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Coalition Opportunity Structures and Advocacy Coordination in Consensus and Majoritarian Democracies

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ABSTRACT

Research on advocacy coalitions suggests that belief homophily—the tendency of actors to coordinate based on shared policy beliefs—drives coalition formation. However, coalition opportunity structures, which are shaped by institutional contexts, may influence the extent to which belief homophily matters. We argue that coordination dynamics differ between majoritarian and consensus democracies. While majoritarian systems promote moderate norms of compromise and open decision-making processes, consensus democracies foster stronger norms of cross-coalition cooperation. Consequently, belief homophily may be a stronger driver of coordination in majoritarian democracies than in consensus democracies, where broader cooperation is needed to introduce policy change. To test this hypothesis, we use data from climate change policy subsystems in nine countries and apply a multilevel structural equation model to examine coordination patterns. Our results show that the more majoritarian a country's institutions are, the more actors coordinate with like-minded partners. Additionally, in majoritarian systems, coordination is more likely to involve influential actors, emphasizing power dynamics. Conversely, coordination in consensus democracies is less dependent on belief homophily, and broad-based cooperation is more prevalent. These results underscore how institutional contexts shape advocacy coalitions and contribute to a comparative understanding of advocacy coordination.

摘要

倡导联盟研究表明，信念同质性(行动者基于共同的政策信念进行协调的倾向)驱动着联盟的形成。然而，受制度背景影响的联盟机会结构可能会影响信念同质性的作用程度。我们认为，多数民主和共识民主之间的协调动态有所不同。多数民主制度提倡温和的妥协规范和开放的决策过程，而共识民主则培育更强的跨联盟合作规范。因此，信念同质性在多数民主中可能比在共识民主中更能促进协调，因为在共识民主中，政策变革需要更广泛的合作。为了检验这一假设，我们使用了九个国家气候变化政策子系统的数据，并应用多层结构方程模型来检验协调模式。我们的结果表明，一个国家的制度越处于多数，行动者与志同道合的伙伴的协调就越多。此外，在

多数制体制中，协调更有可能涉及有影响力的参与者，强调权力动态。相反，在共识民主体制中，协调对信念同质性的依赖程度较低，广泛的合作更为普遍。这些结果强调了制度背景如何影响倡导联盟，并有助于对倡导协调进行比较性理解.

RESUMEN

Las investigaciones sobre coaliciones de incidencia política sugieren que la homofilia de creencias —la tendencia de los actores a coordinarse basándose en creencias políticas compartidas— impulsa la formación de coaliciones. Sin embargo, las estructuras de oportunidad de coalición, moldeadas por los contextos institucionales, pueden influir en la importancia de la homofilia de creencias. Argumentamos que la dinámica de coordinación difiere entre las democracias mayoritarias y las de consenso. Mientras que los sistemas mayoritarios promueven normas moderadas de compromiso y procesos abiertos de toma de decisiones, las democracias de consenso fomentan normas más sólidas de cooperación entre coaliciones. En consecuencia, la homofilia de creencias puede ser un factor más importante de coordinación en las democracias mayoritarias que en las de consenso, donde se requiere una cooperación más amplia para introducir cambios en las políticas. Para comprobar esta hipótesis, utilizamos datos de subsistemas de políticas sobre cambio climático en nueve países y aplicamos un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales multinivel para examinar los patrones de coordinación. Nuestros resultados muestran que cuanto más mayoritarias son las instituciones de un país, más actores se coordinan con socios afines. Además, en los sistemas mayoritarios, es más probable que la coordinación involucre a actores influyentes, lo que enfatiza la dinámica de poder. Por el contrario, la coordinación en las democracias de consenso depende menos de la homofilia de creencias, y la cooperación de base amplia es más frecuente. Estos resultados subrayan cómo los contextos institucionales configuran las coaliciones de incidencia política y contribuyen a una comprensión comparativa de la coordinación de la incidencia política.

1 | Introduction

Political coalitions form of the need to advocate for a common cause. By joining forces with like-minded actors, resources are pooled, making coalitions more powerful than any of their members could be on their own. Mere coalitions of convenience, consisting of members with differing policy beliefs and goals, also exist, but they are likely to be short-lived. The assumption that shared policy beliefs are the foundation upon which political coalitions are built is at the forefront of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), arguably the most important framework for studying political coalitions (Nohrstedt 2023). The ACF posits that policy actors coordinate their advocacy and form coalitions based on shared beliefs. The most important policy beliefs in this context are so-called core policy beliefs, which refer to general normative and empirical beliefs concerning the policy area in question. The argument is that actors who share policy beliefs coordinate their actions because they have a common goal of promoting policies based on shared beliefs and making policy changes accordingly.

The original ACF studies were criticized for assuming that coordinated action would follow almost automatically from the similarity of policy beliefs. This assumption was considered unrealistic because it did not consider the transaction costs involved in coordinating action (Schlager 1995). As a result of this criticism, many studies turned to testing whether similarity of beliefs is indeed associated with coordination. The assumption that beliefs and coordination of action are related became known as the belief homophily hypothesis, for which numerous studies have found supportive evidence (e.g., Matti and Sandström 2011; Weible 2005). A recent review called the association between similar beliefs and action coordination one of the "most established findings from ACF scholarship" (Nohrstedt 2023, 137). However, elaborations of the belief homophily thesis have also been proposed. One line of research has found that coordination of action is more likely to be associated with belief homophily in conflictual contexts than in consensual contexts, because conflict tends to pit actors with different beliefs against each other (Gronow et al. 2020). Other studies have explored the conflictual nature of specific beliefs, finding that those policy beliefs over which there is conflict in a given subsystem are likely to be associated with coordination of action (Karimo et al. 2023). Thus, these studies suggest that both subsystem level conflict and specific beliefs mediate the association between policy beliefs and coordination.

In addition to these elaborations of the belief homophily hypothesis, we argue that the institutional differences across countries call for an examination of the link between policy beliefs and coordination of action. Differences in political institutions translate into different types of coalition opportunity structures. The concept of coalition opportunity structures refers to differences in institutional contexts, in particular the difference between consensus and majoritarian institutions (Sabatier and Weible 2007). Crucial to this distinction is the degree of consensus required for major policy change and the openness of the political system. Majoritarian institutions are characterized by moderate norms of compromise and open decision-making systems, whereas corporatist institutions tend to favor strong norms of consensus and relatively restrictive norms of participation.

Previous ACF scholarship has argued that such institutional differences affect coalition formation (Sabatier and Weible 2007), but this assumption has rarely been tested empirically (Nohrstedt 2023). More generally, although the study of public policy generally acknowledges that political institutions matter in the policy process (Lubell et al. 2012), only a few studies have begun to empirically explore the link between the political system and the types of interactions that exist among policy actors (e.g., Metz and Brandenberger 2023; Gronow et al. 2020; Kriesi et al. 2006). Empirical studies linking interactions in policy subsystems to the characteristics of political institutions can help in understanding why some political systems are more likely than others to generate certain types of policies (Lijphart 2012; Poloni-Staudinger 2008). Different patterns of interaction among policy actors can facilitate the inclusion of diverse concerns in policy debates and increase the consideration of a wider range of policy

options (Novotný et al. 2021). Our analysis is made possible by our unique set of comparative data on the coordination of action among policy actors in the climate policy subsystems of nine countries. Structural equation models allow us to examine the direct and indirect effects of political systems on the coordination of action. Indirect effects have rarely been tested, mainly due to a lack of suitable data (Bressers and O'Toole 1998; Kriesi et al. 2006). For instance, certain political systems may encourage actors to coordinate with a greater number of stakeholders, potentially facilitating coordination among those with differing opinions.

Our data cover the climate change policy subsystems of nine countries that vary in the extent to which they are majoritarian/consensual. We find that coordination of action is less likely to be limited to like-minded actors in consensual countries. In addition, we find that belief homophily is more prevalent in majoritarian countries and also that actors in these countries tend to coordinate with influential actors. Interestingly, this influence effect can also weaken belief homophily, but only up to a point. We interpret these findings to suggest that negotiation and consensus-building among actors with differing opinions are more important in consensus countries than in majoritarian contexts. In contrast, belief homophily and strategic alignment with influential actors play a substantial role in majoritarian contexts. We emphasize the importance of a comparative approach to advocacy coalitions to better understand the foundations on which they are built.

2 | Advocacy Coalitions and Coalition Opportunity Structures

The study of advocacy coalitions tends to focus on specific policy subsystems that are limited in territory and scope. For example, the climate change subsystem in India includes the climate policy actors operating in that country. However, policy subsystems are interconnected with each other and with the global arena. For example, what happens in international negotiations on climate change can have a major impact on national climate policy subsystems. Nevertheless, the national level of the policy subsystem is essential in determining how different countries respond and react to climate norms and regulations emanating from the international arena. Therefore, the national level policy subsystem is a fruitful focus when teasing out the contours of advocacy coalitions, and the essence of coalitions is the mobilization of people or organizations with "others who share their beliefs about what [the national] government should or should not do on an issue" (Weible et al. 2016, 1). The policy actors involved include government officials, but also other entities-such as NGOs, businesses, and research institutions that seek to influence policy decisions within the policy subsystem in question. To pool resources and increase their chances of turning their beliefs into policy, these actors coordinate their action with like-minded others.

