

When do Lithuanian NGDOs Succeed in Influencing Foreign Policy?*

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Abstract. The literature indicates an ever-growing involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in foreign policy and hence an increasing potential for them to exert influence over it. Approaching foreign aid policy as a suitable empirical indicator of a country's foreign policy, this paper examines the case of Lithuanian development NGOs' (NGDOs') influence over bilateral foreign aid policy. Based on the mechanistic approach to social science, this paper demonstrates that NGDO influence is observed when an NGDO has resources to assist decision-makers in policy implementation; when it behaves strategically; and when decision-makers' access to these resources is threatened. Although other NGDO's resources are insufficient to result in the NGDO being able to exercise influence, they help to strengthen the long-term collaborative relationship with decision-makers, which is necessary for the micro-phenomenon of NGDO influence to occur. The paper concludes that the potential influence of Lithuanian NGDOs is limited, constrained by the scant demand for NGDOs' resources and the uncondusive institutional setting. But the paper identifies low issue salience and a focused concentration of valuable resources within Lithuanian NGDOs as factors which increase the likelihood of NGDO influence.

Keywords: Lithuanian NGDOs, policy influence, resources, foreign aid policy, inside lobbying.

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Kada lietuviškoms vystymosi NVO pavyksta daryti įtaką užsienio politikai?

Santrauka. Mokslinėje literatūroje minimas vis didėjantis nevyriausybinių organizacijų (NVO) įsitraukimas į užsienio politiką, tad ir didėjantis NVO potencialas ją paveikti. Šiame straipsnyje vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politika traktuojama kaip empirinis šalies užsienio politikos rodiklis ir juo remiantis nagrinėjama lietuviškų vadinamųjų *vystymosi NVO* (NVVO) įtaka dvišalei Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politikai. Laikantis mechanistinio požiūrio į socialinius mokslus, straipsnyje atskleidžiama, kad NVVO įtaka matoma tais atvejais, kai: a) NVVO turi išteklių, kuriais gali padėti sprendimų priėmėjams įgyvendinti politiką; b) NVVO elgiasi strategiškai; c) kyla grėsmė, kad sprendimų priėmėjų galimybės naudotis NVVO turimais ištekliais bus apribotos. Nors kiti NVVO ištekliai nėra pakankami įtakai sukurti, jie padeda sustiprinti ilgalaikius tarpusavio bendradarbiavimo santykius su sprendimų priėmėjais, o tai – būtina NVVO įtakos reiškinio sąlyga. Straipsnyje daroma išvada, kad potenciali lietuviškų NVVO įtaka yra ribota, ją varžo menka NVVO išteklių paklausa ir nepalankios institucinės sąlygos. Tačiau straipsnyje taip pat pažymėta, kad menkas dėmesys tam tikram politiniam klausimui ir koncentruotai NVVO sutelkti vertingi ištekliai didina NVVO įtakos politikai tikimybę.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: lietuviškos vystymosi NVO (NVVO), įtaka, ištekliai, vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politika, lobizmas.

Introduction

Foreign aid policy (here used interchangeably with “development cooperation policy”), driven by selfless principles of solidarity with poorer countries, but also by selfish national interests¹ is one of the hallmarks of modern developed countries. Thus, it is a good empirical indicator of a country’s foreign policy direction and its political priorities. The study of the foreign aid policies of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) is particularly intriguing, since, as they commenced development cooperation policies due to their EU accession² these countries turned from foreign aid recipients into donors almost overnight. ECE foreign aid policy is, therefore, an especially good testing ground for further understanding of the influence of domestic and international actors over foreign policy.

¹ Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, „Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?“ *Journal of Economic Growth* 5, no. 1 (2000): 33–63, doi:10.1023/A:1009874203400.

² Balázs Szent-Iványi and Simon Lightfoot, *New Europe’s New Development Aid* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 1–228.

Foreign policy processes are dominated by domestic executive decision-makers, though the recent literature³ indicates an increasing involvement, and hence potential influence, of non-state actors, among them non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs of a particular type, whose focus is on development (hereinafter, “development NGOs” or “NGDOs”)⁴, are important foreign aid policy actors. This is primarily because of the distance between foreign aid decision-makers and people in the poorer developing countries, whom (at least to some extent) foreign aid policy targets and benefits, but also because of low domestic public interest in foreign aid policy, given the low direct domestic benefit. Thus, NGDOs driven by their moral vision to help the global poor can help to channel into the policy process public views which otherwise might remain unheard. Besides, NGDOs are often the direct beneficiaries of foreign aid policy as they implement donor government-funded foreign aid projects. The literature⁵ indicates that NGDOs’ power and interests, and consequently their behaviour, can affect the foreign aid policy of the donor country. However, the NGDOs in the ECE countries, which mostly emerged following the launch of development cooperation

³ Frank A. Stengel and Rainer Baumann, “Non-State Actors and Foreign Policy,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.456; Klaus Brummer et al., *Foreign Policy as Public Policy?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1–264.

⁴ Conceptualized here as “self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people”. Anna C. Vakil, “Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs,” *World Development* 25, no. 12 (1997): 2059, doi:10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00098-3. Besides, this research specifically concerns NGDOs, i.e., those which “<...> acclaim and utilise the tenets of international aid as a substantive basis for their existence” (Alan Fowler, “Development NGOs,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, ed. Edwards Michael (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.) located in the donor countries, whilst also recognizing that in a pure form such cases in ECE are rare.

⁵ Erik Lundsgaarde, *The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 1–273; Szent-Iványi, *New Europe’s New Development Aid*, 1–228; Youngwan Kim, “How NGOs Influence US Foreign Aid Allocations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 13, no. 1 (2014): 112–132, doi:10.1111/fpa.12064.

policies after ECE accession to the EU⁶ remain under-researched⁷. Because of low membership and individual participation rates attributed to the communist legacy, regardless of the NGO type, the ECE NGOs are viewed as weaker than their Western counterparts⁸. Although this type of research is informative about the membership densities of NGOs across ECE, it does not inform us how influential they are as political actors. Nonetheless, as observed by Cox⁹, the weakness of NGOs in exercising influence over policy is assumed. Besides, there is a gradual accumulation of literature which reports the ECE NGOs' influence over policy¹⁰, including specifically the influence of NGOs over foreign aid policy¹¹. This identifies the

⁶ Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot, *New Europe's New Development Aid*, 108–109.

⁷ But see Balasz Szent-Iványi and Simon Lightfoot, “Determinants of Civil Society Influence: The Case of International Development and Humanitarian NGOs in the Czech Republic and Hungary,” *Comparative European Politics* (2014), 1–20, doi:10.1057/cep.2014.50; Maja Bučar, Eva Nastav and Anija Mešič, “Development Cooperation in New EU Member States: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations,” in *Private Development Aid in Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 257–291; Galia Chimiak, *The Growth of Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Poland and their Cooperation with Polish Aid* (Warsaw: IFiS Publisher, 2016), 1–288; Krisztina Szabó, Balázs Szent-Iványi and András Tétényi, “While the Cat’s Away, Will the Mice Play? Government-NGO Relations and the Politics of Aid in Hungary,” in *Aid Power and Politics*, eds. Iliana Oliví, Aitor Pérez (Oxon: Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2019), 149–164.

⁸ Caire Wallace, Florian Pichler and Christian Haerper, „Changing Patterns of Civil Society in Europe and America 1995–2005,” *East European Politics and Societies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 3–19, doi:10.1177/0888325411401380; Marc Morjé Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹ Terry Cox, *Interest Representation and State-Society Relations in East Central Europe* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2012).

