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Getting by with a little help from their (EU) friends:

NGO cooperation and involvement across multi-level
policy processes

Melissa Schnyder

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of research focuses on the expanding roles of NGOs in global and supranational governance. The research emphasizes the increasing number of participation patterns of NGOs in policymaking and cross-national cooperation. It has produced important insights into the evolving political role of NGOs and their growing involvement in governance. The focus on activities at a transnational level has, however, led to the virtual exclusion of research on other levels of governance. It has not been possible to tell whether the locus of their political activity is shifting from the national to the transnational environment, or whether it is simply broadening. Missing from the literature is an examination of the variety of cooperative relationships, including those between NGOs, which impact policy involvement *across different levels of governance*. To bridge this gap, I address two key questions: 1) Is the strategy of cooperation among NGOs a common feature of social movement activity across levels of governance, and if so, what does the structure of cooperation look like? 2) What impact, if any, does cooperation have on the expanding political involvement of NGOs, both within and across levels of governance? Using data from an original survey of migrant and refugee organizations across much of Europe, I test several hypotheses that shed light on these issues. The findings broadly indicate that 1) Cooperation is a widely-used strategy *across levels of governance*, 2) Cooperation with *specific sets of actors* increases the likelihood of NGO involvement *at different levels of governance*. Specifically, cooperation with *EU-level actors* increases the likelihood of *national-level* involvement, and 3) NGOs are more likely to extend their involvement across *a range of institutions* if they cooperate with a broad range of actors.

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1 INTRODUCTION²

The past decades have witnessed a sharp increase in the importance ascribed to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in governance and policy issues. As a consequence, the political involvement of NGO actors has become a significant area of research, marked by a rapidly growing collection of studies on this topic, particularly in the social sciences and law. For example, recent political science research has focused on the expanding roles of NGOs in global and supranational governance processes³, participation of NGOs in policymaking functions traditionally dominated by state actors⁴, cooperation among NGOs and political elites⁵, and cooperation among NGOs across borders resulting in a “global civil society”⁶. This body of research has produced important insights into the evolving political role of NGOs and their growing involvement in governance. However, without expanding the scope of the research to cover a wide range of organizations and behavior it remains unclear whether, for example, *cooperation* with other policy stakeholders, such as other NGOs, business associations and labor unions is the norm or the exception for NGOs attempting to wield political influence. The literature that examines cooperation with other policy stakeholders as a strategy for influencing governance processes includes elements of, for example, Resource Mobilization (RM) theory, and is broadly reflective of the claims of the transnational social movements and advocacy networks literatures in that cooperation with non-elites can bring about substantive policy change. These studies underscore the benefits of cooperation. On the other side of the coin, political economy and collective action approaches to coordination are more pessimistic, and list various reasons why the coordination of strategies among NGOs will remain a rare activity. NGO cooperation would not represent a common strategy or trend, but rather an anomaly. These contrasting lines of thinking shall be discussed in more detail below.

Beyond any disagreement over the *likelihood* of cooperation, there is also a debate on the *impact* of cooperation on NGOs’ political involvement. Research on NGOs and global governance, as well as the transnational social movement literature, often implies that cooperation is beneficial for organizations seeking to influence policy. However, few studies analyze whether cooperation by NGOs has any effect on their *involvement in policymaking independently of other factors*. Limited attention has focused on systematically analyzing the structure of cooperation among NGOs, including cooperation among groups headquartered in the same country, and the effects of different types of cooperation on NGO involvement in policy processes across multiple levels of governance. Consequently, little is known about whether and how cooperation may benefit non-governmental organizations by expanding the range and impact of their political involvement.

Against this theoretical backdrop, the aim of this paper is twofold. *First*, it aims to assess whether cooperation is *a common strategy or rare occurrence* among NGOs across Europe. *Secondly*, and more importantly, it will investigate whether cooperation does, in fact, have an *impact on NGOs’ political involvement*. The latter objective is pursued by examining

² I would like to thank Sebastian Oberthür, Richard Lewis, Harri Kalimo, and Derekh Cornwell for helpful comments on previous drafts of this paper, and the entire staff at the IES for their support.

³ Karns 2004; Schwitter Marsiaj 2004; Lindblom 2005.

⁴ Nye 2000; Alston 2005.

⁵ Fernando 1997; Chasek 2000; Ray 2005.

⁶ Risse-Kappen 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999.

whether coordinated efforts among groups and strategic actors increase the range of NGOs' involvement *across policymaking institutions*, and whether cooperation in general can serve as a vehicle for NGOs to expand the range of their involvement *across multiple levels of governance*. Cooperation is defined herein as collaboration among NGOs and other policy actors that involves exchanging information, exchanging expertise, sharing personnel or other resources, and/or coordinating common activities or projects. Although prior research has shown that the role of NGOs in governance and policy issues is growing, it has not yet shown whether and how cooperation structures this involvement across different levels of governance. In this paper, I broadly hypothesize that the extent of NGOs' cooperation with specific actors can be expected to influence the range of their involvement in policymaking processes across both institutions and levels of governance.

To approach these research questions, this paper examines NGOs working in Europe⁷ in the policy domain of *migrant inclusion*. Migrant inclusion is a broad concept that encompasses work involving issues of how many people and who may enter the country, and the requirements for attaining citizenship. It also deals with the practical, day-to-day issues that affect migrants' rights and quality of life, such as access to housing, health care issues, language acquisition, employment, education, as well as the fight against intolerance and discrimination. Thus, the concept applies to organizations working on legal issues⁸ as well as to quality of life or cultural adjustment issues⁹. Migrant inclusion NGOs incorporate a broad and diverse sample of organizations that address a variety of interrelated policy issues. However, migrant inclusion NGOs is also a concept narrow enough to exclude those organizations whose main interests do not touch upon migrant- or migration-related issues.

The migrant inclusion policy sector was selected as a most likely case for several reasons. First, migrant inclusion groups tend to lack the resources of other NGOs such as environmental groups¹⁰. Cooperation and collaborative activity are more of a necessity, a means of burden-sharing. Secondly, Eurobarometer surveys have documented negative public opinion on migration issues at the national level, which ultimately constrains the options of policymakers. Against this background, collaboration may become more important, as it constitutes a means of presenting a unified message to policymakers and the public. Thirdly, migrant inclusion NGOs are likely to find growing opportunities for influence at the European Union (EU) level, because the European Commission seeks to involve civil society in policy debates. Given the current political climate in many countries, migrant inclusion NGOs may engage in cooperation in order to effectively take advantage of the opportunities of this more open environment.

