |

We chose 18 intergovernmental meetings in the period 2004-2009 that were directly related to global climate change or energy governance (see Table 2). They fall into six categories (forums) that were described in the previous section:

1. The biannual international renewable energy conferences (renewables conferences) launched by Germany in 2004
2. The G8 Gleneagles process 2005-2008
3. The Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) meetings in its initial years 2005-2007
4. The US Major Economies Meetings (MEM) 2007-2008
5. The fifteenth meeting of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development that addressed climate change and energy for sustainable development (CSD) in 2007
6. The annual Conferences/Meetings of the Parties to the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol including negotiations on the post-2012 agreement during 2005-2009.

The sample of meetings we included in the analysis is not completely covering the various processes, but rather aimed at including the key meetings in each process for the period in question.¹⁵

The articles included in the sample were identified in the following way. For each meeting a search period was determined that started two days prior and ended four days after each meeting. The newspapers were then searched for articles in this period that included key words linked to the meeting in question (name of meeting, location, and “climate”, “energy”, or “CO₂”). In special cases (for the renewables conferences and the CSD 15) additional search phrases such as “renewable energy” and “sustainable development” were used.¹⁶ Different combinations of the terms were used and the one with the best search results was chosen. All the articles that met these criteria were downloaded or scanned, and included in the quantitative analysis in Table 3?¹⁷ Articles that did not mention the meeting in question were not included in the sample.¹⁸

From the larger sample a subsample of 220 more analytical articles or editorials were selected for the qualitative analysis according to specific criteria (see Table 3). The objective was to include articles that not only reported on the facts of the meeting but also included

¹⁵ Meetings during the time period that were not included in the analysis due to time constraints were those of the Major Economies Forum launched in 2009 by President Obama as a continuation of the MEMs, as well as the 2006 and 2009 G8 meetings. These G8 meetings did not have climate change high on the agenda (check for Italy). In addition the analysis did not cover the Beijing International Renewable Energy Conference (BIREC) in China in 2005.

¹⁶ In most cases the papers’ own Internet archive and advanced search options were used, except for The Wall Street Journal where articles were retrieved via Pro Quest (a search platform for newspaper articles). The search through online archives with key words was fast, but relying only on key words could lead to omitting articles. For example a search for articles concerning a meeting in Washington would miss articles that refer to the “the capital” and searching for the word “climate” could miss articles that instead refer to “global warming”. Three newspapers (Aftenposten, the Times and the Vientiane Times) were only or only partially available on microfilm or CD-ROM, which made the search time consuming but more comprehensive.

¹⁷ Only articles that were published in the printed version of the paper were included. Some newspapers publish certain articles exclusively online such as the Guardian and the Wall Street Journal, but such articles were excluded. It is not always possible to be sure, however, that the articles in the online database had not been modified from the printed version of the same article.

¹⁸ In a few cases, such as for the G8 meetings, the articles may not have been addressing climate change particularly but some other issue addressed by the meeting, these were still included in the quantitative sample, but not in the qualitative one.

commentary. Each paper had different types of categories of such material and judgments of which to include in the analysis were made on a case-by-case basis. The number of editorials and opinions varied considerably between papers, with the lowest numbers in absolute and relative terms in Vientiane Times and the Johannesburg Star.

Table 3. Selection criteria for qualitative analysis of newspaper articles

| Positive criteria | Negative criteria |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Editorials (leaders etc. without named author representing the official view of the newspaper)• Op-eds (similar in form and content to an editorial but representing the opinion of an individual writer who is sometimes but not always affiliated with the newspaper)• Specialist editorials (for example, articles written by the paper's environmental editor)• Comments and Columns | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articles from agencies or from other newspapers (with a few exceptions see note)• Short news reports• Articles without any evaluative comments• Letters to the editor• Articles that discussed climate change or energy but did not mention the meeting in question |

Note: Op-eds were excluded if they were written by those that very obviously represent the government, such as Gordon Brown in the Guardian or an Ambassador in Aftenposten. Articles from three news agencies were included in the qualitative analysis: 1) Times News Network (TNN) as it is the Times of India's own news agency; 2) the Xinhua news agency, the official news agency of The People's Republic of China; 3) and the Inter Press Service (IPS) which is a global news agency that specializes in providing a southern/developing country perspective on news).

The focus of the qualitative analysis was on arguments raised around the legitimacy, or lack of legitimacy of these forums. As a starting point for the coding we used the normative framework for comparing the legitimacy of international hard and soft law which was described in the theoretical section (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma, 2009).

Quantitative results

The result of the quantitative analysis of total number of articles covering each meeting per newspaper is described in Table 4 and the total number of articles per meeting is also shown in Figure 1. From this analysis the following observations can be made:

The renewables conferences received very meagre coverage; the meetings were often completely ignored. One striking example is that even when the renewables conference was hosted by the USA in 2008 and President Bush attended it the NYT did not write about it.