¹⁰ Brigitte Horváthová and Michael Dobbins, “Organised Interests in the Energy Sector: A Comparative Study of the Influence of Interest Groups in Czechia and Hungary,” *Politics and Governance* 7, no. 1 (2019): 139–151, doi:10.17645/pag.v7i1.1784; Tsveta Petrova and Sidney Tarrow, “Transactional and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007): 74–94, doi:10.1177/0010414006291189; Sándor Gallai et al., “What Makes them Successful? Influential Interest Groups in Hungary (1990–2014),” *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 9 (2015): 1469–1486, doi:10.1080/09668136.2015.1088514.

¹¹ Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot, *New Europe's New Development Aid*, 1–228; Chimiak, *The Growth of Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Poland and their Cooperation with Polish Aid*, 1–288.

NGOs' resources and their mobilisation capacity, as well as their contacts and coalition-building with decision-makers, as sources of the NGOs' power and of successful strategies to exert policy influence.

This scarce literature provides some clues as to what factors might account for NGOs' influence over foreign aid policy. But overall, we know little how the considerably weaker NGOs influence policy. Thus, to understand to what extent NGOs might influence foreign aid policy, this paper aims to fill this knowledge gap by developing a causal NGO influence production mechanism and testing it on a case study of Lithuanian NGO influence. In doing so, it follows the mechanistic approach to social science¹² that views a social phenomenon not as an effect of some intervening variables but as a process, which links the cause and the outcome through an uninterrupted causal mechanism. Through subjecting the causal mechanism to empirical tests, this paper integrates the insights of the literature which identifies the NGOs' resources as their power base and contributes to it by proposing and testing when and how specifically control over certain resources could result in NGOs exerting influence over policy. Empirically, a typical case displaying NGO influence located in Lithuania (which has hitherto been subject to very little research¹³), is analysed because of its high potential to update confidence in the theory with new data¹⁴. In light of the single case study research design, the conclusions primarily concern the case analysed. Nonetheless, as the contexts are similar, the results of this paper could, subject to further empirical tests, help to explain cases of the NGOs' influence observed in the other Baltic States.

¹² Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, Second ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 1–328.

¹³ But see Laure Delcour, "Lithuania: A Hybrid Development Cooperation Policy," in *Development Cooperation of the New EU Member States. Beyond Europeanization*, eds. Ondrej Horký-Hluchán and Simon Lightfoot (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 170–192; Marta Gadeikienė, "Too Weak to Influence? A Case Study of the Lithuanian NGOs in Foreign Aid Policy Making," *Politologija* 87, no. 3 (2017): 130–166, doi:10.15388/Polit.2017.3.10858.

¹⁴ Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, 1–328.

The remainder of this paper first develops the causal mechanism of NGDO influence, basing it on resource dependence literature. Then it moves on to discuss the context of the case study and examines which NGOs' resources are important to Lithuanian foreign aid policy decision-makers; how available they are in the Lithuanian NGO sector; and how the institutional setting affects the resource exchange between decision-makers and the NGDOs. Later, an analysis of two within-case episodes demonstrates how the demand for specific policy implementation resources on behalf of the decision-makers, and the strategic behaviour of the NGDO, results in the NGDO exerting influence. In conclusion, the article discusses to what extent Lithuanian NGDOs might influence foreign aid policy and relates those results to the broader literature examining NGOs' influence.

1. Theoretical Approach and Methodology

The resource-exchange based approach dominates the literature on the interactions between interest groups, including NGOs, and decision-makers¹⁵. Thus, when developing a causal mechanism, resource dependence theory¹⁶ is applied as an overarching conceptual framework. The political influence of NGOs is conceptualized as a mutually beneficial interaction with the decision-making organisation where both sides exchange resources. A non-exhaustive list of resources (also known as policy goods or capacities) includes policy legitimacy, expertise, assistance in policy implementation and member representation¹⁷. According to resource dependence theory, the

¹⁵ Jan Beyers, „Influence,“ in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Interest Groups, Lobbying and Public Affairs*, ed. P. Harris and others (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 5.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Carsten Daugbjerg, Bert Fraussen and Darren Halpin, „Interest Groups and Policy Capacity: Modes of Engagement, Policy Goods and Networks,“ in *Policy Capacity and Governance*, eds. Xun Wu, Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 243–261, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-54675-9_11; Caelesta Braun, “The Captive or the Broker? Explaining Public Agency-Interest Group Interactions,” *Governance (Oxford)* 25, no. 2 (2012): 299, 303, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0491.2012.01567.x.

extent of the NGO's influence depends on the decision-maker's demand for certain resources and the NGO's capacity to supply those resources. The demand is determined by the importance of the resources to the decision-maker, i.e., whether the resources provided by the NGO could help to achieve his/her specific policy objectives, and the availability of alternative resources. Demand for resources could create long-term interdependency between organisations and hence opportunities to influence the behaviour of an organisation which requires those resources, and consequently to influence policy. Following this logic, NGO influence is not a result of some concrete act of NGO lobbying, but rather a micro-phenomenon accompanying the mutually beneficial exchange relationship (interdependency) between the NGO and the decision-making organisation, where the NGO functions as a 'service bureau' assisting the decision-makers and hence facilitating the policy process¹⁸. Besides, because of the duality of roles performed by NGOs (see the Introduction), and especially when there is reliance on public funding, policy and funding environments merge¹⁹. Thus, the decision-makers, which also control the distribution of foreign aid money, are simultaneously conceptualized as the NGOs' donors.

In the literature²⁰ foreign aid is considered a low salience policy. Low salience implies the concentration of decision-making power among the bureaucrats, who in essence deal with the technical and administrative decisions²¹, affects the type of resources demanded as well as the higher likelihood of influence being exerted by NGOs²².

¹⁸ Darren R. Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 1st ed. (Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 178–179, doi:10.4324/9781315817583; Beyers, "Influence," 1–10.

¹⁹ Jennifer E. Mosley, „Keeping the Lights on: How Government Funding Concerns Drive the Advocacy Agendas of Nonprofit Homeless Service Providers,“ *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 22, no. 4 (2012): 843, doi:10.1093/jopart/mus003.

²⁰ Lundsgaarde, *The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid*, 23; Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot, *New Europe's New Development Aid*, 1–228.

²¹ Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Second ed. (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 52.

²² Jan Beyers, „Policy Issues, Organisational Format and the Political Strategies of Interest Organisations,“ *West European Politics* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1188–1211, doi: 10.1080/01402380802372654; Lundsgaarde, *The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid*, 23.

But the literature is inconclusive as to what resources could be valuable to decision-makers. Some literature indicates that policy implementation, member representation, and expertise are the valuable resources²³, whereas the other suggest that policy legitimacy is important²⁴. Therefore, two episodes of the same case study, featuring different NGOs' resources, allows one to test and identify which of the resources specified above are important to Lithuanian foreign aid decision-makers, and could result in the NGO influence.

Based on insights from the literature, this section deconstructs the causal mechanism into sequentially operating parts, which are observed when the mechanism is triggered by the demand for resources on behalf of the decision-makers. The first part of the causal mechanism concerns the strategic behaviour of the NGO. Given the duality of roles performed by NGOs noted in the Introduction, it is well established in the literature²⁵ that NGO behaviour is driven by its moral vision to help the global poor and the organisational interest to survive. At times, these interests may be at odds with each other. In such cases, resource dependence theory²⁶ is straightforward in indicating that the organisational interest to survive should prevail. Thus, given chronic resource scarcity among the NGOs, which could threaten their survival, it is largely expected in the literature that NGOs will adapt to the demands of those who control the resources that are important to them, thus enabling them to become more attractive partners²⁷. In other words, when the decision-makers

²³ Braun, „The Captive or the Broker? Explaining Public Agency-Interest Group Interactions,“ 299, 303.

²⁴ Patrycja Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 174.

²⁵ For an overview see Balazs Szent-Ivanyi, „Practising what they Preach? Development NGOs and the EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa,“ *Third World Quarterly* (2021): 3–4, doi:10.1080/01436597.2021.1964358.

²⁶ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*.

