

ON MELTING SUMMITS: THE LIMITATIONS OF FIELD-CONFIGURING EVENTS AS CATALYSTS OF CHANGE IN TRANSNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

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Although field-configuring events have been highlighted as catalysts of institutional change, scholars still know little about the specific conditions that allow such change to occur. Using data from a longitudinal study of United Nations climate conferences, we analyze how regular and high-stakes events in an event series interacted in producing and preventing institutional change in the transnational climate policy field. We uncover variations in event structures, processes, and outcomes that explain why climate conferences have not led to effective solutions to combat human-induced global warming. Results in particular highlight that growing field complexity and issue multiplication compromise the change potential of a field-configuring event series in favor of field maintenance. Over time, diverse actors find event participation useful for their own purposes, but their activity is not connected to the institutions at the center of the issue-based field. In discussing how events configuring a field are purposefully staged and enacted but also influenced by developments in the field, our study contributes to a more complete understanding of field-configuring events, particularly in contested transnational policy arenas.

The worst-case scenario for me is that climate becomes a second World Trade Organization. Copenhagen, for me, is a very clear deadline that I think we

need to meet. And I'm afraid that if we don't, then the process will begin to slip. And like in the trade negotiations, one deadline after the other will not be met, and we sort of become the little orchestra on the Titanic. (Y. de Boer, UNFCCC executive secretary, 2008 interview)

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Less than two years after he made the above statement, the United Nation's (UN's) climate chief Yvo de Boer resigned, taking the blame for the chaos and breakdown for which the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit will go down in history. After almost two decades of transnational policy efforts, the summit ended without the promised new binding agreement to fight global warming. It was one of a series of meetings of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty aiming at transnational solutions to stabilize "greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (article 2, UNFCCC [United Nations, 1992]). A decisive early—1997—UNFCCC

meeting, or Conference of the Parties (COP), established the Kyoto Protocol, which committed industrial countries to legally binding greenhouse gas reduction targets. Initially hailed as a breakthrough, the Kyoto Protocol has not been effective in limiting global carbon emissions (e.g., Heffernan, 2011). Given widespread agreement that urgent action is required, why have the 19 COPs to date failed to bring about regulations to combat human-induced climate change?

Recent research has described UN conferences as field-configuring events that are important “catalysts of change, especially as organizations and governments struggle to develop global solutions to complex problems” (Hardy & Maguire, 2010: 1365). Such events play a role not only in transnational policy making, but also in the “structuration” of organizational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Giddens, 1979, 1984) more generally (Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Meyer, Gaba, & Colwell, 2005). In the context of transnational fields (e.g., Djelic & Quack, 2003, 2008; Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002), the analysis of field-configuring events sheds light on the microlevel processes in which state representatives and international organizations, local and transnational communities, and public and private sector actors interact in a common arena in which policy surrounding a contested transnational issue is being developed (Wittneben, Okereke, Banerjee, & Levy, 2012). To date, however, little is known about the conditions that allow field-configuring events to bring about institutional change.

Hardy and Maguire (2010) argued that field-configuring events can catalyze change because they provide discursive spaces not normally available: they are temporally bounded, special moments in the life of a field and facilitate interactions among field members that do not usually interact. In this article, we examine how these two vital characteristics of field-configuring events, which we call “temporal boundedness” and “interactional openness,” develop over time by studying the series of annual COPs¹ occurring between 1995 and 2012.

¹ In contrast to Hardy and Maguire (2010), who considered a series of international conferences as *one* field-configuring event, we look at *each* annual COP as a field-configuring event, because each fulfills the criteria outlined by Anand and Jones (2008) and Lampel and Meyer (2008) in that they assemble diverse field members in a bounded time and space, enable increased interaction and communication among diverse field constituents, include both ceremonial and dramaturgical

We find, first, that events in this series were staged and enacted in different ways; “regular” events created more interactional openness by providing multiple formal and informal opportunities for participant exchange, whereas the few “high-stakes” events induced a stronger sense of temporal boundedness through deadlines and media attention. In the early phases of field development, the interaction of regular and high-stakes events facilitated institutional change by allowing for both trust building and momentum creation. Second, we find that over time these field-configuring events ceased to be interactionally open and temporally bounded, as diverse actors with vested interests entered the transnational climate policy field, power coalitions shifted, and the events became platforms for issues not strictly related to emission reduction. Under such conditions, deliberate staging of the Copenhagen high-stakes event in 2009 to induce a sense of urgency in the climate negotiations prevented institutional change and resulted in an ongoing delay of substantive policy decisions.

Our analysis yields two theoretical contributions to research on field-configuring events, institutional change, and the structuration of transnational fields. First, we identify variations among different events within a series that allow us to define the processes by which the temporal boundedness and interactional openness of field-configuring events can lead to institutional change. This theorizing extends the current scholarly work on discursive spaces and field-configuring events (Hardy & Maguire, 2010). Second, we detect field-level conditions that limit the capacity of field-configuring events to bring about institutional change. We argue that when an issue-based field (Hoffman, 1999) fragments into increasingly diverse membership and subissues as a result of the fluid and complex dynamics of transnational field structuration (Djelic & Quack, 2008), the role of field-configuring events shifts; instead of field-endogenous catalysts of change, they become mechanisms of field maintenance. In the field of climate policy, this means that more and more actors find COP participation useful for their purposes, but

activities and unstructured opportunities for face-to-face social interaction, and allow for the transformation of capital—for instance, by generating social and reputational resources. Thus, we refer to the sequence of COPs as a “field-configuring event series.”

their activity is increasingly disconnected from the issue of mitigating climate change.

FIELD STRUCTURATION, TRANSNATIONAL FIELDS, AND FIELD-CONFIGURING EVENTS

Field-Configuring Events and the Structuration of Transnational Policy Fields

Organizational fields have become an important unit of analysis in contemporary organization theory (Davis & Marquis, 2005; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008), and understanding how new fields are formed and evolve over time has been a central concern in institutional theory (e.g., Hirsch, Lounsbury, & Ventresca, 2003; Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991). A field is broadly defined as “a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside of the field” (Scott, 1994: 207–208). Such interactions may take place in the context of an industry (e.g., Anand & Peterson, 2000; Garud, Jain, & Kuramaswami, 2002; Munir, 2005) or a profession (e.g., Rao, Morrill, & Zald, 2000; Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002) or form around a contested issue (Hoffman, 1999). Field structuration—establishment of increasingly coherent patterns of interaction and understandings—can be achieved through rules and norms set by states and professional systems (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), through collaborations (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000), through institutional entrepreneurs (e.g., Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004), or through conflicts and debates (Hoffman, 1999; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008).

In transnational fields, diverse organizations, networks, and communities come together around many different regulatory projects and agendas inside and outside of national boundaries (Djelic, 2011: 36). While they may share an interest in a particular policy issue, actors in transnational fields operate according to different logics and on multiple levels, so complexity, fluidity, and differentiation characterize transnational field structuration (Djelic, 2011; Djelic & Quack, 2008). Existing research has shed light on different bottom-up and top-down processes by which transnational institutions are built, diffused, and adapted. Intergovernmental actors such as the World Bank and the UN set global norms informed and transmitted by national laws in recursive cycles (Halliday & Carruthers, 2007). From the bottom up, transnational

communities not only define a transnational problem space and mobilize collective action, but also participate directly in setting rules and monitoring their implementation (Djelic & Quack, 2010). Because an overarching authority is missing in transnational fields, rules, norms, and understandings are continuously (re)negotiated and are often highly ambiguous, which allows them to include diverse actors and logics (Djelic & Quack, 2011).

Processes of transnational field structuration can be facilitated by field-configuring events, defined as “settings in which people from diverse organizations and with diverse purposes assemble periodically, or on a one-time basis, to announce new products, develop industry standards, construct social networks, recognize accomplishments, share and interpret information, and transact business” (Lampel & Meyer, 2008: 1026). Such temporary gatherings are particularly important in the context of complex, fluid, and multilayered transnational fields, where frequent and fateful interactions among the diverse field members may otherwise not develop. Accordingly, Djelic and Quack recognized ritualized gatherings as relevant for bottom-up transnational community building, because they allow diverse actors to develop “richer, denser, and more contextualized repertoires of interaction” (2010: 387). The field-configuring events framework adds to this argument the potential of such venues to catalyze change—that is, to bring about change in the rules, positions, and understandings making up an organizational field (Hardy & Maguire, 2010), as do other triggering events from which changes in field membership and a joint sense of purpose can emerge (Hoffman, 1999). An analysis of such localized, discontinuous microlevel processes in transnational fields complements knowledge about the global, continuous processes that drive the development of new transnational frameworks (e.g., Frank, 1997; Meyer, Frank, Hironaka, Schofer, & Tuma, 1997).

The field of climate policy is an extreme case of a transnational field, because the need to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions not only mobilizes governments, international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private sector actors, and research institutes all around the world (Orr, 2006), but also requires that millions of organizations and individuals change their production and consumption patterns, which implies changing an economic system to meet a threat that lies largely in the future (Giddens, 2009; Levy & Egan, 2003). The issue is both wider and deeper than

other transnational issues, touching all areas of human life and fundamental human beliefs and values (Hoffman, 2011a, 2011b). To coordinate this complex task of transnational institution building, regular climate conferences have been set up as field-configuring events mandated to bring about converging rules, norms, and beliefs among the countries of the world on how to tackle climate change. This challenging situation raises questions about the conditions under which field-configuring events can catalyze change.

Field-Configuring Events as Catalysts of Change: A Dynamic Perspective

Many existing studies of field-configuring events have described processes wherein single or a small number of events have successfully brought about field-level changes, such as a new collective understanding (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008) or new technological standards (Garud, 2008). These studies highlighted how institutional entrepreneurs seize emergent opportunities (McInerney, 2008) or gain central positions from which to trigger shared “sensemaking” (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). The general understanding is that field-configuring events conform to dominant field logics but at the same time leave room for individual initiative and creativity because participants can interact in unpredictable ways (Lampel & Meyer, 2008: 1027–1028). The concentration of interactions at field-configuring events highlights different and conflicting positions in a field (Garud, 2008; McInerney, 2008) as well as common concerns (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008) and creates opportunities for both powerful and peripheral actors to influence emerging orders (Hardy & Maguire, 2010). In focusing on explaining change processes, these studies have so far tended to neglect the idea that events are also products of a field, embedded in ongoing processes of field structuration (Lampel & Meyer, 2008). To address this current gap in knowledge, a dynamic perspective on the evolution of a series of events in the context of a changing field is needed.

As a first step in this direction, Hardy and Maguire (2010) discussed how field-configuring events can take different forms by building on the concept of *discursive spaces* (Hajer, 1995), which they defined as physical or virtual arenas in which actors discuss, debate, and dispute issues important to them. They argued that to trigger change, field-configuring events must comprise multiple discursive spaces that are more open and at the same time

more bounded than the discursive spaces regularly available in a field. In this way, events bring actors together that do not normally interact for a fixed duration or at particular intervals. Innovation then emerges because new things can be said in these unusual discursive spaces, information can flow between otherwise separate discursive spaces, and multiple actors translate dominant narratives in unforeseeable ways (Hardy & Maguire, 2010).

This argument is useful in that existing research often describes events as temporally and spatially bounded social arenas (Lampel & Meyer, 2008; McInerney, 2008), but does not distinguish the dimension of temporal limitation from the question of whether field-configuring events, not least through their spatial arrangements, support increased interaction among organizations in a field—a central aspect of field structuration (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As Zilber (2011) indicated, events can be temporally bounded but still provide for little openness in members’ interactions: two conferences in the field of Israeli high tech assembled field members in a temporally bounded space, but participants were not engaged in a joint debate because event organizers allocated different issues to separate social spaces. As a result, these events contributed to maintaining conflicting institutions rather than leading to a convergence of positions and new institutional frameworks.