Table 4. Quantitative analysis of number of newspaper articles per newspaper covering each meeting

| Meeting | Helsingen Sanomaat | Aftenposten | The Guardian | The Times | New York Times | Wall Street Journal | The Times of India | Vientienne Times | The Johannes-burg Star | Total |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Renewables 2004 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| WIREC 2008 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| G8 Gleneagles 2005 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 74 |
| G8 Heiligendamm 2007 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 6 | 7 | 82 |
| Gleneagles Dialogue ministerial 2008 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| G8 Hokkaido 2008 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 13 | 13 | - | 11 | 71 |
| APP 0: 2005 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 11 |
| APP 1: 2006 Sydney | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| APP 2: 2007 Delhi | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MEM 1: 2007 Washington | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 20 |
| MEM 2: 2008 Honolulu | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| MEM 3: 2008 Paris | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| UN CSD 2007 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| COP 11: 2005 Montreal | 8 | 14 | 23 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 1 | 4 | 88 |
| COP 12: 2006 Nairobi | 2 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 14 | 55 |
| COP 13: 2007 Bali | 7 | 13 | 47 | 19 | 17 | 13 | 41 | 15 | 6 | 178 |
| COP 14: 2008 Poznan | 0 | 4 | 14 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 5 | - | - | 31 |
| COP 15: 2009 Copenhagen | 20 | 31 | 80 | 46 | 44 | 30 | 141 | 9 | 45 | 446 |
| Total | 51 | 101 | 216 | 127 | 109 | 91 | 257 | 41 | 97 | 1090 |

The G8 Summits that had climate change high on the agenda were given most coverage in newspapers of the UK and India (the latter's prime minister was invited these summits), and in the US in the case of the Hokkaido summit. The ministerial meeting that rounded off

the Gleneagles Dialogue was ignored by all except the three developing countries in the sample.

The announcement of the APP attracted limited attention, four papers having no mention of it, the launch meeting was only written about in the developing country papers and the Guardian while the 2007 APP meeting scored zero coverage in all newspapers. Notable is that this low or absent coverage included the USA papers, with the Wall Street Journal not writing about it at all around the APP meetings, and the New York Times only covering it at the launch.

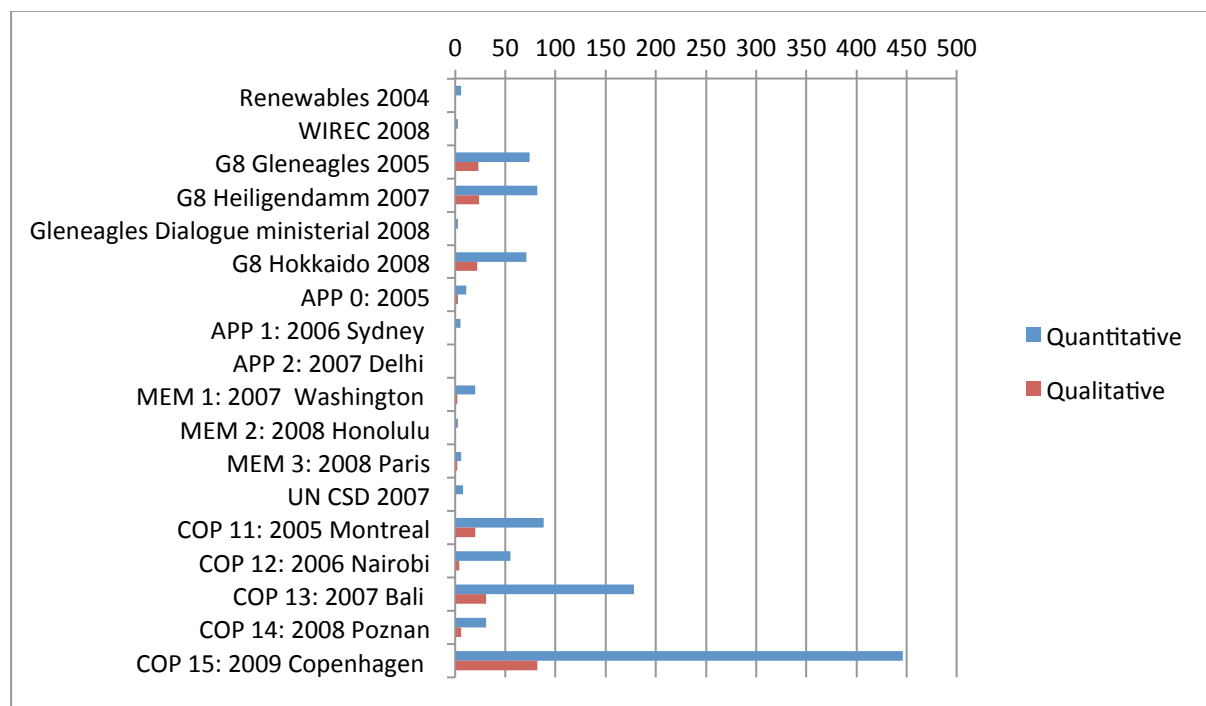
The launch meeting of the MEM initiated nearly twice as many articles as the announcement of the APP, and got several articles in the UK and US papers as well as the Times of India. Subsequent meetings attracted much less attention, indeed none at all from the Nordic, Indian and South African papers included in the study.

