ABSTRACT

Research on stakeholders primarily focuses on questions of power and influence in particular policy fields and governance levels. Recently scholars have also shown a growing interest in the mobilization of stakeholders. This paper adds to that literature focusing on the mobilization of stakeholders in a multilevel setting. More in particular, it looks into which actors mobilize in the context of European Union funding opportunities, more in particular in cross-border cooperation programmes. Inspired by the theoretical frameworks of multilevel governance and resource dependency, we look at the operating level of stakeholders, their dependency on EU funding, their financial means and the policy issues they deal with. Empirically, we use data regarding the Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Programme (2007-2013). We find that the operating level of stakeholders, dependency on EU funding, financial means and the policy issues stakeholders deal with, all trigger differential levels of mobilization.

KEYWORDS

Mobilization, Stakeholders, EU funding, Cross Border Cooperation.
MAPPING OF STAKEHOLDERS’ MOBILIZATION IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

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Introduction: Mobilization of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are constitutive actors in public policy, both during decision-making and implementation stages. They can be defined as “a variety of actors that have an interest in participating in any given governance process. For instance: private business, voluntary associations, organized interests, or single-issue pressure groups” (BACHE and FLINDERS, 2004). For example, an NGO that pleads for environmental protection is a stakeholder in EU environmental policies and funding programs. The concept of stakeholders is used for different purposes and in various fields. In this paper we apply the concept in relation to mobilization with the purpose of influencing or participating in public policies. In this respect, SAVAGE et al., (1991) clarify that stakeholders are “actors which have an interest in the actions of an organization, and they also have the ability to influence it” (SAVAGE et al., 1991, p. 209). FREEMAN (1984) adds that “...its actions can affect or are affected by the achievements of the organization’s objectives”. Most of the time “stakeholders make their actual stakes known... or might be influenced by, or are potentially influencers of some organization whether or not this influence is perceived or known” (STARIK 1994, p. 90; ROWLEY and MOLDOVEANU, 2003).

Overall, mobilization creates more opportunities for stakeholders to engage in direct contact with policy makers (BACHE and FLINDERS, 2004).

Mobilization of stakeholders is not a recent phenomenon, it appears with every creation and implementation of public policies. It concerns a process through which a group evolves from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life (TILLY, 1988, p. 69). It has been empirically studied by scholars such as BAUMGARTNER (1998, 2001, 2007), WITTENBERG (1994); HALPIN and BINDERKRANTZ (2011), KLÜVER (2010) and NADALUTTI (2013). Authors examined various aspects of stakeholders’ mobilization, for example how the need for resources drives stakeholders to mobilize (OLSEN, 1965; MCCARTHY and ZALD 1997) or how not reaching objectives pushes stakeholders to mobilize (ROWLEY and MOLDOVEANU, 2003). Some studies have looked into how a multilevel setting enables mobilization to take place even more than in other settings (MILBRATH 1963; SALISBURY 1984; SCHLOZMAN 1986; HOOGHE and MARKS 1996; BAUMGARTNER, 2007; TARROW 2011).

One of the crucial issues to address is the identification of the main drivers for stakeholders’ mobilization in certain policy domains (GARY and LOWERY, 1996). More in particular, the search for resources has been suggested as an important trigger to mobilize (BEYERS and KERREMSANS 2007; EISING 2007; BLATTER et al., 2009; HANNEGRAAFF and
BEYERS 2013). Resources are vital for stakeholder’s survival and for allowing them to pursue their claims and goals. Moreover, several types of resources such as financial sources and selective benefits, legitimacy, facilities and labor are taken into account (MCCARTHY and ZALD, 1977; GRAY and LOWERY, 1996). At the same time, however, some researchers such as MARKS et al., (1996) didn’t find support for the resources hypothesis.

In addition, stakeholders can mobilize in different policy contexts, both within states and beyond. One example is the European Union which has increasingly become a crucial player in public policy-making. Due to the organization of its policy cycle, the European Union attracts quite a fair deal of attention from stakeholders. Its distinct institutional features triggers a high level of mobilization (BEYERS and KERREMANS 2007; BINDERKRANTZ, 2008; DÜR and MATEO, 2012). In other words, the European Union has become a venue where stakeholders “represent their interests, next to the first level of their operation” (EISING, 2007, p. 28). Offices for regional representation have become a regular occurrence for the Brussels scene (MARKS, 1992; DONAS and BEYERS, 2012). In a direct or indirect manner the Council of Ministers, the Commission, the Parliament and other EU level institutions and agencies all stimulated stakeholder’s mobilization by offering multiple opportunities for access and information exchange (BACHE and FLINDERS, 2004). In short, the process of European integration has generated additional mobilization on top of what traditionally occurred at the domestic level (BACHE, 2008).