Thus, to better understand why events fail to trigger change, researchers first need to treat the dimensions of temporal boundedness and interactional openness as separate and as displaying distinct causes and effects. Interactional openness relates to the temporary spatial copresence of diverse actors that can interact in the context of overlapping formal and informal spaces. Research from the field of economic geography has shown that copresence at trade fairs, in a research laboratory, or during a joint product presentation can stimulate knowledge exchange, learning, and the emergence of trustful ties (e.g., Maskell, Bathelt, & Malmberg, 2006; Torre, 2008). Temporal boundedness, in contrast, refers to the temporal limitation of events. Temporally limited meetings among different and possibly rival professional communities in creative projects, for instance, are said to induce creative friction (e.g., Grabher, 2004; Ibert, 2010). The setting of deadlines, another form of temporal limitation, is known as a mechanism to stimulate momentum for change (e.g., Gersick, 1989, 1994). Whereas openness is thus primarily associated with learning and trust building, boundedness re-

lates more to creativity and momentum, and both processes may be necessary for facilitating institutional change. Existing research indicates that the temporal boundedness of an event can be enhanced by building up anticipation (Lampel, 2001) or by making thematically charged opening statements (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). Interactional openness, on the other hand, is influenced by organizing choices concerning, for instance, spatial arrangements, participant fees, or theme selection (Rüling & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2010; Zilber, 2011). To elaborate on these two characteristics of field-configuring events and their relationship to institutional change we pose the following first research question: *What are the causes and effects of temporal boundedness and interactional openness in a field-configuring event series?*

A related but different question is how and why field-configuring events change over time as they become more deeply embedded in a field. Lampel and Meyer (2008) argued that, during field emergence, field-configuring events create new standards, practices, or categories; in mature fields, they expand, refine, and solidify beliefs. Existing research indicates that rare and exceptional events, such as a 1944 conference of Jewish lawyers that established an independent legal system in the forming state of Israel (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008), are associated with radical field-level changes, whereas periodic events tend to stabilize field processes. Power and Jansson (2008), for instance, studied recurrent trade fairs in the furniture industry and their role in entrenching business relations and exchanges. Similarly, research on "tournament rituals" stresses how events such as award ceremonies symbolically reinforce existing field structures, such as power relations (Moeran, 2011; Skov, 2006) and horizontal relationships (Anand & Jones, 2008; Anand & Watson, 2004). While these events may also lead to changes such as new genres or market categories, those changes are primarily incremental. To better understand why field-configuring events fail to trigger change therefore also depends on analyzing how and why their characteristics change over time as a result of ongoing processes of field structuration. Accordingly, we pose a second research question: *How and why do field-configuring events change in the context of an evolving organizational field?*

The field of transnational climate policy is structured by the dominant institution of the UNFCCC. This international treaty, first adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, has been ratified by 194

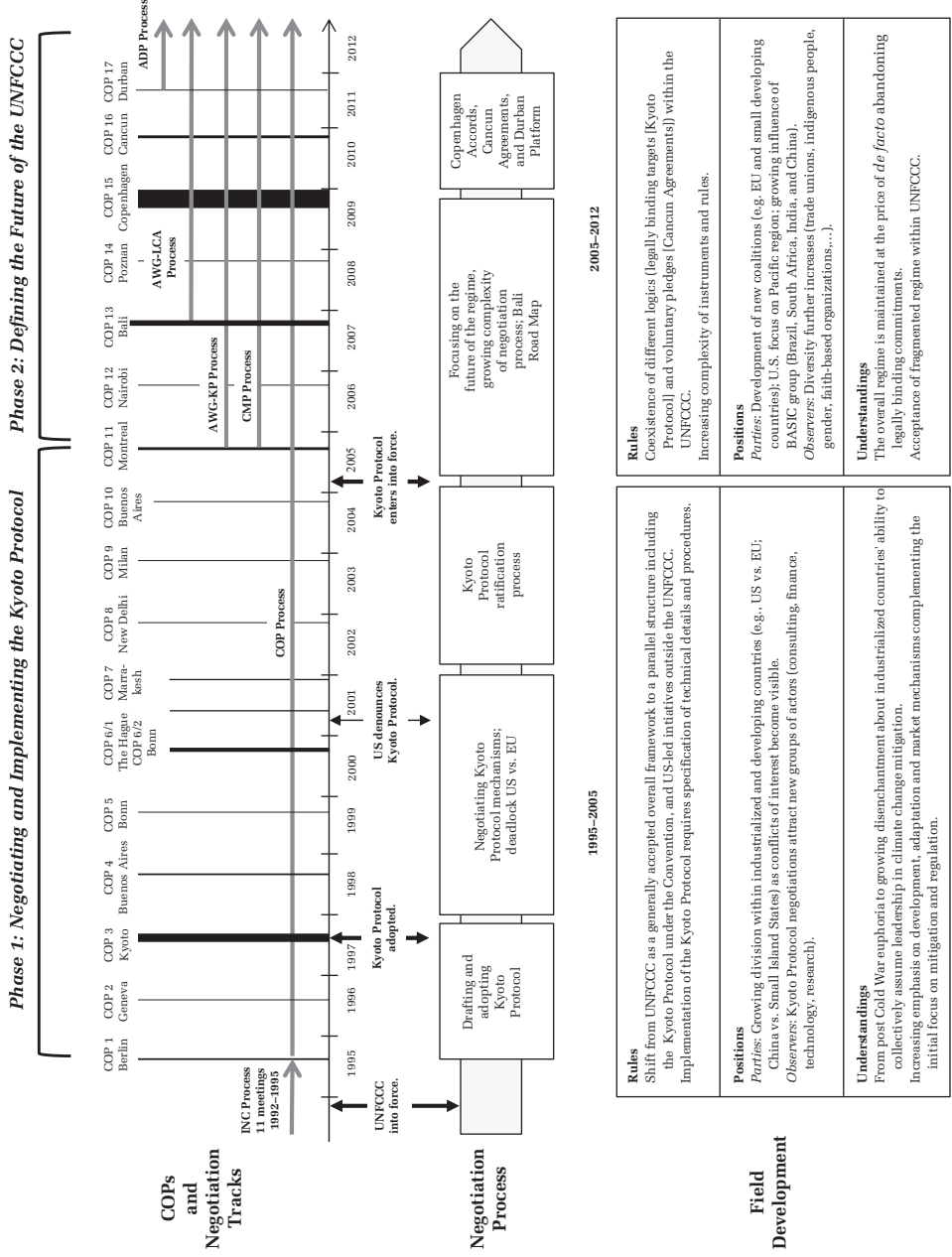
countries and therefore boasts near global acceptance. During COPs, decisions pertaining to the implementation of the treaty and the extension of its legal framework are taken, and countries' climate change reports and greenhouse gas emission inventories reviewed. Drawing on the concept of issue-based fields (Hoffman, 1999), we take participation in the COPs as a proxy for membership in the transnational climate policy field and for engagement in a common debate, although the actual extent of interaction among field members remains to be examined empirically. The aegis of the UN has shaped the rules and understandings governing the COPs' discursive spaces. From the outset, the UNFCCC was aimed at universal membership, which involves openness to all countries and the principle of unanimous consent. It relied on the standard instruments of transnational environmental policy processes, including targets, timetables, and legally binding texts (Victor, 2011). As we outline below, this structure has been problematic in the face of the enduring and complex issue of climate change, because it affected the ability of the COPs to be both temporally bounded and interactionally open.

Figure 1 illustrates how the climate policy field and the COPs have developed in two main phases. The years from 1995 to 2005 were dominated by the negotiation, adoption, and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, a treaty that defines legally binding emission reduction targets for industrialized countries in a first commitment period ending in 2012. This process was delayed by an open discord between the EU and the US. In 2000, the US decided to leave the Kyoto Protocol process. When the Kyoto Protocol finally "entered into force" in 2005,² the field moved into a second phase, in which its future was negotiated. As we show in more detail in our findings, this second phase was marked by a growing diversity of field constituents and issues, a shift in dominant coalitions, and the emergence of parallel regulatory solutions in a context of increasingly complex rules and instruments mainly associated with the Kyoto Protocol. These changes were reflected in strongly increasing COP participation, the multiplication of official negotiation

² A treaty does not immediately enter into force at the time of its adoption but typically does so on a later date following its ratification by a predefined number of signatory states.

FIGURE 1

The UNFCCC and the Climate Policy Field, 1994–2012^a



^a The thickness of vertical lines in the timeline varies with the extent of *New York Times* coverage of the COPs. Abbreviations: INC = Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change; AWG-KP = Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol; CMP = Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol; AWG-LCA = Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention; ADP = Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action; COP = Conference of the Parties.

tracks, and an increasing divide among a growing number of diverse field constituencies.

Inside Conferences of the Parties

COPs can be considered the climate change field's central field-configuring event series. The UNFCCC's secretariat and a host country government organize each annual conference. In between COPs, subsidiary bodies hold negotiations in which draft texts are advanced. Since 1995, about an average 3,500 government delegates from more than 190 countries, 4,500 delegates from organizations accredited as observers, and 1,200 media representatives have attended each COP. Total attendance has varied between 4,300 for COP 8 in New Delhi and more than 27,000 registered participants for COP 15 in Copenhagen.

Multiple discursive spaces coexist at COPs. Central among these is the *negotiation space*, in which governments that are Parties to the Convention make decisions. Most countries that are parties belong to groups, such as the G-77 group of developing countries, the EU, or the BASIC group, which comprises Brazil, South Africa, India, and China. The second key discursive space is the *observer space*. Observers, although not directly involved in decision making, are admitted to the COPs to represent industry, civil society, and the realm of science. Observer delegates must be registered with a not-for-profit nongovernmental organization and admitted by the UNFCCC secretariat. Observers typically attend COPs to set up and participate in official side events, network, learn, and share information (Orr, 2006). Over time, diverse observer groupings have been officially recognized, including representatives of environmental NGOs (ENGOS), business and industry NGOs (BINGOS), research and independent NGOs (RINGOS), indigenous peoples' organizations (IPOS), trade union NGOs (TUNGOS), women and gender groups, and young generation NGOs (YOUNGOS). Press and media representatives (who must be accredited by the UNFCCC secretariat) constitute the *media space*. Media people are allowed to take photos and video footage at the COPs and are invited to numerous press briefings held by country and observer groups as well as by COP organizers.

The main COP activities are policy negotiations, side events, and exhibits. The first week of a conference is normally dedicated to technical negotiation in the UNFCCC bodies and contact groups—open-ended meetings where negotiation text is

drafted. The second week is reserved for the so-called high-level segment in which environment, trade, and finance ministers advance negotiations and make decisions in the COP plenary. Any government or observer organization can register a side event to hold a panel discussion or present an idea or research findings. In addition, any registered organization can also request free exhibit space to distribute brochures and display posters. Negotiation, observer, and media spaces overlap at side events, exhibits, press briefings, and informal exchanges. The latter can be planned or simply organically emerge from the interaction of event participants. While the broad format of the COPs remained stable over time, our research showed evidence of critical shifts in temporal boundedness and interactional openness that affected the COPs' ability to advance institutional change.

METHODS

Research Process

Drawing on our prior experience in the climate policy field and in studying field-configuring events, our initial research question focused on field-configuring processes *during* COP events. Two authors (Betina and Elke) attended COP 14 in Poznan (2008) and the subsequent meeting of the subsidiary bodies (SB 30; 2009) in Bonn to observe, conduct interviews, collect documents, and take field notes (see the section on data sources below). From these initial observations and interviews, we discovered that most field participants referred to the COPs as part of a trajectory rather than as discrete events (e.g., placing a COP within the two years of negotiation for the "Bali Road Map") but at the same time anticipated each COP differently. We began to develop the idea that COPs should be understood as embedded in a longer-term event series with changing dynamics over time.