²⁷ Bram Verschuere and Joris De Corte, „Nonprofit Advocacy Under a Third-Party Government Regime: Cooperation or Conflict?“, *Volumas* 26, no. 1 (2015): 222–241, Doi:10.1007/s11266-013-9427-9; Nuno da Silva Themudo, „Managing the Paradox: NGOs, Resource Dependence and Organisational Independence. Case Studies from Mexico and Portugal“ (London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 2004), 77–78, 84.

demonstrate a demand for resources, for example, by launching a call for projects or asking for the opinion of an NGDO, it is expected that the NGDO will adapt so that it can provide the required resource.

Given that resource dependence theory assumes the strategic behaviour of organisations, it is expected that, in addition to adaptation, an NGDO will attempt to change the demands of other organisations so that they better suit the NGDO. This could be done by trying to increase “[...] *the importance of what the influencing organization supplies*”²⁸. In other words, if an NGDO can convince the decision-makers of the value of its resources, this could strengthen their interdependency, and hence pave the way for the NGDO to exercise influence. The literature demonstrates that organisations attempt to establish their identity among external audiences and build a reputation for certain resources²⁹. Also, the NGOs tend to lobby their donors to communicate the relevance of their resources³⁰. Especially when they are reliant on public funding, they tend to intensify, and engage in, more collaborative insider lobbying of their donors³¹. Thus, in parallel to the production of the required resources, it is expected that, by engaging in insider lobbying, an NGDO will attempt to increase the relevance of its resources.

²⁸ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 44–45.

²⁹ Themudo, „Managing the Paradox: NGOs, Resource Dependence and Organisational Independence. Case Studies from Mexico and Portugal“, 84, 222–224; Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 1–240; Caelesta Braun, “Lobbying as a Leveraged Act: On Resource Dependencies and Lobby Presence,” in *The Organization Ecology of Interest Communities*, eds. David Lowery, Darren Halpin and Virginia Gray (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 141, doi:10.1057/9781137514318_8.

³⁰ Hudock, 1997a, cited in Themudo, „Managing the Paradox: NGOs, Resource Dependence and Organisational Independence. Case Studies from Mexico and Portugal“, 84.

³¹ Mosley, „Keeping the Lights on: How Government Funding Concerns Drive the Advocacy Agendas of Nonprofit Homeless Service Providers,” 841–866; Malin Arvidson, Håkan Johansson and Roberto Scaramuzzino, „Advocacy Compromised: How Financial, Organizational and Institutional Factors Shape Advocacy Strategies of Civil Society Organizations,” *Voluntas* 29, no. 4 (2018): 844–856, doi:10.1007/s11266-017-9900-y; Verschuere, De Corte, “Nonprofit Advocacy Under a Third-Party Government Regime: Cooperation Or Conflict?”, 222–241.

Thirdly, in the resource dependence framework, the power of one organisation over another largely derives from its control over resources. Hence, what are assumed to be complementary processes, the production of the required resources and the attempt to increase their relevance, are expected, if the supply of alternative resources remains stable, to strengthen the interdependency between the interacting organisations. Based on resource dependence assumptions, the interdependency would increase because the NGDO has managed to change in its favour the preferences of the decision-makers concerning the NGDO's resources³².

Finally, when access to a required resource is threatened, an interdependent organisation is expected to comply with the preferences of the organisation that controls this resource, though full compliance is problematic³³. Nor is this expected by the decision-making organisation, given its much lesser dependence on an NGDO than vice versa. Hence, coordination of behaviour is more likely, with trust being a key element for the emergence of general norms coordinating such inter-organisational behaviour³⁴. The literature³⁵ links the emergence of trust to interactions and social contacts in the past, to the positive reputation of actors, and to the expectation of future mutual benefits. The term "coordination of behaviour", originally found in resource dependence theory, in political science terminology should rather be understood in the sense that the NGDO's voice was a significant one in the policy debate³⁶. Thus, the last part of the causal mechanism expects that, in order to retain access to an important resource, when taking a foreign policy decision, the decision-making organisation considers the NGDO's resources and preferences, in the framework of which the NGDO's influence might be anticipated and observed.

³² Werner Nienhüser, „Resource Dependence Theory: How Well does it Explain Behavior of Organizations?“ *Management Revue* 19, no. 2 (2008): 27.

³³ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 94–95.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 144, 149.

³⁵ Joop Koppenjan and Erik-Hans Klijn, *Managing Uncertainties in Networks: A Network Approach to Problem Solving and Decision Making* (London: Routledge, 2004), 86–87.

³⁶ Based on Maloney et al., 1994 cited in Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 182.

As no resource exchange occurs in a vacuum³⁷, the supply of foreign aid policy related resources in the Lithuanian NGO sector and institutional setting are distinguished as scope conditions defining the context in which the hypothesized causal mechanism operates. Firstly, according to the resource dependence framework³⁸, the availability of alternative resources is important because low supply increases the potential for influence by the limited number of organisations controlling the demanded resource. Secondly, by distributing the decision-making power among the involved organisations³⁹, and therefore by shaping the groups' access to the policymaking process⁴⁰, the institutional setting is one of the factors determining the interest group's influence⁴¹. In summary, it is expected that the causal NGO influence production mechanism will operate in the manner depicted in Figure 1.

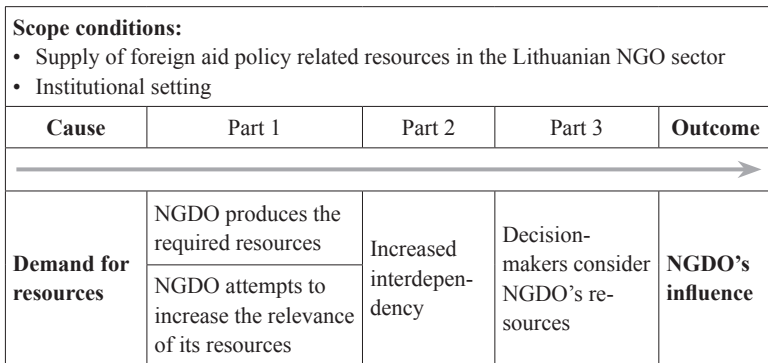


Figure 1. *NGDO Influence Production Mechanism* (Figure by the author)

³⁷ Beyers, „Influence,“ 5.

³⁸ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 144, 149.

³⁹ Milner, 1997 cited in Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 142.

⁴⁰ Lundsgaarde, *The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid*, 1–273.

⁴¹ Andreas Dür and Dirk De Bievre, „The Question of Interest Group Influence,“ *Journal of Public Policy* 27, no. 1 (2007): 1–12, doi:10.1017/S0143814X07000591.

The causal mechanism is constructed on the level of interactions between the concrete organisations: specifically, between an NGDO, i.e., the National Non-Governmental Development Cooperation Organisations' Platform (NGDO Platform), whose influence over foreign aid policy is observed, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which is primarily responsible for the foreign aid policy of Lithuania⁴², including the distribution of the greatest share of bilateral foreign aid⁴³. According to Lithuanian legislation, the Government, the President and the Parliament are the other institutions responsible for foreign policy in Lithuania, but in practical terms decision-making is concentrated within the MFA. Moreover, during the period analysed here, a broad consensus and continuity of Lithuanian foreign policy goals and strategies existed among those key institutions⁴⁴. But the MFA is not a homogenous and monolithic organisation. Pfeffer and Salancik⁴⁵ emphasized that power is distributed differently even within the same organisation and that the power of an organisational unit depends on the resources it controls. As far as Lithuanian foreign aid policy is concerned, much of the decision-making power is concentrated within the Development Cooperation Department of the MFA (hereinafter “the Department”), but it is also shared with other MFA units. The interactions analysed here mostly concern this specific Department, but for the sake of textual clarity, the decision-makers in the Department are generically

⁴² “Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Lithuania,” *Valstybės žinios* 57-2850 (2013).