The CSD meeting was only covered in the UK papers, Aftenposten and Vientiane Times.

The COP meetings of the UNFCCC received by far the most attention, at least in the years when crucial decisions were on the table (2005, 2007, 2009) with a gradual increase among these three meetings escalating towards the COP in Copenhagen which generated 446 articles in this study.

The newspapers with most total coverage from all meetings were the Times of India (257 articles) followed by the Guardian (218 articles). The paper with significantly lower coverage was Helsingin Sanomat (51) and Vientiane Times (42), about or less than half the number of papers compared to the Aftenposten and the UK and US papers in the study.

Figure 2. Total number of articles per meeting in selected newspapers for quantitative and qualitative analysis



The lowest coverage was consistently of the meetings that related to energy rather than climate change per se; the IRECs and the CSD. This can of course be a reflection of that the

journalists and editors were not aware of the meetings taking place, or that they considered them of marginal interest for the public, for example because they did not expect them to have any influence on the domestic and/or international arena. The attention to the APP that also had a more direct energy sector focus was meagre already at the launch and then the process dwindled into obscurity. Again, this can be due to media not knowing it took place or deeming it inconsequential. The G8 meetings that discussed climate change did that through a considerable degree linked to energy issues (for example it forged close bonds with the International Energy Agency to implement or follow-up some of those decisions) and these meetings got higher coverage in the media than the COPs of years when no major deadline featured in the UNFCCC negotiations. Without more data from other years it is, however, difficult to ascertain whether the coverage of G8 meetings is linked to the agenda items or who is the host. Most likely it is a combination of the two as well as other factors such as the scale of public demonstrations etc. (a strong feature at Gleneagles and previously in Genoa for example).

The attention of the media to the UNFCCC process especially around the most important climate negotiations was considerable, it was certainly seen as major news. The peak around the Copenhagen COP is impressive, almost 450 articles with a record for a single newspaper in this sample coming from the Times of India who publishes 141 items on climate change in the three week period around the COP. The Guardian with 80 items is a good second but even the lowest score in Vientiane Times of 9 makes one article on average every other day. This must have been (one of) the most significant awareness raising events on climate change ever (which was already illustrated in figure 1 above). However, in order to answer our first research question whether media plays a role in (de-)legitimising specific forums of governance the results illustrated in figure 2 are perhaps more important than the total number of articles published in connection with the meeting. Figure 2 shows the proportion of items we could select for the qualitative analysis, this included editorials, op-eds and other similar style articles with in depth discussions on the governance process and/or outcome. Here numbers are significantly lower roughly between ten and twenty per cent of the items and it is only for the meetings of the G8 and the more important COPs that we find such items to analyse. Clearly these two governance arenas have been the only ones seen as important enough to express an opinion on in the newspaper and thus the only governance forums they can (de-)legitimise. The variation among the newspapers in the number of items that qualified for our qualitative analysis varied much less than the total number of items. The total number included was for HS 12, AP 17, The Guardian 44, The Times 35, the NYT 26, the WSJ 21, the ToI 42, the VT 7 and JS 7. From this we can conclude that there is a most active contribution to discourse on global climate governance in the Guardian and Times of India and the least contribution is in Helsingin Sanomat, the Vientiane Times and Johannesburg Star.¹⁹ The qualitative analysis (see below) also showed how indeed the Guardian and the Times of India stood out among all the newspapers included in terms of the knowledge its commentaries displayed on the issues at hand. If we also consider that the newspapers we selected were what used to be called 'broadsheets' or 'serious' morning papers that only a certain section of the population reads, then we can conclude that to the degree that there are

¹⁹ According to Painter (2010) there has been a decline in number of specialist science or environmental journalists in the USA, for example, in 2008 CNN laid off its entire science, technology and environment staff. Two decades ago nearly 150 US newspapers included a science section, compared to just 20 in 2010. On the other hand, not all papers cut their environmental coverage, for example The Guardian in the UK doubled its environmental special reporters to eight and the BBC also increased its numbers of journalists covering this field.

some (hopefully informed) views on the process and outcomes of global climate governance in the media, it may not reach the broader public.

Qualitative analysis results

Through the analysis of how the different efforts of governing climate change are ‘judged’ or ‘evaluated’ in the newspapers we can indirectly infer what factors are considered to make the *sources*, *processes* and their *outcomes* legitimate even if the word legitimacy itself is not used. The source of governance is the forum in question and we discuss these in the two categories of unilateral forums and the multilateral forum of any note in our analysis, the UNFCCC.