To capture the factors leading to variations among the COPs and to understand the long-term evolution of this event series, we conducted follow-up interviews with people we had met at COP 14 and other experts in the climate policy field. In addition, we collected many secondary data, mostly academic articles from environmental policy studies and international law, discussing the development of the field and reporting on specific COPs (details below). Finally, we collected COP-related primary data. Following Hardy and Maguire (2010), we analyzed all daily and summary issues of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) related to

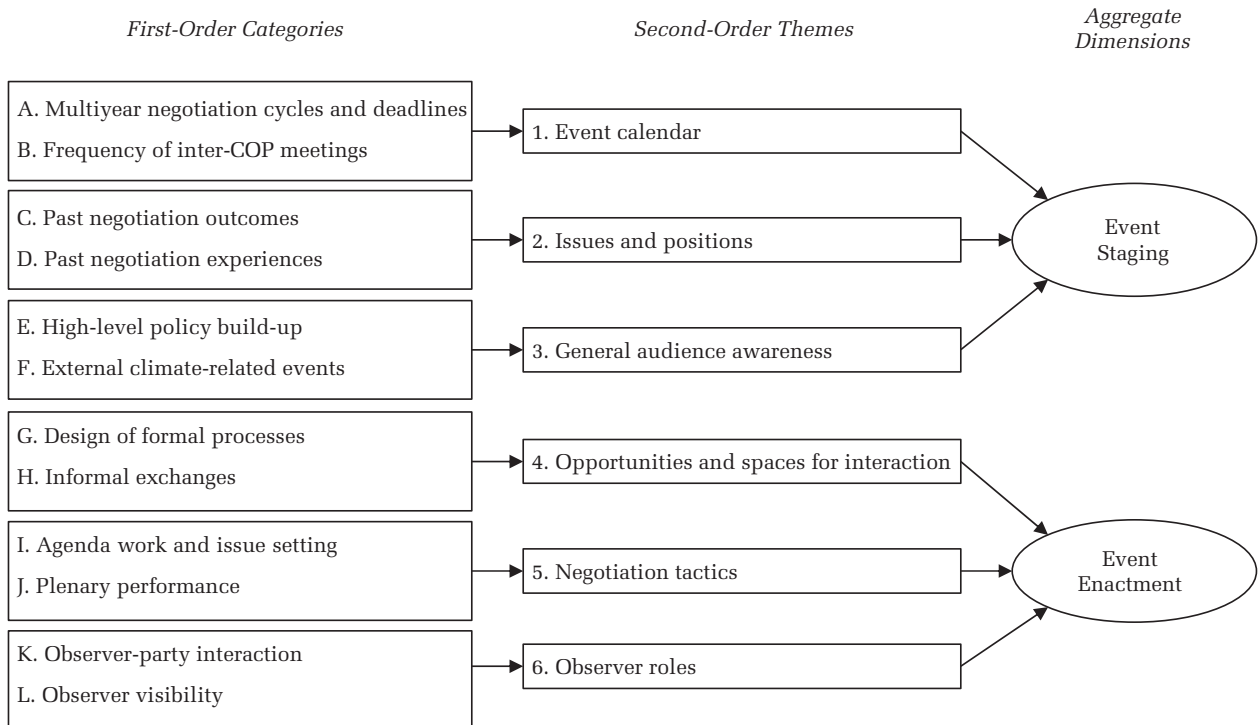
the meetings from COP 1 in 1995 to COP 17 in 2011. Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, which is based in Canada (www.iisd.ca), ENBs are “high quality, reliable, independent, and technical” and “considered invaluable by policymakers who require up-to-date, detailed information on international meetings” (United Nations Association in Canada [2009], quoted in Hardy and Maguire [2010: 1371]).

We used ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software to code all 204 COP-related ENBs as well as our interviews and observations. During a first round of coding, we assigned descriptive codes to all text passages that evoked activities and processes occurring during or related to the COPs. A review and consolidation of these descriptive codes yielded an initial scheme with 60 codes that facilitated the comparison of topics across data sources. This coding scheme, which remained close to the data, comprised labels such as “inter-COP lack of agreement,” “texts/drafting/bracketing,” “conflict/dissent/tensions,” “proposing and receiving texts,” “NGO/observer-delegation contact,” “government-sponsored meetings and initiatives,” and “conference logistics.” In addition, we coded our data for temporal boundedness and in-

teractional openness of discursive spaces. We linked openness to text passages indicating either overlap or distance of discursive spaces and to exchanges between different actor groups; boundedness was linked to text passages that indicated either the exceptional or routine character of events, the frequency of events, and time limits. After the first round of coding, we began an iterative process, moving back and forth between data and theory to capture what we had identified as the most empirically grounded and theoretically interesting factors relating to the temporal boundedness and interactional openness of discursive spaces at the COPs. This process yielded a simplified, more abstract data structure, which is presented in Figure 2.

The data structure has six main second-order themes that we associated with two aggregate dimensions: “event staging” and “event enactment.” These dimensions reflect the notion of events as forms of collective performance (Rao, 2001) and capture different ways in which organizers and participants set up events and participated in them. Once we had defined the data structure, we used both the six second-order themes and additional texts including articles, COP reports, and speeches

FIGURE 2
Data Structure



to recode our primary data. We then compared all text passages associated with each second-order theme to comprehend how and why the temporal boundedness and interactional openness varied across COPs and over time along with changes in the field. Table 1 is an overview of themes and categories, with representative data.

Data

The transnational climate policy field is uniquely complex, containing often conflicting and dynamic political, scientific, technological, and legal dimensions and pressing public concerns. We approached our research in this multifaceted setting by combining a detailed knowledge of climate science and policy with nuanced qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and longitudinal analysis of textual data.

Participant observation. One of us (Bettina) has more than ten years research experience in the climate policy field (see, e.g., Whiteman, Dorsey, & Wittneben, 2010; Wittneben 2007) and has attended 13 major international climate policy events since 2000 (see Table A1 in the Appendix) working for the UNFCCC secretariat and different European governments and conducting research for academic and policy institutes. In these roles, she has been able to follow the field's development over time and to observe event-related processes. These observations have been documented in blog entries, conference reports (Ott, Brouns, Sterk, & Wittneben, 2005; Sterk, Ott, Watanabe, & Wittneben, 2007; Wittneben, Sterk, Ott, & Brouns, 2006), videos, and field notes. Another author (Elke) attended climate policy conferences in 2008 and in 2009 and took field notes on side events, informal gatherings, social events, and press conferences. We drew on these observations to identify key moments in the development of the field and to map out variations in COP-related microdynamics over time.

Semistructured interviews. We conducted 39 formal, semistructured interviews (28 at events and 11 follow-ups; see Table A2). COP interviewees were selected to reflect diversity in global regions (industrialized and developing countries), organizations (government delegations, not-for-profit organizations, business associations, and intergovernmental agencies), and length of experience in the climate policy field. Our long-term engagement in the field facilitated access to high-level respondents. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and 34 were audio-taped and fully transcribed. Initial interviews addressed respondents' roles in the con-

ference process, their activities before, during, and after the events, and their evaluation of the importance of the UNFCCC event cycle compared to other international climate change policy-making processes and events. We revised our interview protocol for the follow-up interviews, taking into account current policy developments and asking for assessments of the evolution of the UNFCCC process.

Documents. Our goal was to gain a broad understanding of the field and related COP dynamics by analyzing, first, academic work reflecting on the climate policy process and specific COPs; second, texts allowing us to closely trace negotiations and interactions during the COPs; and, third, texts reflecting the perception of COPs in the media. Table A3 gives an overview of the document types and how we used them.

Academic sources were identified using EBSCO and Google Scholar. We selected 58 academic articles that explicitly analyzed the UNFCCC or commented on COPs and transferred information from these documents onto a three-by-ten-foot paper timeline and a spreadsheet in which we entered information by source (line) and by COP (column). These steps improved our understanding of developments over time. To capture negotiation processes and interactions, we mainly relied on daily ENBs and COP summaries. Volume 12 of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) includes all issues related to the UNFCCC (i.e., 594 issues published between February 1995 and December 2013). During COPs, ENBs are made available to attendees on the morning of each negotiation day. For each COP, we retrieved, on average, 11 ENB issues of about 2,000 to 3,000 words each. Each issue summarized the key points in the official negotiations of the past day and contained a section entitled "In the Corridors," about the negotiation process itself. We complemented the 187 daily issues with 17 summaries of COPs, published by *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* several weeks after the respective COPs and reviewing the events and evaluating outcomes.

Furthermore, we analyzed a large number of documents from the UNFCCC secretariat's electronic archives. We used directories of participants to identify the number of delegates and average delegation size. Official COP press releases and official speeches and statements of the UNFCCC executive secretary were used to refine themes and categories identified from the analysis of the ENBs. We consulted the detailed daily programs of seven COPs to identify the number of country and observer groups present and to count the official press briefings

TABLE 1
Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Data^a

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
Aggregate Dimension: Event Staging	
1. <i>Event calendar</i>	
A. Multiyear negotiation cycles and deadlines	A1. The Copenhagen Conference marked the culmination of a two-year negotiating process to enhance international climate change cooperation under the Bali Roadmap, launched by COP13 in December 2007. (ENB 12[459], COP 15)
B. Frequency of inter-COP meetings	A2. [This year's COP] is also called like "poor Poznanhagen"—it's like before Copenhagen, . . . however it is a very important intermediate stage, step for negotiations to present your perspectives and I think this is crucial for those negotiations. (observer interview, COP 14) B1. COP 6 was preceded by numerous formal and informal meetings and consultations held during 1999 and 2000. The UNFCCC subsidiary bodies held their tenth sessions in Bonn, Germany. . . . This work was continued . . . at the eleventh sessions of the subsidiary bodies. . . . During the first few months of 2000, several UNFCCC technical workshops on key issues under the Plan of Action were held to assist the process leading to COP 6. (ENB 12[163], COP 6) B2. The intersessional meetings do not bode well. The Bonn meeting in June saw a continuation of the long-drawn-out fight over the agenda, a situation which many saw as an attempt to unravel the Cancún deal. A seasoned and committed veteran of global negotiations even asked me, "is this really worth it?" (Grubb, 2011: 1269)
2. <i>Issues and positions</i>	
C. Past negotiation outcomes	C1. At this COP, we celebrate two major milestones in the climate change process—the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the forthcoming entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. (COP 10 opening statement, J. Waller-Hunter, UNFCCC executive secretary, December 6, 2004) C2. What we will now do in Montreal is to formally adopt the decisions contained in the Marrakesh accords—the Protocol's "rule book"—after many years of hard work. (R. Kinley, UNFCCC acting head, press release, November 28, 2005)
D. Past negotiation experiences	D1. After her election [as president of COP 1], Dr Merkel said that the Spirit of Rio would once again be needed in Berlin. (ENB 12[21], COP 1) D2. Some minds have turned back to the negotiation of the Berlin Mandate and the lessons to be drawn for Bali. Some believe that too much content if only tacit has crept into negotiations on the future process, provoking at least one large developed country to join a chorus of heated warnings that they would entertain no text that would prejudice outcomes. (ENB 12[352], COP 13)
3. <i>General audience awareness</i>	
E. High-level policy build-up	E1. In 2007 climate change has moved up to the very top of the world political agenda. It started with the EU adopting a 20 or 30% reduction target for 2020. . . . It continued with major developing countries like China adopting national climate change strategies. In 2007 all major summits adopted policy positions on climate change, starting with the G-8 and including APEC, ASEAN and the Commonwealth. (opening keynote statement at the Bali "global business day," by Y. de Boer, UNFCCC executive secretary, December 10, 2007) E2. During the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September over 100 world leaders expressed political will to reach a meaningful outcome in December. Coming to Copenhagen, many hoped that . . . the unique gathering of international decision-making power would result in a political agreement on the key issues. (ENB 12[459], COP 15) F1. The Nobel Peace Prize was accorded to Al Gore and the IPCC in 2007 and this gave a new boost of recognition to the scientific research being carried out. (Gupta, 2010: 646) F2. This COP suffers from the uncertainty about the new U.S. administration. Barack Obama has just won the election, but the Bush delegation still sits at the negotiation table. (observation, COP 14, Poznan, 2008)
F. External climate-related events	
Aggregate Dimension: Event Enactment	
4. <i>Opportunities and spaces for interaction</i>	
G. Design of formal processes	G1. The President noted that the work was organized in two parts: an initial negotiating segment followed by a Ministerial Segment from 5–7 April. She hoped that the sessions of the Committee of the Whole (COW) would not seek to reopen resolved issues but would work on outstanding issues. . . . The COW was asked to deal with the items where consensus was not reached at INC-11. Consequently, all other decisions recommended by the INC-11 for consideration by COP 1 were referred directly to the Plenary. (ENB 12[21], COP 1) G2. President Pronk's proposal to consider outstanding issues by dividing ministers into three negotiating groups has generated concern within the G-77/China. However, some observers underlined that it is the prerogative of the COP 6 President to lead the process in a manner he deems most effective. (ENB 12[158], COP 6)
H. Informal exchanges	H1. During the third session of the SBI . . . little discussion of difficult issues took place during open sessions. Delegates noted their objections to several draft decisions, which were referred immediately to contact groups by the Chair. Differences were ironed out in closed sessions by Parties, and were considered for adoption by the open SBI session only after consensus had been reached. (ENB 12[38], COP 2) H2. On Thursday morning, weary delegates congregated to continue a number of informal consultations at the Moon Palace after all-night negotiations that had included an informal ministerial stocktaking at midnight and what a seasoned negotiator characterized as a "vague" text on mitigation under the Convention and Protocol tracks. (ENB 12[497], COP 16)

