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'A very human business' – transnational networking initiatives and domestic climate action

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Abstract

The past two decades have witnessed a proliferation of transnational networking initiatives aimed at addressing climate change. Previous work has suggested that these initiatives largely achieve their governance functions by fostering learning and resource acquisition. Our particular contribution seeks to advance current understanding of networking initiatives by suggesting that they may additionally perform social and emotional roles which galvanise, energise and motivate actors to pursue actions which advance domestic climate goals. To illustrate our argument, we examine GLOBE International, an inter-parliamentary institution focused on supporting the development of domestic legislation around sustainable development. Based on semi-structured interviews with legislators, we provide evidence that GLOBE functions as a network for learning, and particularly political learning. Yet participation in the group setting of the initiative's summits has additionally given rise to feelings of unity, emotional energy and inspiration. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings, which paint a richer, more complex picture of transnational climate governance than previously acknowledged in the literature.

1. Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed a 'Cambrian explosion' (Keohane and Victor, 2011) of transnational initiatives to address climate change (Abbott, 2012; Bulkeley et al., 2018). One sub-set of these initiatives which has attracted particular attention from scholars focuses on networking, in the sense of connecting spatially disparate actors, typically with the aim of sharing information and developing participants' capacities. Examples of initiatives with a networking function include C40 Cities, and the focus of the present paper, GLOBE International.

Our goal in this paper is to provide better understanding of how transnational networking initiatives accelerate climate action amongst their participants. A frequently-made assumption is that they do so by performing two roles: (1) fostering learning and (2) resource acquisition (Busch, 2015; Hoffmann, 2011; Legrand, 2012; Stone, 2013). We do not set out to challenges these roles, though acknowledging the paucity of past empirical research, we seek to contextualise their influence. Rather, our argument is that this view of networking initiatives is too narrow, in that it potentially omits more social and emotional roles. In particular, as well as learning and resources, we suggest that networking initiatives may help to generate solidarity, an '*esprit de corps*' (Blumer, 1939) and become a source of inspiration for participants (Thrash et al., 2014). In doing so, network encounters potentially galvanise actors, and give rise to emotional energy and motivation which may be instrumental in sustaining commitment and subsequent climate action.

To explore this argument, and provide empirical insight into the roles performed by transnational networking initiatives, we examine the case of GLOBE International – an inter-

parliamentary institution (IPI) focused on promoting sustainable development. More specifically, we focus on GLOBE's climate change-related initiatives, which have sought to 'provide a forum for legislators to share experiences in developing, passing and overseeing the implementation of climate change legislation and to support legislators as they move forward' (GLOBE International, 2015). Our concern is with the constituent mechanisms through which networking aspects of GLOBE have impacted participants (i.e. legislators in national parliaments) in the run-up to, during, and following major network summits.

The paper makes three important contributions. First, by invoking a role for emotions and collective identity, we seek to enrich current understanding of networked and/or transnational forms of environmental governance (Keohane, 2015). The importance of emotions (or affective aspects) as a causal force in understanding human beliefs and behaviour has received growing recognition within disciplines ranging from politics through to geography (e.g. Burke et al., 2018; Goodwin et al., 2009; Hoggett and Thompson, 2012; Mercer, 2006; Mitchell, 2016). They have also begun to be recognised in recent work on multilateral co-operation and inter-state climate politics (Milkoreit, 2017). Yet the role of emotions has, to the best of our knowledge, largely by-passed work concerned with transnational networking initiatives. Second, following on from the above, our paper provides much-needed empirical insight into how transnational networking initiatives contribute to environmental governance. By governance, we mean the purposeful guiding, steering and controlling of behaviour in the pursuit of public goals (Börzel and Risse, 2010; Kooiman, 1993). The academic literature has made significant progress in describing the emerging architecture of the climate governance system(s), highlighting the growing role of boundary-spanning networks (Bulkeley et al., 2018; Kütting and Cerny, 2015; Roger et al.,

2017). Much less well-understood are the mechanisms through which these institutions govern climate change by influencing, empowering and motivating their participants to produce and/or implement collectively-binding rules (Tosun and Schoenefeld, 2017). Third, we contribute to understanding the role of IPIs and transgovernmentalism (Keohane and Nye, 1974; Slaughter, 2002) in contemporary environmental governance. Both the literatures on IPIs (e.g. Cutler, 2006; Legrand, 2012), and public transnational networks (e.g. Michaelowa and Michaelowa, 2017), have largely ignored the engagement of parliamentarians with environmental issues. By analysing GLOBE International, we begin to fill this gap, providing wider insights into the contributions of IPIs outside the realms of traditional inter-state relations to the governance of global environmental change.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces GLOBE International and its climate change-focused activities, and situates the institution as a form of transnational climate governance. Section 3 critically reviews past work into networking initiatives and argues for the need to take greater account of their social and emotional roles. Research design and methods are described in Section 4. Section 5 presents our empirical findings, while discussion and conclusions are presented in Section 6.

2. GLOBE as an inter-parliamentary networking initiative

Much of the existing literature concerned with transnational networking in the area of climate governance has analysed initiatives involving non-state actors and/or sub-national governments (Bernstein and Hoffmann, 2018; Bulkeley et al., 2012; Michaelowa and Michaelowa, 2017). GLOBE International (originally 'Global Legislators Organisation for a Balanced Environment'), the focus of the present paper, is different in that its members

comprise parliamentarians. One way of categorising GLOBE is as an IPI. That is, it is an institution in which parliamentarians (i.e. legislators) from different states interact, deliberate, and co-operate 'with a view to formulating their interests, adopting decisions, strategies or programs, which they implement or promote, formally and informally, in interactions with other actors, by various means such as persuasion, advocacy or institutional pressure' (Šabič, 2008a, pg.258). IPIs take a diversity of forms: some are formal organs of international organisations, while others are akin to international NGOs, created to address issues of common interest and concern to parliamentarians (Šabič, 2008b, pg.81). GLOBE belongs to this latter grouping of international parliamentary associations. It is a voluntary, cross-partisan organisation, which is not officially endorsed by the parliaments of its constituent members.