The ACF thus assumes that shared policy beliefs are the glue that binds policy actors into coalitions. Of particular importance in this regard are policy core beliefs, defined as "a collection of general values and beliefs about causes, problem severity, policy preferences, and more" (Gabehart et al. 2022, 2). As the

quote suggests, policy core beliefs can refer to different kinds of things—beliefs, values, preferences—and it is not always clear how policy core beliefs should be operationalized. For example, the belief that nuclear energy is useful in addressing climate change may be an "instrument" for achieving emissions reductions, which would make it a secondary belief in ACF terminology, but in many countries nuclear energy is closer to a policy core belief because of its controversial and value-laden nature. It is also possible that the conflict over nuclear energy will fade, and it will become just another instrument (as has happened in some European countries, partly due to the Greens' changing stance). An alternative approach to the issue of policy core beliefs is to not define them in advance. Instead, one can empirically analyze which beliefs are divisive in a policy subsystem. Then, one can define these beliefs as constituting the policy core (Karimo et al. 2023). This is the approach we take in this paper.

Several empirical studies have found support for the belief homophily hypothesis, which posits that advocacy coalitions are formed based on shared policy core beliefs. For example, Weible (2005) showed that coordination patterns cluster based on shared beliefs, and Matti and Sandström (2011) found that actors form coalitions and coordinate action with those with whom they share beliefs. More recent studies have suggested important qualifications regarding the conditions under which the hypothesis holds. For example, Gronow et al. (2020) found that coordination of action is particularly likely to be associated with belief similarity in conflictual settings, but also that ties to influential actors explain coordination in such contexts. Kammerer et al. (2021) conducted a four-country comparison that produced similar results, demonstrating that other factors besides belief homophily influence coordination.

These previous studies have elaborated on the belief homophily hypothesis by arguing that the degree of conflict in a policy subsystem affects the extent to which belief similarity is associated with coordination of action. However, none of these studies have addressed the potential implications of institutional differences across countries on the formation of advocacy coalitions. While internationalizing the ACF research agenda, Kübler (2001) and Sabatier and Weible (2007) introduced the idea of *coalition opportunity structures* as a new component of the framework. This concept acknowledges the differences in institutional contexts in which coalitions operate in different countries, particularly the distinction between majoritarian and consensus institutions.

The concept of opportunity structures was originally developed in sociology beginning in the 1930s (Merton 1995) and adopted in political science through the study of social movements. Eisinger (1973) used the concept to explain *why* people mobilized in race riots in some cities and not others, arguing that open political opportunity structures constrained mobilization, while Tilly (1978) explained *how* people mobilized, choosing tactics depending on the opportunity structures they faced. Subsequent research has shown that opportunity structures affect the strategies of political mobilization and the success or failure of those strategies (Kriesi 1989). Definitions of opportunity structures vary in the literature, and the concept has been criticized for conceptual overstretching, which can lead to the concept meaning so many things that it becomes difficult to measure (McAcam et al. 2001). Despite these difficulties, the

idea of political opportunities has proven useful in understanding political mobilization, and scholars continue to use the concept in fruitful ways (Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

The ACF literature borrowed the concept of opportunity structures from Lijphart (2012 [1999]) and relied on his distinction between consensus and majoritarian democracies. This approach to opportunity structures has the obvious limitation of focusing only on selected features of the political system compared to broader definitions. However, Lijphart's approach has the advantage of making the concept of coalition opportunity structures operationalizable and measurable across countries. This is the reason why we adopt it here.

Despite the introduction of the concept of coalition opportunity structures in the ACF theory, relatively few empirical studies have addressed the topic (Henry et al. 2014). However, as ACF research has become more international since the 2010s, a growing body of research has recently begun to address this issue (e.g., Yun 2019; Gupta 2014; He et al. 2025; Ingold et al. 2025; Bogumil-Uçan and Klenk 2021). Figure 1 shows that coalition opportunity structures include three aspects: the degree of consensus needed for major policy change, the openness of the political system, and overlapping societal cleavages. Furthermore, we argue that the effects of coalition opportunity structures can be observed and analyzed at three levels: (1) the constitutional level, which potentially influences all subsystems; (2) the subsystem level, which guides collective decision-making across coalitions; and (3) the coalition level, which shapes the actions of individual actors within coalitions. In this paper, we focus on how the differences between countries in the degree of consensus required by constitutional level institutions affect coordination behavior.

Our operationalization of constitutional-level opportunity structures is based on Lijphart's (2012 [1999]) work, in which he summarized opportunity structures into two ideal types of democratic institutions: majoritarian democracy and consensus democracy. Majoritarian institutions are based on majority rule, whereas the consensus model considers majority rule as a minimum requirement and seeks to maximize the size of majorities through broad participation and agreement (ibid., 2).

These two models can be further distinguished by two dimensions: the executive-party dimension and the unitary-federalism dimension. The former concerns the logic of the consensus–majoritarian distinction at the national level of governance, and the latter pertains to the coordination between national and local levels of governance. Along the executive–party dimension, the ideal type of majoritarian democracy is characterized by a concentration of executive power in a single-party majority, executive dominance over the legislature, a two-party system, a disproportional electoral system, and pluralist interest group structures. In contrast, the consensus democracy ideal type is characterized by executive power sharing in broad multi-party coalitions, a balance of power between the executive and the legislature, multi-party systems, proportional representation, and corporatist interest group structures. In the unitary–federal dimension, majoritarian democracy is marked by a strongly centralized government, a unicameral legislature, a flexible constitution, legislative dominance, and a weakly independent central bank. Consensus democracy, on the other hand, features a decentralized federal government, bicameralism, a rigid constitution that is difficult to amend, independent supreme or constitutional courts with judicial review powers, and a highly independent central bank. In short, the distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracies concerns the institutional configuration of power-sharing across different levels of governance. According to Lijphart, the United States—the birthplace of the ACF—is an exception because it does not fit neatly into his theoretical expectations of a majoritarian democracy due to its strong federalism in the unitary-federalism dimension. Such hybrid patterns are common in countries with larger populations.

Recent studies have examined the relationship between Lijphart's conceptualization and policy networks by comparing them across multiple countries. These studies have examined the structure of collaboration networks (Metz and Brandenberger 2023), influence attribution (Wagner et al. 2023a), and advocacy tactics (Wagner et al. 2023b). Two findings from these studies are particularly relevant to our work. First, actors in consensus democracies interact more with their political opponents than in majoritarian democracies. Second, actors in majoritarian democracies more often choose politically powerful actors as collaboration
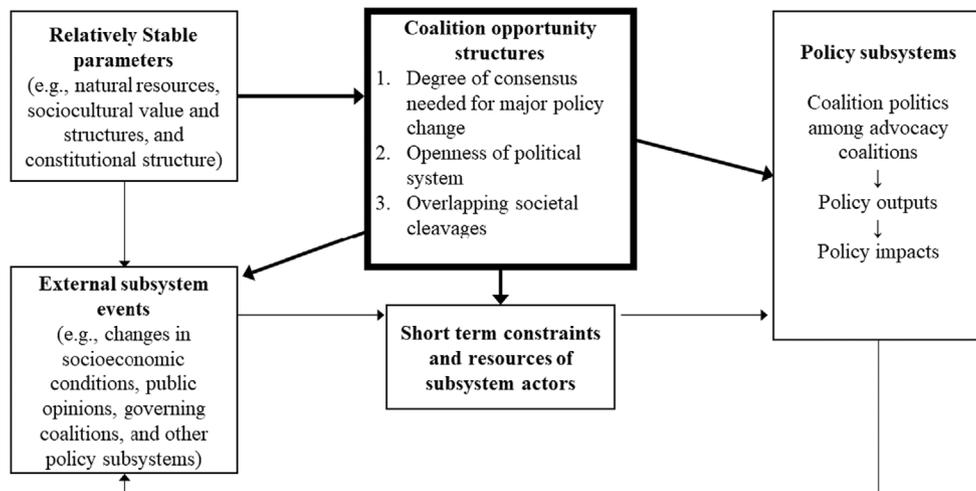

FIGURE 1 | Coalition opportunity structures in the advocacy coalition framework. Adapted from Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017, 143).

partners than those in consensus democracies (Metz and Brandenberger 2023). However, it is unclear how these different logics of choosing coordination partners relate to each other. Additionally, since these studies do not statistically analyze the effect of political institutions on the formation of co-ordination networks, the significance of these effects remains unclear. Furthermore, these studies only briefly discuss the ACF; thus, the relationship between coalition opportunity structures and coordination of action has not yet been systematically analyzed. Since the concept of coalition opportunity structures was introduced in the process of internationalizing the ACF, analyzing how different kinds of opportunity structures influence coordination among actors with varying degrees of shared policy beliefs is crucial. Accordingly, our research question is: *How do the coalition opportunity structures of constitutional-level institutions influence coordination among policy actors?*