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
5. <i>Negotiation tactics</i>	
I. Agenda work and issue setting	<p>11. Agenda disputes seemed to be the order of the day in other venues, with some delegates discussing the difficulties faced by parties seeking to streamline SBI's agenda. Observers noted that the EU's efforts to fold two agenda items under SBI and SBSTA on adverse effects and response measures into just one had received short shrift from Saudi Arabia and others that place great emphasis on these particular issues. (ENB 12[310], COP 12)</p> <p>12. The US delegation insisted on a clear, symbolic separation between the Kyoto and non-Kyoto negotiation tracks in the set-up of the COP. (observation, COP 11, Montreal, 2005)</p>
J. Plenary performance	<p>J1. Saudi Arabia . . . reported a lack of transparency throughout the Conference. He read a formal objection from this group of Parties to the adoption, approval or acceptance of the draft Ministerial Declaration due to the: lack of opportunity for the COP to discuss the draft; failure of the draft to reflect the views of many Parties as stated at COP 2, with the result that the draft reflects only some views that exist among the Parties; non-objective characterization and selective reference to some of the information . . . resulting in a draft that is biased and misleading; and failure to adhere to the customary procedures of UN bodies and the absence of adoption of rules of procedure for the COP. (ENB 12[38], COP 2)</p> <p>J2. Sudan condemned the document, stressing that it threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in developing countries, including the African continent. He referred to the financial commitment of US\$100 billion in the document as "a bribe," saying that a commitment to 2°C would ask Africa to "sign an incineration pact" and was based on values that "funneled 6 million people in Europe into furnaces." The UK, Mexico, Canada, Grenada, Norway, the EU, and others called on Sudan to withdraw his offensive references to the Holocaust. (ENB 12[459], COP 15)</p>
6. <i>Observer roles</i>	
K. Observer-party interaction	<p>K1. After the first few speakers, the Plenary was interrupted by a group of protesters who ran down from the balcony and shouted that the delegates were not doing enough. Others draped banners and flung leaflets onto the Plenary floor. The security officers led them away as many supporters applauded. President Merkel remarked that the group had now heard another opinion, but added that overall NGOs had played a constructive role. (ENB 12[21], COP 1)</p> <p>K2. In Buenos Aires, the traditional NGO party, which takes place at the half-way point of the conference and is organized by CAN, was put under the theme of the Kyoto Protocol. The organizers announced that coming to the party implied liking the KP. . . . It was rumored that the U.S. delegation sent out a memo forbidding any of its members to attend the party. (observation, COP 10, Buenos Aires, 2004)</p>
L. Observer visibility	<p>L1. For example, local NGOs may have little clout in relation to their country's ministry officials and members of delegation at international climate conferences in influencing the process. However, teamed up with international NGOs, for example under the umbrella of the Climate Action Network (CAN), their positions published by international reporting services are very much taken note of by state officials. (Okereke, Bulkeley, & Schroeder, 2009: 65)</p> <p>L2. At this COP, we seek to gain attention for gender issues. Some people think they are marginal, but for us they are really essential. . . . Our exhibit here is next to the trade unions, and they have clearly adopted some of our ideas in their statements, such as "there is no climate justice without gender justice." (interview, gender NGO delegate, COP 14, Poznan, 2008)</p>

^a Abbreviations: COP, Conference of the Parties; ENB, *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*; SBI, Subsidiary Body for Implementation; INC, Inter-Governmental Negotiation Committee; NGO, nongovernmental organization; CAN, Climate Action Network.

scheduled, and we accessed the UNFCCC's electronic side event registration system to identify the organizers of all side events since COP 9. Finally, we analyzed the annual budget reports submitted by the UNFCCC secretariat to the COPs to trace the development of UNFCCC budget and staff over time.

To capture variation in the media coverage associated with the respective COPs, we also included articles from the *New York Times*, whose critical role in the translation of climate change policy has been analyzed in prior research (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). As the extent of coverage varied over time (from only 2 articles in 2003 to 110 in 2009), we decided to sample 3 articles for each COP (unless fewer articles were published for a given COP), including one each published on the first, middle, and final days of a conference. We retrieved these

texts from Dow Jones/Factiva and in addition counted the total number of articles published in the *New York Times* for each COP and about climate change in general.

FINDINGS

Presentation of our findings is structured in two parts. To address our first research question, we begin by discussing variations in the staging and enactment of events that lead to differences in temporal boundedness and interactional openness and, consequently, different outcomes. To address our second research question, we then examine changes in event structures, processes, and outcomes over time, with emphasis on the phase following the Kyoto Protocol's entry into force in 2005. We end by applying

these findings to explain the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen summit and provide an outlook on subsequent developments.

Variations in Event Staging and Enactment: Regular versus High-Stakes COPs

The extent to which discursive spaces in the COP event series were temporally bounded or interactionally open differed according to whether the event was a regular COP or one of the smaller number of high-stakes COPs. The two kinds of COPs were characterized by different actor compositions, interaction dynamics, and outcomes. Relatively unspectacular, incremental, and technical negotiation and decision making characterized the large number of regular COPs. Three high-stakes events—COP 3 in Kyoto, COP 13 in Bali, and COP 15 in Copenhagen—stood out because they marked milestones in the negotiation process, thereby creating high expectations that a substantial outcome would be reached and receiving significantly more media attention. What was at stake at high-stakes COPs depended on actor type and changed over time. For Parties to the UNFCCC, binding texts or political commitments created high stakes; for observers, particular opportunities to mobilize resources, to gain visibility, and to weigh in on the policy process were at stake; and for supporters of the UNFCCC itself, the legitimacy and credibility of the overall policy process depended on the success or failure of the high-stakes events.

Event staging. High-stakes events occurred at visible junctures in the multiyear negotiation periods. What happened in Kyoto (1997), for instance, marked the end point of the highly debated Berlin Mandate adopted at COP 1, and the Copenhagen COP (2009) was widely seen as the “culmination of a two-year negotiating process” (ENB 12[459]) defined in the Bali Road Map. The definition of deadlines and negotiation cycles focused attention and activities on specific events in the ongoing event series. Frequent references by UNFCCC officials to the deadline and expected results for an upcoming high-stakes event enhanced expectations and pressure to progress:

You have one year to go before Copenhagen, and the clock is ticking! Work needs to shift into higher gear! (Y. de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, COP 14 opening statement)

Our interviewees at the Poznań COP 14 constructed this event in reference to the expected

outcomes of the upcoming high-stakes Copenhagen meeting:

The Bali action plan said that there should be a negotiated outcome in Copenhagen, . . . but then how to get there that’s what we have to get out of Poznań; so even though the work program doesn’t sound as sexy . . . it will be quite important for next year. (developed country delegate)

The experience of successful high-stakes events in the past also contributed to sustaining high expectations with regard to an upcoming high-stakes event. Although many of our COP 14 interviewees stressed their disillusion with the overall UNFCCC process, they still expressed their belief that the Copenhagen summit would “somehow” move the process ahead, “cut the Gordian knot” in negotiations, and get delegates “out of the trenches,” in the words of one expert we interviewed. The earlier Kyoto and Bali high-stakes events, during which parties had actually been able to establish consensus and advance the policy process, served as symbolic references and influenced the hopes and expectations attached to Copenhagen.

Beyond its placement in the overall negotiation timeline, the characteristics of an upcoming COP depended heavily on the key negotiation issues and positions that had emerged in prior negotiations and during the build-up for the COP. Prior to the 2007 high-stakes Bali event, for example, an unusual number of high-level political meetings (e.g., among the “G8”) had brought the issue of climate change to the public’s attention and contributed to raising expectations about the event’s outcomes. Comparable hype was highlighted in the UNFCCC executive secretary’s opening statement at the 2009 Copenhagen COP:

Over recent weeks and months, I have heard a multitude of strong political statements calling for a successful and ambitious agreement in Copenhagen. And I have heard strong political statements calling for an agreement that offers serious emission limitation goals and that captures the provision of significant financial and technological support to developing countries. (Y. de Boer)

The UN and host country governments contributed to positioning some conferences as high-stakes events. To build momentum, the Danish organizers of COP 15, for example, had labeled it a “summit,” and UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon had approached the International Advertising Association, a large trade organization, to build “buzz” and coverage with a campaign including

branding as “Hopenhagen”—a label that many critics later replaced with “Nopenhagen” or “Brokenhagen.”

Finally, events outside the UNFCCC process also helped raise the stakes for a given event. Several sources concurred that unusually frequent extreme weather conditions, together with the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and to former US vice president and climate activist Al Gore (who in the same year received an Academy Award for his climate change documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*) contributed to increased media attention and public interest in the 2007 COP 13 in Bali.

We found that the structure of attendance at regular and high-stakes COPs differed. The latter attracted more observers, more journalists, and stronger media coverage. COP 3 in Kyoto, for example, featured 50 percent more observers, four times more journalists, and 60 percent more press briefings than the subsequent COP 4 in Buenos Aires (see Table A4). From one month before the conference to one month afterwards, the *New York Times* published an average of 63 articles for each of the three high-stakes COPs, compared to an average of only 7.6 articles for each of the 14 regular ones. As we show in more detail below, strong media attention, more attendees, and the salience of targets and timelines increased focus on the short time span available for reaching an outcome—but decreased opportunities for exchange between negotiators and observers. High-stakes events were thus set apart from the more regular COPs in that they conveyed a higher sense of temporal boundedness but were also accompanied by a lower overlap among discursive spaces, which decreased interactional openness.

Event enactment. At the high-stakes COPs, the temporal boundedness produced in advance was reinforced throughout the events themselves by highly emotional appeals and speeches, celebratory moments, drama, intense media coverage, and the appearance of world leaders at the high-level segments. At both types of events, interactional openness was mainly achieved through engagement in various formal and informal arenas. For example, the COP president’s consultations with observer constituencies, as well as presentations of short statements at the plenary by recognized observer constituencies, provided formal, albeit limited, areas of interaction across discursive spaces. In addition, side events, the “most visible venue for civil society engagement in international climate nego-

tiations” (Hjerpe & Linnér, 2010: 167), formally allowed the exchange of ideas and propositions among observers’ and parties’ delegates. The nature of these interactions differed at high-stakes and regular events. A comparison of the issues addressed at side events at a high-stakes (Bali) and a regular (Poznań) COP showed that 41 percent of the side events in Bali did not directly refer to the UNFCCC negotiations, a number that dropped to 26 percent for Poznań (Schroeder & Lovell, 2012). This observation is coherent with our finding that high-stakes events attracted a larger number and variety of observer organizations representing a broader set of issues that might be only indirectly related to the UNFCCC negotiations. At high-stakes COPs, side events tended to represent “forums in and of themselves” (Schroeder & Lovell, 2012: 34) and to play an important role in information sharing, networking, and capacity building, especially among observers.