GLOBE itself was founded in 1989 by legislators from the US Congress, European Parliament, Japanese Diet, and the Russian State Duma 'with the mission to respond to urgent environmental challenges through the development and advancement of legislation' (GLOBE International, 2015). It is intended to function as an action-oriented international knowledge and policy network, focused around peer-to-peer information exchange and the provision of support to national parliamentarians. Underlying this model of informal transgovernmentalism is the assumption that legislators will gain credible and authoritative information which they can use domestically to inform the development of new legislation through conventional domestic legislative channels, or else by influencing agency decision-making (Slaughter, 2002). GLOBE's Climate Legislation Initiative, which is the focus of the present paper, dates back to 2005.

An important feature of GLOBE's climate change-related activities has been a series of international summits. Prominent examples include: the first and second World Summit of Legislators (Brazil in 2012 and Mexico in 2014); the first and second Climate Legislation Summits (London in 2013 and Washington DC in 2014); and the Climate Adaptation Legislation and South-South Cooperation Summit (Beijing in 2013). Held in venues such as the US Senate and Mexican Congress, the summits have typically featured a combination of expert briefings and presentations by international organisations. Typically, the formal outcome of the summits has been a declaration or statement, signed by legislators, which they pledge to take back to their parliaments. The summits have also seen the launch of legislation studies produced by GLOBE in partnership with academic institutions – including climate legislation studies providing information on the state of climate change laws and policies for a large number of developing and developed countries (e.g. see Nachmany et al., 2015).

GLOBE's members have featured prominent and influential politicians ranging from Al Gore (former Vice President of the US), Shinzo Abe (Japan's Prime Minister), Prakash Javadekar (India's former Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Rafael Pacchiano Alamán (Mexico's Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources), Bukola Saraki (President of the Nigerian Senate), and Cedric Frolick (Chairperson of the South African National Assembly). However, GLOBE has also enrolled many lesser-known parliamentarians. In fact, the composition of the network, and its cross-partisan nature, means that some countries have been represented, at times, by members of the opposition, and/or by people with little influence over decision-making in their respective parliaments.

This reflects a notable feature of GLOBE: membership is voluntary with participants being invited by the organisation to take part, or else enrolled by existing members.

This structure of GLOBE has provided an opportunity for single parliamentarians to pursue their own interests independently of national governments. Moreover, GLOBE has allowed single parliamentarians to connect, co-operate, and problem-solve directly with their counterparts in other countries. Importantly, participants in the GLOBE network have not been bound by any formal obligations. Instead, the organisation has sought to leverage "softer" governing processes such as learning, persuasion, and agenda-setting to achieve its goals.

For the purposes of the present paper, we situate GLOBE as a transnational climate governance initiative and, more specifically, a public governance network (Andonova et al., 2009). In common with other such transnational initiatives, GLOBE exists outside of any intergovernmental or multilateral agreement, although its activities nevertheless support the objectives of the international regime on climate change. As a form of governance institution, it purposefully seeks to govern by steering and supporting legislators to act in relation to domestic climate change policy. To this end, GLOBE is configured as a networking initiative focused on knowledge sharing and capacity development amongst its members. In this sense, GLOBE shares a number of similarities with several high-profile transnational networking initiatives previously explored in the literature, such as the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004; Giest and Howlett, 2013; Hakelberg, 2014). It is not representative of how all transnational governance initiatives govern. Of particular note, GLOBE neither sets rules nor monitors the behaviour of its constituent

members, therefore distinguishing it from transnational governance initiatives with an explicit regulatory function – such as the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Program (Roger et al., 2017). Accordingly, insights from the present study should (at most) be seen as potentially applicable to a sub-set of transnational governance initiatives, rather than their entirety (Hoffmann, 2011).

3. Understanding networking initiatives

3.1. Conventional explanations and their shortcomings

The existing literature which has sought to understand transnational networking initiatives focused on climate change has largely examined two roles: learning and resource acquisition. Learning comprises a potentially complex set of phenomena but, at its core, can be understood as a process whereby actors alter their thoughts and/or potential behaviours in relation to a particular issue in response to new information (Sabatier, 1987). Most previous work has demonstrated an important role for networks in fostering cross-border learning processes. Research has drawn attention to the activities of transnational professional networks in creating 'circuits of knowledge' through which ideas, policies, and ensembles of practice are created, legitimated, and diffused across geographic space (Goldman, 2007; Healey, 2013; Legrand, 2012, McCann, 2008; Stone, 2004; True and Mintrom, 2001). Within the context of transnational governance initiatives, studies have demonstrated that transnational municipal networks (TMNs) facilitate policy learning through information sharing, demonstrating 'best practice', and lesson-drawing (Bernstein and Hoffmann, 2018; Busch, 2015; Gore, 2010; Hakelberg, 2014; Lee and Jung, 2018), as well as re-shaping discursive framings of the problem of urban sustainability amongst participants (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004). What limited research has been undertaken into

IPIs has also provided evidence that they facilitate learning. Legrand (2012) shows how the Windsor Conference – an informal network comprising senior civil servants – provided a setting for positive and negative cross-border lesson-drawing.

A second role commonly ascribed to transnational governance initiatives is the provision of resources. Actors are assumed to participate in order to gain resources that they might not otherwise be able to obtain. Indeed, with the aim of building capacities to enable constituent members to take action, networking initiatives often support participants' efforts to acquire resources and/or provide access to resources directly (Andonova et al., 2007). One of these resources, closely bound up with learning, is the provision of useful, credible, and authoritative information (Slaughter, 2002). However, the literature also variously discusses finance (accessing additional streams of funding or enhancing the capacity to do so), political resources (leveraging the support of wider coalitions of actors), and legitimacy (acquiring the right and acceptance to govern) (Bernstein and Hoffmann, 2018; Hoffmann, 2011; Kell and Levin, 2003; Lee and Jung, 2018). As an example: Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) find that the principal contribution of participation in the CCP program was the provision of enhanced resources needed to build local capacities to address municipal climate action.