Legitimacy dimensions of unilateral based energy and climate change governance

The evaluative judgements of the unilateral energy and climate change governance forums, are few, as the quantitative result indicated with the exception of the G8 there is not much commentary on these in our sample. Most of the comments on these unilateral forums are negative, either because they have not met with some high expectation of what they should have achieved (such as persuading President Bush to come back to the UNFCCC negotiations) or because the forum itself had fundamental legitimacy flaws. So it was said of the various G8 declarations on climate change that they had: no (specific or mid-term) targets, no timetable and no base year. It was said of the G8 as a governance forum that it:

- acts for their own interests rather than with the world’s interest;
- is outside the established structures such as the UN;
- discusses issues where more voices should be heard;
- negotiates behind closed doors;
- and can carry no conviction until China and India are welcomed plus a few more.

These arguments link to a number of the components of (input) legitimacy that were part of our analytical framework such as tradition, participation, transparency and equity.

The unilateral forums for international energy and climate change discussion were all initiated by powerful countries. They had the resources to organise them and the soft power to get other countries to come, even those who publicly rejected the set up (such as India in relation to the MEM). As discussed above our analysis shows that they were almost non-events in the news and editorial pages of the media with the exception of the G8 meetings. There was thus virtually no public debate on their possible (il-)legitimacy as forums of authority. Among the few comments there were, the judgements spanned from “it will change nothing”²⁰ to the Wall Street Journal embrace of the APP “Unlike Kyoto -- in which a government sets a national target for emissions, and then forces a few unlucky industries to make cuts -- the [Asia Pacific] Partnership gets industry execs from every sector across the table from relevant government ministers, and devises practical approaches to reductions.” It was written of President Bush’s MEM that it “pins its hopes on wishful technological breakthroughs and sidesteps mandatory ceilings” but when the APP was noted in a positive light it was because of it being a voluntary partnership that sought to address environmental issues through economic growth and technology, not by targets and command-and-control mechanisms, and because it was more acceptable to countries like China. The silence around

²⁰ The Times, JUNE 4, 2004, *Renewable energy is nothing without the atomic option*; SEARJEANT FINANCIAL EDITOR.

them can of course also mean there were no expectations indeed of them having any significant influence. The fact that they were new with little time to establish their credibility in the increasingly crowded space of international governance might have contributed.

For the G8 that was different, despite the lack of continuous institutional structure, e.g. the G8 has no secretariat or standing structures; it was perceived as powerful and influential as it has a legacy and powerful member states. But despite this, the expectations were low. The Guardian wrote “German electors care deeply about the environment, which is one reason Ms Merkel has made global warming a focus of this summit [G8 Heiligdamm]. It also explains why hopes are higher for some kind of international agreement. Unfortunately, the odds are that it will be more watered down than a cup of service-station coffee.”²¹ The G8 process faces “daunting challenges, which most of the assembled leaders are ill-positioned to address. At G8s, unlike other international forums where big bureaucracies represent national interests, personalities matter. To get results the Japanese, as hosts, must exercise impressive powers of leadership. Instead, there are already signs that they will pursue their usual search for consensus, which means the triumph of a lowest common denominator.”²² For the G8 the public is involved in contesting the legitimacy (demonstrations etc.) both of the process, lack of transparency and accountability; limited access for civil society and the fear that important decisions that carry implications are being decided on without any influence.

Nonetheless, the minilateral forums do seem to have had influence. The IREC conferences preceded the establishment of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and are likely to have played a role in finally rounding up enough support for setting up such an organization (the Germans and others had lobbied for it for quite some time). The minilateral climate change forums may also have played a part in endorsing the minilateral negotiation approach used in the Copenhagen COP through discursive means (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and McGee, 2013).

Legitimacy dimensions of multilateral climate change governance

The multilateral forum of the UNFCCC got unprecedented attention in the run-up and during the COP in Copenhagen where a new agreement was supposed to be adopted and this can be seen as a manifestation of the broad acceptance that this is where the most important (influential) decisions on climate change are or should be made. Commentaries included evaluative judgements of both the process and (lack of) outcome of the negotiations.

Many commentaries around the UNFCCC negotiation *process* concerned the final week of the Copenhagen COP when the established negotiation process became a massive logjam of conflicting red lines and mounting pressure. It is usual for COP negotiations to get stuck but the stakes were higher and the presence of some 120 heads of state charged the situation with a lot of political tension, especially as many of these leaders were not that familiar with the process, usually it is the ministers of environment that lead the countries delegations, not the prime ministers or the presidents. In a last ditch attempt to create some outcome in the disarray that was COP 15 United States, China, India, Brazil and South Africa drafted the *Copenhagen Accord* on the last night of the conference. The Copenhagen Accord was a flimsy 3 page document void of many of the key issues of the negotiation but one should remember that the minilateral approach led by the US and China and few others and

²¹ The Guardian, June 6 2007, *G8 Summit - Tony's final talking shop*, Leader.