In addition to these formal interactions, informal interactions, especially among representatives of parties and between party and observer delegates, occurred when COP participants interacted while, for example, standing in line or taking shuttle buses, and also at staged events, such as the annual NGO party, held on the Saturday of the first conference week and attracting many observer, party, and media delegates. Here again, a difference could be observed between high-stakes and regular COPs. COP 14, in Poznań, for example, was seen by many as a mere “pit stop” (Santarius et al., 2009) on the road to Copenhagen, but the fact that the negotiation deadline was a year away created less pressure on negotiators to defend their positions on issues and allowed for more informal interaction between delegates for parties and observers:

The fact that people believe Poznań to be less important—half-way between Bali and Copenhagen—is a great opportunity for us, because everyone is more relaxed, and there is more openness for our issues. (interview with observer delegate, COP 14)

At the high-stakes events, on the contrary, deadlines and expectations pressed country delegates to concentrate on the formal negotiation process, including coordination within their country groupings, and on constant briefing and exchange with their ministers and heads of state. Observers, on the other hand, found themselves part of a larger and more diverse array, which facilitated the experience of novel exchanges and network building within the observer space. Moreover, they bene-

fited from the high-stakes events' media exposure, which allowed them to address exceptionally large international audiences.

In the context of the formal negotiation processes, key individuals, whom we label "negotiation leaders," played an important role for stimulating interactions. The COP president (most often a host country's environment minister), the UNFCCC executive secretary, and the chairs of the meetings of bodies and contact groups influenced both the formal set-up of negotiations and the facilitation of informal exchanges. Negotiation leaders had a crucial role in advancing the parties' drafting efforts, as one of our interviewees, a topic expert, highlighted:

The chairs are extremely important. When I see the names, I know whether it is a tough negotiator who will get something through, somebody the others listen to. Or . . . someone without experience—there it will be extremely difficult to get any result.

A key aspect of negotiation leadership at all COPs entailed shifting between formal and informal negotiation arenas. We observed, for example, how session chairs regularly suspended formal negotiations and moved to informal exchanges by gathering smaller groups of negotiators. At many COPs, informal "friends of the presidency" groups were set up during the final days to unblock controversial issues and enable text adoption. Much of the success in adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, for example, was attributed to Argentinian ambassador Raul Estrada's negotiation leadership. As a chair of the official negotiation group that had worded agreements since COP 1, Estrada was highly familiar with the key issues and respected by the parties' negotiators:

The AGBM Chair, Raul Estrada, is expected to take over the task of chairing the QELROs working group during COP-3. The new role . . . will put Estrada in a key position to pursue his proactive approach to the negotiations and bring his influence to bear on the high level negotiations expected at the end of COP-3. (ENB 12[67])

At high-stakes COPs, negotiation leaders' ability to achieve (or block) expected outcomes was more visible for COP participants and more frequently discussed in the ENBs. The sense that the stakes were high, the emotionally charged processes, and the high media exposure favored personalization and dramatization of negotiations. An ENB from Copenhagen shows this:

Several participants were expressing surprise at the appearance of a prominent developing country negotiator in the delegation of Sudan. This fueled speculation that her role as a "hardline negotiator" for the South had been in jeopardy following pressure from certain parties. (ENB 12[449])

The overall atmosphere at high-stakes events was tense, feverish, and full of rumors, as discursive spaces had less overlap than they did at the regular, more technical, COPs, and the final negotiation outcomes had a strong impact on field constituents. This tension and drama reached a climax at the high-level plenary sessions in which policy text was adopted from the negotiation groups. While the Kyoto closing plenary could build on the consensus achieved in the prior negotiations, the last hours in both Bali and Copenhagen were filled with a mixture of excitement, conflict, and exhaustion. The following quote provides a sense of the Bali final plenary:

The dramatic highpoint came in the mid afternoon of Saturday. . . . The U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon . . . had returned to Bali to plead with delegates to find a consensus. . . . But the United States, the last speaker, opposed the new formulation. The conference erupted in boos, an unprecedented occurrence at such otherwise staid diplomatic events. . . . What followed was another series of short interventions by several countries who implored the United States to reconsider. . . . The delegate from Papua New Guinea, Kevin Conrad, perhaps most succinctly captured the sentiment of the conference when he pleaded that "the world is waiting for the U.S. to lead but if for some reason you are not willing to lead, leave it to the rest of us. Please, get out of the way." The head of the U.S. delegation Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky—who was said to have been in regular contact with the White House—took the floor again, expressed her appreciation for what had been said, . . . before she concluded "we will go forward and join consensus." Now her intervention was greeted by relieved lengthy applause, when it sunk in that a deal had been reached. (Cléménçon, 2008: 77)

The differences in staging and enactment of regular and high-stakes events led to different event outcomes. During the long phase dedicated to the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol instruments, for example, regular events favored the incremental advancement of specific rules with low visibility in the wider public. High-stakes events, in contrast, led to highly visible outcomes, in the form either of new agreements (as in Kyoto or Bali) or of a widely shared sense of failure (as in Copenhagen). These

TABLE 2
Regular versus High-Stakes Event Characteristics

Characteristic	Regular Events	High-Stakes Events
Participants	Number and composition of observers close to long-term average.	Higher number of observers and journalists.
Event staging	Waypoint within an ongoing negotiation period. Mostly technical build-up (Convention bodies). Low expectations of breakthrough decisions among observers and the public.	Highly visible start or end point of a negotiation period, salience of targets and deadlines. Intense high-level build-up (Convention bodies and high-level meetings). High expectations among observers and the public.
Event enactment	Frequent interaction between parties and observers during side events and informal encounters. Negotiation and development of consensus on technical issues and details within the overall negotiation agenda.	High media attention puts pressure on negotiation leaders and parties. Separation between technical negotiations (first week) and political statements (second week). Highly emotional appeals and strong pressure on parties to reach a significant agreement. Little overlap between negotiation and observer spaces; observers interact mainly with the media. Importance of negotiation leadership for stimulating interactions.
Event outcomes	Incremental advancement in the negotiation of rules. Outcomes are less visible in the wider public.	New visible agreements (Kyoto and Bali); strong sense of failure (Copenhagen). Shifts in the orientation of the future policy process.

outcomes, whether positive or negative, created shifts in the rules, positions, and understandings making up the field and influenced the course of the policy process (see next section). Table 2 summarizes the main differences between regular and high-stakes events developed in this first part of our findings.

Changes in Event Structures, Processes, and Outcomes over Time

In addition to a difference between regular and high-stakes events, we found that the temporal boundedness and interactional openness of the COPs decreased as the climate policy field, after the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, entered into a second phase oriented toward defining the future of the overall regime. Not least because the US had decided not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the COPs in this second phase became layered with numerous parallel negotiation processes, which significantly changed their ability to produce institutional change. Observer organizations became more and more detached from UNFCCC negotiations. In parallel to these UNFCCC-internal developments, the US, under the leadership of the newly elected George W. Bush, began setting up several alternative bilateral and multilateral climate-related cooperative ventures (e.g., “Methane-to-Markets” and the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Devel-

opment and Climate [Gupta, 2010]). As interactions increasingly took place *within* specific subgroups and in parallel arenas, the COPs no longer facilitated interaction *among* the diverse actors participating in the climate policy field. These changes contribute to explaining why the staging and enactment of the Copenhagen COP in 2009 failed to bring about a new and ambitious transnational agreement.

Changes in the field and in COP dynamics after 2005. With the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in 2005, the UNFCCC negotiation process split into two separate tracks: one including all Parties and dedicated to the Convention itself, and another one focusing specifically on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (and limited to its signatory states). Moreover, the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol after more than ten years of difficult negotiations cleared the way for turning toward the future of the regime. In order to do so, two additional, ongoing negotiation tracks were officially set up: the first in 2005 to negotiate the Kyoto Protocol’s second commitment period (the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties³ under the Kyoto Protocol), and

³ Annex I Parties include those industrialized countries that were members of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 1992, plus

the second in 2007 to define the contours of a new legally binding regime (the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention), intended to address, among others, the challenge of rapidly growing greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries (especially China and India), which had been underestimated when the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol were initially drafted in the early 1990s.

With the Kyoto Protocol and its accentuation of market and financial mechanisms, emphasis in the field shifted from climate change mitigation in industrialized countries to clean development through emission trading and a new emphasis on adaptation (Gupta, 2010). Although the market mechanisms were specifically created to support the Clinton administration in signing the treaty into law in the US, the eventual failure to do so led to profound disagreement and essentially a deadlock between the US and the EU, an avid supporter of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto implementation process also divided developing countries and observers that defended the market mechanisms from those criticizing them as inadequate to address climate change (Lohmann, 2005).

Although their effectiveness for mitigation of climate change remains highly contested, the Kyoto Protocol instruments, especially the “Clean Development Mechanism” (CDM), had two important impacts on the climate policy field. First, they led to an increase in the complexity of the negotiations, defining a variety of highly specific issues for negotiation and monitoring. Second, they attracted new actors into the field. Finance, consulting, technology, and development organizations hoped to benefit financially from the new regime around the Kyoto Protocol. Civil society actors, such as organizations from the development, antiglobalization, and gender movements, trade unions, faith-based organizations, and academic research institutes wanted to make use of the growing public awareness of climate change issues. The creation of highly technical policy instruments for the Kyoto Protocol, the multiplication of negotiation tracks stemming from the limited membership in the Protocol, and the growing number and diversity of

countries with economies in transition, including the Russian Federation, the Baltic States, and several Central and Eastern European States. (http://unfccc.int/parties_and_observers/items/2704.php.) The term “Annex I Parties” refers to the Annex of the UNFCCC listing these countries.

actors thus led to a situation in which “the welcome elevation of climate change on the priority list of national and international agendas went along with a proliferation of issues, concerns, and special interests” so that “no single individual [could] follow, or even fully grasp, all agenda items negotiated under the UNFCCC” (Streck, 2012: 53).

Both parties’ and observers’ average COP attendance more than doubled after the 2005 entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol (see Table A5). Whereas the size of the average observer delegation remained stable over time, the average number of observer organizations present at the COPs more than doubled from one phase to the next. The increasing diversity of observer organizations was mirrored by an increase in officially recognized observer constituencies from five in 2003 to nine in 2011. For instance, a farmers’ and agricultural NGO, a gender, and a youth observer constituency were officially established in 2011. The growing number of government delegates, on the other hand, resulted from a 100 percent increase in the average size of parties’ delegations. According to our interviewees, this growth in delegation size was necessary to cope with the multiplication of negotiation tracks and the increasing emphasis on technical details in relation to the Kyoto Protocol instruments. The growing size and specialization of delegations fomented fragmentation within negotiation teams. Furthermore, we found an increase in the number of country groupings organizing separate press briefings. In Kyoto (1997), 14 groupings organized briefings, a number that had increased to 20 in Bali (2007). The following quote highlights the consequences of increasing complexity for the negotiation teams:

There are more and more parallel processes, and everything must be negotiated at the same time. The number of . . . negotiation issues has increased, and many of these issues . . . are discussed in different places at the same time. That is very inefficient; there are simply too many people involved. . . . The delegations become so large that only very few people understand the whole thing. . . . Everybody . . . [is] defending . . . positions that have been identified in advance . . . losing the overall negotiation outcome out of sight. (interview with developed country delegation member, COP 14)

Growing specialization, mainly within developed country party delegations, increased the need for internal coordination and reduced the time available for interaction with observers. This situation contrasted starkly with that at the earlier ne-

gotiations; even at the high-stakes Kyoto COP (1997), observers played an important role in influencing the negotiations:

NGOs played a pivotal role in identifying and advising receptive delegations on loopholes in the proposals, notably in emissions trading and sinks. At a meeting with NGOs, Vice President Gore also proved receptive to advice on moderating the content of his Plenary speech on the need for developing country commitments. (ENB 12[76])

The multiplication of negotiation tracks and the creation of additional UNFCCC bodies since 2005 also increased uncertainty (Cléménçon, 2008) and demanded more regular and intense negotiation activities. In turn these called for coordination among field participants to ensure advancement of detailed technical negotiations as well as harmony between the different negotiation tracks. In response to this situation, the UNFCCC staged an increasing number of intersessional meetings and workshops. More and more formal UNFCCC body meetings were held outside COPs, to produce draft texts to be negotiated later at them. As well, a growing number of UNFCCC workshops, seminars, and informal consultations developed, aimed at capacity building and learning and mirroring the increasing specialization and need to develop and share expertise, in particular with respect to the Kyoto Protocol instruments. Whereas the objective of these intersessional meetings was to advance technical negotiations and to create as much consensus as possible on the different issues to be submitted to political decision makers during COPs, they also significantly reduced the temporal boundedness of the COPs, which were increasingly seen as continuation of the ongoing intersessional negotiations. Over time, a growing part of the two-week COP time itself was devoted to ongoing negotiation groups finishing their work before bringing texts into the plenary.