Our argument is not that these roles are unimportant. Instead, we suggest that learning and resources by themselves provide a potentially incomplete account of how transnational networking initiatives achieve their governance functions. Networking initiatives are invariably voluntary and require time, commitment, and energy on the part of their members. Moreover, participants may lack the power, authority, and means to readily

follow through on new knowledge, ambitions, and obligations which are hypothesised to come about from their involvement in networking initiatives. The result is potential disappointment, disillusionment, and even feelings of failure. This raises questions, not only about why participants engage in such initiatives in the first place, but also how participants sustain their commitment. An additional puzzle, which is not fully addressed by the existing literature, is why participants should necessarily engage in some of the co-operative activities they are alleged to within network settings. One response to these questions is the prospect of acquiring resources. However, it remains unclear as to whether all participants should necessarily stand to gain resources, even more so in networking initiatives with limited capacity and resources (e.g. finance) of their own.

3.2. Bringing collective identity and emotions into networking initiatives

To address these questions, we draw from scholarship which has explored the relationship between emotions, collective identity and social movements (Goodwin et al., 2009). Our argument is that another element is at play: according to this work, collective gatherings can forge solidarity, whereby participants identify with the collective unit (Hunt and Benford, 2004; Jasper, 2011). Solidarity is closely aligned with the concept of '*esprit de corps*' which seeks to capture 'feelings of devotion and enthusiasm for a group that is shared by its members' (Hunt and Benford, 2004, pg.439). The literature documents how *esprit de corps* is important in cementing a collective identity, a shared sense of purpose, and commitment to a common cause.

Commitment is significant because it defines whether individuals continue to participate and offer their time, energies, and ongoing support. Without sufficient commitment,

individuals may decide to abandon a particular movement, cause, or organisation, or fail to carry out the requirements of its members (Hercus, 1999). Indeed, the concept of *esprit de corps* has been deployed to understand how particular bureaucratic and judicial organisations realise (or otherwise) their goals, including in contexts where opposition exists (Greenwood and Roederer-Rynning, 2015; Juncos and Pomorska, 2014; Vauchez, 2012).

One way of thinking about how commitment is generated, and moreover sustained, is through the concept of emotional energy (Collins, 1981; Gould, 2002). Emotional energy is a form of energetic arousal which creates feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, and vigour (Spreitzer et al., 2013). According to Collins (1993), social interaction within a group setting can give rise to positive feelings of enthusiasm and confidence, particularly where there is a shared focus of attention. The energetic arousal from interpersonal interactions may be temporary. Yet the emotional charge stored up from a series of successful 'interaction rituals' can translate into more enduring affective commitments. In particular, ongoing participation can be sustained by collective symbols which, in a political setting, could include associations with slogans, pledges, policies, or even charismatic leaders. It can also be strengthened by feelings of a shared moral vision of right and wrong (Goodwin et al., 2009).

Much of the empirical support for these ideas has come from research into social movements (Nicholls, 2009). Work has emphasised the emotional experiences of participants and how these emotions propel the creation, maintenance, and functioning of activist networks (Bosco, 2007; Gruszczynska, 2009; Hercus, 1999). There is also some evidence that international political conferences and summits are instrumental in

generating a degree of emotional energy. For example, True and Mintrom (2001) briefly note how various United Nations World Conferences on Women generated 'excitement and energy' which led to subsequent policy action. While not addressing emotional energy, Milkoreit (2017) finds that emotions, and their interaction with cognitive aspects, influence the belief systems of negotiators involved in inter-governmental climate change politics. She also locates an important role for collective identities, and associated identity groups, in these processes. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, emotions have not been explored in any detail within the context of transnational climate governance.

A further concept which sheds light on how actors might be motivated to take a particular course of action is that of inspiration (Shiota et al., 2016). Defined as 'the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016), inspiration remains a comparatively under-explored, emotion-laden phenomenon in social science. However, its role is widely invoked, particularly in relation to understanding acts of devotion, creativity, and political activism (e.g. Hellmanzik, 2012; Oleynick et al., 2014). Thrash and Elliot (2003) suggest that inspiration arises where individuals become aware of new or better possibilities. Moreover, inspiration combines being inspired by, and inspired to, something (Thrash and Elliot, 2004). The former refers to the experience of being moved by the perceived value of a particular 'eliciting object', such as a role model, creative image, or idea. Being inspired to do something, on the other hand, describes the motivation to reproduce or extend the qualities of this evocative object.

The role of inspiration is less well-documented in the empirical literature. Several authors have suggested that environmental policy adoptions in one country have 'inspired' the

incorporation of similar policies elsewhere – although the motivational underpinnings of these alleged instances of inspiration are rarely unpacked (e.g. Kronsell, 2002). Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) describe how the Cities for Climate Protection programme provided a 'source of inspiration' for participants seeking to advance domestic climate action. Others have highlighted how principles inscribed into global environmental treaties have inspired policies in various countries (Wapner, 2003).

Drawing from these insights, we posit that environmental networking initiatives might give rise to affective group dynamics. Like social movements previously studied, such initiatives often involve group gatherings, with their own forms of collective symbols, rituals and, to a greater or lesser extent, moral scripts. The idea that international environmental gatherings constitute a staged ritual or spectacle, involving emotionally arousing displays of ambition, hope, and group endeavour, has been observed in the literature (Death, 2011; Haas, 2002; Klinsky and Brankovic, 2018; Mahony, 2013; Paprocki, 2018; Schüssler et al., 2014). It is within this context of institutionally choreographed, emotionally-infused collective action that environmental networking initiatives might well foster solidarities, emotional energy and inspiration. In doing so, they could help generate, strengthen and/or reinvigorate participants' engagement in and commitment to the environmental agenda championed by networking initiatives. Participation in networking initiatives could in turn motivate and sustain the sometimes difficult day-to-day work of translating environmental goals into practical action – including in the face of opposition, disappointment and slow progress.