In addition, migrant inclusion NGOs are an appropriate universe for this study because, in addition to providing services to migrants, their work typically involves efforts to participate in and influence various policy processes. At a basic level, their efforts to effect political change suggest that the implementation of policy reforms cannot be accomplished alone¹¹. On the contrary, contemporary politics in advanced democracies involves alliance formation, coalition building, and cooperation in order to secure allies and counterbalance

⁷ See the Data and Methods section below for the exact description of the methodology.

⁸ E.g., facilitating immigration procedures, naturalization requirements, work permits, and voting issues.

⁹ E.g., learning the national customs and language, psychological adjustment, health care, and fighting discrimination.

¹⁰ Author interview, European Commission, 2004

¹¹ Dalton 1994.

opponents¹². Therefore, cooperation within the migrant inclusion movement potentially occurs at numerous levels of governance, including the national and EU levels. Cooperation can also occur at the transnational level, between actors located in different countries.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The ensuing section discusses the theoretical debate over cooperation in greater detail, focusing on both the likelihood of cooperation as well as its impacts. The next section advances the hypotheses on NGO cooperation that this paper will test. This is followed by an outline of the methods used to test the hypotheses and discuss the main data source of this study - the Survey of European Pro-Migrant and Refugee Organizations. After a presentation and discussion of the results, the conclusion brings forth the main themes and the most important findings.

¹² Ibid.

2 COOPERATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

2.1 Reasons for cooperation

Perhaps the best argument in favor of cooperation is that it allows groups to band together in order to wield greater influence in policy and governance. In other words, NGOs can plausibly achieve greater political leverage when they act together. Although groups do compete with one another, their common interests may override this tendency and stimulate cooperation. Some elements of resource mobilization (RM) theory, for example, emphasize the NGO as an organization that focuses on the process of coalition-building to achieve its policy goals¹³. Cooperation can create a platform, which facilitates access to the policy process and solidifies links to potential supporters within the political system. Moreover, it can increase the resources for taking action, facilitate the flow of information, and promote burden-sharing. RM theory in other words contends that an organization's behavior is shaped by strategic calculations of how to best meet its resource needs¹⁴, suggesting that NGOs consciously select activities that will best meet and advance group goals. Thus, we can surmise that when organizations cooperate, they strategically choose to emphasize commonalities and act together as a means of advancing their interests through the policy process.

The logical foundation of cooperative action is that most NGOs seek some type of socio-political change that requires altering the status quo. Presumably, altering the status quo becomes more likely when groups work in concert rather than in isolation or against one another. Hence, Charles Tilly¹⁵ posits that it is not uncommon for groups to act together in pursuit of a common goal, even if these groups share no more in common than an opposition to the political status quo. Empirical research indicates the increasing potential for cooperation among NGOs based on common interests¹⁶. Thus, there is an incentive for NGOs to cooperate to advance their interests by influencing the policy process.

Social movement research has shown that groups do, in fact, act in concert with other actors and target multiple levels of governance. For example, the postwar period has witnessed the proliferation of international institutions and a set of supranational institutions (i.e., the EU) which provide a focus for transnational action among NGOs¹⁷. Thus, it is possible for groups to become involved in policy issues across different levels of governance. Moreover, from the 1960s onward the political landscape in most advanced democracies witnessed a proliferation of NGOs, including many types of migrant inclusion organizations. While these groups are presumed to be quite active in the domestic arena, some scholars have argued that NGOs, migrant inclusion groups included, increasingly cooperate in transnational arrangements¹⁸. This phenomenon has produced claims by some scholars that a global civil society is emerging, comprised of transnational advocacy networks¹⁹.

The social movement literature has documented many types of transnational collaborative activity. For example, many studies examine the emergence of transnational networks of

¹³ McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978; Klandermans 1988.

¹⁴ Dalton 1994.

¹⁵ 1978.

¹⁶ Rochon 1988; Imig and Tarrow 2001.

¹⁷ della Porta et al. 1999.

¹⁸ Danese 1998; Kastoryano 1998; Geddes 2000b; Guiraudon 2001; Beja Horta 2002.

¹⁹ Risse-Kappen 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Risse-Kappen et al. 1999.

actors and their influence on policies²⁰. The more quantitative research has shown that well over two-thirds of the European NGOs surveyed had met with groups from other countries to exchange information and coordinate common activities²¹. Moreover, a survey of global environmental NGOs found that well over half met with other groups to collaborate in some way²². Thus, prior research sets an expectation that NGOs will spend a good portion of their time and efforts acting in concert with others.

2.2 Arguments against Cooperation

On the other hand, political economy arguments suggest that NGOs are unlikely to cooperate with one another because it is a time-, cost- and resource-intensive activity that simply produces little additional benefits. According to this perspective, NGO leaders are self-interested and prioritize the existence and expansion of their own organizations above political reform. Political economists would therefore argue that factors such as resources drive the increasing involvement of NGOs in governance processes independently of cooperation. If this were indeed the case, the largest and best-funded groups would also be the most active and influential.

The fact that organizations compete for scarce resources, members, and political influence²³ can inhibit cooperation. For example, a study of human rights movements found some level of competition over members among transnational NGOs²⁴, and other research has identified similar competition among groups in specific countries²⁵. Moreover, research on pro-migrant NGOs found that competition hampered group efforts and ultimately led to the demise of a well-known transnational organization²⁶. Thus, although groups may share common interests, competition over limited resources and influence may preclude cooperative activities. Alternatively, when cooperation does occur, it may not be effective if the competitive tendencies dominate. All in all, cooperation may represent a time- and resource-intensive activity that simply produces little additional benefits to NGOs seeking to influence policymaking.

In addition to the competition for resources, cooperation between the NGOs may also face ideological impediments. For example, the question of how to frame the content of cooperation can constitute a major source of disagreement among organizations²⁷, because a collective framework must underlie their common actions²⁸. At the heart of such disagreements may lie fundamental group differences about the issue at stake and how to best address it. Within the migrant inclusion movement, for example, there is often fierce ideological competition between organizations representing different ethnic groups²⁹, each seeking to draw attention to the problems of that particular group. Moreover, political rivalries and other inter-group differences have been the reason for many coordination problems among French migrant inclusion NGOs.