2.1 | Hypotheses

Policy actors are incentivized to adopt the rules of the game in order to maximize their chances of influencing policy outcomes (Lubell 2013). A key difference between the rules of majoritarian and consensus democracies is the degree of consensus required for major policy change (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 200). In consensus democracies, where consensus among multiple political actors is required, coalitions have stronger incentives to be inclusive and to seek compromise. These different incentives are likely to affect how actors form coalitions. Previous research has found that coalitions differ in the extent to which they coordinate their action with members of other coalitions—a phenomenon known as cross-coalition coordination (e.g., Koebele 2019; Weible et al. 2019). Furthermore, studies have shown that belief homophily plays a more important role in driving coordination in conflictual settings (Kammerer et al. 2021), and it is likely that majoritarian democracies are more conflictual than consensus democracies. Extending this line of thinking to coalition opportunity structures, we propose that in the context of majoritarian institutions, cross-coalition coordination is rare. In contrast, in the context of consensus institutions, cross-coalition coordination is more common. Therefore, belief homophily is less important as a determinant of coordination in consensus countries. The extent of consensus requirement establishes a shared set of the rules of the game for actors operating under the same national political system. The effect of consensus institutions at the constitutional level should thus hold across policy subsystems within a country. In other words, it should shape coordination behavior at least partly independently of the degree of conflict over policies in a given subsystem. Our first hypothesis is:

H1. *In consensus democracies, belief homophily is less strongly associated with coordination of action than in majoritarian democracies.*

In addition to this primary, direct effect, we hypothesize that there are additional indirect effects that may reduce the influence of belief homophily on the formation of coordination relationships in consensus democracies. The first indirect effect relates to the number of coordination partners and can be explained by two factors: necessity and transaction costs. First, the corporatist interest group representation prevalent in consensus democracies may be more limited to key actors than the pluralism of majoritarian countries (Sabatier and Weible 2007). However, achieving the consensus necessary for policy change in consensus countries requires coordinating action with several key stakeholders. This contrasts with majoritarian countries, where a wide range of coordination partners is not essential for achieving policy goals. Second, due to this necessity, corporatist countries have typically developed specialized committees and forums in which key stakeholders regularly participate (Streeck and Schmitter 1985). These institutionalized venues for key stakeholders, in turn, reduce the transaction costs associated with coordinating with multiple actors (Leifeld and Schneider 2012). Consequently, we expect policy actors to have more coordination partners in consensus countries than in majoritarian countries. Importantly, having multiple coordination partners increases the likelihood that these partners will have different beliefs. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H2. *In consensus democracies, actors are likely to have more coordination partners than in majoritarian democracies.*

The second indirect effect relates to the integration of different interests into the policymaking process. In democracies, no single policy actor can translate its beliefs into actual policies without reaching an agreement with at least some of the other actors. The manner in which different beliefs and interests are integrated varies across different types of democracies. In many consensus countries, interest group representation traditionally takes the form of peak organizations that coordinate the views of their member organizations, particularly labor and employer organizations regarding labor policy. Traces of this arrangement can also be observed in other policy subsystems, such as climate policy (Gronow and Ylä-Anttila 2019). Because peak organizations coordinate the views of their member organizations, they represent similar types of organizations. This implies that actors under the same peak organization are similar in kind even if they have different policy beliefs. For instance, a business peak organization may represent firms in both carbon-intensive manufacturing and green technology industries, despite the fact that these two types of firms may be very different the climate policy beliefs. In addition, comparative political science has argued that coordination among similar types of organizations is less common in majoritarian democracies, where organizations tend to seek issue-specific allies (Heclo 1978). While consensus countries do not always involve corporatist interest group representation, the following hypothesis is likely to hold true in light of the preceding discussion:

H3. *In consensus democracies, actors are more likely to coordinate action with similar kinds of organizations.*

Finally, in majoritarian countries, having influential coordination partners is important for strategic reasons because translating one's beliefs into policy involves dominating the political process rather than by building consensus. The more influential one's allies are, the more likely one is to dominate

the political process. However, if this postulate is true, it runs counter to the tendency of actors in majoritarian countries to coordinate with like-minded actors because the influential actors with whom they have an incentive to coordinate with do not necessarily share their beliefs. Thus, the tendency to coordinate with influential actors could weaken the effect of belief homophily on coordination in majoritarian countries. To investigate this possibility, we postulate the following hypothesis:

H4. *In majoritarian democracies, actors are more likely to co-ordinate action with those that are politically influential.*

3 | Data and Methods

3.1 | Data

To test our hypotheses, we used a unique dataset collected by the international research network Comparing Climate Change Policy Networks (COMPON; Ylä-Anttila et al. 2018). The data cover the climate change policy subsystems of 14 countries. Among the countries covered by the data, we selected those for which Lijphart's (2012) majoritarian-consensus democracy score is available (see below for more details). The following nine countries were analyzed: Australia ($n = 43$, response rate = 45%, collected in 2015), Germany ($n = 51$, resp. = 73%, 2012), Finland ($n = 82$, resp. = 85%, 2014), India ($n = 38$, resp. = 54%; 2014), Ireland ($n = 52$, resp. = 91%, 2013), Japan ($n = 72$, resp. = 58%, 2012), South Korea ($n = 87$, resp. = 82%, 2010), Portugal ($n = 57$, resp. = 68%, 2016), and Sweden ($n = 69$, resp. = 70%, 2015). The total number of respondents in the analysis was 551.

The survey respondents represent the main organizational actors of the climate policy subsystems. They correspond to the specialists that the ACF assumes are responsible for most policy decisions (Sabatier and Weible 2007, 191). The most important policy actors were included in all countries. To ensure that no important actors were overlooked, different procedures were followed in each country, such as consulting experts and conducting media searches. These procedures resulted in the inclusion of policy actors in the list of respondents in most countries. The organizations represented various societal sectors, including ministries, political parties, businesses, NGOs, and scientific institutions. Ministries included, for example, ministries of the economy, the environment, and cabinet offices. Political parties refer to the major parties in each country. Businesses included industrial, commercial, and farmers' associations, as well as various corporations particularly relevant to climate politics, such as heavy industries, renewable energy companies, electric utilities, insurance firms, and banks. NGOs include both environmental and business NGOs, as well as cooperatives. Scientific institutions consist of research institutes, independent think tanks, and universities.

In most cases, individual respondents were responsible for climate or environmental issues within their organization. If such a role did not exist within an organization (mainly in the case of small organizations), the person highest in the hierarchy was contacted and asked to respond. One limitation of our approach is that only one person responded on behalf of each organization.

This may be problematic for larger organizations, which are more likely to have staff with differing views on climate policy. To mitigate this problem, we instructed respondents to answer the survey questions based on their understanding of their organization's policy positions, and not on their own personal opinions. (See Karimo et al. 2023 and Ylä-Anttila et al. 2018, for details on the data collection process and methodology).

Respondents were asked to identify their mutual, long-term collaboration partners in the field of climate policy. They selected these partners from a list that included all the organizations that were chosen as respondents. These organizations represent each country's climate policy subsystem. Thus, we measured the coordination of action through these collaborative relationships, which constitute a social network. Respondents also reported their policy beliefs regarding various climate policy statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Using the same data, Karimo et al. (2023) calculated the standard deviations of the responses to these policy belief questions and identified the 10 most divisive beliefs in each country.[1] In the following analysis, we use these divisive beliefs because Karimo et al. (2023) demonstrated that they are more likely to be associated with the coordination of action than opinions on predefined policy core beliefs. This means that actors tend to coordinate action with others who share their beliefs on divisive issues. In other words, coordinated advocacy is associated with controversial policy issues. Focusing on divisive beliefs accounts for contextual differences, as divisive beliefs may differ from country to country. (For a list of the most divisive questions in each country, see Appendix A in the Supporting Information).

Since this paper focuses on relatively stable institutional effects, linking the results to specific temporal events could be misleading. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the broader context of global climate governance during the period in which the data were collected. This period spans from the aftermath of the 2009 Copenhagen Summit to the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Paris Agreement. As developing countries GHG emissions rose and the limitations of the Kyoto Protocol's approach—which focused on mandatory commitments from developed nations—became widely recognized, new models of climate governance were actively debated. Over the course of these discussions, two key notions gained traction among policymakers and were ultimately reflected in the Paris Agreement (Held and Roger 2018). First, there was a growing consensus on the need to include all major emitters, whether developed or developing, in any new climate framework. Second, the inclusion of non-state actors and their active role emerged as a cornerstone of effective climate governance. Accordingly, as this inclusive discourse spread, the period was marked by a relatively high level of ambition and momentum for progress in climate policy among a wide range of stakeholders. As a result, the climate subsystems were generally consensual in the countries we observed, which may have influenced our results by facilitating broader coordination compared to periods of conflict. Japan is an exception in this regard because it experienced an "external shock" in ACF terminology. Following the 2011 earthquake and Fukushima nuclear disaster, Japan experienced a state of emergency, and the operation of nuclear power, on which Japanese climate policy had heavily depended, became a major contentious issue. We will return to this point in the discussion section.