4. Research design and methods

Twenty-four semi-structured interviews were undertaken with legislators (N=20), policy officials (N=2, e.g. legal counsels), and secretariat staff (N=2) of the GLOBE network in 2015 (respondents are identified as R1-R24 in the results below). Legislators were drawn from 16 different developing/emerging and developed countries. The interviews were conducted by the authors, either in person or remotely via telephone or Skype. Two respondents provided answers in writing. Interview questions sought to uncover respondents' personal motivations for participating in the GLOBE network, their experiences, and the perceived impact of involvement on their knowledge, beliefs, commitment, and climate change-related actions. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interview data were complemented by personal observations from one of the authors who attended two GLOBE summits.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, wherein 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg.82). A central goal for the analysis was to identify the constituent mechanisms through which participation influenced climate governance. The research adopted a mixed deductive-inductive approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2008). Constructs drawn from the academic literature on networking initiatives (learning and resource acquisition), together with work on policy diffusion (e.g. competition and emulation), informed preliminary thoughts about higher-order codes and organising themes. Codes/themes were also generated inductively from the data – beginning with a reading of the full interview transcripts by both authors. This process led to the early identification of emotional aspects,

both as a potentially important experience of participants, but also as a factor shaping their governance-related activities. The primary coding was undertaken by one of the authors using NVivo software; with the second author evaluating, and providing feedback on, consistency and validity (Schreier, 2012). Amongst others, this feedback led to a more refined operationalisation of several conceptual ideas, including ones capturing different dimensions of emotions and learning.

Coding was undertaken in two waves. In the first, more iterative wave, the aim was to fully explore the data. Material which related to the central research question was coded, organised according to prior and constructed higher-order categories (e.g. learning), as well as potentially important and recurrent topics (e.g. climate actions, significant experiences, etc.). Next followed a quasi-abductive phase in which both authors moved back and forward between the coded material and potentially relevant literatures (c.f. Granqvist and Ritvala, 2016). Here the ambition was to refine and situate interpretations in a reflexive "dialogue" with salient theories, concepts and typologies. This informed a second, more focused wave of coding, wherein clustered material was categorised into, and/or linked to, three final global themes (interpreted as learning, resource acquisition and emotional/social dynamics). Pre-set codes (e.g. those relating to diffusion-related aspects such as emulation) which were not a significant feature of the data were removed. Additionally, coherent sub-themes were established, many of them corresponding to theoretical/conceptual ideas. To take one example: following discussion between the two authors, a distinction was made between policy and political forms of learning, because they were existing conceptual categories that best seemed to fit the data (Nilsson, 2005; Radaelli, 2009). The former encapsulates learning about the means (instruments) and ends (goals) of policy, and

includes lesson-drawing (Rose, 1991), whereby actors purposely learn from observing the previous experience of others. Political learning is concerned with new strategies and tactics to achieve specific political goals. It covers activities ranging from the substantive use of information to influencing political agendas through to the symbolic incorporation of concepts to increase policy-making legitimacy (May, 1992; Radaelli, 2008). Although previous work has identified normative learning as a potential consequence of social interaction (Baird et al., 2014; Newig et al., 2010), we found little evidence of changes in participants' norms and values.

Finally, based on a re-reading of the transcripts and coded material, the authors subsequently sought to qualify the perceived significance of the three global themes, as reported by interviewees. Doing so (a) ensured that marginal comments were not elevated out of context and (b) created a distinction between more and less influential mechanisms and roles. In reporting the findings below, frequency of comments correlated with particular codes/themes, as well as the importance ascribed to them (Table 1), were taken into account.

Table 1 – Frequency and dominance of themes in interviews

	Number of interviewees who referred to this theme	Number of interviewees who mentioned this as a prominent theme for them
Learning	24	17
Resources	7	2
Emotional/social aspects	16	11

One of the two authors was employed by GLOBE between March and July 2013, and was the lead author of the climate legislation study, produced at the time in collaboration between

GLOBE International and the LSE. All the interviews were conducted after the author's employment with GLOBE had finished, and it was made clear to interviewees that the author was no longer an employee of GLOBE. One potential issue of this association is respondent bias – which could manifest itself, for example, in respondents providing answers which might be expected to "please" someone who has worked for the organisation. In the event, respondents provided open and frank accounts of their experiences of GLOBE, including negative aspects. If anything, familiarity appeared to have made respondents more candid, which we interpreted as a potential product of trust. Another potential problem is researcher bias – with the author's prior affiliation potentially making it difficult for them to remain detached, critical and objective towards the data. We were keenly aware of this risk and sought to mitigate it by ensuring that the other author was directly involved in the data analysis and reporting of results.

5. Evidence from participants

5.1 Social and emotional dynamics

> *Politics is a very human business, and GLOBE is a very human business. It creates human relationships around a topic. It provides information, a sense of common endeavour, and it provides shared solutions to help tackle what is an extreme form of a long-term problem.* (R6)

An important finding to emerge from the interviews was how participation in the summits had forged a 'human' connection amongst participants and, moreover, how this created a psychological momentum and increased motivation to act. Commenting on the experience

of GLOBE, one legislator noted how 'a relationship was built…not only professionally, but also sometimes personally' (R1). Likewise, a legislator highlighted the 'camaraderie that builds up across the floor' (R6), while another respondent described how the organisation helped to create a 'community' amongst parliamentarians (R10). While most of these parliamentarians had a pre-existing interest in climate change, the very experience of engaging in the network, and the summits in particular, was instrumental in forging a sense of unity amongst certain participants.

Legislators expressed an affinity to other participants in the network. An important factor underlying this affinity arose from the realisation that parliamentarians are 'not on their own' (R4), 'a trust that other people are doing it [i.e. climate policy]' (R10) and a sense of common purpose. Indeed, the interviews revealed an *esprit de corps*, as evidenced by the following quote:

> *It is very inspiring and very useful to build sort of a community, of people from different countries, that gives me the feeling that we fight the same battle – and we come back home and continue doing what we believe is right, and I have this feeling of being connected to them.* (R16)

Another legislator observed how 'at GLOBE meetings, you couldn't see easily that they [the legislators] were from this party or this party. It was like a common position' (R1).