²⁰ Risse-Kappen 1995; Danese 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998.

²¹ Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002.

²² Dalton et al. 2003.

²³ Zald and McCarthy 1987.

²⁴ Smith et al. 1997.

²⁵ Maney 2000.

²⁶ Guiraudon 2001.

²⁷ Meyer and Kleidman 1991.

²⁸ Gerhards and Rucht 1992.

²⁹ Guiraudon 2001.

Given these obstacles, it is remarkable that so many migrant inclusion NGOs so frequently engage in cooperative activity. A glance at Figure 2 in the Results section shows that most such groups cooperate frequently across different levels of governance (Figure 2 will be discussed in detail later). Why might such high levels of NGO cooperation be important? I argue that through cooperation, NGOs are more likely to expand the range of their political actions and, ultimately, their involvement in policymaking. Thus, I expect cooperative arrangements to involve migrant inclusion NGOs in the formulation of policies by creating a common platform, which facilitates connections with other strategic actors, allows resource sharing among groups, and increases any given group's access to information.

2.3 What We Know about Cooperation

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a proliferation of research examining the transnational dimensions of NGO activity. Many of these studies focus not on the conditions that prompt collaborative action, but rather on the development of international norms and the role of non-state actors in international policymaking³⁰. At the heart of this body of work are questions regarding traditional realist approaches that underscore the utmost importance of states in international politics³¹. The implication of this research is that the role of non-state actors in international politics is growing, and thus also the cooperation among NGOs seeking to impact change. What these studies leave unanswered for the most part is whether and how cooperation impacts the range of involvement in the policy process across various levels of governance. Some research suggests that cooperation and group collaboration is important at the international or EU levels³². Very little work has examined, however, the variety of cooperative relationships, including those with other NGOs in the domestic environment, and the effects of these arrangements on policy involvement across different levels of governance.

Transnational movement research tends to view global forces as having a profound effect on NGO behavior³³. For example, international and supranational institutions like the EU offer a new perspective on how NGOs interact with their governments and what may prompt these actions. Moreover, most scholars agree that since 1945 cooperation among NGOs has become more common³⁴. In addition, the number of domestic, international, and transnational NGOs has greatly increased, thereby improving opportunities for cooperation.

The likelihood that globalization, to some extent, impacts transnational and collaborative activity among NGOs renders conceptions of social movements as purely national phenomena, or as movements and organizations that act in isolation, increasingly inappropriate. Although issues on migrant inclusion policy may fall mostly within the domain of the nation-state, they do not fall therein entirely. NGOs are becoming increasingly important actors that are able to confront migrant- and refugee-related problems with expertise. Because of their specialized knowledge and expertise, they also fulfill certain functions once dominated by the state. Often, these activities have a transnational dimension which leads to the phenomenon of collaboration among NGOs across state boundaries. The EU provides a telling example, as the European Commission

³⁰ Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Risse-Kappen et al. 1999.

³¹ Tarrow 2001.

³² Geddes 2000b, Guiraudon 2001.

³³ e.g., Guidry et al. 2001.

³⁴ Risse-Kappen 1995; Fernando 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Risse-Kappen et al. 1999; Chasek 2000; Ray 2005.

actively seeks input from civil society groups³⁵. In contrast, these types of activities were less likely when nation-states held a monopoly on migration-related issues.

Globalization and its attendant changes, then, facilitate communication among groups in different countries³⁶. This, in turn, allows migrant inclusion NGOs in different states to coordinate their activity and work toward similar movement goals. In addition, the growth of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations encourages groups to act transnationally; these IGOs often are targets of group activity, a focus for NGO action³⁷.

These arguments on the impact of globalization on social movement NGOs provide the impetus for scholars to shift from examining national factors to those transnational and supranational factors that likely shape NGO behavior. Indeed, the expansion of opportunities beyond the nation-state is one reason for the phenomenon of transnational collective action³⁸. Moreover, NGOs themselves recruit both local and non-local supporters via the Internet to mount transnational collaborative action³⁹. The implication of such arguments is that the nation-state is losing its ability to structure NGOs' political activity as groups gain access to new allies and resources to organize collective action⁴⁰.

Despite these developments, and even though the involvement of non-state actors may be increasing, realist international theory serves as a reminder that the state continues to be a powerful and significant force in shaping policy, as well as the opportunities for NGO activity. States remain the dominant agents in most areas of policy. This is particularly true when it comes to immigration and asylum issues, as they embody the important notions of border control and state sovereignty, which are increasingly associated with national security. While much migrant inclusion research has focused on the role of transnational actors in shaping policy⁴¹, this paper aims to create a broader perspective by investigating cooperation among actors at *various levels* of governance (including the national and EU levels), and by systematically analyzing the impact of such cooperation on NGO involvement in the policy process. Thus, this study builds on previous research in that it is explicitly comparative *across different levels of governance*.

In sum, an important goal for research is to analyze *both* domestic and non-domestic forms of NGO cooperation in order to arrive at accurate and reliable inferences about its effects on NGO involvement in the policymaking processes. The literature that focuses solely on transnational or supranational action excludes the wealth of cooperative activity that takes place within states. In attempting to influence a policy issue, groups may be just as likely to cooperate with domestic actors as with those in other countries. In fact, they may be more likely to cooperate domestically since it is less costly to do so. In short, although the transnational dimensions of NGO activity may be increasing, the national setting continues to be an important locale for group activities. Whereas the literature has thoroughly documented the growing role of NGOs in governance and policy processes⁴², less is known about the nature of cooperative relationships across various levels of governance, and how these relationships may impact NGOs in policy debates.

³⁵ Marks and McAdam 1999.

³⁶ Tarrow 1998.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Imig and Tarrow 2001.

⁴⁰ Rosenau 1990.

⁴¹ Danese 1998; Kastoryano 1998; Geddes 2000b; Guiraudon 2001; Beja Horta 2002.

⁴² Nye 2000; Karns 2004; Schwitler Marsiaj 2004; Alston 2005; Lindblom 2005.