The increasing field complexity and multiplication of issues after 2005 was also reflected in the development of side events. While the overall number of side events at the COPs grew, our analysis of UNFCCC side event registration data since 2003 revealed a decline in the number of side events organized by governments, from 22 percent in 2003 to only 13 percent in 2011. More importantly, the share of Annex I countries among government-organized side events dropped over the same time period from over 80 percent to less than 30 percent. Side events initially were forums where parties and

observers debated alternative courses of action. The diminishing relative weight of parties at these events, and more specifically, the diminishing participation of Annex I countries, reflected decreased overlap between parties and observers as well as between industrialized and developing country delegations. Observers then began to concentrate on networking, resource acquisition, and capacity building for their own projects and agendas instead of engaging in a dialogue with the parties.

Some civil society groups also tried to leverage COP media coverage to attract attention for actions taking place in parallel to a COP. Since 2005, for example, NGOs around the world have organized an annual Global Day of Action on Climate on the Saturday occurring during the annual COP “to demand urgent action on climate, and climate justice, from the governments of the world meeting at the annual climate talks” (www.globalclimatecampaign.org). In parallel, the growing prominence of limited-access intergovernmental forums, such as the G20 group of large economies, and the inability of smaller and poorer countries to match the large industrialized nations’ negotiation and lobbying efforts have widened a divide between industrialized and developing countries.

Table 3 summarizes the most important changes in the structure and dynamics of the COPs between the first and second phase of field development, and Figure 3 summarizes the differences in COP interaction dynamics at high-stakes and regular events in these two phases. Before 2005, both the negotiation and the observer space were relatively clearly structured, and the COPs facilitated interaction among the constituents of the policy field emerging around the issue of climate change. Afterwards, growing field complexity and issue multiplication implied that the COPs were no longer able to assemble all field members in a temporally bounded locale and provide for open exchanges among diverse participants. Thus, while climate change had become a more widely shared concern, the transnational policy field that had formed around this issue fragmented into many subfields, only some of which intersected and closely related to the main aim of the UNFCCC—that is, to mitigate climate change.

The failure of Copenhagen. The consequences of increasing field complexity and issue multiplication became particularly visible at the 2009 Copenhagen summit, the COP specified as the end point of the Bali Road Map and staged as a high-stakes event, decisive for the future of international

TABLE 3
Changes in COP Characteristics, Phase 1 versus Phase 2

Characteristics	Phase 1 COPs	Phase 2 COPs
Participants	COP attendance varies strongly between regular and high-stakes events.	Regular vs. high-stakes difference in attendance is not as strong as for the pre-2005 COPs. High increase of average COP attendance. Strong increase in average size of party delegations. Strong increase in the number and diversity of observer organizations.
Event staging	Expectations are strongly marked by the Kyoto Protocol implementation and ratification process.	Strong emphasis on negotiation deadlines (e.g., Bali Road Map). Increasing frequency of inter-COP meetings dealing with technically complex negotiation issues. Climate change as a highly visible mainstream policy issue.
Event enactment	Overlap across discursive spaces can be effectively created. Annex I countries strongly represented in side events.	Growing complexity of the negotiation process demands high coordination efforts for parties and negotiation leaders. Increasing specialization of negotiation tracks and issues leads to growing importance of experts. Growing divide between technical negotiations and political statements. Decreasing overlap between negotiation and observer spaces.
Event outcomes	Kyoto Protocol as an early success and “only game in town”; emphasis on development of instruments, and on implementation and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.	Maintenance of the overall process is secured at the price of regime multiplicity and postponement of decisions. Growing frustration; lack of clear sense of progress.

climate policy. At the Copenhagen COP, it became clear that the ambitions captured in the Bali Road Map would not be met, and heads of state swapped the more than 200 pages of text (including thousands of “brackets,” or alternative wordings) that had served as a basis for negotiation over the previous two years for a brief voluntary target agreement, the Copenhagen Accords, which failed to reach consensual approval.

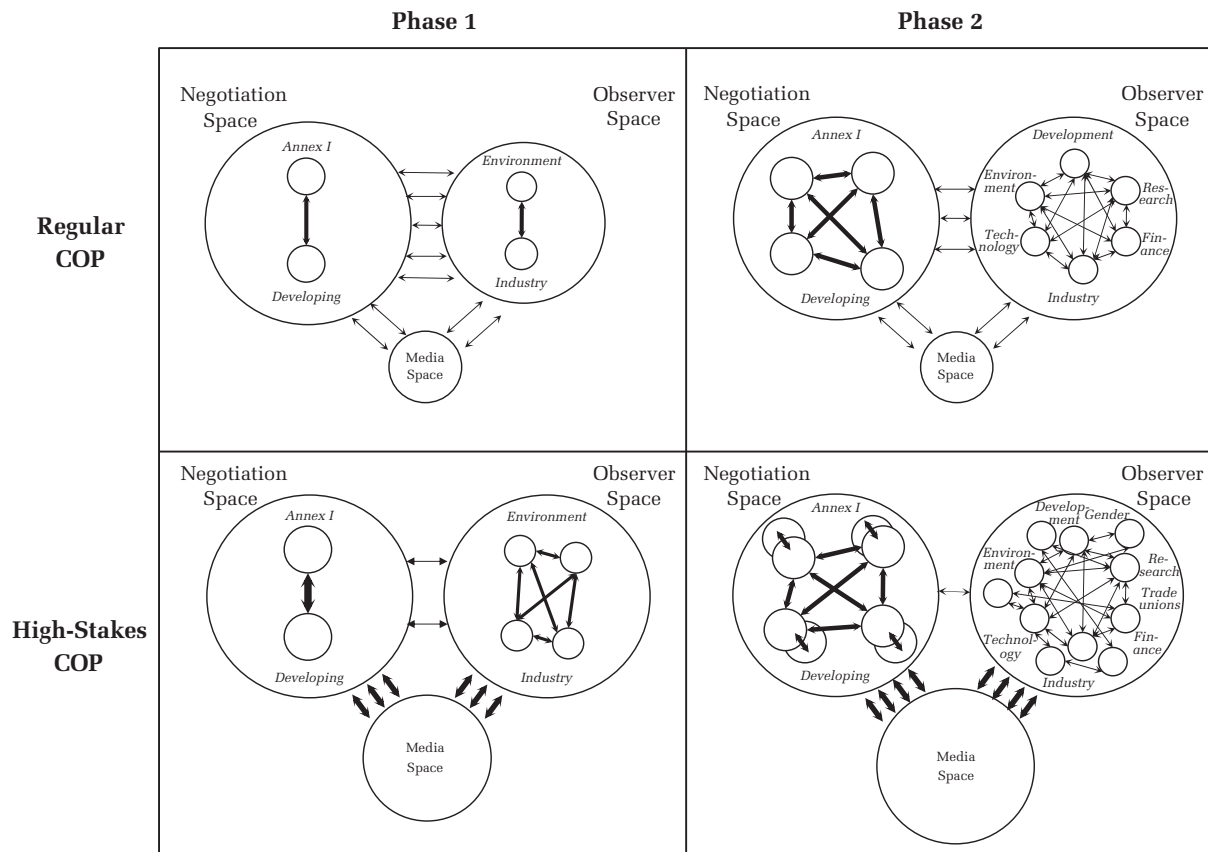
In the absence of a consensus prior to the conference and in light of the complex and fragmented dynamics in the field, the Copenhagen organizers decided to stage the Copenhagen event as particularly decisive. To complement the more technical preparation meetings, the UN set up a second layer of high-level preparatory meetings. There, participating heads of states made highly publicized statements that contributed to disconnecting technical negotiations from political statements before the COP had even started. As the negotiators at the technical preparation meetings were unable to produce convergent positions among parties, rumors began to spread that the high-level preparatory meetings formed a parallel, informal process in which high-level diplomats sought to develop an

alternative political solution to be put forward in Copenhagen:

As Copenhagen approached and as each negotiating session achieved less than what was needed for an ambitious outcome, many began lowering their expectations, especially concerning a legally-binding outcome. At the same time, rumors circulated about positive progress during various informal meetings, including between China and the US. (ENB 12[459])

At the beginning of the Copenhagen COP, participants and commentators showed ambivalence, skepticism, and disagreement. Although many experts who had followed the technical preparation meetings did not believe that the COP would be able to advance substantially, expectations among the wider public reflected the strong media build-up and the fact that Copenhagen would, for the first time in the history of the UNFCCC, bring together more than 100 heads of state to negotiate climate policy. Many commentators also expected the new US administration under President Obama to assume leadership. Negotiators were at the ready, and some openly expressed their hope

FIGURE 3
Changes in COP Interaction Dynamics^a



^a The numbers and thickness of arrows symbolize the intensity of interaction.

that high-level involvement would allow moving forward:

“Now we really are at the center of the world’s attention—I do hope we will be able to live up to the great hopes and expectations,” commented one negotiator. (ENB 12[458])

However, the successful high-stakes staging of the Copenhagen COP also led to an unprecedented and unexpectedly high number of attendees and caused a spectacular logistical breakdown. The UNFCCC secretariat received more than 40,000 nominations and registered 27,300 delegates on the site, but the conference venue had a maximum capacity of 15,000 (ENB 12[459]). As a consequence, the organizers decided to restrict access for the observer delegates to the conference site, reducing the total number of observers admitted to the conference center to only 300 during the last two

conference days (Sterk et al., 2010); yet, according to estimates, between 30,000 and 100,000 demonstrators assembled outside the center (ENB 12[454]). This contributed to “a carnivalesque atmosphere saturated with dramatic and emotive imagery” (Carter, Clegg, & Wahlin, 2011: 689). Some of the side events were canceled, and the media widely portrayed Copenhagen as a symbol of a widening gap between governments and civil society. The de facto exclusion of civil society during the high-level segment of the conference was seen as representative of a divide between parties and observers:

Many NGO representatives were angry, arguing that their exclusion from the negotiations at such a critical moment was not good for the outcome: “How can we keep up the pressure when we do not know what is going on and are not even allowed near the

building where these crucial negotiations are taking place?” asked one NGO representative during COP President Connie Hedegaard’s briefing to civil society. (ENB 12[459])

The separation of parties and observers was problematic for different reasons. First, on a symbolic level, it reinforced the overall impression, strongly relayed by the media reporting from Copenhagen, that the negotiations took place behind closed doors and among the most powerful governments, violating the UN principle of equity among member states and its emphasis on civil society involvement. Second, the exclusion of observers from the conference venue deprived developing countries of the important capacity-building aspect of observer-party interaction events and made it more difficult for observer organizations to follow and weigh in on the negotiation process. The incompatibility between the technical negotiation process and the high-level political involvement, which had already been visible during the build-up, also came to light during the conference:

The texts from the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP are too complicated and full of brackets—Ministers and Heads of State cannot negotiate based on them. (ENB 12[459])

The strong media presence and public interest proved particularly counterproductive when some of the propositions taking shape in the informal policy discussions leaked into the press, and both the exclusion of civil society and the difference between the official technical negotiation documents and the leaked high-level texts enhanced overall impressions of divergence, of the formal negotiation process as “pure show” (Michaelowa, 2010: 2), and of a lack of transparency in high-level decision making behind closed doors:

In the corridors, many were “outraged” at what they described as an attempt to sideline the work done by the AWGs. “What is going on? What are they doing?” despaired one veteran negotiator. “Tense backroom discussions” were reportedly occurring behind the scenes during the day to determine how to proceed. However, most delegates, even many well-known negotiators, appeared to be unaware of the exact details of these consultations. (ENB 12[457])

The feeling of distrust among parties grew during the high-level segment, and merging with the widespread feeling about irregular process and lack of convergence between technical and political nego-

tations, set the stage for intense debates about procedures and legitimacy:

During COP President Rasmussen’s opening remarks, several parties raised points of order. Brazil sought clarification on the texts proposed by the Danish COP Presidency . . . China identified the issue as “one of trust between the host country and parties,” noting that the procedure had not been transparent. He stressed that . . . the Presidency could not “put forward text from the sky.” . . . Sudan, for the G-77/China, emphasized that parties . . . were not ready to “rubber stamp text coming out of the blue.” (ENB 12[459])

The high stakes, uncertainty, and distrust at the COP meant that even more informal consultations were necessary to bridge divides between parties. This in turn further hampered the legitimacy of the process, facilitated obstruction, and increased uncertainty about how to proceed.