One factor which was identified as contributing to this collective sense of purpose was intensity of the summits. As one respondent summarised:

That openness, the fact that it isn't formal negotiation, the fact that it is so well-informed, the fact that it's so extreme, in a way, and there you are, everyone's tired, flying in from everywhere and they're spending all bloody day, Saturday and Sunday, wrestling this thing, not going out and seeing any light, gives a sense of the group that's meant to do something. I think that infects Chinese members of the National People's Congress as much as it does everybody else. (R6)

A common and dominant theme amongst those respondents who alluded to the affective dimension of GLOBE was that this *esprit de corps* was associated with feelings of 'enthusiasm' and 'excitement'. In fact, interviewees used these very terms to describe their experience of GLOBE (e.g. R1, R15, R17, R20) and recalled how these feelings helped to motivate them. One interviewee summarised the impact that being a part of the GLOBE network had on him:

The psychological impact of talking to people who are pursuing the same goals - that creates an environment in which a spark was happening. A spark was happening for me. You get a lot of energy from people doing the same thing…that's probably one of the more useful things that a summit or a conference can do – just to refocus, recharge your batteries, and then you have energies for another round. (R13)

Another legislator commented how 'you come back really motivated and wanting to work more on it [i.e. climate policy]' (R20). Likewise, one delegate recalled:

Every time I have the opportunity to attend, I notice that it encourages you [sic] – that once you go back to your home country you look for issues that you can really advocate on, draw the executive arm of government's attention, so that we can take a stance to mitigate or to adapt. (R17)

Along similar lines; '[C]oming back from the summits, I was motivated, reassured, because having colleagues in other countries doing the same as what we are doing, gives you a sense of community that helps' (R16). What this suggests is that involvement in GLOBE was not simply about exchanging information, learning from best practice, or increasing actors' political legitimacy. Additionally, participation in the networking initiative was instrumental in generating an 'emotional energy' (Gould, 2002) which helped to propel subsequent action by legislators. This point is encapsulated in the following quote:

I think legislators come because they feel empowered, perhaps more psychologically than technically. Because at the end of the day there is only so much knowledge transfer that can be replicated to different countries, so I think at least half of the impact or half of the benefit is to feel psychologically empowered and motivated. (R3)

Likewise, several legislators emphasised how being part of the GLOBE network helped to increase feelings of self-efficacy, understood here as an individual's belief in their capacity to execute necessary actions to achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1986). For example, one commented how 'it is really a bit disappointing to fight this really important battle not surrounded by colleagues, and having conversations with others in other countries really helped' (R16). Another noted how 'coming from a small country you are isolated and feel

helpless and there's nothing we can do, and coming to a big meeting…it's a positive reinforcement thing – reinforces sense of confidence in your own country, in your own parliament, in what you can do' (R13). Heightening this sense of self-confidence was the fact that participation in GLOBE helped to make legislators feel 'important' (R10). The summits provided an opportunity for individual legislators to speak at prestigious venues (e.g. the US Senate, the Mexican Congress), to network with senior representatives from organisations such as the World Bank, and 'to be in the room' with distinguished international figures (R5, R16, R19). They also gave a 'voice' to countries, including smaller ones, which have historically been neglected in multilateral meetings under the auspices of the UNFCCC (R5).

Several legislators noted how the experience of attending the GLOBE summits, combined with the non-partisan structure of GLOBE, was instrumental in generating an increased sense of unity *within* their national delegation. Travelling together created opportunities for a range of social interactions amongst domestic political rivals, or legislators from other branches of the legislature, which might not otherwise happen (R1, R8, R16, R17, R21). In doing so, it helped to forge bonds between members of national delegations, raising the prospects for subsequent co-operative behaviour. In at least one case, a heightened sense of national unity was recognised as a key factor in passing significant legislation: in the process of drafting Mexico's framework climate legislation, several separate proposals for a climate change law were tabled by different parties. The national GLOBE chapter convened a meeting in which members from all parties succeeded in creating a unified version, which later became Mexico's General Law on Climate Change.

Our findings regarding GLOBE resonate with previous research on social movements and activist networks in the sphere of civil society (Bosco, 2007; Hercus, 1999); for example, in highlighting how interpersonal interactions can give rise to heightened solidarity, confidence, and emotional energy to pursue a common goal. Yet, going beyond this body of work, a further important theme to emerge from our work was how participants were 'inspired'. This was neatly summarised by a legislator from an emerging/developing country: '[W]hat happened [at the GLOBE summits] was a bit of everything – knowledge sharing, competition, but mainly inspiration' (R1). For some, this inspiration had come from keynote speeches and others' presentations:

> *In Washington we had the occasion to be in the room with a really exceptional leader, Nancy Pelosi. She was really able to transmit not only a very strong engagement but also a highly effective action on these issues and she was really inspiring. But in general every presentation is inspiring – you learn from each other. If a colleague in another country has achieved that result it means we can do it too.* (R16)

Others were inspired by direct contact with delegates from other countries. One legislator therefore commented on the impact of meeting face-to-face with one of their counterparts from Micronesia:

> *To hear from first hand from legislator there, what's happening there and that they still fight against climate change and didn't get frustrated. That they didn't get frustrated and said 'okay, we cannot do anything anymore'. I really like the first hand contact with somebody who faces the problems directly. I read about*

it before and knew all the examples and so on, but to talk to this person, literally

right there…[that was] my moment in Washington. (R4)

At least one respondent noted that 'inspiration' had directly contributed towards subsequent efforts to advance climate action: 'We were inspired by all the information we got at that conference and we went back we asked the parliament to put forward a standing committee on climate change' (R7). Others reported being inspired to renew their efforts to increase pressure on domestic governments to accelerate climate action. In line with Thrash and Elliot (2004), certain participants in GLOBE were *inspired by* (speeches, actions by other countries, etc.), and *inspired to* (scrutinise government policy, table bills to amend existing or introduce new climate legislation, etc.).

While evidence from the interviews mostly portrayed a positive account of how legislators' experience of GLOBE had energised, motivated, and inspired action – a note of caution is in order. Although several legislators testified to having taken concrete steps to advance domestic legislative action on climate change, qualifying the impact of the emotion-laden aspects of participation remains highly problematic. An important question in this regard is the degree to which the emotional 'buzz' from legislators' involvement in GLOBE was ephemeral. One legislator voiced his frustration that, despite initial enthusiasm, an initiative to set up a sub-national GLOBE chapter never materialised. Another legislator drew attention to the 'shelf-life of parliamentarians' (when they are not re-elected) and how this made it more difficult to build and sustain relationships over time (R3). We cannot discount the possibility that, for certain legislators, the emotional energy generated by involvement

at the summits dissipated afterwards. It is also possible, that some people are more prone by their nature to experiencing emotional energy than to being driven by it.