3 HYPOTHESES: COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND NGO POLICY INVOLVEMENT

Figure 1 below outlines how *cooperation* can be expected to shape policy *involvement* among migrant inclusion NGOs. A migrant inclusion NGO, depicted at the top of the figure, can choose to enter into cooperative arrangements with other NGOs and strategic actors, including business associations, labor unions, and organizations that function predominantly at the EU level,⁴³ such as the Migration Policy Group or the Churches' Commission for

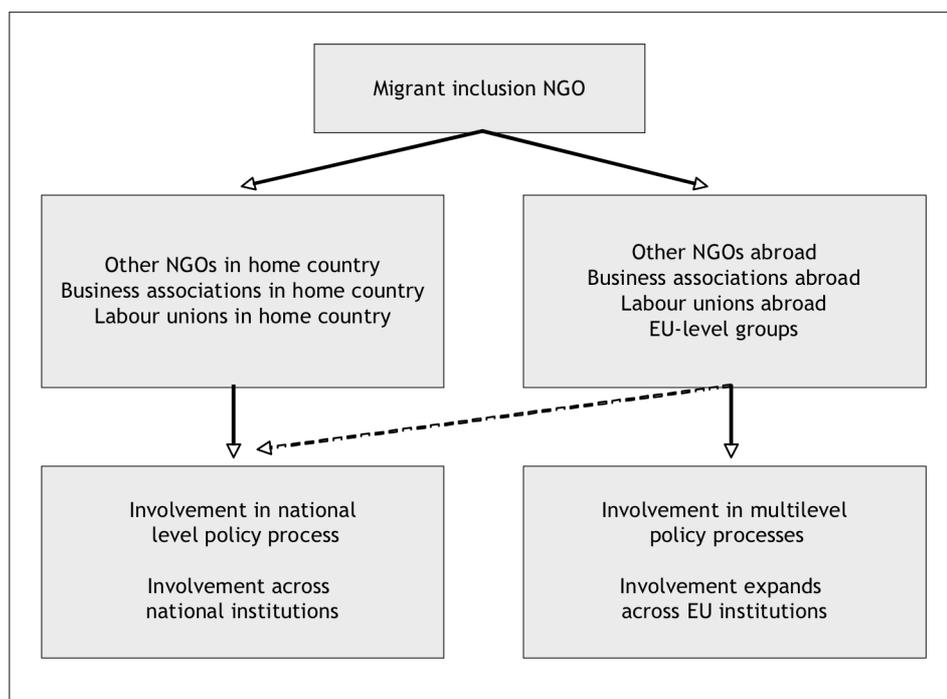


Figure 1. Cooperation and NGO Policy Involvement

Migrants in Europe. The first set of relationships (on the left side of the figure) posits that as cooperation with national-level actors increases, NGO involvement in influencing the national policy process becomes more likely. At this stage, the model shows that NGO participation will be limited to the national level: networking with actors based in the same country is likely to focus on pressing national policy issues, which these actors can strategically influence. Therefore:

H1: As NGO cooperation with other national actors increases, the NGOs' involvement in the national policy process will increase.

The second set of relationships, illustrated on the right side of Figure 1, moves beyond the national level. The model predicts that as cooperative relationships expand beyond the nation-state, the range of NGO participation will also expand from the national to the EU level. In addition, it makes another assumption: as cooperative relationships expand beyond the nation-state, the range of NGO involvement at the EU level will expand across a range of policymaking institutions. Thus, as NGOs develop their cooperative relationships,

⁴³ In this paper, migrant inclusion NGOs refer to citizens' issue groups focusing on quality of life issues whereas business associations and labor unions tend to focus more on employment issues. Organizations that function predominantly at the EU level (or, EU groups) tend to have headquarters in Brussels and interact heavily with the European institutions.

their patterns of involvement in the policy process are expected to change. The logic is that as groups develop networks beyond the domestic sphere, they are likely to be exposed to new policy problems and new perspectives on existing concerns. When the involvement with other actors increases, NGOs may choose to broaden their methods of influence. They may be called on to do so by those with whom they choose to cooperate, or they may call on others to act. For example, as a group spends more time cooperating with an NGO headquartered in Brussels with an EU-level focus, it may choose to proportionally increase its efforts in lobbying certain EU institutions instead of its national government. Because many EU-level pro-migrant groups are tied to the European Commission, for instance, including them in cooperative arrangements may increase the likelihood that the organization will be in contact with the Commission. Moreover, business associations and labor unions are routinely and formally consulted in matters of EU policymaking. Thus, cooperation with business and labor interests across many countries may increase the likelihood that NGOs will expand the range of their involvement beyond the nation-state. Therefore:

H2: As cooperative relationships expand beyond the state, the range of NGO policy involvement will also expand from the national level to a multi-level environment⁴⁴.

H3: As cooperative relationships expand beyond the state, the range of NGO involvement in the EU policy process will extend across a variety of institutions.

⁴⁴ This multi-level environment encompasses participation at *both* the national and EU levels.

4 DATA AND METHODS

4.1 Survey of European Pro-Migrant and Refugee Organizations

Again, the purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic evaluation of how NGO cooperation impacts the range of their involvement across levels of governance. To this end, the main data source is an original survey of migrant inclusion organizations across much of the EU⁴⁵. A list of as many such organizations as possible in each EU country was collected, based on prior Internet research and several extensive published and online directories of NGOs.⁴⁶ In order to be included, each group had to meet specific criteria, including: status as a formal and legal pro-migrant and/or refugee organization, active participation on behalf of migrant and refugee issues, and be headquartered in a member state of the EU. Groups whose human rights or anti-discrimination work touched only negligibly on migrant inclusion were excluded, as were groups with a purely anti-fascist or anti-nationalist agenda.

A five-part questionnaire was sent to each organization and included questions on a variety of topics: the organizational characteristics of the group, their assessment of various national and EU political institutions on matters concerning migrants and refugees, their involvement in a range of strategies to affect the political process at various levels of governance, their policy interests, and the extent of the group's cooperative activities with a range of other actors. The questionnaire was administered in several rounds in August 2005-February 2006. A total of 114 groups representing 20 EU member countries⁴⁷ comprise the database, reflecting a response rate of about 20%.