²² Guardian, July 7, 2008, *It may seem ineffective, but we need G8 in order to face the daunting future*, Max Hastings.

the attempt to reach some compromise behind closed doors was only pursued at the end of the conference; after the more inclusive process had resulted in a hopelessly long negotiating text, or the perhaps semi-inclusive (yet rather secretive) process resulting in the so called Danish proposal that had been vetted informally to a subgroup of countries prior to the conference imploded as a possible compromise. If the Copenhagen accord had been successful in reaching a significant deal, much of the criticism of the exclusive process against it would probably not surface. That is in line with Scharpf's (Scharpf, 1999) theory of input and output legitimacy; if it would have delivered the goods – a new climate regime – the critique would have been muted.

One central theme in such evaluative judgements of the *outcome* of the various forums is what we can call the basic 'architecture' of the agreements. This concept captures the discussions on:

- the type of governance model selected that spans from internationally negotiated legally binding emission targets such as in the KP vs. voluntary targets pledged by each countries submitted to international review such as in the Copenhagen Accord (often referred to as targets and time-tables vs. pledge and review or top-down vs. bottom-up)
- the legal character of the obligations spanning from voluntary, via politically binding to legally binding
- the kind of financial incentive structure that are set up, cap and trade vs. levy etc.
- the type of governance actors that play the central role: governments and their regulations or the private sector and its investments
- the type of measures that will 'solve' the climate problem spanning from individual behavioural change to waiting for technological fixes
- the division (or not) of countries into different categories with different types or degrees of obligations.

Most of the elements relate to assumptions of what type of agreement would be most *effective* to address the climate change challenge but one can also see elements of equity being embedded (we discuss those separately, see below).²³ These assumptions are widely diverging and mostly not elaborated. For example, the value of legally binding commitments is either taken for granted to be the best route to ensure that countries take strong action on climate change and thus for an effective agreement, or seen as the most ineffective and inefficient option. In the ToI it was claimed that the pledge and review approach without legally binding targets for anyone would be "bad for climate change, bad for us" (Times of India) while in the AP it was concluded that perhaps it is best for the climate if the world enters a continuous negotiation process while dropping the traditional goal to codify everything in public international law. None of the diverging assumptions of the (in)effectiveness of legal commitments are backed up with much elaboration on why legal commitments would be so (in)effective. One exception is the following perspective in the JS on why legal obligations do not matter:

²³ A few voices are raised that clearly find climate change of less importance to address, primarily in ToI and WSJ. For example, one article argued that the way that climate change should be addressed was to adapt to a warming world, pay a little to the poorest to adapt and invest a little in energy, adaptation and geoengineering. (Wall Street Journal Dec 22, 2009 *Time for a Climate Change Plan B*, Nigel Lawson)

“An awareness of the indissoluble kinship between human and non-human life needs to be instilled in popular consciousness and used as a template for moral action. Such a culture cannot be legislated into existence, for it is not defined by legal prescriptions - it does not prescribe, it affirms. It is less about what one ought not to do...than about the celebration of "life-centred" values and the weaving of those values into new patterns of individual and collective self-understanding.”²⁴

There is also considerable variation in what constitutes a legally binding or not. In one commentary the UNFCCC provided binding obligations for developed countries to provide full incremental costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation of developing countries. In another commentary the KP was not regarded as legal and in a third one from India the bottom-up voluntary commitments would through international monitoring become law through the back door even if it had a different name.

In some cases the newspapers capture a diversity of opinions on the architecture of global (energy and) climate governance, but in most cases the views expressed follow a clear line differentiated by country and political colour with the Guardian, the Times of India and the Wall Street Journal providing three very different views. The Johannesburg Star and the NYT is both less active in this debate and more mellow in its positions but brings in some perspectives not seen in the other outlets as well.

The WSJ consistently praises the approach to climate governance of President G.W Bush, such as the APP which “gets industry execs from every sector across the table from relevant government ministers, and devises practical approaches to reductions” that is put in contrast with Kyoto “in which a government sets a national target for emissions, and then forces a few unlucky industries to make cuts”.²⁵ It considered the G8 declaration from the Heiligendamm summit on climate change as a perfect example of how the world had caught up with the Bush approach as it e.g. set a global goal of halving emissions by 2050, invited the major emerging economies to join in the endeavour to reach that goal, acknowledged that different approaches across the world can ‘coordinate rather than compete’ and stressed that technology is a key to control climate change and that fossil fuels will remain the world's dominant source of energy and that any program support growth in developing, emerging and industrialized economies. In the same WSJ article Bush take on how to address climate change was contrasted with the “Kyoto-world” where “governments exist to create draconian rules, even if those dictates are disguised by ‘market’ mechanisms such as cap-and-trade”.²⁶

In most cases the comments on architecture are made in relation to the outcome of the specific meeting (or series of meetings) discussed, whether the outcome fitted the views of what would indeed be an effective outcome or not. This was particularly the case after the COP-15 meeting that resulted in the ‘noted’ Copenhagen Accord. Table 5 lists the positive and negative elements of the Accord mentioned in the analysed media. It should be no surprise that the same element is seen both as good and bad depending on who judges it.