5.2. A network for learning and resources?

Given the aspirations of GLOBE, it is perhaps unsurprising that learning emerged as a major theme in the interviews and was cited as the leading motivation for participation. Many legislators enrolled themselves into the network in the expectation that GLOBE would serve as a valuable platform for knowledge exchange and learning from experts and peers. Within this context, several respondents from developing and emerging economies mentioned their lack of prior knowledge and experience in climate change policy, and how this hampered their ability to initiate legislative measures to address climate change. The summits were highlighted by participants for their learning value. For some members, the condensed learning opportunities provided by GLOBE were transformative in nature:

> *I had zero knowledge prior to GLOBE...I was an environmental advocate, but it was limited to 'the three Rs' – reduce, reuse, recycle...but now I've learned about climate justice, climate finance, IPCC reports, and what's going on internationally.* (R15)

A significant number of respondents reported learning about legislative, policy, and administrative developments in other countries (e.g. R1, R2, R5, R18, R20 and R21). As one respondent wryly noted, '[T]he capacity for legislators to learn from each other and to shamelessly steal policy ideas is really important' (R4). Participants moreover reported gaining insights into the experience of other countries in putting policies into effect – learning about good practices as well as potential pitfalls to avoid in implementation.

Yet, alongside policy learning, GLOBE also functioned as a site for *political* learning. For example, commenting on the value of the network, one legislator noted:

> *GLOBE was also useful just to get in touch with other parliamentarians in other countries, who may be aware of what's happening in those countries, but also will have experience in dealing with political issues that are common in any jurisdiction.* (R21)

Likewise, one respondent observed, 'It was useful to get to know how people succeed, how they manage to pass legislation' (R9). Another highlighted how '…this gathering of experience helps legislators put forward their proposals more boldly and more effectively' (R16). Another theme that emerged from the interviews was how legislators had used their knowledge from GLOBE in a 'substantiating' capacity (Radaelli, 2009), that is, to help support their political position domestically. Several respondents reported deploying the GLOBE legislation studies as a political 'prop' (R6): for example, information from the studies regarding the number of countries which had adopted climate change legislation was used strategically to spur on further legislative action domestically. Amongst others, mentions of the study were made in parliaments and by governments in China, India, South Africa, Mexico, and the UK.

More broadly, political learning was important in the sense that it provided a better understanding of the realities of climate politics in other countries, which helped legislators form their position on certain issues To take one example: participation in GLOBE provided legislators with information about the domestic political challenges facing other countries

and about why countries were, or were not, making progress in tackling climate change (R25). For several legislators from developed economies, such information had instrumental value. A number of respondents reported that learning about the problems faced by developing countries had allowed them to adjust their positions on international negotiations and/or climate-related foreign aid (e.g. R2, R20).

Asked how they had learnt, nearly all respondents said that their key learning experiences had been through formal and informal interactions with other legislators at the summits. Such interactions allowed participants to compare practices with each other and gain insights into more and less effective administrative and legislative measures. Face-to-face contact provided a particular opportunity for legislators to ask questions and seek out information directly relevant to their needs. Additionally, it enabled parliamentarians to forge connections with their counterparts from other legislatures, with whom they could stay in touch after the summits (e.g. through email exchange).

Contributing to learning was the general atmosphere in summits, which was reported by interviewees as being open, honest and conducive to candid discussion. For example: in one panel discussion on renewable energies in Mexico, one legislator elaborated on Germany's 'best practices' in implementing feed-in-tariffs, while another legislator from Spain shared parallel insights from her country under the title 'worst practices'. A contrast was sometimes drawn between GLOBE – which was described as a collaborative, non-competitive environment in which all legislators had a voice – and formal negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – which was

seen as a more closed, competitive venue for traditional inter-state diplomacy between government representatives. One respondent noted:

> *I think what was interesting is that the motivations were much less geopolitical in the GLOBE process. For example, in the UN negotiations all the developing countries negotiate together as a block, in the G77 plus China, and it's sort of almost like we have to get as much out of the developed countries as possible and don't commit to doing much themselves [sic], whereas in the GLOBE process I think there is very much more geopolitical neutral type stance that it was viewed as an issue of national benefit, national security.* (R10)

GLOBE delegates are not official representatives of their national governments, irrespective of whether they are members of the ruling party, coalition, or opposition. Participants are therefore not bound to take an 'official' party line and can express their opinions more freely. Interviewees remarked on how this helped to 'create a sense of trust' between legislators (R4). The membership of the network was important for other reasons. Insights about policy and practice imparted by legislators were considered as more relevant, in the sense of being '….more attuned to the different pressures that you….as a parliamentarian understand' (R21). In line with work demonstrating the role of peers in learning (Stadelmann and Castro, 2014), participants were more likely to be more receptive to information, advocacy, and persuasion from their "peers" – fellow parliamentarians, as opposed to civil society. As one parliamentarian bluntly noted: 'I'm not bloody having Friends of the Earth feeling like they can pretty much instruct my office what to do' (R6).

Learning did not simply take place through personal interactions. A number of interviewees mentioned that their most significant learning episodes had been the high-level speakers – notably the scientific presentations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the US National Academy of Sciences and the UK Royal Society, as well as the dialogue with the President and Vice-President of the World Bank. References were also made to the Climate Legislation Studies with several legislators noting how they were used to inform themselves and their advisors on developments in other countries they engage with. One respondent noted how the studies were instrumental in stimulating a process of self-reflection, comparison, and benchmarking.

There was little evidence that GLOBE contributed to normative forms of learning. None of the respondents made references to changes in their underlying values and beliefs (e.g. heightened moral obligation to advance climate action) as a significant outcome of their involvement. This could be because of the methodological difficulties involved in identifying such learning. Yet another plausible explanation is that many legislators involved in GLOBE had been invited to, and agreed to, participate precisely because they are already "on-board" with the importance of climate protection.