A wide variety of organizations and a diversity of countries are represented in the sample. A diverse sample is vital to ensure that inferences are not biased by a specific feature common to a certain type of organization. In this paper, national groups represent policy issues spanning housing for migrants and refugees, anti-discrimination, services for undocumented migrants, ethnically specific organizations, health care and psychological wellbeing, migrant employment and other labor issues, and education to or about migrants and refugees. In addition to a broad range of national groups from each country, the dataset includes a handful of international organizations, such as Caritas Refugee Service affiliates in Austria, Luxembourg, and Spain, as well as organizations that function mainly at the EU level such as the Migration Policy Group. The combined membership of this sample reaches almost 500,000 supporters of migrant and refugee issues across the EU. Moreover, the combined budgetary figures indicate that the estimated financial resources that these groups control well exceed 80 million Euros a year. Thus, the Survey of European Pro-Migrant and Refugee Organizations offers a reasonable basis on which to make preliminary estimates about the structure of cooperation among pro-migrant actors and how that affects their involvement in the policy process across levels of governance.

⁴⁵ See below on the details of the data sample.

⁴⁶ I relied on various sources of information to identify relevant groups: pro-migrant and refugee organization websites, online links to other such organizations, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) membership list (http://www.enar-eu.org/en/info/2_1.shtml), and the European Address Book Against Racism (<http://www.united.non-profit.nl/pages/onderadr.htm>).

⁴⁷ Represented countries include: EU15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK); and 5 of the new member states (EU10) (the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary and Malta).

4.2 Methods

The dependent variables in this study are 1) NGO involvement in multi-level (e.g., both the national and EU levels) versus strictly national policy processes, and 2) level of NGO interaction across a range of policymaking institutions. These variables thus reflect both *qualitative* measures that capture the *choice between different activities* across levels of governance, and *quantitative* measures that capture the *frequency* of participation across different institutions at both the national and EU levels. All data for the dependent variables come from the Survey of European Pro-Migrant and Refugee Organizations.

The dependent variables are all coded dichotomously. The measures of involvement in multi-level versus strictly national policymaking are coded so that 1=multi-level involvement (e.g., in both EU and national processes), 0=national-level involvement only. Similarly, the measures of interaction across institutions are coded so that 1=moderate to high levels of interaction (i.e., the NGO reports that it interacts with the given institution sometimes or often), 0=low to non interaction (i.e., the NGO reports interacting with the given institution rarely or never). Given the binary nature of the dependent variables, logistic regression for survey data is the appropriate technique. These variables are particularly useful in that they allow an analysis of the *factors that impact* NGO involvement across multi-level policy processes. Although prior research has shown that the role of NGOs in governance and policy issues is growing, it has not yet shown whether and how cooperation structures this involvement across different levels of governance, while controlling the other factors. The ensuing analyses will answer this question.

The data for the main independent variables that measure cooperation also come from the Survey of European Pro-Migrant and Refugee Organizations. They capture the extent to which migrant inclusion NGOs cooperate by sharing information, advice, personnel or other resources, and by engaging in common projects with the following types of actors: 1) with other NGOs located in the group's home country, 2) with business associations and labor unions (i.e., the social partners) in the home country, 3) with other NGOs headquartered in another country, 4) with business associations and labor unions located in another country, and 5) with EU-level organizations such as the European Council on Refugees and Exiles. In each case, higher scores correspond to stronger cooperative relationships.

The models also include several other variables to control for additional factors that might plausibly impact NGO policy involvement. First, a set of variables that measures the relative openness of national institutions, both to non-elite participation in the policy process and to the goals of migrant and refugee NGOs, is included. In addition, the models control for the types of policy priorities of most concern to the organization. These range from basic services/care-giving priorities (e.g., health care, housing assistance, education, etc.) to slightly more challenging political/legal concerns (e.g., voting rights, procedures for attaining citizenship, etc.) and further to those that center around asylum issues (asylum policy, etc.). Finally, several variables that measure the level of resources that the NGO possesses are taken into account: the age of the organization, number of staff and volunteers, annual budget, and whether the group has received a grant from the European Commission.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Patterns of Cooperation and Policy Involvement

Figure 2 illustrates the patterns of *cooperation* by migrant inclusion NGOs, and shows that cooperation is a fairly widespread phenomenon between NGOs and various types of actors. By far, most migrant inclusion organizations prefer to cooperate with other NGOs at the same level of governance. For example, the vast majority of groups at least sometimes cooperate with other NGOs headquartered in their home country, and with those headquartered in another country. Moreover, about half of the groups surveyed at least sometimes engage in cooperative acts with organizations at the EU level, such as the Migration Policy Group think tank. Less popular types of cooperation include engagements with business associations and labor unions. At the national level, about 39% of NGOs at least sometimes cooperate with labor, and only 27% collaborate on a regular basis with business. These patterns decline as we move beyond the nation-state, as only 11% of NGOs cooperate with labor unions in another country and only 6% do so with business in another country. Although NGOs do cooperate with a variety of actors, it is clear that they prefer to engage with like-minded organizations - whether at home or abroad - likely because they share similar values and policy goals.