In a few cases the commentaries include more comprehensive, and creative proposals for the architecture of global climate governance, for example in NYT where the author Thomas Friedman suggests an “Earth Race” led by America and “built on markets, economic competition, national self-interest and strategic advantage” that would be “a much more self-sustaining way to reduce carbon emissions than a festival of voluntary, nonbinding

²⁴ The Johannesburg Star, July 07, 2005, *Environment is not for sale*, Graeme Cowley.

²⁵ Wall Street Journal, June 8, 2007, *Bush 1, Greens 0*, Kimberley A. Strassel.

²⁶ Ibid.

commitments at a U.N. conference”²⁷ or VT where a commentator suggests e.g. setting up a UN expert committee that should find projects to cut emissions, countries that phase out old industrial processes could be rewarded with better financial and trade status and an international fund could be set up to support new environmental technology testing.²⁸

The evaluative judgements of the minilateral energy and climate change governance forums, their outcomes and processes are fewer, as the quantitative result indicated with the exception of the G8 there is not much commentary on these in our sample. Most of the comments on these minilateral forums are negative, either because they have not met with some high expectation of what they should have achieved (such as persuading President Bush to come back to the UNFCCC negotiations) or because the forum itself had fundamental legitimacy flaws. So it was said of the various G8 declarations on climate change that they had: no (specific or mid-term) targets, no timetable and no base year. It was said of the G8 as a governance forum that it:

- acts for their own interests rather than with the world’s interest;
- is outside the established structures such as the UN;
- discusses issues where more voices should be heard;
- negotiates behind closed doors;
- and can carry no conviction until China and India are welcomed plus a few more.

These arguments link to a number of the components of (input) legitimacy that were part of our analytical framework such as tradition, participation, transparency and equity. For example, on (government) participation there is some comment on G8 and its transition towards being a G20.

“[T]he more inclusive the G8 becomes, the more the membership of the inner sanctum is called into question. How can you have an effective discussion about the price of oil without the presence of Saudi Arabia, or about greenhouse gases without China? The current two-tier system of debate, with non-members being invited to join the feast for specific courses only, has its problems. One of the reasons, it was claimed, why the G8 was so keen to widen the discussion on greenhouse gases, becoming a G16 in the process, was to avoid confronting the issue of who should take the lead in cutting emissions.”²⁹

The same Guardian article later makes one of the clearest statements about the hierarchy of legitimacy in international governance in any of the articles analysed,

”If we are moving into a different international order, we should take a cool look at the effectiveness of world institutions. In the first rank come the UN and bodies like the EU, the African Union and the Association of south-east Asian nations. But behind them, the annual discussions of G8 leaders add - however inadequately - to the global debate and do advance the discussion, however incrementally.”³⁰

²⁷ New York Times, December 19, 2009, *Off to the Races*, Thomas L. Friedman.

²⁸ Vientiane Times, December 12, 2007, *All eyes on Bali climate meeting*, Yuo Nuo (reprinted from China Daily).

²⁹ The Guardian, July 10, 2008, *Welcome to club world*, Editorial.

³⁰ Ibid.

It was written of President Bush's MEM that it "pins its hopes on wishful technological breakthroughs and sidesteps mandatory ceilings" but when the APP was noted in a positive light it was because of it being a voluntary partnership that sought to address environmental issues through economic growth and technology, not by targets and command-and-control mechanisms, and because it was more acceptable to countries like China.

There is no need to discuss (the legitimacy of) something that is not expected to have any impact and thus the silence on the CSD, IRECs and the APPs and the attention to UNFCCC and G8. The attention to the G8 seems a bit double, however, with much scepticism of what it can deliver, and questioning the legitimacy of the institution as such due to its exclusivity for the most powerful, its compromise with Russia in the case of democracy as a membership criteria is a clear case.

The Times of India stand out among the newspapers not only for having the second largest number of articles total, it is also rather unique in the way it directly addresses the Indian negotiators, cheering them on and chastising them for a poor deal as after Copenhagen. The following is a typical example.

"The inclusive, one-country-one-vote democratic process of the UNFCCC has been thrown to the winds. And when countries like Brazil, China and Sudan took the lead in denouncing the secret goings-on among select groups that might foist a political declaration that hasn't been debated and crafted by the Parties, the Secretariat and the Presidency fumbled. Finally, caught in his own web of words, an exasperated Rasmussen invoked the people outside the precincts of the conference and their demand for a solution, not a process! I couldn't believe my ears! Whose solution and a solution for whom? I am sure the Indian delegation would not forget the father of our nation, for whom the process was as important as the goal. And to the Secretariat and the Danish hosts I say that it is indeed the process that will ensure a transparent and legally binding agreement, not a political declaration."³¹

When it comes to analysing the climate governance from a normative ethical perspective Sunita Narain columnist for The Times of India together with Guardian columnist George Monbiot has some of the sharpest critiques of the politicians and the process for failing to deliver a equitable, just agreement:

"It's clear that the world needs an effective agreement to combat climate change. But this agreement cannot work, unless it demands that the rich nations reinvent their growth by substantially reducing emissions. It cannot work unless there is clarity that China and India and others need the right to development. But equally it recognizes that we can grow differently without first polluting and then cleaning up. And that this is not possible without the world agreeing to share the economic growth, between nations and between people. In this global deal, equity is a pre-requisite for an effective agreement, not a sweet-nothing good for the preamble only. So, we can now cry wolf. But this is an outcome of the 'pragmatic global diplomacy' that many in the

³¹ The Times of India, December 18, 2009, *Flop-enhagen: Team India a confused lot*, Surya P Sethi.

government believe is the need of the day. They openly reject the idea that global agreements can and should be based on principles of equity or justice. They say this is old-fashioned and idealistic, not fit for the real world. Their world is about global deals that give and take. The question we in India must ask is what did we get: other than the official stamp of a third-class citizen of the world?”³²

Table 5. Evaluative judgements of the Copenhagen Accord in the analysed editorials, op-eds and articles

| | Good elements | Bad elements |
|---------|---|---|
| Outcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green Climate Fund • 2C degree target • The first global agreement on climate change • A mechanism to enable developed countries and companies to offset their emissions by funding protection of tropical rain forests • No quantifiable targets for rich countries to reduce emissions • So bad that there is no risk anyone will think climate change is taken care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only noted, not adopted by the COP • No agreement on how to scale up carbon finance • Commitments on finance weakened by “lawyerly language” • Developing countries get an ‘aid bonanza’ • No binding commitments on emission reductions • No details on how to address climate change through forests • No roadmap or timeline for further negotiations and brokering a legally binding deal • No agreement on second phase of the KP or a successor • No binding goals on when global emissions should peak and begin to decline • Abandoning commitments made under the Bali Action Plan • the entire international consensus built up since Rio “set aside to the |

³² The Times of India, December 16, 2009, *EARTH TALK - Finally, a non-paper with long-term consequences?*, Op.Ed. Sunita Narain.

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| | | dictate of a new world order dominated by the US and China” |
| Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rich countries had to negotiate with the BRIC countries on more equal terms than ever before • The west's recognition that the world will not be rescued by diktat, but only through genuine dialogue • The highlevel involvement because that means it will happen again | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of courage • Developed countries belieing the spirit of the UNFCCC (meant to be an open forum for discussion and debate) by willing to confer secretly on the Danish proposal • The first COP wherein the well established bottom-up multilateral process driven by the Parties was given up. |

Conclusions

This paper was guided by two research questions. The first concerned whether the media play a role in (de)-legitimising specific forums of global governance (and if so if it differs between countries/newspapers). The material we had to analyse enabled us to at least partially answer this question. Yes, the media does engage in evaluative judgements about two of the governance forums we analysed, the UNFCCC and the G8, to some extent on their process and primarily on their (lack of) outcome. However, there was considerable variation in both the number and the ‘quality’ or ‘depth’ of the commentaries. If everyone read the Guardian or the Times of India they would know a great deal about the complex challenges of global climate governance.

There is no need to discuss (the legitimacy of) something that is not expected to have any impact and thus the silence on the CSD, IRECs and the APPs. The attention to the G8 seems a bit double, however, with much scepticism of what it can deliver, and questioning the legitimacy of the institution as such due to its exclusivity for the most powerful, lack of transparency, lack of attention to equity etc. What we cannot answer is, however, to what extent the commentaries in the newspapers contribute to initiating or strengthening debate in the respective countries on global climate governance (they can hardly do it on energy governance as those meetings were utterly ignored). Commentaries in these kinds of newspapers must in the end be seen as part of an elite discourse, which if it were active, would still strengthen the democratic input to the government’s policy in these global governance forums.

The second question concerned what criteria that, explicitly or implicitly, that are used in the media commentaries for (de)-legitimising global governance forums and their outcomes. Here we can (preliminary) conclude that all of the components for procedural and substantive legitimacy from the normative framework we used for the analysis could be found in the material, with a significant dominance of the effectiveness and equity criterion. The commentaries want to see an effective and equitable agreement (although it varies considerably what is implied in those concepts). One factor that stood out in the material that

was not part of the framework was leadership and we will return to the material in the next version of the paper to analyse this in more detail.