This paper combines the two perspectives: the quest for resources as triggers for mobilization of stakeholders in the multilevel setting of the EU. More concretely, it examines the features of stakeholders that mobilize in the context of EU funding opportunities. What kind of actors mobilize in order to attract EU funding? With the exception of a few analytical studies on crucial aspects of stakeholder’s involvement in structural funds (DELLMUTH, 2011; DELLMUTH and STOFFEL, 2012), this issue has been largely left unaddressed. Empirically, we narrow down our focus to Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes. While such programs attract a substantial part of stakeholder’s attention, to our knowledge, no one has yet profoundly examined this particular context. Assessing some of the crucial features that stakeholders display while participating in EU funding programs allows us to make an original contribution to the literatures on mobilization and on EU funding.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we present a theoretical framework based on multilevel governance and resource dependency. Then, we move on to the context of EU regional policies and structural funding, and more in particular to the area of cross-border cooperation programs. In the next section we develop our hypotheses. We then elaborate on the methods and data. The core section is dedicated to our analysis of an original data set that contains
information about 788 stakeholders that mobilized for the Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Program, during the 2007 – 2013 funding period.

**Theoretical Perspectives on Mobilization: the multilevel governance and resource dependence theory**

While stakeholder’s mobilization is a crucial feature of public policy-making, authors disagree about the reasons why it happens (BAUMGARTNER and LEECH, 1998; PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003). Consensus on a single unified theory has not yet been reached: several dimensions of stakeholder’s behavior, including the internal dynamics of coalitions, and how the environment can influence their behavior have been put forward (BAUMGARTNER and LEECH, 1998; PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003).

One of the earliest contributions comes from Truman who argued that stakeholders will most likely mobilize for an issue, if they directly ‘feel’ their interests are threatened (TRUMAN, 1951). This feeling of urgency pressures stakeholders to exploit new channels to mobilize. However, some of Truman’s main assumptions came under attack. If mobilization was as simple as Truman described it, one would rather expect stakeholders to mobilize as much as possible (TILLY, 1988, p. 87). However, empirical observations made clear that stakeholder’s mobilization can easily get hampered for several reasons, implying a discrepancy between ‘potential’ and ‘actual’ mobilization. Notably the ability to acquire and maintain resources, and a constantly changing environment were identified as factors affecting mobilization capacities of stakeholders. OLSON (1965), for instance, has described why some disadvantaged groups would probably never be able to even reach a fraction of their mobilization potential, producing inevitably a landscape where a small number of stakeholders consistently dominate (BURSENS, BEYERS and DONAS, 2014).

In this paper we delve into two dimensions that can mediate the opportunities of interested stakeholders. The first refers to the complexity of the governance context. Drawing on the framework of multilevel governance the “complex, multilayered, decision-making process stretching beneath the state as well as above it” (MARKS, 1992, p. 221) is suggested to affect potential stakeholders’ chances to become active players. The second points to the idea that stakeholders try to exploit as many resource venues as they can (PFEFFER and SALANICK 2003; RAO et al., 2007; MALATESTA, 2014). An additional framework for understanding stakeholder’s mobilization is therefore the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). Resources are considered crucial in shaping stakeholder’s strategies for their maintenance and survival. Stakeholders’ primary need is to survive and to represent their stakes in a consistent way. In doing so, they
mainly need to identify where to search for resources, and how to address the requests of each of their key providers (PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003; FROELICH, 1999). “A resource is essentially anything an actor perceives as valuable, whereas dependence is a state in which one actor relies on another to achieve particular outcomes” (FROOMAN, 1999, p. 5). In an oversimplified way, stakeholders are not self-contained or self-sufficient. They are constantly searching for resources in their external environment (EMERSON, 1962; FROOMAN, 1999; PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003). It is therefore quite conceivable that stakeholders situate their arguments in different venues, across a constellation of policy resources.