Inevitably, assessing the impacts of learning – including through legislators' subsequent involvement in advancing domestic, or even international, climate legislation – is fraught with difficulty (c.f. Radaelli, 2009). We would caution against suggesting that GLOBE alone had a decisive effect on domestic climate action, because such a claim is not supported by the data. At least two respondents speculated that the involvement of members of national legislatures in GLOBE had contributed to the passing of the General Law on Climate Change

in Mexico, followed by efforts in several other Latin American countries (Costa Rica, Columbia, Peru) to introduce similar legislation (R1, R10). Another legislator from a developing country noted that, 'I was the one who initiated the climate legislation law in my country, and I wouldn't have thought about it if I had not[sic] been attending GLOBE' (R14). A further respondent said that the knowledge exchange in GLOBE summits is what allowed his country to begin a process of legislating on climate change (R11). However, across the interviews, there was only limited evidence linking participation to specific instances of policy diffusion, whereby learning about innovations in one country had unambiguously informed the development of specific policies (or administrative innovations) in another. Instead, the impact of learning through GLOBE lay more with empowering legislators, providing them with policy-relevant knowledge, strategies, and ultimately greater confidence which they could use in domestic legislatures to shape discourses and legislative activity. As one legislator observed, 'What GLOBE would do is support legislators in their own agenda' (R6).

While respondents made frequent references to learning, far fewer mentions of resources were made. Several legislators from developing/emerging economies noted the enhanced opportunities provided by the summits to learn more about climate finance, as well as the chance to meet senior representative from organisations such as the World Bank, GEF, and from the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD+) (R1, R5, R14). Yet it was not apparent that the prospect of enhanced financial resources was a significant motive for participation or a consequence of legislators' involvement – although it should be noted that GLOBE International is an

organisation with ambitions to provide largely informational resources and not financial ones.

Where involvement in GLOBE appears to have been of greater value, was in terms of providing legislators with enhanced domestic political recognition, legitimacy, and influence. One respondent noted how his involvement in an 'international framework' had meant that 'the speaker of parliament gave me a free hand', in the sense of granting him additional opportunities to, for example, table bills (R9). Another noted how his involvement in GLOBE had led his country's Minster of Environmental Affairs to regularly consult with him on climate change issues (e.g. international policy developments, etc.), and included him as part of the delegation for COP21 (R5). Additionally, it was noted how participation in GLOBE could raise the domestic 'profile' of participants, and how 'an international stage is good for them politically, domestically' (R10). A further theme that emerged from the interviews was how GLOBE was instrumental in (re-)affirming the importance of domestic legislative action in addressing international climate goals and, with it, the central role of parliamentarians. There was a real sense that participation had psychologically 'empowered' certain legislators and helped them to reclaim 'ownership' over the climate agenda domestically (R1, R3, R5, R10, R19).

6. Discussion and conclusions

Our study paints a richer, more complex picture of networking initiatives, and highlights the value of acknowledging the "human" character and experience of transnational climate governance. We show that transnational networking initiatives can perform important social and emotional roles which have been largely neglected in previous work (Betsill and

Bulkeley, 2004; Busch, 2015; Hoffmann, 2011). Within the context of GLOBE, participation helped to generate feelings of unity amongst legislators. Collective solidarity was forged around the idea that legislators were 'fighting the same battle', not 'alone', and part of a wider 'community' with a common and urgent purpose. We also found evidence that participation, particularly at the summits, gave rise to emotional energy; that is, feelings of excitement and enthusiasm (Jasper, 2011). A number of participants were also inspired by their experience, especially around narratives of climate action in the face of adversity.

Whilst we would caution against over-stating the impact of these collective, emotion-laden dynamics, our findings suggest that they can potentially provide the micro-foundations for climate governance by advancing domestic legislative change, at least for some participants. Within the context of GLOBE, the emotional energy generated by relational encounters in a bounded space was instrumental in invigorating commitment towards climate action, during and following the summits. Although many of the legislators selected or enrolled into the GLOBE network had a pre-existing interest in climate change, interviews suggested that participation had helped to strengthen and sustain their climate-related ambitions, advocacy, and actions. The camaraderie and feelings of unity which arose amongst particular national delegations also played a role in facilitating greater cross-party co-operation on climate change. This, in turn, increased the possibilities for subsequent legislative climate action domestically. Indeed, without these social and emotional dynamics, we do not expect that all of the parliamentarians would have left the summits with the same level of motivation to act.

A further contribution of our study is to provide new insights into the types of learning within transnational networking initiatives. The idea of learning through governance networks is far from new (Lee and Jung, 2018; Legrand, 2012; Paterson, 2014; Stone, 2013). We found some evidence for policy learning of the sort described in previous studies (e.g. Bernstein and Hoffmann, 2018), with participants drawing positive and negative lessons about the experience of policies adopted in other jurisdictions. Yet, from the perspective of interviewees, of greater importance was another type of learning, which has received very little recognition in the literature on transnational networking initiatives: political learning. GLOBE provided legislators with opportunities to learn about the political realities of climate policy, strategies to advance legislative action and 'substantiating information' (Radaelli, 2009) which could be used to shape discourses in their domestic parliaments. That is, our findings advance on previous work by opening-up the possibility that networking initiatives not only provide a vehicle for learning about policies, but also acquiring strategic information which can be used instrumentally by participants to achieve their political goals.

We feel compelled to qualify these findings. The importance of political learning may well be a function of GLOBE's ambitions and membership, the latter comprising legislators faced with the often politically-challenging task of championing and passing climate change laws domestically. Legislators are not bureaucrats charged with designing specific policies to realise the ambitions and requirements enshrined in climate change legislation. The climate summits studied in the research were carefully staged events, purposefully configured to inspire and foster a shared identity and mission (e.g. by being held in high-profile venues with curated opportunities for socialising with like-minded parliamentarians). In many ways, they have been text-book examples of interaction

rituals (Collins, 2004), known to provide favourable contexts for the development of solidarity and emotional energy. Furthermore, GLOBE's climate initiative has had a comparatively narrow focus on a positive valence issue (Cox and Béland, 2013), around which many of its members have a strong personal interest and normative attachment. The perceived urgency and critical nature of climate change may have further contributed to the level of emotionality observed in our study. It also ought to be noted that far from all participants in the sample mentioned social and emotional dimensions as a significant feature of their involvement in the network. In fact, these aspects remained secondary to learning, cautioning against under-emphasising the cognitive function of networking initiatives vis-à-vis more affective aspects. Additionally, from a methodological perspective, significant difficulties exist in establishing a causal link between the learning and emotions we observed and substantive actions contributing to climate goals (Dunlop and Radaelli, 2017; Rietig and Perkins, 2018).