⁴³ Vygantė Mizgerytė and Julius Zubė, „Kurk Lietuvai“ programos projekto „Lietuvos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo politikos veiksmingumo stiprinimas“, vykdomo kartu su Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidento kanceliarija ir Užsienio reikalų ministerija, galutinė ataskaita (projektas) [A Draft Final Report of the Project “Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Lithuanian Development Cooperation Policy” Jointly Implemented by the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Carried Out within the “Create Lithuania” Programme] (2021).

⁴⁴ Giedrius Česnakas and Gerda Jakštaitė, “Lithuania’s Foreign Policy in the Public Policy Cycle: Efficient Evaluation is Still Missing,” *Public Policy and Administration* 18, no. 1 (2019): 25.

⁴⁵ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 44–45.

referred to as “the MFA”. It is acknowledged that to take the position of the Department or its employees as the position of the entire organisation is a simplification and a limitation of this paper, especially when the Department has its own organisational interests (which may not always be compatible with those of other MFA units), separate resources, and hence separate power. However, given the scope of this paper, this is the only viable option for operationalisation.

Here, influence is defined as “*as an actor’s ability to shape a decision in line with her preferences*”⁴⁶. Such a conceptualization implies the observation of political outputs for the apparent effects of power that are indicative of the actor’s influence⁴⁷. Empirically the approximation of the policy outputs to the preferences of an NGO is observed, i.e., a preference attainment method⁴⁸. NGO influence over the policy outputs might range from minor, concerning the changes to the means of otherwise unaltered foreign aid policy goals, to major, referring to influence over the changed policy goals⁴⁹. The preference attainment method implies a focus on the so-called 1st face of power⁵⁰. Other power conceptions⁵¹ therefore remain outside this paper.

Following the process-tracing method’s guidelines⁵², in the remainder of this paper, each part of the theorized causal mechanism (see Figure 1) is empirically tested by searching for confirmatory evidence. Because causal mechanisms are expected to operate in an uninterrupted “cogs and wheels” manner, confirmatory evidence con-

⁴⁶ Nagel, 1975, 29 cited in Andreas Dür, „Measuring Interest Group Influence in the EU,” *European Union Politics* 9, no. 4 (2008), 561, doi:10.1177/1465116508095151.

⁴⁷ Dür, „The Question of Interest Group Influence,” 3.

⁴⁸ Beyers, „Influence,” 2.

⁴⁹ Based on Jakob Gustavsson, „Studying Foreign Policy Change,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 34, no. 1 (1999), 76.

⁵⁰ Robert Dahl A., „The Concept of Power,” *Journal of the Society for General Systems Research* 2, no. 3 (1957), 202–203.

⁵¹ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, „Two Faces of Power,” *The American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (1962): 947–952, doi:10.2307/1952796; Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London; New York: Macmillan, 1974).

⁵² Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, 1–328.

cerning a part of the mechanism increases confidence in the overall mechanism, and vice versa, when no evidence is found. The Methodological Appendix should be consulted for the operationalisation of the mechanism and the proposed confirmatory evidence. The causal mechanism is empirically tested on a positive case of NGDO influence, i.e., where, at least in theory, the hypothesized causal mechanism operates⁵³. Moreover, this case concerns the NGDO Platform, which is an umbrella organisation, and which could potentially control not only assistance in policy implementation and expertise but also, given the significant number of its members, resources of member representation and policy legitimisation. Therefore, two different episodes of the same case study (though concerning different NGDO resources) are analysed to test whether different resources could result in NGDO influence over policy. The data has been derived from multiple sources, primarily documents and semi-structured interviews. As a former insider researcher⁵⁴, the author brings in her personal observations.

2. Context of the Lithuanian NGDO's Influence

Separate estimates indicate that there are between 10,000 and 30,000 Lithuanian NGOs⁵⁵. Development NGOs comprise a small fraction of this number – less than a hundred of them were counted, and most of the NGDOs do not specialize in development cooperation and therefore have little expertise⁵⁶. In addition, most Lithuanian NGOs engage very few people⁵⁷, they are small and financially un-

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ During the period examined, I was the director of the analyzed NGDO.

⁵⁵ Ieva Petronytė-Urbonavičienė, „Lithuania: Slow but Visible Progress,“ in *2017 Report on the State of Civil Society in the EU and Russia* (EU-Russia Civil Society Forum e.V., 2017), 56–77; Rūta Žiliukaitė, “Quantitative Growth of the NGO Sector in Lithuania: When the Number of Organizations Increases without Significant Effects on Participation Level,” *Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmai* 30, no. 1 (2012): 243–244.

⁵⁶ Gadeikienė, „Too Weak to Influence? A Case Study of the Lithuanian NGDOs in Foreign Aid Policy Making,“ 130–166; observations of the author.

⁵⁷ Žiliukaitė, „Quantitative Growth of the NGO Sector in Lithuania: When the Number of Organizations Increases without Significant Effects on Participation Level,“ 247.

stable⁵⁸, and their income is mostly derived from project-based grants⁵⁹. Thus, the Lithuanian NGO sector is largely influenced by public donor priorities, which prioritize service delivery⁶⁰ consequently allowing one to assume that Lithuanian NGOs are well-endowed with policy implementation resources, but less so with resources such as member representation, policy legitimacy, and expertise. Altogether, this indicates that potentially very few Lithuanian NGOs have the resources to assist foreign aid decision-makers and, where they do, it is mostly in the sphere of policy implementation.

Secondly, the institutional environment setting the boundaries of potential NGO influence has evolved as a result of historic legacies, characterized by the lack of a state tradition of including NGOs in policymaking⁶¹. On the other hand, the opportunities for NGOs' engagement in policymaking have been expanded by the diffusion, learning and adaptation processes that are associated with Europeanization⁶², including Lithuania's accession to the OECD⁶³. Therefore, the institutional setting features several formal opportunities for NGOs' engagement in policymaking but has significant gaps in their implementation⁶⁴. Alongside institutionalized forms of

⁵⁸ Paulius Murauskas and Gabija Lukšaitė, *NGO Landscape in Lithuania: Legal Setting and Current Practices* (Transparency International Lithuanian Chapter, 2016).

⁵⁹ FHI360, *The 2019 CSO Sustainability Index Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (2020).

⁶⁰ NGO Law Institute, *Pilietinės visuomenės plėtros agentūra. Galimybių studija [Civil Society Development Agency. Feasibility Study]* (Vilnius, 2017).

⁶¹ Delcour, "Lithuania: A Hybrid Development Cooperation Policy," 170–192.

⁶² Heather Grabbe, "How does Europeanization Affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity," *Journal of European Public Policy* 8, no. 6 (2001): 1013–1031, doi:10.1080/13501760110098323; Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, 69, 76.

⁶³ Vitalis Nakrošis, "The Agendas of Public Administration Reforms in Lithuania: Windows of Opportunity in the Period 2004–2017," *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* 11, no. 1 (2018): 108, doi:10.2478/nispa-2018-0004.

⁶⁴ Civil Society Institute, *Valdžios ir nevyriausybinių sektorių bendradarbiavimo viešosios politikos sprendimų priėmimo procese stiprinimas [Enhancement of Cooperation between the Public and Non-Governmental Sectors in Public Policy Decision-Making]* (Vilnius, 2015); Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, 80.

access, informal consultation practices are relatively common⁶⁵, but contact with NGOs is mostly kept for legitimizing policy results⁶⁶. A shadow of historic legacies, evidenced in negative attitudes among decision-makers towards lobbying, which is associated with corruption⁶⁷, continue to undermine NGOs' participation in policymaking. In summary, the institutional setting creates little pressure for decision-makers to engage NGOs in policymaking, especially in the stages which precede policy implementation, and which imply the joint formulation of policies.