The focus of this paper is to scrutinize the mobilization of stakeholders in the context of EU funding opportunities. The insights of multilevel governance and resource dependence theory provide us with the essential background for developing and testing hypotheses to answer the research question of this paper: What are the main features of stakeholders that mobilize for the EU funding, in particular with respect to cross-border cooperation programs?

Mobilization in the Context of EU Regional Policies and Funding Programs

The EU has evolved into a conglomerate of institutions providing strong stimuli for European regions. Already in the beginning of the 1980s new policies were introduced, promoting regional representation at the European level. A decade later, this was further reinforced by the Maastricht Treaty. The introduction of the “Regional Agenda” and of the subsidiarity principle upgraded the position of regional stakeholders in EU policy processes (TATHAM, 2008). A core institution in this respect is the European Commission (MAZEY and RICHARDSON, 2002). Through the use of instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), the Commission has substantially nurtured territorial cooperation. By transforming territorial cooperation into a top-notch priority, the Commission has created solid grounds for regional stakeholders (EC, 2006a) to engage in cross-border cooperation, aimed at reducing the regional disparities between levels of development.

The territorial cooperation objectives of the EU are translated, among others, into cross-border cooperation programs. Since the Single European Act (1986), four programming periods have been completed (1989 – 1993, 1994 – 1999, 2000 – 2006 and 2007 – 2013) that created considerable opportunities for stakeholder’s participation (KOHLER-KOCH and FINKE 2007, p. 160). These programs have urged research to partly shift its traditional focus on stakeholders’ involvement in public policies to patterns of stakeholders’ mobilization in other venues. Indeed, because stakeholders are rational actors who follow their own interests and agendas (BÖRZEL, 2001), it is expected that they will mobilize for funding opportunities as well. EU funding
programs are an explicit example where such mobilization may occur. Within this funding system, the EC allocates financial support to stakeholders who develop projects which yield the economic development of border areas in the EU Member states. More precisely, the EU indirectly finances stakeholders through granting financial support to the projects that stakeholders jointly develop.

This paper looks at the case of the Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Program, one of the most elaborated examples of cross-border cooperation, in the programming period 2007 – 2013. Each program has its own managing institutions. In our case, the principal institution that assesses whether project proposals of stakeholders meet the overall need of the cross-border regions, is the Steering Committee (SC). In close collaboration with the Secretariat – the other crucial institution of this program – the SC develops the main objectives and priorities of each program call. These managing authorities have a pivotal role in the process. Because they are directly involved in the setting-up of the program’s priorities, they may also have an effect on the kind of stakeholders that mobilize. By defining certain priorities and objectives, it is possible to shift and polarize the mobilization process towards certain kinds of stakeholders. After all, applications must fit with the program’s objectives and priorities. Stakeholders can submit project applications alone or in collaboration with other stakeholders. In the program under scrutiny, stakeholders could require a maximum 50% of the financial needs of their overall project. This means that applicants are to commit themselves to raise own resources to co-finance project proposal. The co-financing condition makes it very likely that stakeholders build coalitions to enhance their chances of success.

Although this paper is limited to Belgian and Dutch stakeholders, it is possible to translate some of the arguments to other contexts and venues. We are well aware, though, that some of the main features that stakeholders display when they mobilize, are tied to our case. We don’t necessarily expect similar outcomes in other cross-border programs, as this would be contingent on how actor related and context related variables would play out.

**When do stakeholders mobilize for EU funding?**

In this section we develop four hypotheses, mainly based on the multilevel governance framework and the resource dependence theory. The first hypothesis is linked to the overall institutional arrangement and the idea that actors express an interest in opportunities presented by the institutional environment. The European Commission plays a crucial role in this process as the instruments it develops may trigger actors to present their requests and demands, and hence become stakeholders. Providing channels and incentives for societal actors
has indeed been found before to steer more mobilization (MEYNAUD and SIDJANSKI, 1971, p. 468; MARKS and MCADAM, 1996; Pollack, 1997; MAZey and RICHARDSON, 2002; LOWERY, 2007). This also implies that not all sorts of actors are equally prone to get mobilized. We expect that the sector a stakeholder operates in and the issue it usually mobilizes for determine the decision to mobilize. From the literature we know that NGOs and business-oriented stakeholders follow different organizational logics (OLSON, 1965). Business-oriented stakeholders engage in more risk-taking initiatives that are linked to innovation and economic advancement (BERLAND, 2014), whereas stakeholders with a nonprofit focus, will invest more in the development of societal issues (CHALMERS and DELLMUTH, 2015). We therefore expect that stakeholders who work in social sectors will mobilize more for societal issues, whereas, stakeholders who work in a market environment will mobilize more for economic issues. We operationalize this by means of the UN List of Social Sectors which classifies stakeholders into societal and economic sectors. We are able to test this hypothesis as the Interreg program has both societal and economic priorities.