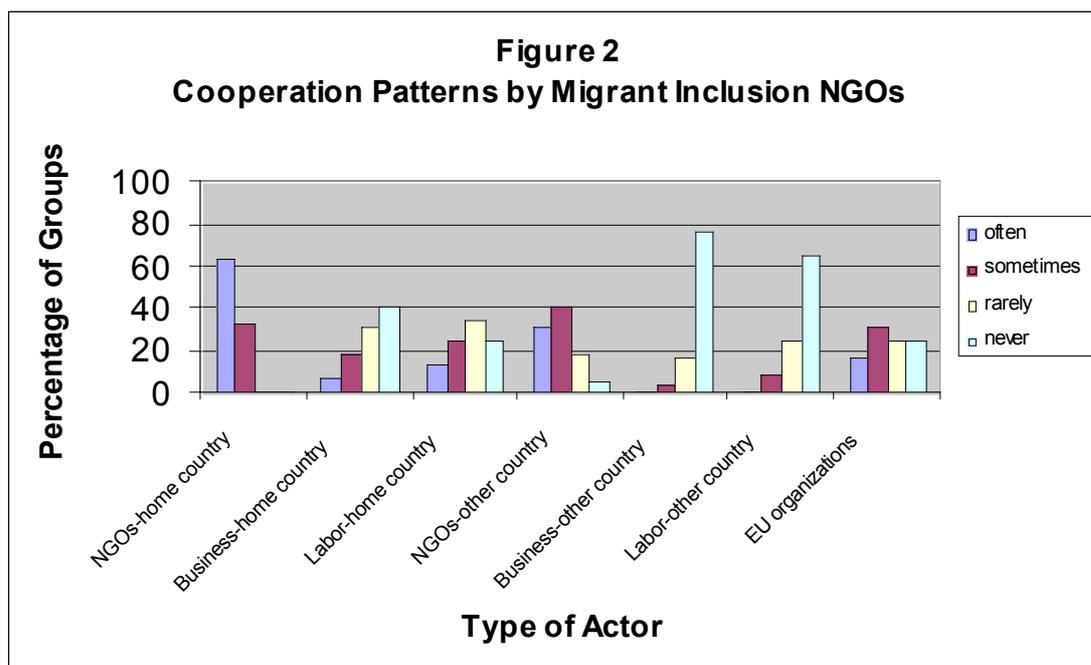


Figure 2. Cooperation Patterns by Migrant Inclusion NGOs.

Table 1 provides an overview of NGO *involvement* in policy processes *by level of governance and institution*. It is apparent that NGOs are quite active across various levels of governance in attempting to influence policy. At the sub-national level, 72 % of NGOs at least sometimes attempt to wield influence by interacting with their local government. Participation at the national level is also quite common. For example, NGOs are highly involved in both informal (66%) and formal (67%) meetings with national civil servants and ministers. They tend to participate in many other ways as well, including interacting with parliament (58%) and political parties (60%), serving on advisory committees (46%), and taking judicial action (37%).

| | % Often | % Sometimes |
|---|---------|-------------|
| NATIONAL | | |
| Informal contacts with civil servants/ministers | 34 | 32 |
| Contact local government | 31 | 41 |
| Meet with civil servants or ministers | 31 | 36 |
| Contact Parliament | 27 | 31 |
| Party contacts | 23 | 37 |
| Participate in committees | 19 | 27 |
| Judicial action-national level | 18 | 19 |
| EU | | |
| Contact European Commission | 17 | 29 |
| Contact Member(s) of European Parliament | 11 | 38 |
| Contact Council of Ministers | 2 | 12 |
| Contact Economic and Social Committee | 2 | 12 |
| Contact COREPER | 1 | 5 |
| Judicial action in ECJ | 1 | 3 |
| N=114 | | |

Table 1. Overview of involvement: Migrant Inclusion NGO Participation in Policymaking Processes by Level and Institution.⁴⁸

Participation of national migrant inclusion NGOs is also widespread at the EU level. For instance, 46% of NGOs at least sometimes interact with the European Commission regarding matters of policy importance, 49% interact with MEPs and 14% interact with the Council of Ministers. At the same time, however, only 4% of NGOs take court action via the ECJ at least sometimes. In addition to these major policymaking institutions, NGOs also target the relatively less visible institutions including the Economic and Social Committee (14%) and Coreper (6%). Overall, the general pattern reflects that although the majority of interaction occurs within the nation-state, there is nonetheless fairly extensive and widespread NGO involvement with various policymaking institutions at the EU level of governance.

5.2 Cooperation and the Range of NGO Involvement

Table 2 sheds light on the actual *range* of NGO participation by illustrating the likelihood of involvement across multiple levels of governance versus acting solely within the national setting. Confirming hypothesis 2, the results show that as the cooperative relationships of NGOs extend beyond the national setting, they are significantly more likely to act across multiple levels of governance. For example, as NGOs engage in cooperation with EU organizations, NGOs based in another country, and the social partners in other countries, they are more likely to become involved in policy processes across multiple levels of governance. More specifically, as groups form increasingly strong cooperative relationships with EU organizations as well as the social partners in a country other than their own, they

⁴⁸ *Note:* Figures are percentages of groups that reported participation in the given activity to address their primary issues of concern over the past two to three years ("often" or "sometimes").

are over three times as likely to become involved in the policy process across both the national and EU levels versus groups that choose not to cooperate. Further, groups that cooperate with NGOs in another country are 82 % more likely to be politically involved across multiple levels of governance. Overall, the data confirm that cooperating with actors beyond the nation-state increases the likelihood that NGOs will undertake activities across multiple levels of governance; moreover, the stronger the cooperative relationship is with external actors, the more likely the organization is to move outside of the national context and attempt to influence multi-level policy processes.

| Predictor | EU and National National Only |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Cooperation | |
| national NGOs | 1.44 |
| national social partners | 0.67 |
| EU groups | 3.24*** |
| non-national NGOs | 1.82* |
| non-national social partners | 3.31** |
| Openness of National Institutions | |
| federal system | 1.03 |
| left government | 0.67 |
| number of parties | 2.34** |
| policy context index | 0.19 |
| policy perceptions index | 1.22 |
| Issue Priorities | |
| services/care | 1.12 |
| political/legal | --- |
| asylum | 0.64 |
| Resources | |
| EU grant | 0.75 |
| full-time staff | 1.78 |
| age | 1.18 |
| budget | 0.69 |
| budget increasing | 1.38 |
| N=110 | |

Table 2. *The Range of Involvement: Multi-level versus Single Level Participation.*⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Note: Table entries are odds ratios from multinomial logistic regression, where the categories are 0=no NGO participation, 1=strictly national level participation, 2=multi-level (national and EU) participation. These are interpreted as the degree to which odds of participating in multi-level versus single level policy processes increase or decrease along with changes in the independent variables. Odds ratios greater than 1 represent positive effects, less than 1 represent negative effects. "---" = unable to be calculated due to multicollinearity. ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10.