COP Vice-President Figueres Olsen clarified that the COP President is “consulting on how to conduct consultations” and noted that it had been “an extraordinary day” and that the road forward was not clear. (ENB 12[459])

Growing criticism in the media and civil society together with clearly voiced opposition from a group of developing countries intensified informal negotiations among parties involving, according to some commentators, strong political pressure and financial offers to developing countries hesitant to subscribe to the logic of the US-led Copenhagen Accords (e.g., Bond, 2011). The failure of the Copenhagen summit can at least in part be attributed to event organizers’ futile attempt to stage a high-stakes event in a situation of insufficient interactional openness among field constituencies. Although the tight deadline set by the Bali Road Map and the high-level political involvement were intended to create momentum for a new agreement by increasing the temporal boundedness of the Copenhagen COP, these staging efforts in fact reduced the sense of temporal boundedness for negotiators, who found themselves under such time pressure to meet the Copenhagen deadline that they had to engage in almost continuous technical negotiations. The official run-up involved more than 30 meetings of UNFCCC bodies, including five extended negotiation sessions of the parallel UNFCCC ad hoc working groups and more than 20 other informal consultations, seminars, and workshops, all listed in the official UNFCCC calendar, making 2009 “one of the most exhausting years of

negotiations, meetings and consultations in the history of environmental diplomatic relations” (Mas-sai, 2010: 104). Furthermore, the high-stakes staging of Copenhagen not only introduced a strong cleavage between the technical and the political sides of the negotiation process, but also widened the already existing gaps between parties and observers and between developing and developed countries.

A very different staging strategy was chosen in the following year for the 2010 COP in Cancún, where the new COP president deliberately tried to increase overlap among parties by enhancing the transparency of the high-level negotiations. The Copenhagen Accords were then adopted as the Cancun Agreements. A year later, in December 2011, COP 17 set up the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), with a mandate to negotiate a new treaty for adoption by 2015. In addition, Parties to the Kyoto Protocol agreed to move toward a new commitment period prolonging the Protocol until at least 2020. To critics of the UNFCCC process, these agreements represented yet another shift from substantial negotiation and effective mitigation of climate change toward mere agreements about negotiation procedures, contributing to a further delay of a new transnational treaty (Bond, 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we set out to analyze a field-configuring event series spanning almost two decades in the field of transnational climate policy to understand why field-configuring events may fail to catalyze institutional change. This specific field setting allowed us to build upon Lampel and Meyer's (2008) claim that field-configuring events are not only mechanisms of field configuration but also products of a field, shaped by field developments in a recursive process. First, we found a difference between regular and high-stakes events in an event series that enabled us to elaborate on the role of temporal boundedness and interactional openness of field-configuring events in bringing about institutional change. We highlight the role of agency, the unfolding of change across a series of events, and the influence of occurrences external to the field-configuring event series. Second, we found that with growing field complexity and issue multiplication, the field-configuring event series no longer provided temporally bounded and interactionally open discursive spaces, so that its role

shifted from a field-endogenous catalyst of institutional change to a mechanism of field maintenance.

Causes and Effects of Temporal Boundedness and Interactional Openness

Hardy and Maguire (2010) argued that field-configuring events provide multiple discursive spaces that are more temporally bounded and interactionally open than those usually available in organizational fields, so information can flow between spaces in unpredictable ways, and novelty can emerge. Our findings suggest the value of disentangling the concepts of temporal boundedness and interactional openness for understanding how field-configuring events can produce, but possibly also prevent, institutional change.

The existing literature calls field-configuring events temporally bounded because they occur rarely in the life of an organizational field and are of limited duration (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). In our event series, we found that some events were more strongly temporally bounded because they were deliberately “stylized” as critical, symbolic moments within multiyear negotiation cycles, whereas others were seen as rather regular occurrences in the focal field. Similarly, the literature describes field-configuring events as interactionally open because diverse field members that do not usually interact come together (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). We found that the regular events in our event series were more interactionally open than the high-stakes events, because they attracted less participation and media attention and thereby allowed more frequent formal and informal interactions among field constituents. Whereas the high-stakes events had the potential to generate momentum for a reordering of positions, the regular events supported the establishment of trustful ties and the incremental advancement of concrete agenda items concerning technical rules and instruments.

Institutional change was thus possible through the event series' interplay of high-stakes and regular COPs. Each kind of event played a particular role in this dynamic. Whereas all events highlighted both common and divergent positions in the field of international climate negotiation (Garud, 2008; McNerney, 2008; Oliver & Montgomery, 2008), the open, informal, and less scrutinized interactions of field constituents at regular events enabled the development of mutual understanding and opened possibilities for making concessions that could not

be made publicly. In turn, the high-stakes events set clear deadlines that had to be reached and increased public attention to the issues at stake, which introduced a heightened sense of drama and emotionality into the negotiations.

These findings allow us to discuss which strategies beyond the crafting of powerful narratives (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; McInerney, 2008) actors can use to influence the outcomes of field-configuring events. Key individuals such as negotiation leaders, for instance, played a pivotal role in enhancing the interactional openness of events by shifting between formal and informal arenas as well as skilfully mediating between inclusion and exclusion, and transparency and secrecy, so that a consensus could be reached. Furthermore, an event's organizers played an important role in developing the dramaturgy (cf. Goffman, 1959) of events by selecting event locations, inviting different sets of participants, or publicly marketing the event in purposeful ways. Not all of these strategies were successful, however. To meet the deadline set by the Bali Road Map, for example, some countries attempted to sideline the inclusive UNFCCC negotiation process with the Copenhagen Accords, drafted by a smaller group of governments. This strategy of exclusion increased discord and lowered trust among country delegations, particularly given that they learned of this informal negotiation through a press leak.

Our findings also highlight the importance of preceding events and anticipated future events in shaping individual field-configuring events. The contentious and suspended COP 6/1 in The Hague (2000), for instance, which was followed by the US's announcement that it would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, paved the way for the adoption of the Marrakech Accords, defining the key mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol, a year later. This observation moves the debate on field-configuring events closer to the broader literature on the role of triggering events and institutional change. Hoffman (1999) already reasoned that event chains rather than single events may be responsible for changes in organizational fields. Sewell (1996), in his essay on the French Revolution, theorized that for a significant historical event to occur, existing structures need to be disrupted by preceding events. Such a longitudinal perspective may also be necessary to understand the effects of field-configuring events. In the case studied by Oliver and Montgomery (2008), for instance, the growing pressure for independence from British control conditioned the 1944 field-

configuring event structuring the Israeli legal system. Thus, the sequence of events within a field-configuring event series as well as activity otherwise related to the field influence the potency of field-configuring events as catalysts of change.

This last aspect relates to a final point raised by our analysis of variations among events and concerns the role of event-external discursive spaces (Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001; Munir, 2005; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010). In our case, public attention and media reporting, national policy arenas, and unexpected climate-related events played an important role in influencing the structure and dynamics of our event series. The high-stakes character of discussions at COP 13 in Bali, for instance, were strongly influenced by the publication of the IPCC's fourth assessment report, and overall public interest in the Bali COP rose when the IPCC and Al Gore received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. On the other hand, factors such as successful media campaigns by climate skeptics (see Hoffman, 2011a, 2011b) and the global financial crisis (Gupta, 2010) provided the backdrop for the failure of the negotiations leading up to Copenhagen. Finally, a field-configuring event may also only be perceived as such in hindsight, at a time when field conditions have changed. One case in point is an 1855 event that has defined classification of wines in the French Bordeaux region ever since—an outcome it was never designed to achieve (Croidieu, 2011).

In sum, both intentionally organized and unforeseeable field-level events, as well as past and future events, interlink in producing or preventing institutional change. The unpredictability associated with field-configuring events thus stems not only from the unforeseeable interactions taking place *during* them, but also from external events in their field and the way a particular field-configuring process unfolds over a series of events. These aspects mediate the impact of actors' strategies for trying to shape event outcomes and also open up multiple possibilities for influence to actors not directly participating in field-configuring events. In consequence, field-configuring events are not only moments during which a field crystallizes and change emerges, but also temporary organizations embedded in a larger and dynamic stream of field activity. Like other temporary systems (for instance, projects [e.g., Brady & Davies, 2004; Engwall, 2003; Sydow, Lindkvist, & DeFillippi, 2004]), field-configuring events are influenced by the more permanent institutional and relational structures within a field.

Field-Configuring Events and the Structuration of Transnational Fields

Existing research on field-configuring events can be divided into two traditions. The first includes studies of unique events in emerging fields or of short event series that contribute to field formation by providing opportunities for organizations to interact with each other, develop their interest in a common issue, and generate cognitive, regulative, or normative frameworks that guide interaction (e.g., Garud, 2008; Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). The second tradition includes studies of periodic events set up to coordinate and refine activities in a field (e.g., Anand & Watson, 2004; Power & Jansson, 2008). In the climate policy field, a long-term field-configuring event series was mandated to create a new regulatory institution concerning a highly contested issue (Hoffman, 1999). This specific field setting allowed us to analyze how the results of field-configuring events in early phases of a field's development influenced the outcomes of field-configuring events in later phases as a result of changing rules, positions, and understandings in the field.

In the field formation phase, the COPs led to an increase in the interaction and information load in the climate policy field and supported the development of a mutual awareness among field members (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Patterns of domination were relatively stable, with the group of industrialized Annex I Countries assuming responsibility and leadership. These initial field structuring dynamics were the basis for a convergence of regulatory, normative, and cognitive institutions toward a new understanding of climate change as a transnational commons problem and of market mechanisms as adequate solutions. Following the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, however, perceptions of what was at stake began to differ fundamentally. Entering the field was a large number of new actors whose main aim was not necessarily to combat climate change, but to benefit from the regulatory regime entailed by the Kyoto protocol's entry into force. Although COP participation grew, interactions and mutual understandings among field constituents decreased as the events' central discursive spaces were formally split into multiple parallel tracks. Early patterns of domination changed as rapidly industrializing developing countries like India, Brazil, and, especially, China emerged as powerful actors with their own positions and understandings. As the field became

more complex and its members' issues became increasingly decoupled from the original shared purpose, the COPs ceased to be both temporally bounded and interactionally open: an ever-larger number of meetings was necessary to coordinate highly specific negotiations on multiple subissues, and exchanges increasingly took place within constituency groupings rather than in unexpected constellations crossing categories of field members.