3.2 | Variables

We conducted an egocentric network analysis focusing on the local network structure of the respondents (ego in network terms) (Perry et al. 2018). In other words, the analysis focuses on the connections that the respondent ("ego") has with other actors and how these connections are associated with the respondent's attributes. Unlike whole network analysis, which considers all ties in a network, egocentric network analysis examines the ties of each respondent. Whole network analysis faces the statistical challenge that the existence or nonexistence of ties—the main unit of analysis—depends on multiple endogenous network factors. Consequently, standard statistical techniques are not applicable. Egocentric network analysis is different in that the unit of analysis is each respondent rather than the network as a whole. This allows for the application of conventional statistical techniques such as regression models (Perry et al. 2018). Measuring the belief diversity of ego's coordination ties captures the extent to which belief homophily is important for the coordination of action. Our approach does not identify advocacy coalitions by clustering actors into different coalitions. Thus, examining what types of coalitions different opportunity structures generate is a topic for future research. Next, we will describe how we calculated our dependent and independent variables.

3.2.1 | Belief Diversity: Dependent Variable

Our main dependent variable is average belief diversity, which measures the diversity of each actor's coordination partners' beliefs. We constructed this variable by combining data on each respondent's policy beliefs and their mutual, long-term collaboration partners. This dependent variable captures the average distance between the beliefs of the respondents (ego) and their partners. Formally, the belief diversity of ego (BD_i) on the m th belief item is:

$$BD_i^m = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \sum_j \left(b_j^m - b_i^m \right)^2}$$

where b_i^m and b_j^m are m th belief scores of ego (i) and the alters ego coordinates action with (j). This calculation was repeated for all 10 divisive beliefs and averaged for the variable for each ego. A low value indicates that the ego coordinates action only with other actors ("alters") who have very similar beliefs to ego, simultaneously meaning that the degree of belief homophily is high. Conversely, a high diversity score indicates that the ego coordinates with actors whose beliefs differ beliefs from the ego's. To illustrate, imagine a dichotomous belief score that is coded as either 1 (black) or 0 (white), as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2a shows that the ego coordinates action with six alters (A1–A6) who have similar beliefs as ego. The ego's belief diversity is therefore 0, indicating maximum belief homophily and minimum diversity. In contrast, in Figure 2b shows that the ego's belief diversity is higher because the ego cooperates with alters A1 and A3, whose beliefs differ from the ego's beliefs. Note that in the illustration we used binary belief scores, but this approach can be extended to numeric values, as indicated by the formula above.

3.2.2 | Lijphart Index: Main Independent Variable

The main independent variable of our study is the Lijphart index, or Lijphart score, which is based on Lijphart's (2012) executive-party dimension. This measure is based on a factor

(a) Low belief diversity

(b) High belief diversity

$$BD_i = \sqrt{\frac{(0-0)^2 \times 6}{6}} = 0$$

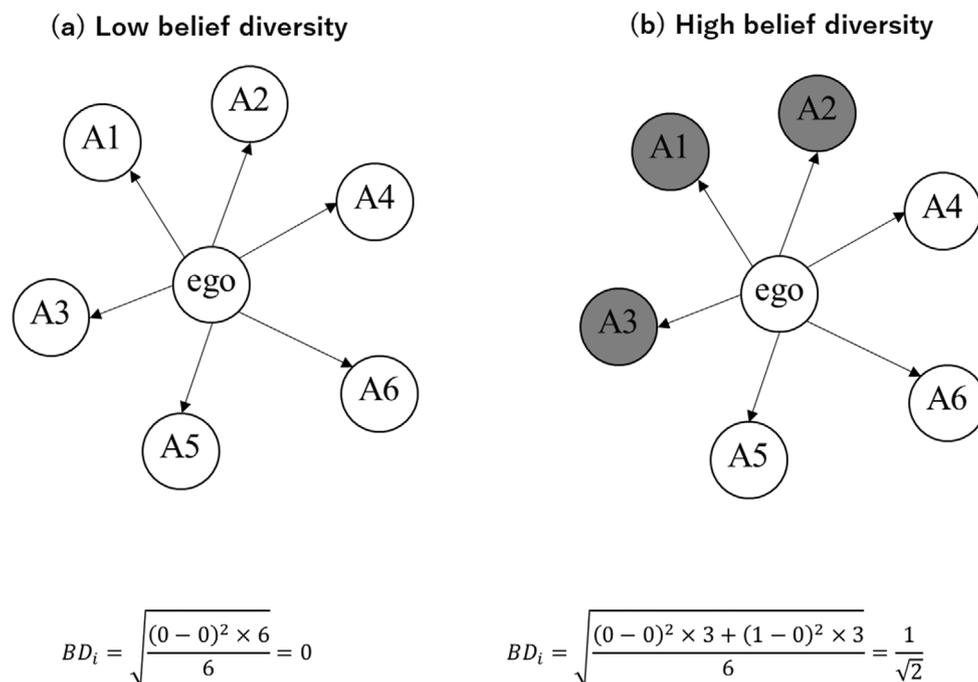$$BD_i = \sqrt{\frac{(0-0)^2 \times 3 + (1-0)^2 \times 3}{6}} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}$$

FIGURE 2 | Illustration of belief diversity measurement. The color of the nodes shows their beliefs and the links represent coordination relationships; black and white nodes differ in their beliefs.

analysis in which five institutional scores (effective number of parliamentary parties, minimal winning one-party cabinets, executive dominance, electoral disproportionality, and interest group pluralism) had high loadings.[2] These five institutional scores were constructed based on observations from 1981 to 2010; thus, the resulting measure captures the relatively longitudinal aspects of opportunity structures. A more positive score indicates a more consensual democracy, while a more negative score indicates a more majoritarian democracy. Importantly, Lijphart (2012) also calculated an additional score for the unitary-federalism dimension. However, in the exploratory stage of our analysis, this second score did not correlate with any of our variables (see Appendix C). This is likely because it relates more to the openness of coalition opportunity structures than to the degree of consensus on which our paper focuses. We will return to this issue at the end of the paper.

3.2.3 | Other Independent Variables

We also included three other independent variables. *Coordination with influential actors* captures the tendency of an ego to cooperate with alters that are considered influential. This measure is known as reputational power and counts the number of times that an actor is named as being influential by all respondents (Fischer and Sciarini 2015). This measure was standardized across countries, meaning that the measure is the average of ego's coordination partners' perceived influence scores.

Coordination with similar actors is defined as the extent to which an organization coordinates with organizations that are similar to the ego's organization. Respondents were categorized according to the type of organization they represent using the following classification: governmental agencies, political parties, scientific organizations, businesses, and civil society organizations (including NGOs). Coordination with similar actors is measured as the proportion of all actors that ego coordinates with that represent organizations similar to the ego's organization. *The number of coordination partners* is simply the number reported by the ego as coordination partners. In addition, we included the ego's organizational type as a control variable.

3.3 | Methods

As a first step, we calculate the average belief diversity score for each country and plot it on a scatterplot to see how it varies with the Lijphart index. After this visual examination, the second step is to calculate Pearson's correlation coefficients for the main dependent and independent variables. This step prepares us to construct the model. As discussed above, we expect opportunity structures to have both direct and indirect effects on the coordination of action. As a direct effect, consensus democracies should induce coordination of action among actors with different beliefs (i.e., H1; see path 1 in Figure 3). Through indirect effects, coalition opportunity structures should influence the number of coordination partners (H2; path 2), the degree of coordination with similar actors (H3; path 3) and the degree of coordination with influential actors (H4; path 4). Each of these can lead to belief diversity (paths 5, 6, and 7). Additionally, although not covered by the hypotheses but important for a full picture of the behavioral dynamics, the number of coordination partners may be related to coordination with similar actors (path 8) and influential actors (path 9).