Before moving onto the examination of the specific case, the following section analyses the Lithuanian foreign aid policy architecture in search for evidence which might identify the decision makers' demand for NGOs' resources. The main driver for introducing foreign aid policy in Lithuania has, without doubt, been its accession to the EU⁶⁸. But here it is important to distinguish between multilateral and bilateral policy, though Lithuanian foreign aid policy is comprised of both. The pressure on Lithuania from EU accession mostly concerned multilateral policy and funding for joint EU development cooperation efforts⁶⁹. Some even argue that multilateral foreign aid

⁶⁵ OECD, Lithuania: Fostering Open and Inclusive Policy Making (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015).

⁶⁶ Birutė Pitrenaitė-Žilėnienė et al., *Įtrauktis: Ką geba Lietuvos asociacijos? [Inclusion: What the Lithuanian Associations are Capable of?]* (Vilnius: Mykolas Riomeris University, 2016), 441–443; Gadeikienė, “Too Weak to Influence? A Case Study of the Lithuanian NGOs in Foreign Aid Policy Making,” 130–166; Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, 216.

⁶⁷ Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, 216.

⁶⁸ Bernotas, cited in The European NGOs for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Population and Development, Report of EuroNGOs Conference “Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Internationally: What Role for the Enlarged EU?” (Vilnius, 2006).

⁶⁹ European Commission, Regular Report from the Commission on Lithuania's Progress Towards Accession 2002. SEC (2002) 1406 Final, 2002.

policy would have been sufficient to meet EU accession demands⁷⁰. Thus, bilateral foreign aid policy, which is more susceptible to influence by domestic politics⁷¹ especially given weak EU conditionality⁷² is of interest here. The influence of domestic politics is well demonstrated in Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid policy, which is used as a foreign policy instrument to ensure the country's security and foreign policy goals, primarily within its close neighbourhood of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and the EU, as well as a means of furthering the MFA's organisational interests.

Lithuanian foreign aid policy comprises only a small fraction of all the MFA's work concerning the formulation and implementation of Lithuanian foreign policy⁷³. Thus, given the significant number of MFA functions⁷⁴, realistically the demand for NGO resources cannot be very high. On the other hand, the very fact that Lithuania has a bilateral foreign aid policy is revelatory of the diversity of the resources required. Firstly, in the delivery of bilateral foreign aid policy, the decision-makers require not only finance but also development cooperation expertise, which is in short supply at the Lithuanian MFA⁷⁵. Most importantly, they require assistance to implement development cooperation policy because such resources are scarcely available in the MFA, which focuses on diplomacy, and especially

⁷⁰ See Simon Lightfoot and Balázs Szent-Iványi, "The Forgotten Chapter? Post-Accession Development Policy of Central and Eastern Europe," in *Reviewing European Union Accession*, eds. Tom Hashimoto, Michael Rhimes, Vol. 67 (Brill, 2017), 243–258, doi:10.1163/9789004352070_015.

⁷¹ Clair Apodaca, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy Tool* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁷² Ulrich Sedelmeier, „Europeanisation in New Member and Candidate States,“ *Living Reviews in European Governance* 6 (2011), 1–52, doi:10.12942/lreg-2011-1. <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2011-1>.

⁷³ Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Lithuania.

⁷⁴ Nutarimas „Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerijos nuostatų patvirtinimo“ [Decree on the Approval of the Operational Rules of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania], *Valstybės žinios*, 1998-09-30, no. 85-2378 (2021).

⁷⁵ Delcour, "Lithuania: A Hybrid Development Cooperation Policy," 170–192.

because organisationally the effectiveness of Lithuanian foreign aid policy is primarily assessed through the implemented bilateral projects⁷⁶. Indeed, the choice of the grants mechanism for bilateral foreign aid policy delivery reveals that, in policy implementation, the MFA relies on the resources primarily of the NGDOs⁷⁷. As for the other resources identified in the literature (see Section 1) – expertise, policy legitimacy and member representation – only very weak evidence has been found during the period under analysis that would confirm the demand for those resources within the MFA. In short, the evidence collected demonstrates that the NGDOs’ assistance in implementing bilateral foreign aid policy is the most demanded (important) resource to Lithuanian foreign aid decision-makers.

A policy implementation resource should be understood as an umbrella term because different functions are performed when, for example, promoting democracy in the EaP or raising Lithuanian public awareness. Bound by its mission an individual NGDO is insufficiently versatile so as to be able to adapt to and perform all those functions. Thus, in respect of the case analysed here, a resource of public awareness-raising on foreign aid can be distinguished. Public awareness-raising is a rather low salience issue within Lithuanian foreign aid policy, as demonstrated by its funding, which comprises only a few per cent of Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid, the majority of which is allocated to the EaP countries⁷⁸. Nonetheless, it is important, as the lack of public awareness and support for Lithuanian

⁷⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerijos (24.900.0554) 2012–2014 strateginis veiklos planas [the Strategic Activity Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania for 2012–2014] (Vilnius, 2012); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuanian Republic, Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerijos (24.900.0554) 2014–2016 strateginis veiklos planas [the Strategic Activity Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania for 2014–2016] (Vilnius, 2014).

⁷⁷ Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Republic of Lithuania.

⁷⁸ Indrė Augutienė, Globalusis švietimas – esama situacija, poreikiai ir galimybės [Global Education – Current Situation, Needs and Opportunities] (NGDO Platform, 2019).

foreign aid policy⁷⁹ directly undermines the MFA's organisational interests, resulting in a foreign aid funding shortage⁸⁰. Moreover, in 2015 the MFA, as a national coordinator of the European Year for Development (EYD 2015), required assistance in implementing public awareness-raising on foreign aid. The MFA's reputation internationally also depended on the successful implementation of EYD 2015⁸¹, for which it had received a grant from the European Commission (EC). To conclude, there is ample evidence demonstrating that specific NGDO assistance in implementing public awareness-raising on foreign aid is among the MFA's most demanded (important) resources.

3. How Did the Lithuanian NGDO Influence Policy?

The NGDO whose influence over policy is analysed here is the NGDO Platform. As an association uniting the development NGOs, it aims to represent the interests of its member organisations and contribute to the formation and implementation of foreign aid policy⁸². Though members' interest representation is at the core of the NGDO Platform's mission, during the period analysed the financial contributions of its members made up a fraction of its annual income (see Figure 2) and could not ensure its organisational survival. As grants from the EC and the Lithuanian foreign aid were a major funding source (in some years comprising close to 100% of the total organisation's budget), it is evident that the NGDO Platform is reliant on public funding.

⁷⁹ Vilmorus, *Reprezentatyvios Lietuvos gyventojų apklausos apie vystomąjį bendradarbiavimą rezultatai* [the Results of the Representative Survey of the Lithuanian Inhabitants on Development Cooperation], (2015).

⁸⁰ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 5, Interview by the author, July 21, 2016; Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 1, Interview by the author, January 12, 2021.

⁸¹ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 13, Interview by the author, March 18, 2021.

⁸² NGDO Platform, *Statutes of the NGDO Platform* (State Enterprise Centre of Registers, 2008).

| Year | 2008 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Total public donor funding in the NGDO Platform's budget | 94% | 94% | 98% | 74% | 97% | 87% | 93% | 99,7% |
| % of EC origin funds in the NGDO Platform's budget | 0% | 44% | 61% | 53% | 86% | 52% | 26% | 0% |
| % of Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid in the NGDO Platform's budget | 94% | 12% | 27% | 21% | 10% | 35% | 67% | 99,7% |

Figure 2. The NGDO Platform's Dependency on Public Funds (Figure by the author)

3.1. Episode no. 1: Evolving Interdependency without Noticeable Influence

There is strong evidence confirming that the expected adaptation of the NGDO to the demand for resources resulted in the production of the required resources – see part 1 in Figure 1. The data demonstrates that, especially in the period between 2010 and 2014, the NGDO Platform changed its structure, increased the autonomy of its secretariat, and profoundly modified its policy portfolio, thus enabling the NGDO to produce the required resources. This process was primarily triggered by the demand for policy implementation resources on the part of the EC, which funded most of the NGDO Platform's activities during this period (see Figure 2).