Accepting these caveats, our study offers a corrective to accounts of environmental networking initiatives which have failed to consider their social and emotional roles and how these contribute to climate governance. We suggest that taking account of these roles provides explanatory value-added in two ways. First, by drawing attention to how group gatherings give rise to solidarity, emotional energies and inspiration, an understanding of networking initiatives which incorporates affective elements may better explain how participation can generate and sustain commitment to collective environmental goals. This does not mean that such feelings will be a feature of all transnational networking initiatives or, as was the case in the present context, all participants. Yet our findings nevertheless indicate that it may be important for

researchers to be attendant to the possibility that collective social and emotional variables may be relevant for more fully understanding how transnational networking initiatives govern; that is, how they enrol, motivate and inspire network constituents to take climate-related actions.

A second way in which social and emotional dynamics add explanatory value is as complements to existing accounts based on learning. Previous work suggests that networking initiatives facilitate interaction, exchange and learning by fostering a common language, inter-subjective understanding and discourse around particular problems (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004; Knight, 2002). Taking account of collective aspects takes this one step further by providing an additional explanation for why the corporeal ecologies of networking initiatives are conducive to learning – highlighting how an *esprit de corps* amongst participants may facilitate discussion, debate and the exchange of information in a comparatively open, honest and unrestrained fashion. An appreciation of how collective solidarity can give rise to a shared focus of attention can also help us understand how such information becomes resonant to participants in networking initiatives. Likewise, accounting for emotional energy, and associated moral commitments, is potentially important because it may help explain why network constituents (continue to) act on information, including in politico-bureaucratic contexts where they have previously encountered resistance or failure. Indeed, omitting these aspects risks making the same erroneous assumptions embedded in early models of pro-environmental behaviour, namely that the main determinant of whether (or not) individuals take environmentally-supportive actions is the information they receive

(Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). What matters is not only information, but whether actors feel compelled or motivated to engage and act on it.

Our study also contributes to an emerging literature concerned with the relationship between emotions and climate change (Head, 2017; Roser, 2012). We provide unique evidence that parliamentarians are little different to the individuals (invariably the public or students) who have been the subject of recent academic studies (many of them based on evidence from surveys and/or experimental methods): in both cases, emotions can provide the stimulus for positive beliefs and support for climate action (Feldman and Hart, 2018; Nabi et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018). An important caveat from past work is that negative emotions, such as feelings of fear, hopelessness and guilt, can potentially undermine people's self-efficacy and give rise to fear-control responses such as denial (Norgaard, 2011; O'Neill et al., 2013). We found a certain amount of evidence for such emotions amongst the parliamentarians we interviewed. Some of these were related to the special problem characteristics of climate change (notably, its perceived status as a collective action problem, and feelings that the multilateral process was not moving toward an effective solution) (c.f. Hulme, 2009; Milkoreit, 2017), while others were more generic in nature (centred on the frustrations with achieving political traction domestically amidst other, competing policy issues). Yet our findings tentatively indicate that the collective nature of network gatherings can help to overcome, and even transform, these negative emotions into positive ones. Indeed, taking a cue from the seminal work of Kasperson et al. (1988), there was a sense in which involvement in the networking initiative led to what we term the "social amplification of hope". Paradoxically, the very scale, pervasiveness, and urgency of climate change played into

these dynamics, in that such challenges could be rhetorically leveraged by individuals involved in the GLOBE summits to create a morally-infused narrative of hope amid despair.

Finally, our study has implications for institutional design, shedding light onto several features of networking initiatives which may help them to advance their goals. Echoing the findings of recent work on international businesses conferences, trade fairs, IPIs and inter-state fora (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008; Henn and Bathelt, 2015; Legrand, 2012), the present study underlines the significance of face-to-face interactions, as well as the physical spaces which support these encounters (Paterson, 2014). We show that environments facilitating regular interpersonal contact within group settings can provide a relational context conducive to learning, as well as generative of *esprit de corps* and emotional energy. Another feature of networking initiatives which potentially determines their influence is whether they provide 'usable knowledge' (Haas, 2004). For certain legislators, the value of GLOBE lay in the perception that it addressed knowledge gaps and contributed to policy- and politically-relevant understanding, which could be used instrumentally to further domestic legislative and policy goals. It also helped that the knowledge circulated, exchanged, and presented in networks was perceived as legitimate, coming from authoritative, politically unaligned sources, including from fellow legislators (c.f. learning from peers). What is more, the influence of networking initiatives may be enhanced where information is not only used to inform participants, but also galvanise, inspire and energise them. Our study thereby foregrounds the importance of initiatives which feature well-choreographed events ("rituals") which create feelings of belonging to a larger group with a shared moral purpose, mission and belief in self- and collective-

efficacy. In the case of GLOBE, this sense of purpose was enhanced by an empowering narrative wherein parliamentarians were hailed as the ones whose actions could make a difference.

Moving forward, our study points to several areas for future enquiry. One is to explore further the conditions under which transnational networking initiatives are generative of emotion-laden dynamics. Our findings tentatively indicate that collective, emotional effects are more likely where the initiative: (a) involves group gatherings which are choreographed (e.g. featuring symbols of group identity and/or inspirational speeches) to induce feelings of solidarity, shared purpose and urgency; and (b) addresses an issue of perceived importance which resonates with the underlying normative values and affective attachments of participants (c.f. Collins, 2004). Much more work is needed, however, to analyse the influence of these – and, indeed, other possible – attributes using, for example, comparative research involving different initiatives. There is also scope for further investigating collectively generated emotions in other settings of interactional environmental governance, including inter-state fora (Milkoreit, 2017). Another important area for future study is to trace, and critically scrutinise, the relationship between emotional experiences and substantive climate actions (e.g. the development and/or implementation of binding rules). Our study provides several preliminary observations in this area. Yet far more work is needed to determine the degree to which, for example, emotional energy can sustain individuals' environmental governance-related activities in the medium- to long-term.

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