5.3 Cooperation and the Extent of NGO Involvement

Hypotheses 1 and 3 relate cooperation by NGOs to the extent of their involvement in policymaking processes at the national and EU levels, respectively. Table 3 below presents the results of the analyses examining the range of migrant inclusion NGO involvement across a host of national policy channels.

| Predictor | Sub-nat'l gov't | Informal contacts | Formal meetings | Parliament | Parties | Commiss./ advis. committees | Courts |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------|
| Cooperation | | | | | | | |
| national NGOs | 1.52* | 1.72** | 2.03** | 1.59** | 1.47* | 2.46*** | 1.13 |
| national social partners | 2.42*** | 1.49* | 1.28 | 1.23 | 1.57* | 3.61*** | 1.64* |
| EU groups | 1.01 | 2.01*** | 2.10*** | 1.69** | 1.24 | 3.21*** | 1.33 |
| non-national NGOs | 0.65* | 0.50** | .47*** | 1.06 | 0.88 | 0.34*** | 0.50** |
| non-national social partners | 1.67** | 0.95 | 1.61 | 0.65* | 0.95 | 0.44*** | 0.79 |
| Openness of National Institutions | | | | | | | |
| federal system | 1.14 | 0.81 | 0.63* | 0.7 | 0.83 | 0.45*** | 0.73 |
| Left government | 1.46 | .59* | 0.53** | 0.67* | 0.71 | 0.25*** | 0.66 |
| number of parties | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| policy context index | 5.11* | 0.28 | 0.44 | 0.47 | 0.66 | 0.22 | 8.60** |
| policy percept. index | 0.98 | 1.86*** | 1.43 | 1.59** | 1.04 | 0.98 | 1.18 |
| Issue Priorities | | | | | | | |
| services/care | 1.60** | 1.11 | 1.04 | 1.17 | 1.12 | 1.41 | 0.70* |
| political/legal | --- | --- | 0.95 | --- | --- | 0.39*** | --- |
| asylum | 0.60** | 0.96 | --- | 0.83 | 0.95 | --- | 1.38 |
| Resources | | | | | | | |
| EU grant | 1.07 | 0.77 | 0.76 | 0.69* | 0.91 | 0.98 | 1.2 |
| full-time staff | 0.94 | 1.64* | 2.18** | 1.24 | 0.84 | 1.36 | 0.62** |
| volunteers | 0.9 | .73* | 1.06 | 1.04 | 0.75 | 0.87 | 1.23 |
| budget | 1.44 | 0.88 | 1.60* | 1.34 | 2.09*** | 1.49 | 1.32 |
| budget increasing | 0.51** | 0.85 | 1.2 | 0.95 | 0.9 | 1.21 | --- |
| N= | 107 | 110 | 109 | 110 | 110 | 109 | 109 |

*Table 3. The Range of Involvement: NGO Participation across National Institutions.*⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Note: Table entries are odds ratios from binary logistic regression, where the categories are 0=non-frequent participation by NGOs (rarely + never), 1=somewhat frequent participation by NGOs (sometimes + often). These are interpreted as the degree to which odds of participating "frequently" versus "infrequently" increase or decrease along with changes in the independent variables. Odds

The table shows that migrant inclusion NGOs are significantly more likely to extend their involvement across multiple institutions as they cooperate with a broad range of actors. For instance, cooperating with other national organizations makes it more likely that migrant inclusion NGOs will contact their local government, meet informally and formally with national civil servants and ministers, interact with the national parliament and political parties, and consult on government commissions and advisory committees. Similarly, migrant inclusion NGOs that engage in cooperative arrangements with national business associations and labor unions are more likely to become involved across a range of participatory activities, including: contacting the local government, meeting informally with civil servants and national ministers, interacting with political parties, serving on government commissions and advisory committees, and taking judicial action. Overall, these patterns broadly support hypothesis 1 and show that migrant inclusion NGOs' cooperation with other national actors results in them targeting a range of national institutions. In other words, their involvement in the national policy processes increases.

In contrast, if migrant inclusion NGOs cooperate mostly with actors beyond the state level, they are *not* more likely to engage in widespread activities at the national level. Indeed, the data indicate the opposite—with, however, the important exception of cooperation with EU organizations. *In fact, as migrant inclusion NGOs cooperate more frequently with EU organizations, they are significantly more likely to become involved in national policy processes.* The involvement occurs via informal and formal meetings with civil servants and national ministers, interacting with parliament, and consulting on government commissions and advisory committees. This pattern reflects a true multi-level dimension to NGO action, and suggests that *EU networks* likely play a strong role in migrant inclusion organizations' involvement with *national* institutions for the purposes of policy influence. This finding will be discussed in greater detail in the Conclusion section of this paper.

Moving beyond the national level, Table 4 displays the range of NGO involvement across a host of EU policy channels, i.e. contacts with different European Union institutions. In broad terms, the data support Hypothesis 3 and show that as cooperative relationships expand beyond the state, migrant inclusion NGOs are more likely to become involved with a range of EU institutions. For example, whereas strong relationships with actors at the national level tend to make EU-level participation less likely, cooperation with EU organizations makes contacts with each of the EU institutions examined significantly more likely. Moreover, those migrant inclusion NGOs that form cooperative relationships with other non-governmental organizations, as well as business associations and labor unions based in other countries, are more likely to extend their policy involvement across a range of EU institutions. More specifically, as migrant inclusion organizations cooperate with other non-national NGOs, they are more likely to interact with the European Commission, European Parliament (EP), the Economic and Social Committee, and Coreper. Similarly, if migrant inclusion NGOs cooperate with non-national business associations and labor unions, they are significantly more likely to interact with the principal EU policymaking institutions—the Commission, EP, and Council—as well as with the Economic and Social Committee. Overall, cooperation with non-national actors makes it significantly more likely that a migrant inclusion NGO will become involved across a range of EU policymaking institutions, and lends further support to the model posited in Figure 1.