On the one hand, actors opposed to the regime had to participate in the transnational arena to undermine progress; on the other, the existence of the UNFCCC processes decreased the need to develop alternative regulatory approaches. Actors also benefited in different ways from COP participation. In the observer space, the field-configuring events played a role in socializing the many new members into the field and acted like a trade fair for new relationships, financial resources, and knowledge (e.g., Glynn, 2008; Hardy & Maguire, 2010). In the negotiation space, delegates engaged in regulatory conversations (Black, 2002) from which they gained expertise for their work in national or local arenas. These resources could be used to support the UNFCCC's mission or to counter any meaningful advances on regulating climate change. Either way, and in line with Selznick's (1948) argument that organizations are inherently self-maintaining, field members' interest in the survival of the "Kyoto regime" turned the COPs into sites of field maintenance. Paradoxically, we thus observed that the increasing popularity of the COPs went hand-in-hand with their decreasing effectiveness regarding the UNFCCC's aims. What Victor (2011) called the "global warming gridlock" may in organizational terms be described as "social deadlock" (Brunsson, 2007)—a steady state full of activity, but activity that stabilizes a situation rather than leading to institutional change.

Our study raises the question of whether a different event format could or should have been chosen in the field of climate policy. Victor (2011) argued that a process similar to that used by the World Trade Organization, not aiming for universal membership and legally binding agreements but rather starting from concrete agreements among the few largest carbon emitters and moving from the bottom up toward wider integration, would have been more effective. Such a less inclusive logic was unthinkable, however, once the problem of climate change had been framed in terms of a transnational commons (Ansari, Wijten, & Gray, 2013). US efforts to shift the UNFCCC logic of

legally binding transnational commitments toward a soft law pledge-and-review system may indicate that the field is slowly moving away from its initial policy choices. However, the long and ineffective pursuit of an encompassing, legally binding agreement among almost all countries in the world suggests the potential path dependence of a field-structuring regime built around a series of field-configuring events and maintained by a number of positive feedback mechanisms (e.g., Dobusch & Schüßler, 2013; Pierson, 2000; Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2009).

This insight allows us to elaborate on the role of boundary work in institutional change processes. Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) argued that boundaries protecting a field's members against institutional pressures are necessary to enable alignment of positions because more open interactions can occur in spaces that are set apart from the rest of the field or the wider public. Existing research indicates that field-configuring events can provide such spaces because they are temporally bounded and facilitate interactions among field members that do not usually come together (Hardy & Maguire, 2010). Our research shows that boundaries around issues and field membership may additionally be necessary for such field configuration to occur. In Hardy and Maguire's (2010) study of the Stockholm Convention, for instance, the field-configuring events addressed a policy issue that was more clearly delimited than the issue of climate change. The conferences studied by Garud (2008) led to a new standard for cochlear implants because a decision-making panel with limited membership was temporarily installed and enforced a consensus position. In the transnational climate policy field, in contrast, the COPs were designed as highly inclusive arenas and dealt with a complex, ill-defined, and enduring policy issue. A shift into smaller policy forums (Victor, 2011) and the breaking down of complex issues into more concrete and tangible policy arenas (Giddens, 2009) could reintroduce some of the boundaries within which field-configuring events can support the development of a new, encompassing climate agreement.

Limitations and Further Research

Like all studies, the present one has its limitations. Most importantly, we focused on one specific and in many ways unique transnational policy field, and our findings may not be directly applicable to other field settings. However, we have iden-

tified some characteristics of the climate policy field that other fields share, such as field formation around a contested issue, the absence of clear structures of domination, and increasing field complexity and issue multiplication. We suggest that our findings on the changing role of a field-configuring event series will apply to such settings.

Further research could build on our idea of field maintenance and track national and community activities resulting from and related to field-configuring events, an aspect that was outside the scope of our research. In climate policy, both policy actors and observers benefit in many ways from the networking and learning taking place at the international conferences and draw on these resources in their local work. In turn, many local activities are geared to developing positions and generating resources for participation in subsequent field-level events. Studying these connections in more detail would provide important additional insights into the trickle-up and trickle-down processes occurring between transnational and local arenas (Djelic & Quack, 2003).

Building on our elaboration of the concepts of temporal boundedness and interactional openness, further research could investigate how elements of creativity and spontaneity could be reinstalled even in highly complex and fragmented decision-making processes. Events such as "unconferences" or "barcamps" (e.g., Ingebretsen, 2008; Wolf, Troxler, & Hansmann, 2011), for instance, have been used in other contexts to generate new solutions and ideas. Such event formats could be integrated into a field-configuring event series to better balance coordination with the creativity needed to imagine possible futures (Mische, 2009). This raises the practical question of how effective a template for structuring transnational fields the UN system is, especially as geopolitical power structures change. We suggest that organizers of field-configuring events need to take field structures into account when designing their events, specifically considering the complexity and diversity of issues at stake and the boundaries and authority structures of a field. This also requires rethinking the notions of legitimacy, democracy, and inclusiveness in the governance of transnational fields. For instance, we found some evidence that the growing technical expertise needed, the growing number of meetings and negotiation tracks, and the time-intensive, often night-long negotiations sessions, posed serious problems to the least-developed

countries, which could often only send very few delegates to the COPs.

Our choice to highlight the temporal aspects of boundedness meant that we largely neglected the role of spatial proximity or distance. Further research on field-configuring events could focus more on both their spatial and temporal dimensions, especially at group and individual levels of analysis. For instance, research could focus on how high-stakes staging affects objective and subjective representations of time and space among event participants (e.g., Ancona, Goodman, Lawrence, & Tushman, 2001; Orlikowski & Yates, 2003) or on how different time frames affect the group processes taking place during events (e.g., Bakker, Boros, Kenis, & Oerlemans, 2013; Schwab & Miner, 2008).

Finally, our findings suggest that the effects of field-configuring events are closely tied to emotions, so that analyzing such events can enrich recent efforts to understand the emotional dimension of institutional work (Voronov & Russ, 2012). Ritualistic performances afford shared emotional experiences and are often deliberately crafted to that end (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010); social movements partly gain their mobilization potential from emotions such as passion and feelings of solidarity (Flam & King, 2005; Goodwin, 1997; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001). At the same time, our study has shown that heightened emotionality can also obstruct change under specific field conditions. Paying attention to the two-sided role of emotions at field-configuring events would improve scholars' understanding of the processes behind institutional change, specifically in the value-laden context of climate change (Hoffman, 2010).

Final Thoughts

In closing, our study contributes to understanding why, despite the widespread agreement on the urgency of mitigating climate change and of developing adaptation mechanisms, powerful actors still seem unwilling and unable to subscribe to a single course of action and to provide an effective solution (Blühdorn, 2011). From an organization studies perspective, we would argue that the framing of the issue at stake as a transnational commons problem to be solved with market mechanisms has created a situation in which multiple and opposing field actors now come together at the UNFCCC climate conferences not to advance policy, but to define and support their own activities and inter-

ests, some of which only loosely relate to the issue of combating human-induced climate change.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1
Climate Policy Events Attended by Researchers^a

Year	Events and Location	Role at Event
2000	SB 12, Bonn	UNFCCC staff
2001	COP 6/2/SB 14, Bonn	UNFCCC staff
2002	SB 16, Bonn	UNFCCC staff
2003	SB 18, Bonn	UNFCCC staff
2003	World Climate Change Conference, Moscow	Academic researcher and presenter
2004	COP 10/SB 21, Buenos Aires	Policy institute researcher, side event organizer, presenter, RINGO member
2005	COP 11/CMP 1/SB 23, Montreal	Policy institute researcher, side event organizer, presenter, ENGO and RINGO member
2006	SB 24/AWG-KP 1, Bonn	Academic researcher
2006	COP 12/CMP 2/SB 25/AWG-KP 2, Nairobi	Academic researcher, side event organizer, presenter
2007	SB 26/AWG-KP 3, Bonn	Academic researcher, side event organizer, presenter
2008	COP 14/CMP 4/SB 29/AWG-KP 6/AWG-LCA 4, Poznań	Academic researchers, presenters, RINGO and gender equity members
2009	SB 30/AWG-KP 8/AWG-LCA 6, Bonn	Academic researchers, side event organizers, presenters
2009	COP 15/CMP 5/AWG-KP 10/AWG-LCA 8, Copenhagen	Supervisor of two research assistants reporting from the COP and the "Peoples' Summit"

^a Abbreviations: COP, Conference of the Parties; SB, subsidiary body; CMP, Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol; AWG-KP, Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol; AWG-LCA, Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention; UNFCCC, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; RINGO, research and independent NGO (nongovernmental organization); ENGO, environmental NGO.

TABLE A2
Interviews, 2008–11, by Actor Category

Actor Category ^a	During Events	Follow-ups
RINGO	7	5
BINGO	2	0
ENGO	5	2
IPO	3	1
Other NGO	4	0
<i>NGO total</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>8</i>
UNFCCC staff	1	0
Government representative, developed country	4	3
Government representative, developing country	2	0
<i>Government representatives total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>3</i>
Total for all categories	28	11

^a Abbreviations: RINGO, research and independent NGO (nongovernmental organization); BINGO, business and industry NGO; ENGO, environmental NGO; IPO, indigenous peoples' organization; UNFCCC, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Over time, actors in the climate policy field regularly change from one group to another. The category noted here represents the role of our interview partners at the time of the interview.

TABLE A3
Documents and Utilization in the Research Process

Category	Document Type (Number)	Utilization
Secondary sources	Scholarly articles and COP reports (58)	Understanding of overall field development; refining analytic themes and categories
UNFCCC documents	Directory of participants, COPs 1–17 (17)	Analysis of event dynamics
	Press releases, COPs 7–17 (24)	Refining analytic themes and categories
	Speeches and statement by UNFCCC executive secretary, COPs 8–17 (22)	Refining analytic themes and categories
	Daily programs, COPs 3, 4, 13–17 (87)	Analysis of the number of country and observer groupings; identification of the number of press briefings
ENBs	Repertory of side events on Side Event Online Registration System, COPs 9–17 (9)	Analysis of the development of party involvement in the organization of side events
	UNFCCC budget performance reports, 1995–2011 (17)	Analysis of development of UNFCCC over time (budget, staff)
Press articles	Daily issues, COPs 1–17 (187)	Definition of analytic themes and categories
	Summaries, COPs 1–17 (17)	Definition of analytic themes and categories
Press articles	COP-related articles published in the <i>New York Times</i> , COPs 1–17 (52)	Analysis of event dynamics (article count); refining analytic themes and categories

TABLE A4
High-Stakes and Regular COP Attendance Data^a

Attendance	COP 3, Kyoto, 1997: Phase 1, High Stakes	COP 4, Buenos Aires, 1998: Phase 1, Regular	COP 13, Bali, 2007: Phase 2, High Stakes	COP 14, Poznań, 2008: Phase 2, Regular
<i>Parties</i>				
Number of participants	2,273	1,430	3,516	3,967
Number of parties (countries)	161	161	192	191
Average delegation size	14	9	18	21
<i>Observers</i>				
Number of participants	3,865	2,628	5,815	4,463
Number of observer organizations	278	180	413	464
Average delegation size	14	15	14	10
<i>Media</i>				
Number of participants	3,712	883	1,498	819
Ratio of media to parties and observers	0.60	0.22	0.16	0.10

^a Calculations are based on COP delegate lists and daily programs published by the UNFCCC secretariat.

TABLE A5
Phase 1 versus Phase 2 COP Attendance

Attendance	Phase 1 Average: COPs 1–10	Phase 2 Average: COPs 11–17	Percentage Change
<i>Parties</i>			
Number of participants	1,998	4,834	+ 142%
Number of parties (countries)	167	194	+ 16%
Average delegation size	12	25	+ 108%
Number of country groupings ^a	14 (1997)	20 (2007)	+ 42%
<i>Observers</i>			
Number of participants	2,833	6,248	+ 121%
Number of observer organizations	259	563	+ 117%
Average delegation size	11	11	+ 0%
Number of observer groupings ^a	2 (1997)	9 (2007)	+ 350%
<i>Media</i>			
Number of participants	1,150	1,365	+ 19%
Number of official press briefings	101 (1997)	140 (2007)	+ 39%

^a Calculations are based on COP delegate lists and daily programs published by the UNFCCC secretariat. The numbers of country and observer groupings in this table are based on an analysis of press briefings organized by country and observer groups at COPs 3 (1997) and 13 (2007). This number of observer groupings slightly differs from the officially recognized constituency groupings.



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