Using the *lavaan* package (Rosseel 2012) for the statistical programming language R (R Core Team 2023), we analyze the direct and indirect effects, as well as the hierarchical nature of the dataset and variables with multilevel structural modeling. The dataset is nested under each country, and Lijphart's index is a country-level variable. Control variables are set for each endogenous variable (belief diversity and the other three variables). As Karimo et al. (2023) discuss, comparative network datasets are rarely perfect. Response rates vary across countries, and some correlations may depend on individual respondents' responses.
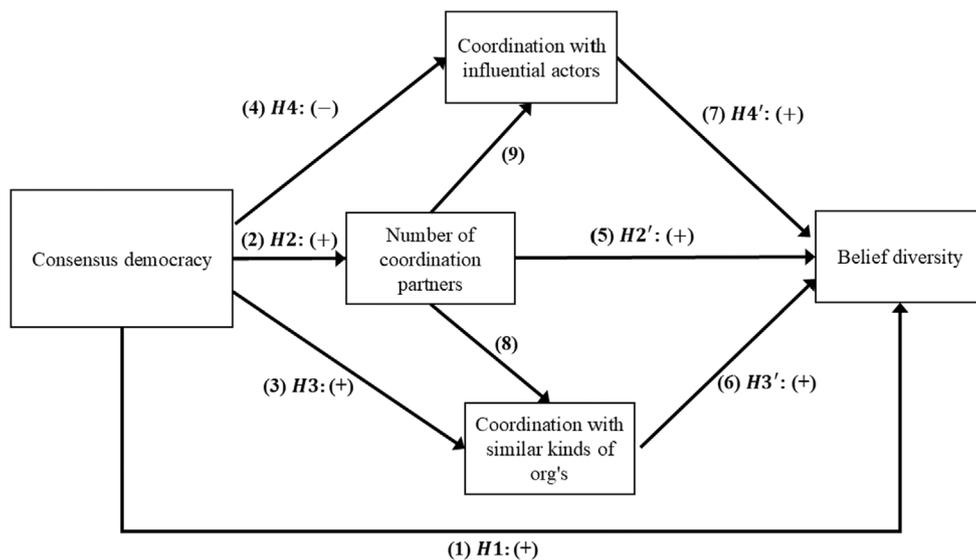

FIGURE 3 | Schematic diagram of our model. The numbers in the figure correspond to the path numbers and the hypotheses (H1, H2, etc.). Hypotheses related to indirect effects are indicated with an apostrophe (e.g., H2). Plus (+) and minus (−) signs on each path indicate the hypothesized direction of the path coefficients.

To account for the possibility of overestimating the effects, we calculated a bootstrap-assisted confidence interval, created 10,000 bootstrap samples, and calculated each coefficient. This serves as a robustness check similar to a conventional *p*-value test. If a confidence interval does not cross zero, this is additional evidence to a *p*-value test that the estimated coefficient may not be zero.

4 | Results

4.1 | Plotting the Relations

First, we examine the descriptive statistics for the main variables in Table 1. The average belief diversity of the coordination partners is 0.95. This indicates that, on average, each actor coordinates with those partners whose beliefs differ by one unit on a five-point Likert scale. The average ranges from a minimum of 0.77 in Japan to a maximum of 1.27 in India. The Lijphart index, the main independent variable in our analysis, varies from −1.29 in South Korea, the most majoritarian country, to 1.48 in Finland, the most consensus democratic country. Table 1 also shows that actors tend to coordinate with influential actors, as indicated by the positive scores. However, the degree varies across countries: actors in South Korea tend to coordinate most with influential actors (a score of 1.07), while the scores are lower in Australia (0.27) and Finland (0.39). On average, actors have about 8.6 coordination partners, though there is significant variance between countries. In Portugal, there are only 4.6 partners on average, while in Finland, there are as many as 18. On

average, 35% (i.e., a score of 0.35) of the coordination partners are from similar types of organizations as the respondents. This proportion does not vary much, ranging from a minimum of 27% in Korea and Germany to a maximum of 46% in Australia.

It should be noted that variation in the types of organizations represented by respondents in different countries exists due to national differences in the subsystem and overrepresentation of certain societal sectors in the collected responses. For instance, 45% of respondents in India represent civil society organizations, while almost the same proportion (47%) represents the business sector in Japan. Representing a particular type of organization may have influenced the responses. It is therefore necessary to control for this factor, which we will do later.

Next, we will examine the relationship between coalition opportunity structures and belief homophily through a macro, cross-country comparison. Figure 4, *x*-axis is Lijphart's index: negative values indicate majoritarian institutions and positive values indicate consensus institutions. The *y*-axis displays the average belief diversity of the countries. The figure shows that consensus countries have higher average belief diversity. This means that coordination of action in consensus countries is associated with a lower degree of belief homophily. Conversely, majoritarian countries have a higher degree of belief homophily, which is consistent with our first hypothesis. Figure 4 illustrates this finding with a simple Ordinal Least Square regression line. This visual analysis helps in understanding the extent to which coalition opportunity structures are associated with average belief homophily. As can be seen in the figure, there are two

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics of the variables for each country.

	Australia	**Germany**	**Finland**	**Ireland**	**India**	**Japan**	**Korea**	**Portugal**	**Sweden**	**Total**
n	**43**	**51**	**82**	**52**	**38**	**72**	**87**	**57**	**69**	**551**
Partners' belief diversity	0.84	0.98	1.15	1.00	1.27	0.77	0.78	0.90	0.91	0.95
	(0.50)	(0.53)	(0.37)	(0.54)	(0.27)	(0.45)	(0.54)	(0.58)	(0.54)	(0.48)
Coodination with influential actors	0.27	0.41	0.39	0.45	0.69	0.96	1.07	0.58	0.51	0.59
	(0.44)	(0.47)	(0.41)	(0.63)	(0.52)	(1.18)	(1.31)	(0.86)	(0.68)	(0.72)
Number of coordination partners	4.91	12.80	17.95	8.87	7.87	7.39	7.17	4.61	5.51	8.56
	(5.29)	(16.35)	(15.72)	(7.78)	(6.34)	(8.47)	(10.96)	(4.49)	(5.49)	(8.99)
Coordinationwith similar kinds of organizations	0.46	0.27	0.34	0.40	0.39	0.35	0.27	0.36	0.35	0.35
	(0.41)	(0.28)	(0.24)	(0.34)	(0.31)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.39)	(0.34)	(0.34)
Government (%)	0.07	0.10	0.16	0.29	0.13	0.13	0.23	0.25	0.26	0.18
Political party (%)	0.05	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.04	0.07
Scientific organization (%)	0.14	0.20	0.17	0.06	0.29	0.08	0.14	0.30	0.13	0.17
Business sector (%)	0.30	0.41	0.39	0.31	0.11	0.47	0.30	0.16	0.32	0.31
Civil society (%)	0.44	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.45	0.25	0.26	0.21	0.25	0.28
Lijphart index	−0.65	0.63	1.48	0.38	0.63	0.71	−1.29	0.04	0.87	0.31

Note: Numbers show the averages except for the Lijphart index, which is reported at the country level. The numbers in parentheses show the standard deviations.
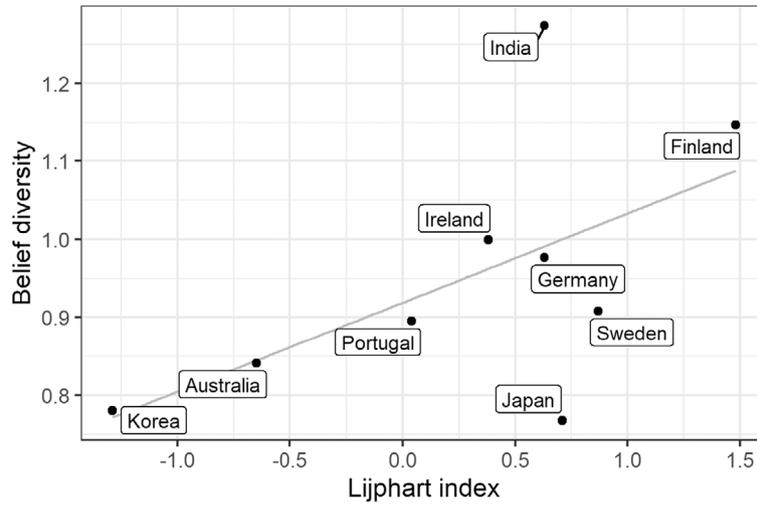
9

FIGURE 4 | The correlation of average belief diversity and the Lijphart index. Each point shows the country's average score. A positive score on the Lijphart index indicates a consensus democracy, while a negative score indicates a majoritarian country.
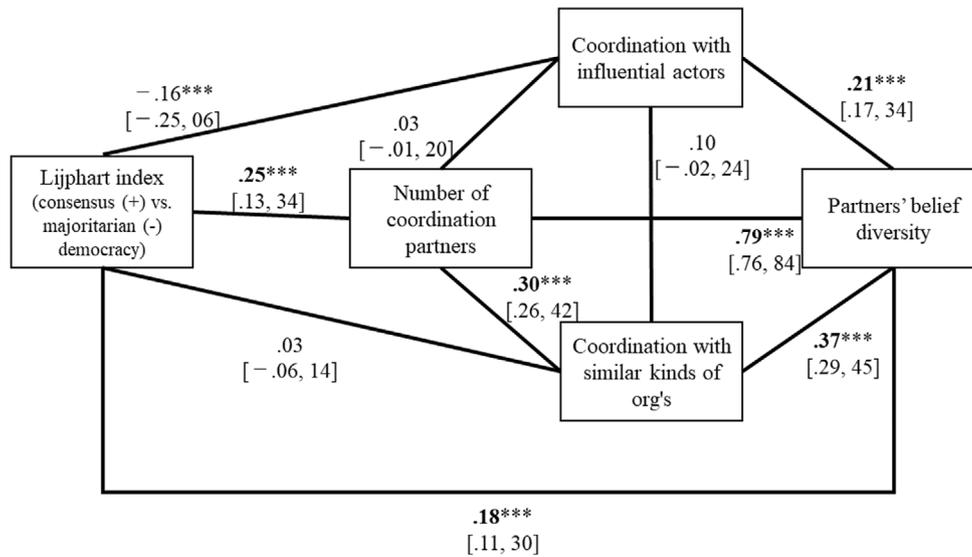

FIGURE 5 | Correlations between the variables. ***$p < 0.001$. The numbers represent the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The bootstrapped confidence interval is shown in square brackets. Statistically significant coefficients whose confidence interval does not cross zero are shown in bold.

outliers. Japan is a consensus democracy, yet belief homophily is lower there than in South Korea and Australia, both of which are majoritarian countries. In addition, India is a consensus country, but belief diversity is much higher than expected.