The fact that since 2008 the NGDO Platform has been continuously awarded public awareness-raising project grants from Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid (see Figure 2) demonstrates the demand for policy implementation resources on behalf of the Lithuanian MFA and their supply by the NGDO Platform. Thus, as expected, in parallel to the production of the required resources, we find evidence of the NGDO Platform's attempts to increase the relevance of its resources – see part 1 in Figure 1. For example, during the Lithuanian EU Presidency

(2013), the NGDO Platform invested in building its identity as a development cooperation expert, targeting mostly the decision-makers at the MFA⁸³. As a result, it became recognized as a professional partner by the MFA officials⁸⁴. Specifically, the MFA respondents⁸⁵ identified the NGDO Platform as a representative of the NGDO community, recognized its expertise, and valued its input concerning Lithuanian multilateral foreign aid policy as increasing the legitimacy of the policy process. Yet it is important not to overestimate the observed demand for expertise, member representation and policy legitimacy, and thus the strength of evolving interdependency. There is very little evidence indicating the importance of these resources to the MFA (see section 2); and some of the policy issues⁸⁶ advocated by the NGDO Platform were not considered relevant by the MFA's decision-makers⁸⁷. Still, there is evidence of a higher degree of access granted to the NGDO Platform: firstly, by institutionalizing its access to the National Development Cooperation Commission⁸⁸, more regular informal consultations⁸⁹, which, as hypothesized, confirms an increasing interdependency between the organisations – see part 2 in Figure 1.

This episode might be characterized as the evolving interdependency between the organisations, which, besides policy imple-

⁸³ NGDO Platform, “Annual Activity and Financial Report of the NGDO Platform of 2013” (NGDO Platform’s Digital Archive, 2014a).

⁸⁴ Unknown consultancy, “External Project Evaluation Report of the Project “Quality Partnership for Development – EU Presidency Project for the Lithuanian EU Presidency, 2013” (no. DCINSA 2013/319214)” (NGDO Platform’s Digital Archive, 2014).

⁸⁵ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 5, Interview by the author; Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 6, Interview by the author, August 27, 2020.

⁸⁶ Such as the principle of policy coherence for development. Based on a moral vision to benefit the global poor it was promoted to be applied for the Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid policies.

⁸⁷ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 5, Interview by the author.

⁸⁸ Nutarimas „Dėl nacionalinės vystomojo bendradarbiavimo komisijos sudarymo ir jos nuostatų patvirtinimo“ [A Decree on the Composition of the National Development Cooperation Commission and the Adoption of its Provisions], *TAR*, 2014-01-20, no. 285 (2014).

⁸⁹ Observations of the author.

mentation, features an exchange of policy legitimacy, expertise, and membership representation resources. Confirmatory evidence of some parts of the hypothesized causal mechanism is found, notably of the NGDO's strategic behaviour and increased interdependency. But there is no proof of the NGDO's influence over bilateral foreign aid policy outcomes. Certainly, instances of decisive NGO influence defined as their attained preference overall are very hard to come by⁹⁰. But the author's interpretation is that in this period the magnitude of the resource exchange between the MFA and the NGDO Platform was low, especially insofar as it concerned policy implementation resources important to the MFA. The access to this resource for the MFA was not particularly threatened and therefore the observed interdependency did not result in the NGDO influence.

3.2. Episode no. 2: Strengthened Interdependency and Coordination of Behaviour

As discussed in section 2, the EYD 2015 national coordinator role, and thus the concern for the MFA's reputation internationally, strengthened the demand for a specific policy implementation resource related to public awareness-raising on foreign aid. This was observed in the MFA's specific call for proposals, which attracted only 16 applicants⁹¹, including the NGDO Platform, demonstrating the limited availability of the required policy implementation resource.

As expected (see part 1 in Figure 1), the confirmatory evidence of the NGDO Platform's adaptation to produce the required public awareness-raising resource was found; i.e., bound by its obligations

⁹⁰ Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 182.

⁹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, „Užsienio reikalų ministerijos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo ir humanitarinės pagalbos teikimo komisijos posėdžio protokolas“ [the Protocol of the Meeting of Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Commission] (The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Description no 2b.3532, 2015).

to implement the projects granted by the MFA, the NGDO Platform concentrated mostly on implementing information campaigns⁹².

As discussed in “Theoretical Approach and Methodology”, organisational interests, when reliant on public funding, tend to dominate NGO behaviour, resulting in attempts to increase the relevance of its resources, which is evidenced in the intensified, more collaborative insider lobbying. Indeed, Figure 2 demonstrates that the EYD 2015 funding provided by the MFA, comprising almost 2/3 of the NGDO Platform’s annual budget, made the NGDO highly reliant on public funding from Lithuanian foreign aid. The very limited and largely non-confrontational insider lobbying observed was due to a lack of resources, as most of the NGDO Platform’s energy was consumed in maintaining the funding relationship with the MFA, and less because of self-censorship as suggested by Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot⁹³. But the data also demonstrates that, during this period, the insider lobbying targeted at the MFA was mostly initiated concerning issues directly related to the NGDO Platform’s and its members’ organisational interests⁹⁴. Especially intensive was the insider lobbying to promote the NGDO Platform’s development volunteers’ programme, its added value to public awareness-raising, and to broker its funding because of uncertainty concerning the organisation’s survival beyond EYD 2015⁹⁵. Taken as a whole, this evidence allows one to confirm that the NGDO’s strategic behaviour sought to increase the relevance of its resources as part 1 of the causal mechanism (see Figure 1).

⁹² NGDO Platform, “Annual Activity and Financial Report of the NGDO Platform of 2015” (NGDO Platform’s Digital Archive, 2016).

⁹³ Szent-Iványi, Lightfoot, “Determinants of Civil Society Influence: The Case of International Development and Humanitarian NGOs in the Czech Republic and Hungary,” 1–20.

⁹⁴ NGDO Platform, “Annual Activity and Financial Report of the NGDO Platform of 2015”; observations of the author.

⁹⁵ NGDO Platform, “Internal Memo „Tarptautinė GLEN savanorių programa“ [GLEN International Volunteer Programme]” (NGDO Platform’s Digital Archive, 2014b); observations by the author.

Given that the NGDO Platform was implementing the MFA funded EYD 2015 projects, interdependency between the organisations might already be assumed⁹⁶. Besides this, and apart from the collaborative relationship already established (see section 3.1), there is some evidence of an even further increased interdependency. This is demonstrated by the very positive reputation of the NGDO Platform within the MFA due to its good project implementation track record⁹⁷, even being referred to as a key implementing partner, especially in public awareness-raising⁹⁸. Additionally, the NGDO Platform provided the required development cooperation expertise and policy legitimacy⁹⁹ which were especially valuable to the MFA during the EYD 2015¹⁰⁰. Contrary to expectations, there is no evidence that the degree of access granted to the NGDO Platform somehow significantly changed. Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence to confirm increased interdependency as part 2 of the causal mechanism (see Figure 1).

Alongside the parts of the causal mechanism already confirmed, i.e., the production of the required resources, the NGDO's attempts to increase the relevance of its resources, as well as the increased interdependency, evidence of coordination of behaviour as part 3 of the causal mechanism was found. It was demonstrated through the creation of trust and decisions stabilizing access to the required resources. First, as expected on the basis of the literature¹⁰¹ that links

⁹⁶ Lester M. Salamon, "The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action: An Introduction," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28, no. 5 (2001): 1611–1674.

⁹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, „Užsienio reikalų ministerijos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo ir humanitarinės pagalbos teikimo komisijos posėdžio protokolas“ [the Protocol of the Meeting of Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Commission] (The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Description no. 3845, 2017).

⁹⁸ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 1, Interview by the author.

⁹⁹ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 6, Interview by the author.