References

- Abbott, K.W., Snidal, D., 2000. Hard and Soft Law in International Governance. *International Organization* 54, 421-456.
- Archibugi, D., 2004. Cosmopolitan Democracy and its Critics: A Review. *European Journal of International Relations* 10, 437-473.
- Bailin, A., 2005. From Traditional to Group Hegemony. The G7, the Liberal Economic Order and the Core-Periphery Gap. Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Biermann, F., Pattberg, P., Asselt, H.v., Zelli, F., 2009. The Fragmentation of Global Governance Architectures: A Framework for Analysis. *Global Environmental Politics* 9, 14-40.
- Black, J., 2008. Constructing and Contesting Legitimacy and Accountability in Polycentric Regulatory Regimes. *Regulation & Governance* 2, 137-164.
- Bodansky, D., 1999. The Legitimacy of International Governance: A Coming Challenge for International Environment Law? *The American Journal of International Law* 93, 596-624.
- Boykoff, J., 2012. US Media Coverage of the Cancún Climate Change Conference. *Political Science & Politics* 45, 252-258.
- Boykoff, M., 2010. Indian Media Representations of Climate Change in a Threatened Journalistic Ecosystem. *Climate Change* 99, 17-25.
- Boykoff, M., Roberts, 2007. Media coverage of climate change: current trends, strengths, weaknesses. United Nations Development Programme.
- Boykoff, M.T., 2011. Who Speaks for the Climate? Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Clark, I., 2005. Legitimacy in International Society. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Commission on Sustainable Development, 2001. Report on the Ninth Session (5 May 2000 and 16-27 April 2001). United Nations, New York.
- Dryzek, J.S., 2001. Legitimacy and Economy in Deliberative Democracy. *Political Theory* 29, 651-669.
- Franck, T.M., 1990. The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- G8, 1989. Economic Declaration. Group of 8, Paris.
- G8, 2005. The Gleneagles Communiqué. Group of 8, Gleneagles.
- Kaasa, S.M., 2005. The Commission on Sustainable Development. A Study of Institutional Design, Distribution of Capabilities and Entrepreneurial Leadership. The Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Lysaker, pp. 1-67.
- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., 2010. The United Nations and Global Energy Governance: Past Challenges, Future Choices. *Global Change, Peace and Security* 22, 175-195.
- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., 2011. Global Regulation Through a Diversity of Norms: Comparing Hard and Soft Law, In: Levi-Faur, D. (Ed.), *Handbook on the Politics of Regulation*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK pp. 604-614.
- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., Jollands, N., Staudt, L., 2012. Global Governance for Sustainable Energy: The Contribution of a Global Public Goods Approach. *Ecological Economics* 83, 11-18.
- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., McGee, J., 2013. Legitimacy in an Era of Fragmentation: The Case of Global Climate Governance. *Global Environmental Politics* 13, 56-78.
- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., van Asselt, H., 2009. Introduction: exploring and explaining the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 9, 195-211.

- Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S.I., Vihma, A., 2009. Comparing the Legitimacy and Effectiveness of Global Hard and Soft Law: An Analytical Framework. *Regulation & Governance* 3, 400-420.
- Karlsson, S.I., 2009. G8 Climate Action from Gleneagles to Hokkaido - Dying Flare or Lasting Flame?, 50th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, New York.
- Koenig-Archibugi, M., 2010. Is Global Democracy Possible? *European Journal of International Relations* 17, 519-542.
- Lesage, D., Van de Graaf, T., Westphal, K., 2009. The G8's Role in Global Energy Governance Since the 2005 Gleneagles Summit. *Global Governance* 15, 259-277.
- McGee, J., Taplin, R., 2008. The Asia-Pacific Partnership and United States International Climate Change Policy. *Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law* 19, 179-219.
- McGee, J., Taplin, R., 2009. The Role of the Asia-Pacific Partnership in Discursive Contestation of the International Climate Regime. *International Environmental Agreements; Politics, Law, Economics* 9, 213-238.
- Moravcsik, A., 2004. Is there a 'Democratic Deficit' in World Politics? A Framework for Analysis. *Government and Opposition* 39, 336-363.
- Painter, J., . 2010. Summoned by Science Reporting Climate Change at Copenhagen and Beyond. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Oxford.
- Scharpf, F.W., 1999. *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford University Press, New York.
- Scholte, J.A., 2002. Civil Society and Democracy in Global Governance. *Global Governance* 8, 281-304.
- UNFCCC, 2003. *Caring for Climate. A Guide to the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.* Climate Change Secretariat (UNFCCC), Bonn, Germany.
- United Nations, 1992. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.* In: Report of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change on the Work of the Second Part of its Fifth Session, held at New York from 30 April to 9 May 1992. Addendum. United Nations, New York.
- United Nations, 1997. *The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.* United Nations.
- Vihma, A., 2009. Friendly Neighbor or Trojan Horse? Assessing the Interaction of Soft Law Initiatives and the UN Climate Regime. *International Environmental Agreements Politics, Law, Economics* 9, 239-262.
- Wagner, L.M., 2003. *A Commission Will Lead Them?: The UN Commission on Sustainable Development and UNCED Follow-Up,* International Studies Association Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon.
- WEHAB Working Group, 2002. *A Framework for Action on Energy.* United Nations,, New York, p. 31.
- Wilson, K.M., 1995. Mass Media as Sources of Global Warming Knowledge. *Communications Review* 22, 75-89.
- Zürn, M., 2004. Global Governance and Legitimacy Problems. *Government and Opposition* 39, 260-287.