In addition to the above analysis, we tested for an association between the institutional context and the degree of conflict (see Appendix B). As discussed earlier, the association between institutional context and belief homophily may be explained by differences in conflict levels among different institutions. A high standard deviation of belief items suggests diverse beliefs among actors and indicates disagreement and conflict in a given policy subsystem. In principle, the lower level of conflict associated with consensus countries could ultimately explain why belief diversity among coordination partners is higher in those countries. Thus, consensus countries could have high average belief diversity simply because there is less conflict, and actors do not have to pay as much attention to whether their coordination

partners are in complete agreement. As Kammerer et al. (2021) argue, belief homophily is likely to be more important as a driver of coordination in conflictual contexts. Conversely, the higher level of conflict in majoritarian countries may mean that there is in fact diversity in coordination partners' beliefs because there is more divergence between coalitions' beliefs in a conflictual context. Our results show that the degree of conflict in policy beliefs (their variance) in a policy subsystem is independent of the average degree of belief diversity among coordination partners. We interpret this finding to mean that the effect of coalition opportunity structures on belief homophily is independent of the degree of conflict over policy beliefs in a policy subsystem.

4.2 | Correlational Analysis

Next, we examine the correlation between coalition opportunity structures and all of the variables in our model. Figure 5 yields

four main results.[3] First, the Lijphart index and the belief diversity of coordination partners are positively correlated, which is consistent with our first hypothesis. The three other variables in our model—coordination with influential actors, the number of coordination partners, and coordination with similar organizations—also have a significant and positive correlation with belief diversity. However, coordination with influential actors is not correlated with the other two variables, coordination with similar actors and the number of coordination partners. This finding suggests that coordination with influential actors is unrelated to these variables. Second, the number of coordination partners tends to be higher in consensus democracies than in majoritarian democracies, which is consistent with our second hypothesis.

Third, contrary to our third hypothesis, there is no direct positive correlation between consensus democracies and coordination with similar types of actors. However, these variables are indirectly related through the number of coordination partners. In other words, consensus democracies have more coordination partners than majoritarian countries, and these "extra" partners are predominantly similar types of organizations. Fourth, being a consensus democracy is negatively correlated with coordinating with influential actors. This means that there is a tendency to coordinate with influential actors in majoritarian countries, which provides evidence in support of our fourth hypothesis. (Note that a negative Lijphart index value indicates majoritarian democracies, so, a negative correlation coefficient indicates a positive correlation with majoritarianism.) However, there is a caveat to the correlation between majoritarian democracies and coordination with influential actors. According to the bootstrap-assisted confidence interval, the correlation coefficient of these variables crosses zero. This means that, in some bootstrap samples, there is no significant positive relationship. In other words, the bootstrap method does not confirm the *p*-value test. In contrast, other correlations are supported by the bootstrap confidence interval test.

4.3 | Structural Equation Model

The final step of our analysis models the direct and indirect effects of coalition opportunity structures on belief homophily. The structural equation model takes into account the hierarchical nature of the variables and the effect of control variables (see Figure 6). We excluded the path from the Lijphart index to coordination with similar types of organizations because including it resulted in the non-convergence of the model. Furthermore, the correlation between these variables is close to zero (see Figure 5), suggesting that there is likely no path between them, thus not supporting H3. The resulting model has a fairly good fit by conventional standards.[4]

The results in Figure 6 confirm our previous findings. Consensus democracy directly affects the belief diversity of coordination partners, supporting H1. In addition to this direct effect, several indirect effects are associated with belief diversity. The more the merrier when it comes to coordination partners in consensus democracies, which partly explains why belief diversity is higher (supporting H2). The effect of coordinating with multiple actors is mediated by coordinating with both similar and influential actors. Thus, both variables have a positive effect on the belief diversity of coordination partners. In other words, multiple pathways lead to belief diversity in consensus democracies. However, note that the effect of coordinating with multiple actors on coordinating with influential actors is relatively weak compared to the other paths. This finding contrasts with majoritarian democracies, where coordination is associated with seeking out influential actors. This is consistent with H4, though the effect is not statistically
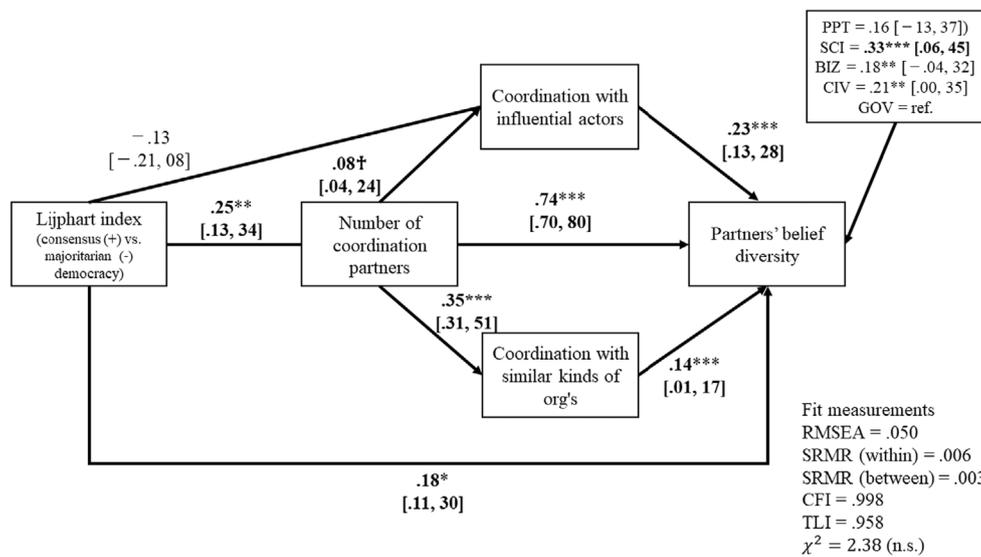

FIGURE 6 | The results of the structural equation model. ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, †$p < 0.10$. The numbers represent the standardized coefficients in the SEM. The bootstrapped confidence interval is shown in square brackets. Coefficients that are statistically significant and whose confidence interval does not cross zero are shown in bold. BIZ, businesses; CIV, civil society actors, such as NGOs; GOV, government ministries; PPT, political parties; SCI, scientific actors.

significant. Regarding the control variables, actors from the scientific sector demonstrate greater diversity of beliefs compared to government agencies. Businesses and civil society organizations also have a higher belief diversity than government agencies, but this association was not confirmed by the bootstrapped confidence interval test.

In sum, these results suggest two different logics of coordination of action. Consensus democracies tend to coordinate with actors having different beliefs and with multiple actors. Multi-actor coordination is associated with coordinating with similar types of actors, as well as, to some extent, with influential actors. In contrast, actors in majoritarian democracies tend to have fewer coordination partners and have a greater tendency to coordinate with influential actors. Interestingly, this latter strategy also introduces a degree of belief diversity into the beliefs of the alters. However, it should be noted that the path from majoritarian

democracy to coordination with influential actors is statistically significant only in the correlational analysis of Figure 5 but not in the SEM of Figure 6. Therefore, this finding should be interpreted with caution.