¹⁰⁰ European Commission, "Guidelines for Designated National Beneficiaries. National Work Programmes of Member States for the European Year for Development 2015. Reference: EuropeAid/136046/DH/ACT/Multi" (The Digital Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Koppenjan and Klijn, *Managing Uncertainties in Networks: A Network Approach to Problem Solving and Decision Making*, 86–87.

the emergence of trust to interactions and social contacts in the past and to the positive reputation of the actors, in light of their lengthy and positive experience of previous collaboration, trust was similarly expressed towards the NGDO Platform¹⁰². Secondly, resource dependence theory suggests that, when access to valuable resources is threatened, interdependent organisations coordinate behaviour. This coordination might be inferred if, besides trust, evidence is collected of social norms facilitating coordination and of decisions stabilizing access to a demanded resource. Indeed, in view of the collaborative relationship (interdependency) between the MFA and the NGDO Platform, it might have been assumed that the lack of funding faced by the NGDO Platform beyond EYD 2015, threatening its survival, could have affected the decision-makers' access to their valued policy resources, especially in public awareness-raising. Moreover, several decisions and norms facilitating coordination could be identified such as reasonably regular informal meetings, the decision to fund the NGDO Platform's development volunteers' programme, and other operational decisions reflecting the preference for acquiring and maintaining access to policy implementation resources from a particular NGDO¹⁰³.

In the framework of such coordination of behaviour between the interdependent and trusting organisations, we find a policy output – an explicitly phrased commitment to fund development volunteers¹⁰⁴. This policy output clearly reflects the NGDO Platform's preference,

¹⁰² Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no 1, Interview by the author.

¹⁰³ E.g., directly offering to the NGDO Platform a service implementation contract related to public awareness (observations of the author), and relaunching the public awareness-raising call for proposals when the NGDO Platform's proposal could not be evaluated because of its late submission Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania („Užsienio reikalų ministerijos vystomojo bendradarbiavimo ir humanitarinės pagalbos teikimo komisijos posėdžio protokolas“ [the Protocol of the Meeting of Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Commission], (2017).

¹⁰⁴ Nutarimas „Dėl vystomojo bendradarbiavimo tarpinstitucinio plano patvirtinimo“ [A Decree on the Approval of the Interinstitutional Development Cooperation Plan], TAR, 2016-09-26, no 24060. *Valid Summary from January 1, 2019* (2016).

thus allowing one to infer its influence. It should not be assumed that this decision was somehow negotiated between the organisations. The NGDO Platform was not directly involved in the formulation of a given clause appearing in the interinstitutional triannual bilateral foreign aid policy strategy¹⁰⁵ and drafted by the decision-makers at the MFA¹⁰⁶. Moreover, this policy output did not have an implicit reference to a particular NGDO. But, according to the observations of the author, the NGDO Platform was at that time the sole potential provider of such a volunteering programme. In sum, it can be concluded that, due to the NGDO Platform's valuable resources and its strategic behaviour, the preferences of the MFA's decision-makers shifted closer to those advocated by the NGDO Platform, thereby increasing the interorganisational interdependency¹⁰⁷ and resulting in the NGDO influence. The author's interpretation is that the decision-makers' preferences concerning the means for public awareness-raising changed as they were persuaded that it could equally well be implemented through volunteering. Thus, due to the interdependency primarily based on policy implementation resource, when the decision-makers' access to this resource was threatened, the decision-makers took into consideration the NGDO's resources and preferences when drafting the triannual bilateral foreign aid policy strategy. This allows one to infer that the NGDO exercised a degree of influence.

Conclusions

In exploring to what extent Lithuanian NGDOs have been able to influence foreign aid policy, this paper has developed and tested the

¹⁰⁵ Projektas „Nutarimas dėl vystomojo bendradarbiavimo 2017–2019 metų politikos krypčių ir tarpinstitucinio vystomojo bendradarbiavimo 2017–2019 metų veiklos plano patvirtinimo“ [Project of A Decree on the Approval of the Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines for 2017–2019 and Interinstitutional Development Cooperation Plan for 2017–2019], (2016).

¹⁰⁶ Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no. 1, Interview by the author.

¹⁰⁷ Nienhüser, “Resource Dependence Theory: How Well does it Explain Behavior of Organizations?,” 9–32.

causal NGO influence production mechanism – see Figure 1. This mechanism, operating in a “cogs and wheels” manner based upon the assumptions of the resource dependence theory, assumes that the NGO influence production process is triggered by the demand for resources made on behalf of the decision-makers. In response to this demand, a resource-poor NGO behaves strategically by adapting, as well as attempting, to increase the relevance of its resources among the decision-makers. As a result, the interdependency between the organisations increases. Alongside the emergence of trust, this leads to a coordination of behaviour, in the framework of which the NGO’s influence might be inferred if the relevant foreign aid policy decision reflects the NGO’s preference.

Summing up the empirical analysis, the Lithuanian foreign aid policy architecture and, in particular, the implementation of bilateral foreign aid policy relying upon the assistance of the NGOs, accords to the Lithuanian MFA the role of the main decision-making organisation and makes the NGOs subject to interdependency – and consequently, subject to mutual influence, because each controls resources which are valuable for the other. The analysis of two episodes concerning the same case study has allowed us to test the causal influence production mechanism when the NGO controls alternative resources. In conclusion, the collected evidence confirmed that the causal mechanism operates as hypothesized in Figure 1. Secondly, the NGO’s influence could be inferred when the mechanism was triggered by demand for assistance in policy implementation, but not by demand for development expertise, member representation and policy legitimacy. This is consistent with the resource dependence framework¹⁰⁸ because the latter resources do not seem to be very important for the decision-makers at the MFA in achieving their objectives, when dealing with technical and administrative decisions. However, the data demonstrated that development expertise, member representation and policy legitimacy contributed to the interdepend-

¹⁰⁸ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 46–47.

ency between the organisations, strengthening it when the MFA's international reputation was concerned.

In the light of the broader literature, these findings do not come as a surprise, since the importance of policy implementation resources to decision-makers¹⁰⁹, especially in the field of foreign policy¹¹⁰ has already been demonstrated. This is partly because foreign policy decision-makers are reluctant to include NGOs in the formulation of policies. Therefore, NGOs' inclusion only in policy implementation stage makes it easier to utilize NGOs in achieving the preformulated policy goals¹¹¹. The contextual analysis has demonstrated that in Lithuania this trend is reinforced by the institutional setting, which still features historical legacies and creates little pressure for decision-makers to engage NGOs in policymaking, especially in the policy formulation stages preceding implementation, thus leading them not to demand resources other than assistance in policy implementation. In summary, this case study has allowed one to infer the existence of some NGDO influence over Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid policy. But it has also demonstrated that the extent of this NGDO influence is small, as it concerns a relatively instrumental aspect of the means of how to achieve a pre-formulated foreign aid policy goal.

The issue salience and characteristics of the Lithuanian NGDO sector merit separate attention. First, the Lithuanian NGDOs lack foreign aid-related resources, especially resources other than assistance in policy implementation. In addition, they are concentrated among very few Lithuanian NGDOs. According to the resource dependence theory, a higher degree of influence is expected if an alternative supply of the demanded resources is limited¹¹². Thus, on the one hand, the limited concentration of foreign aid policy-related resources creates favourable conditions for policy influence by a few

¹⁰⁹ Braun, „The Captive or the Broker? Explaining Public Agency-Interest Group Interactions,“ 299, 303.

¹¹⁰ Stengel, Baumann, „Non-State Actors and Foreign Policy.“

¹¹¹ Stengel, Baumann, „Non-State Actors and Foreign Policy,“ 16.