| Predictor | Commission | EP | Council | Econ/Soc | Coreper | ECJ |
|--|------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Cooperation | | | | | | |
| national NGOs | 0.45** | 0.89 | 0.72 | 0.68 | 0.02*** | 1.15 |
| national social partners | 1.08 | 0.58** | 0.52** | 0.40*** | 8.40*** | 1.2 |
| EU groups | 5.69*** | 2.90*** | 6.61*** | 2.84*** | 55.69*** | 1.68** |
| non-national NGOs | 1.88** | 2.07** | 2.39 | 3.45*** | 24.56*** | 1.22 |
| non-national social partners | 1.82* | 3.05*** | 3.14*** | 2.19** | 1.34 | 1.37 |
| Openness of National Institutions | | | | | | |
| federal system | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1.55* |
| Left government | 2.22* | 0.86 | 0.39** | 0.77 | 0.11** | 2.40** |
| number of parties | 2.17* | 1.99** | 1.8 | 2.62*** | 0.73 | 1.46 |
| policy context index | 0.22 | 0.26 | 1.1 | 0.05** | 105.47*** | 1.04 |
| policy perceptions index | 1.83* | 1.18 | 1.87*** | 1.82** | 0.05*** | 1.19 |
| Issue Priorities | | | | | | |
| services/care | 0.96 | 1.15 | 1.51 | 0.57* | 1.57 | 1.23 |
| political/legal | --- | --- | 0.54* | 1.80* | --- | --- |
| asylum | 0.70 | 1.21 | --- | --- | 19.59** | 2.37*** |
| Resources | | | | | | |
| EU grant | 0.95 | 0.81 | 1.53 | 1.14 | --- | 0.97 |
| full-time staff | 1.52 | 0.97 | 1.36 | 1.61* | 3.37* | --- |
| age | 0.71 | 1.09 | 2.11* | 0.54** | 9.60** | 0.84 |
| budget | 0.87 | 1.05 | 0.84 | --- | 0.15*** | --- |
| budget increasing | 0.68 | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| volunteers | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1.31 |
| N= | 110 | 112 | 111 | 111 | 112 | 112 |

Table 4. *The Range of Involvement: NGO Participation across EU Institutions.*⁵¹

⁵¹ Note: Table entries are odds ratios from binary logistic regression, where the categories are 0=non-frequent participation by NGOs (rarely + never), 1=somewhat frequent participation by NGOs (sometimes + often). These are interpreted as the degree to which odds of participating "frequently" versus "infrequently" increase or decrease along with changes in the independent variables. Odds ratios greater than 1 represent positive effects, less than 1 represent negative effects. "---" = unable to be calculated due to multicollinearity. ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this paper was to investigate in detail both the range and impact of NGO cooperation, specifically focusing on how cooperation influences the involvement of migrant inclusion groups in multi-level policy processes. While much work documents NGO influence particularly at the international level or in global governance, this study took a broader view by examining NGO involvement across different levels of governance. In the model used, cooperation with various actors was expected to influence the range of NGO policy involvement. In general, this study found support for its three hypotheses. This indicates that as migrant inclusion NGOs enter into *cooperative* arrangements with strategic actors, they are significantly more likely to *participate* in policymaking at *multiple levels* and across a *range of policy channels*. Thus, cooperation can be regarded as a mobilization tool that potentially impacts NGO policy involvement.

The results of this study inform the theoretical debate over the likelihood and influence of cooperation in policy participation. On the one hand, political economy arguments suggest that NGOs are unlikely to cooperate with one another, because it is cumbersome and costly. Moreover, ideological differences among NGOs can prevent cooperation: framing the issues of cooperation can constitute a major source of disagreement among the organizations (Meyer and Kleidman 1991). The evidence presented here, however, does not support these arguments. While it is not claimed here that the noted hindrances do not exist, this paper clearly shows that migrant inclusion NGOs do indeed cooperate frequently. In addition, the findings are coherent with the contentions that, in general, cooperation can benefit NGOs inasmuch as it allows them to band together in order to wield greater political influence. In other words, cooperation can potentially help NGOs to achieve greater leverage in multi-level policy processes. Although groups undoubtedly compete over members, resources, and influence, this study is in line with the claims that organizations strategically emphasize commonalities and frequently act together when they target the policy process.

Moreover, in comparing activity across different levels of governance, this study has shown that most cooperation takes place within the nation-state. Although there has been a proliferation of studies in recent years on the transnational dimensions of NGO activity, including their role in global governance, the evidence presented here reminds us that the nation-state continues to be the dominant locale for exerting policy influence. The implication is that in ignoring the role of NGOs in national processes, the literature would miss a large and important dimension of organizational political behavior. Although NGOs' involvement at the *transnational* level is growing, we would be left with an incomplete picture of NGOs' political role if studies ignored their *national* activities.

Importantly, however, the reverse is also true. Cooperation between migrant inclusion NGOs and organizations active *at the EU level* was found to clearly contribute to NGO involvement in *national* politics. This means that migrant inclusion NGOs do not limit themselves to cooperating with national actors, even though it may be less difficult and costly to do so. More importantly, it shows that *cooperation* across levels of governance does not *only* facilitate *involvement* across levels of governance. Rather, migrant inclusion NGOs leverage their EU level relationships also to help target more immediate national issues. In other words, although such NGOs may regularly interact with their EU counterparts, their cooperation does not always lead to political action directed toward the EU. This type of cooperation is very likely to focus NGO involvement at the national level,

underscoring the importance of the nation-state in organizations' political efforts, and of the EU in helping to facilitate those efforts.

Finally, it is important to note that although cooperation tends to occur frequently among NGOs and likely serves as a vehicle through which groups can expand their political activities, cooperation does not, by itself, guarantee that they will manage to change policy. This raises the question of whether cooperation is worth the time and effort that groups expend on it. As was explained in the previous section on Cooperation and Social Movement Theory, to the extent that NGOs value the interaction with a broad range of political actors across various levels of governance, cooperation may indeed be worth the effort. It may allow the NGOs to shape the terms of the debate, lobby more strongly, and maintain an active presence within policy circles. In this manner, NGOs are likely to benefit from acting collectively, avoiding many difficulties and costs of acting alone. As a result, groups that value these interactions may wish to reallocate resources in common projects with other NGOs. However, benefits can also be obtained simply by sharing information, advice, or resources to a greater extent. Although the ultimate end goal may be policy change, at the very least cooperation likely allows groups to broaden their networks of political allies.

In sum, migrant inclusion NGOs engage in a wide variety of cooperative relationships and attempt to influence policy processes across multiple levels. Moreover, the evidence of this study shows that cooperation among NGOs and strategic actors happens frequently, and relates to their patterns of involvement in multi-level policy processes. It also shows that *EU-level* cooperation is likely to increase involvement at the *national* level. Overall, the likelihood of NGO involvement in specific political activities or patterns of participation is shaped to a large extent by with whom and how extensively they cooperate in the form of information-sharing, advice-sharing, resource-sharing and undertaking common projects. Thus, the nuances of cooperative relationships between NGOs, various actors and institutions are important. They are mobilizing factors that may benefit NGOs by extending the range of their political involvement.

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