4.4 | Differences Among Organizational Types

Thus far, the analysis has examined the general relationship between political institutions and coordination behavior. However, a closer look reveals that different types of organizations utilize opportunity structures differently. Figure 7 illustrates this finding by including a three-way interaction term between the ijphart index, organizational types, and each pathway. Generally, nongovernmental actors behave differently from governmental actors. When nongovernmental actors coordinate with a larger number of partners, they
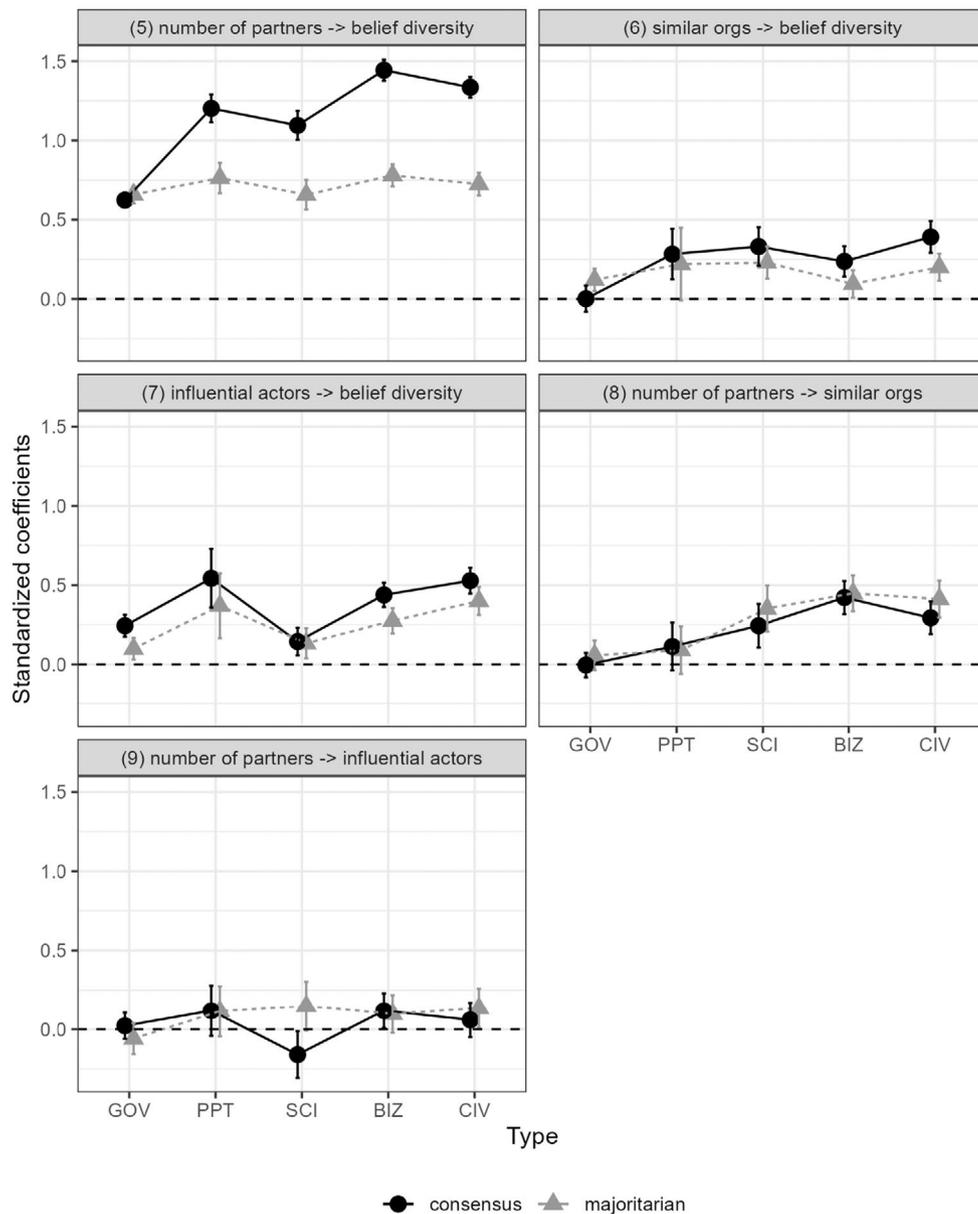

FIGURE 7 | The SEM with interaction by type of organization. The numbers in parentheses in the subheader box correspond to the paths shown in Figure 3. BIZ, businesses; CIV, civil society actors, such as NGOs; GOV, government ministries; PPT, political parties; SCI, scientific actors.

tend to do so with similar types of organizations (see path 8 in Figure 7), which leads to coordination with actors holding different beliefs (path 6). Similarly, coordinating with influential actors has a stronger effect on belief diversity among nongovernmental actors than among governmental actors, except for scientific organizations (path 7).

Perhaps most importantly, the magnitude of the effects leading to belief diversity varies across institutional contexts. These effects are stronger in consensus democracies than in majoritarian ones. The clearest result in this regard is the association between the number of partners and belief diversity (path 5). Nongovernmental actors in consensus democracies are more likely to engage with actors holding different beliefs when they have more coordination partners than their counterparts in majoritarian democracies. In other words, while Figure 6 shows both the direct and indirect effects of institutional settings, Figure 7 suggests that the institutional context influences the strength of the indirect effects as well. Another notable difference between consensus and majoritarian democracies concerns the behavior of scientific organizations (see path 9). In majoritarian democracies, scientific organizations tend to coordinate with influential actors when they have more partners. In contrast, the coefficient for scientific organizations on this path is negative in consensus democracies, suggesting that these organizations coordinate with less politically influential actors when adding new partners.

4.5 | Robustness Checks

We performed three additional robustness checks on the model′s results. First, we examined whether the results differed when individual countries were excluded from the model (see Appendix D). If the results are highly dependent on a particular country, excluding it may alter the outcome. This check is also useful for identifying countries that may deviate from the general trends. If actors in a particular country behave differently from those in other countries, excluding such cases should reduce the standard errors of the coefficients of the independent variables, leading to a higher level of significance of the effect. The results generally support the generalizability of the model′s results. Excluding countries did not significantly change the estimates of the coefficients for the independent variables. However, note that excluding Finland and South Korea weakens the effect of the Lijphart index on belief diversity. In other words, these two countries are the most representative of consensus and majoritarian democracies, respectively.

Interestingly, excluding Australia and Japan causes the Lijphart index to have a significant effect on coordination with influential actors (previously this effect was not significant). The result suggests that, although Australia is a majoritarian country, coordination with influential actors is not prevalent. Conversely, although Japan is a consensus country, coordination with influential actors is more prevalent than expected. Thus, these countries deviate from the general trend, which likely explains why the association between majoritarian countries and a tendency to coordinate with influential actors was not statistically significant in the model. In the main analysis, we also found that India has a higher-than-expected belief diversity. One possible

explanation is the high proportion of civil society actors among Indian respondents. The results of the structural equation model suggest that belief diversity among civil society actors tends to be high. The robustness check of the model in Appendix D supports this explanation because the models with and without the Indian case do not show a considerable difference, suggesting that the "abnormality" of the Indian case disappears when controlling for the effect of civil society actors. In addition, the robustness check suggests that the Japanese case deviates from the overall pattern, as illustrated in Figure 2, where Japan has less belief diversity than would be expected based on the Lijphart index. Excluding the Japanese case increases the effect of the Lijphart index on belief diversity. This result indicates that the Japanese anomaly does not disappear even after controlling for other variables.

Second, we examined how the results would change if the original 5-point Likert scale belief items were recoded into a 3-point scale (i.e., 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree; see Appendix E). This test is useful for evaluating the contribution of each independent variable to coordination across different policy beliefs. In addition, the original 5-point Likert scale method treats the distance between "strongly disagree" and "disagree" as if it were the same as the distance between "disagree" and "neutral." The results of the test show that the effect of coordinating with similar types of organizations on the diversity of partners′ beliefs is greatly reduced and renders it statistically insignificant. This result suggests that the effect of coordinating with similar types of organizations on belief diversity is limited and mainly affects actors whose beliefs are relatively close to each other.

Third, due to the uneven distribution of different types of organizations in the collected responses of certain countries, we examined how the results would change in a "balanced" dataset, where each organization type is equally represented. To create this dataset, we randomly determined the proportion of each type of organization and performed bootstrap sampling of the relevant organizations from each country′s dataset. We repeated this process 10,000 times and calculated confidence intervals (see Appendix F). Overall, the results are largely consistent with our main findings, with two exceptions. First, the number of coordination partners was weakly associated with coordination with influential actors in the main analysis, but this association is not supported by the balanced dataset. Second, the association between majoritarian democracy and cooperation with influential actors was not statistically significant in the main analysis, but is supported by the balanced dataset according to the confidence interval test. These results suggest that the lack of significance in the original analysis may have been due to an imbalance in organizational types.

5 | Discussion and Conclusions

A fundamental assumption of the ACF is that political coalitions form due to a tendency to coordinate action with those who share one′s political beliefs. This belief homophily assumption has been empirically supported across many policy subsystems and countries. However, some researchers have argued that belief homophily is more likely to be a feature of conflictual subsystems (Kammerer et al. 2021). As a part of the

internationalization of the ACF research agenda, Sabatier and Weible (2007) introduced coalition opportunity structures to account for institutional differences between countries. This concept acknowledges that the degree of consensus required for policy change varies by country. We argued that this means the nature of political institutions can have an impact on coordination of action. In addition, more recent research has suggested that actors in majoritarian democracies tend to choose politically powerful actors as collaboration partners more often than in consensus democracies (Metz and Brandenberger 2023). Despite these implications, previous research has not systematically examined whether opportunity structures influence the extent to which belief homophily matters for the coordination of action. We set out to address this gap by examining egocentric coordination networks in climate policy subsystems in nine countries. Our main findings and their implications are as follows.