¹¹² Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 45.

resource-endowed NGOs, such as, for example, the NGO Platform analysed here. On the other hand, owing to the low concentration of valuable resources and thus inadequate contribution to policy making, especially prior to policy implementation, the potential for Lithuanian NGOs to impact policy is low. Secondly, NGO influence was observed in respect of a rather instrumental, politically non-contentious, and low salience issue concerning the means of Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid policy. Certainly, influence over salient policy issues is not an easy victory for any interest group¹¹³. But influence over foreign aid policy goals, which are more salient and which concern the more politically contentious aspects of Lithuanian bilateral foreign aid policy, seems out of reach for the Lithuanian NGOs which lack valuable resources.

This single case demonstrated that NGO influence over policy was observed when the NGO could assist the decision-makers in bilateral foreign aid policy implementation; when it behaved strategically; and when the decision-makers' access to their valued policy implementation resource was threatened. And all this occurred when the long-term interdependency and trust-based relationship between the NGO and the decision-makers was established. The finding of a long-term collaborative relationship between the NGO and the decision-makers is very important, as the NGO's influence, conceptualized as a preference attainment, appears here as a rare micro-phenomenon accompanying such a relationship. Thus, our knowledge would benefit from future research designs which capture the other faces of power which were excluded from this paper – for example, by addressing the NGO networks with the decision-makers, which, as we know from the literature concerning the ECE NGOs¹¹⁴ could affect the influence production process. In addition, further re-

¹¹³ Beyers, "Policy Issues, Organisational Format and the Political Strategies of Interest Organisations," 1188–1211.

¹¹⁴ Gallai et al., "What Makes them Successful? Influential Interest Groups in Hungary (1990–2014)," 1469–1486; Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot, *New Europe's New Development Aid*, 139–140, 158–159; Chimiak, *The Growth of Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Poland and their Cooperation with Polish Aid*, 166, 185–188.

search could probe the causal mechanism confirmed here in relation to other cases of influence of NGDOs located in the Baltic states.

A final reflection relates to the potential role of Lithuanian NGDOs in the foreign aid policy system. The prevalence of the NGDOs' organisational interests over their moral vision to benefit the global poor is often demonstrated in the literature¹¹⁵. The finding of strategically behaving NGDO, which succeeds in influencing policy when its organisational interests are threatened, is very important in the Lithuanian NGO context, which is financially unstable and largely reliant on public donor funding. Thus, it can be concluded that, if the NGDOs do not have the resources to ensure their survival, the extent of their policy agenda may be largely limited to issues concerning their organisational interests. This trend has been already observed among the ECE NGDOs¹¹⁶, whose policy agenda, when compared with that of their Western counterparts, is more strongly driven by funding concerns. Altogether, this indicates the low potential of Lithuanian NGDOs (and, one can assume, of their counterparts in ECE) to be morally driven norm entrepreneurs which promote policies benefitting the global poor. Undoubtedly, this should be considered when addressing the NGDOs' role as civil society actors in the sphere of Lithuanian and EU foreign aid policies.

¹¹⁵ Szent-Iványi, "Practising what they Preach? Development NGOs and the EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa," 16.

¹¹⁶ Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot, *New Europe's New Development Aid*, 1–228; Balázs Szent-Iványi and Pēteris F. Timofejevs, "Selective Norm Promotion in International Development Assistance: The Drivers of Naming and Shaming Advocacy among European Non-Governmental Development Organisations," *International Relations (London)* (2020), doi:10.1177/0047117820954234.)

Methodological Appendix

Table 1. *Hypotheses, Priors, and the Propositions of Confirmatory Evidence* (Table by the author)

| Part of the mechanism/ Hypothesis | Priors | Confirmatory evidence |
|--|---|---|
| Demand for resources | A certain resource is required (important) by the organisation for its continued operation ¹ . Policy implementation, membership representation and expertise ² , assessment of societal impact and policy legitimacy ³ are valuable resources for bureaucrats. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative magnitude of the exchange, resource importance manifested in the activities, structure and information system of a decision-making organisation |
| NGDO produces the required resources | Aspects of the NGDO's organisational form are adapted enabling it to better produce the required resources ⁴ . | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of changes of the NGDO's organisational form Evidence of the NGDO's increased control of resources/ capacities to produce (new) resources |
| NGDO attempts to increase the relevance of its resources | By increasing awareness of the resources controlled ⁵ establishing its identity among external audiences ⁶ , intensifying and engaging in more collaborative insider lobbying ⁷ , an organisation attempts to change the demands of another organisation so that they better fit its capabilities ⁸ . | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of the NGDO's attempts to increase the relevance of its resources/ enhance the reputation Evidence of insider lobbying pattern by the NGDO Evidence of more collaborative insider advocacy of the NGDO |

¹ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 45.

² Braun, "The Captive or the Broker? Explaining Public Agency-Interest Group Interactions," 299, 303.

³ Rozbicka et al., *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, 174.

⁴ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 106–107; Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 188; Themudo, "Managing the Paradox: NGOs, Resource Dependence and Organisational Independence. Case Studies from Mexico and Portugal," 236; Verschuere, De Corte, "Nonprofit Advocacy Under a Third-Party Government Regime: Cooperation or Conflict?" 222–241.

⁵ Hudock, 1997a, cited in Themudo, "Managing the Paradox: NGOs, Resource Dependence and Organisational Independence. Case Studies from Mexico and Portugal," 84.

⁶ Halpin, *The Organization of Political Interest Groups*, 107, 137–138.

⁷ Mosley, "Keeping the Lights on: How Government Funding Concerns Drive the Advocacy Agendas of Nonprofit Homeless Service Providers," 841–866; Arvidson, Johansson and Scaramuzzino, "Advocacy Compromised: How Financial, Organizational and Institutional Factors Shape Advocacy Strategies of Civil Society Organizations," 844–856; Verschuere, De Corte, "Nonprofit Advocacy Under a Third-Party Government Regime: Cooperation or Conflict?" 222–241.

⁸ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 106.

| Part of the mechanism/ Hypothesis | Priors | Confirmatory evidence |
|---|---|--|
| Increased interdependency | <p>Grants as policy implementation tools create interdependency between the cooperating organisations⁹.</p> <p>When a supply of alternative resources is stable and the relevance of certain resource is increased, interdependence between the interacting organisations increases¹⁰.</p> <p>The interdependence increases because an organisation manages to change in its favour the preferences concerning its resources held by the other organisation¹¹.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of recognizing relevant resources as controlled by a particular NGDO (reputation) • Evidence of an increased degree of access granted to a particular NGDO |
| Decision-makers consider NGDO's resources | <p>Trust is essential for the emergence of social norms coordinating behaviour¹².</p> <p>When working together, trust emerges¹³.</p> <p>When there is uncertainty related to the important resource, the organisations coordinate behaviour to manage their interdependency and to ensure access to the required resource¹⁴.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of trust towards a particular NGDO • Decisions stabilizing access to a demanded resource controlled by the particular NGDO |
| NGDO's influence | <p>Preference of the organisation that controls the demanded resource is met¹⁵.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGDO's preference is reflected in the policy outputs • A productive continuity of the influence production process is established |

⁹ Salamon, "The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action: An Introduction," 1611–1674.

¹⁰ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 42f.

¹¹ Nienhüser, "Resource Dependence Theory: How Well does it Explain Behavior of Organizations?" 27.

¹² Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*.

¹³ Verschuere, De Corte, "Nonprofit Advocacy Under a Third-Party Government Regime: Cooperation or Conflict?" 222–241; Mosley, "Keeping the Lights on: How Government Funding Concerns Drive the Advocacy Agendas of Nonprofit Homeless Service Providers," 844, 856.

¹⁴ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*, 68, 144.

¹⁵ Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations*.

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List of interviews

1. Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no. 1, 2021. Interviewed by Marta Gadeikienė.
2. Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no. 5, 2016. Interviewed by Marta Gadeikienė.
3. Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no. 6, 2020. Interviewed by Marta Gadeikienė.
4. Respondent from the Lithuanian MFA no. 13, 2021. Interviewed by Marta Gadeikienė.