First, the ACF has argued that opportunity structures induce differences in the degree of consensus needed (Sabatier and Weible 2007). We found that, in consensus democracies, actors tend to coordinate with others across coalitions because they more often cross lines of belief dissimilarity. Our finding indicates that the hold of belief homophily on coordination is weaker in consensus democracies. This makes sense because in consensus democracies, it is necessary to reach agreements with both proponents and opponents to achieve political goals. This necessity leads actors to coordinate with those who are not their immediate allies. Similar findings have been reported when comparing policy networks across political systems (Metz and Brandenberger 2023), but our study provides statistical evidence of institutional variation in the effect of belief homophily on coordination behavior. These results may help explain why consensus democracies tend to make progress in environmental policy, particularly on issues involving a wide range of everyday practices (Poloni-Staudinger 2008). In consensus democracies, coordination among actors with different beliefs promotes the inclusion of diverse concerns in policy debates and facilitates solutions requiring cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders. However, it should be noted that coordinating action with actors with different beliefs is a tendency, and its realization may vary across contexts. In our study, the case of Japan illustrates this point; the average level of coordination between actors with different beliefs was lower than expected for a consensus democracy (Lijphart 2012).

Second, our results indicate that consensus democracies tend to have more coordination partners than majoritarian democracies. Dense coordination networks are likely a consequence of the broad agreement required for policy change in consensus democracies. This finding contradicts Sabatier and Weible's (2005), 200) argument that coalitions would have fewer actors in consensus contexts due to the corporatist tendency to limit interest group representation to key government actors and peak associations. However, Sabatier and Weible also acknowledged that coalitions can have solid cores with fuzzy edges, meaning that membership may not be limited to key peak actors. While we did not directly analyze corporatist interest group representation or coalition composition, our results suggest that multiple, diverse actors are involved in coordination relationships in consensus countries, even if relatively few key actors would form the core of coalitions. Future studies should systematically examine how

consensus institutions facilitate coordination of action across coalition boundaries in association with corporatist interest representation (see Ingold et al. 2025).

Third, we found that coalition opportunity structures influence the logic of coordination in several ways. We originally expected that coordination with similar types of actors—i.e., firms coordinating with other firms, NGOs coordinating with other NGOs, etc.—would be a feature of consensus democracies. As discussed above, corporatist arrangements are more common in consensus countries, and corporatist umbrella organizations tend to bring together similar kinds of organizations. Contrary to this expectation, we found that coordination with similar types of organizations also occurs in majoritarian democracies. However, there is a mediated path between consensus democracies and coordination with similar types of actors, as actors in consensus democracies tend to have more coordination partners, mainly due to coordinating with similar types of organizations. This finding suggests that coordination with multiple actors is more institutionalized in consensus democracies than in majoritarian democracies. Importantly, coordination with similar types of organizations can lead to coordination beyond like-minded allies, thereby weakening the hold of belief homophily.

Fourth, we observed a tendency to coordinate with politically influential actors in majoritarian countries, which may also lead to cross-coalition coordination despite belief differences. However, the evidence for this finding is weaker than for the others, as the association was statistically significant in a correlation test, not in the hierarchical structural equation model. There are two possible interpretations for this ambiguity. One explanation is that it results from a canceling effect. It is likely that coordination with influential actors occurs to some extent in consensus democracies as well. Previous research by Kammerer et al. (2021) indirectly supports this interpretation. They found both belief homophily and a tendency to coordinate with influential actors in the same subsystem, although the main focus of their analysis was not comparing consensus and majoritarian institutions. The other possible explanation relates to potential biases in the collected data. As we demonstrated, balancing the proportions of each organizational category across the dataset renders the association between majoritarian democracies and coordination with influential actors significant even in the structural equation model. This implies that belief homophily is not the only coordination logic even in majoritarian countries. However, because there are several possible explanations for this result, it is a topic for future studies.

Our results also suggest several other directions for future research. The first direction is to examine the implications of the cases where the general trends were weaker than expected. Our findings showed that the diversity of policy beliefs among coordination partners in Japan is lower than the country's ranking on the Lijphart index suggests. One possible explanation is the unusual context of the data collection. The Japanese data were collected 1 year after the Fukushima nuclear accident. During this period, all energy and environmental policies, including climate policy, were in flux and highly controversial. In the context of such an external shock, policy images may become simplified and exaggerated (Baumgartner et al. 2017), and the inclination towards consensus building may diminish. The relationship

between coalition opportunity structures and external shocks clearly warrants future research.

A second avenue for future research examines the content of coordination of action. Our research has shown that consensus democracies have a higher number of coordination partners than majoritarian democracies. However, the exact mechanism behind this difference requires further investigation. Actors in consensus democracies may experience lower transaction costs when establishing coordination ties. This ease of establishing coordination ties may also result in "shallower" coordination in terms of its content compared to majoritarian democracies. Therefore, comparative research on the content of coordination behavior—what coordination of action consists of—in both types of democracies is needed. Third, although our dataset is in many ways unique, it is limited to surveys collected in nine countries. Hence, further research with different types of data and with a greater number of country cases is also needed. For instance, studies of coalitions as discourse networks typically assume that shared beliefs unite actors (Leifeld 2020). However, it would be interesting to see if belief homophily is more prevalent in media discourse networks of consensus countries than of majoritarian countries, at least during the "equilibrium" stage of policy, as some studies suggest (Leifeld 2013).

Fourth, it is likely that consensus and majoritarian countries produce different types of policies. For example, consensus countries' corporatist interest representation may produce more ambitious climate policies (Gronow et al. 2020). Future research could examine whether these policy differences stem from the fact that coordination of action in consensus countries tends to cut across belief differences, potentially paving the way for the integration of different interests and the construction of compromises. However, it should be noted that coordination across belief differences is not automatically always a positive phenomenon if the policy process is dominated by the powerful, who may coerce weaker policy actors into submission through coordination.

A fifth avenue for future research is examining the various dimensions of coalition opportunity structures. Our focus has been on the degree of consensus required for policy change. However, systematic research on the openness of the political system and on different types of societal cleavages remains underdeveloped. As mentioned briefly, Lijphart's unitary-federal dimension, which is related to the openness of the political system, was not associated with belief diversity. However, it may still influence other aspects of coalition behavior, such as searching for alternative venues in more open systems (see also Wagner et al. 2023). Additionally, because Lijphart's index focuses on the long-term institutional effects, the short-term changes and dynamics of opportunity structures were not explored in our paper. Furthermore, there are other possible ways to examine opportunity structures besides Lijphart's index. For instance, the V-Dem Democracy Index (Coppedge 2025) allows one to compare different opportunity structures within and between democratic and authoritarian countries (see He et al. 2025 for a comparison within authoritarian countries).

Our results speak not only to policy process scholars but also to the broader political science literature on opportunity structures. For comparative politics scholars, our study provides a method for opening the "black box" of macro-institutional measures of opportunity structures by demonstrating how macro-institutional settings influence meso-level organizational behavior. For social movement scholars interested in the effects of opportunity structures on the selection of allies (Olzak et al. 2016; Rucht 2004) and the formation of movement networks (Crossley 2016; Ding and Slater 2021) and coalitions (Zajak and Haunss 2022), our results imply that belief differences are less likely to influence the range of potential allies in consensus countries. For practitioners, our contribution improves the understanding of the extent to which policy beliefs matter in different institutional settings. Coordinating action across policy beliefs is more sensible for practitioners in consensus contexts because it is the norm rather than an exception.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Endnotes

[1] The data and code for calculating the divisive beliefs are in the Harvard Dataverse online repository: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SBGETC. For a full list of the policy belief questions of the surveys, see the Supporting Information of Karimo et al. (2023).

[2] Lijphart (2012) operationalized each criterion as follows: (1) Effective number of parliamentary parties: The sum of the squares of the proportions of each party in parliament. This variable measures the number of political parties in parliament and takes into account their relative size. (2) Minimal winning one-party cabinets: The proportion of cabinets consisting of a single party with the smallest possible majority during the observation period. (3) Index of executive dominance: The average duration (in years) of cabinets during the observation period. (4) Index of electoral disproportionality: The sum of the squared differences between the percentage of seats and the percentage of votes received by each party in elections. This index measures the degree of proportional difference between votes and actual seats. (5) The index of interest group pluralism is based on Siaroff's (1999) corporatism-pluralism index and includes additional calculations by Lijphart (2012). Siaroff's index aggregates eight different indicators, such as the strength of peak organizations and the existence of centralized wage bargaining.

[3] In addition to the main result presented in Figure 5, we analyzed the correlation between the original indicators that comprise the Lijphart index and belief diversity (see Appendix C). Our findings confirmed that each indicator has a significant effect in the same direction as the Lijphart index, suggesting the robustness of the results.

[4] The conventional standards for each fit statistics are as follows: The RMSEA should be less than 0.05, the SRMR should be < 0.05, the CFI and TLI should be close to 1, and the chi-square test should preferably not be statistically significant (since the null hypothesis is the model).

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Data S1:** psj70067-sup-0001-Supinfo.docx.