Hypothesis 1: Stakeholders working in social sectors will mobilize more for societal issues, whereas stakeholders working in economic sectors will mobilize more for economic issues for the EU Funding

Next, we turn to the multilevel context. Through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Commission offers support for regional economic growth. One of the objectives, territorial cooperation among regions, is organized by cross-border cooperation programs which essentially concentrate on building wider cooperation among regional stakeholders (MARKS et al., 1996). Such programs play an important role in building partnerships among stakeholders, that otherwise would probably not have been initiated. Also the requirement to raise own sufficient financial support for projects has triggered coalitions, sometimes involving quite a large variety of actors. All this feeds the expectation that stakeholders who work on sub-national levels will mobilize more as they can get more easily 'in touch' with similar stakeholders, even across borders. In some cases, stakeholders may have had previous experience in building cooperation, fostering even more opportunities to forge coalitions (FREEMAN et al., 1996; MAHONEY, 2007; KLÜVER, 2010). While it may be relatively easy to distinguish between levels of mobilization in theory (JEFFREY, 2000; HALPIN and BINDERKRANTZ, 2011), in practice we measure the level of mobilization by looking at the stakeholder’s level of operation. With this perspective in mind, we expect to encounter more stakeholders working at sub-national or lower levels than stakeholders that are closely situated on the European or international level. This results on the second hypothesis:
Hypothesis 2: Stakeholders working on sub-national (thus regional, local and provincial) levels will mobilize more than stakeholders working for European and international levels for the EU Funding.

The resource dependence theory framework orients our thinking towards a variety of actors whereby some stakeholders mobilize more than others, contingent on the variety in resources. There is no doubt in stating that organizations are dependent on resources (FROOMAN, 1999; PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003; CASCARIO and PISKORSKI, 2005). Although resources are vital for all stakeholders’ survival and existence, there are significant differences in the level of dependency. Compared to firms, NGOs tend relatively more to develop a direct dependency on external resources as NGOs are mainly non-profit driven, whereas business oriented stakeholders have incentives for developing as profit-maximizers (FROOMAN, 1999, p. 8; EISING, 2007). Following the same reasoning, it is easier for business-oriented stakeholders to make a profit out of their activities, thus to develop a more limited dependency on external resources. In addition, there are differences tied to the ability of stakeholders to continue normal functioning when resources are absent (PFEFFER and SALANICK, 2003). Hence, if an NGO doesn’t mobilize for resources, this could have detrimental effects on the continuation of its mission and work, as opposed to stakeholders that are making profits out of their activities.

Looking at mobilization from a resource dependency perspective makes clear that EU funding opportunities are simply another venue where stakeholders look for resources. Because the clear link between the stakeholder type and the level of dependency we expect to encounter less mobilization from the side of stakeholders that have an “indirect” dependency on EU funding. The opposite also stands, namely stakeholders that have a more “direct” dependency, will tend to mobilize more for EU funding. This implies that firms, companies and other business-oriented stakeholders will emerge far less in our dataset. Hence our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Stakeholders that have a “direct” dependency on resources, will mobilize more than stakeholders that have an “indirect” dependency on resources for the EU Funding

Moreover, resource dependencies generate greater discrepancies between states and regions (BEYERS and KERREMANS, 2007). EU funding instruments are explicitly established by the EU to foster economic development of peripheral regions. This makes regions and provinces even more unevenly dependent on EU funding. Building on the concept of ‘core-periphery’ equilibrium (HOPKINS and WALLERSTEIN, 1982; FORSLID, 2000; DAVIS and WEINSTEIN, 2001; BALDWIN and GARDINER et al., 2004; EGGER et al., 2013), we consider the EU as being traditionally preoccupied with achieving a more equilibrated growth among its
regions. Since the beginning of the 1980s, some core regions have constantly been scoring higher growth rates, in comparison with others from the periphery of the European map. For this paper we examine the differences in growth rates between the most advanced- (thus core) provinces and the least developed (thus periphery) provinces of each partner. Our expectation is that stakeholders will mobilize differently. Resource dependence theory tells us that the “periphery” provinces will depend more on EU funding than the “core” provinces. In order to classify the actors we consider the provincial level (NUTS 2) and create an ordered rank in relation to the GDP per capita that these provinces display for 2007 (the starting date of the funding period under consideration)\textsuperscript{iv}. This results in the following and final hypothesis:

\textit{Hypothesis 4: Stakeholders from “periphery” provinces will mobilize for EU funding more than stakeholders from “core” provinces}

\textbf{Case Selection And Data Collection}

Guided by the expectations developed in the previous paragraph, this paper analyses which actors mobilize to take part in EU funding, more specifically with respect to cross-border cooperation programmes. The focus is mainly on the features displayed by stakeholders who actually mobilize. Our case is the Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Programme, for the 2007–2013 funding period. We obtained a dataset from the Secretariat Office of Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Programme containing the list of stakeholders that participated in the program, i.e. that mobilized by submitting project proposals to the program.

Based on the original data we constructed a new extensive data set which contains information about all the stakeholders that have mobilized, with respect to the type of actor, the sector they operate in and the level they are situated on. These data stem from the procedures followed by the Office Secretariat that initiates a specific call within the wider program, making this accessible for everyone on the website. From the project applications we can derive who the submitting stakeholders are and what distinct features they display. Our coding scheme followed a rigorous procedure and built on previous work by HANEGRAAFF (2013). All the necessary information about the stakeholders and their activities was obtained through coding information of the actors’ individual websites. More precisely, we coded the geographical location (country, region, and province), the type of stakeholder, the social sector (based on the UN List of Social Sectors)\textsuperscript{v}. Because websites are periodically updated, we carried out a careful re-coding procedure over time: data collection was performed from September 2014 to June 2015.
In addition, we also have data on the patterns of collaboration among the stakeholders and on whether their application was successful or not. The unit of analysis in this paper is the individual stakeholder that engaged in submitting a project proposal.

Our investigation spans 7-years (2007–2013). In total, 788 stakeholders were identified as having mobilized for the program. Each of these actors submitted, alone or in collaboration with others, a project proposal for one of the three main program priorities: economy, environment or societal issues. Table 1 presents the basic information about the distribution of stakeholders according to the country, indicating an almost equal distribution of stakeholders between both countries (54.4% of stakeholders are based in Belgium and 44.4% are working the Netherlands, whereas only 1.1% have either a European or an international character).

Clearly, one of the main advantages for this paper is that our data consists of a full data set of participating stakeholders. As it is not feasible to trace all stakeholders that could have mobilized but chose not to do so, we only look at the "actual" mobilization, not the "potential" mobilization. Therefore our focus is not on explaining who mobilized and who did not mobilize, but on examining the main features of stakeholders that have mobilized. Hence, this is primarily an explorative empirical study that aims to gain more insight in how mobilization occurs for a broad range of stakeholders. Nevertheless, the size of the data set allows for simple quantitative analyses. In the next section we present descriptive and bivariate correlations to test for the hypotheses formulated above.

Analysis

We started out from the assumption that actors will mobilize when they have a ‘stake’ in the matter. Applied to our case: if an actor sees an opportunity in a particular funding program, it becomes a stakeholder. As we have no data on the ‘non mobilizers’, we tested this hypothesis within the available data set by correlating the sector of participating stakeholder with the theme of the call. Hence, we hypothesized that societally oriented stakeholders would submit more proposals to the societally related calls, while economic actors would be more interested in the economy-related calls of the program. In other words, we investigated for which of the three program priorities, stakeholders submitted applications. In the program period under scrutiny there were three main themes: Economy, Environment and People to People (the latter referring to Societal Matters). We used the UN List of Social Sectors to classify the social sector.
of each stakeholder. Here we evaluated the relationship between two variables: the social sector of the stakeholders and the main theme it mobilizes for in the program under scrutiny. Table 2 shows a strong correlation between the two variables (Spearman’s correlation coefficient Rs is 1.161, significant at the 0.01 level), indicating that stakeholders working on social issues have submitted their project applications mostly for calls related to the environmental and societal priorities. Alternatively, stakeholders are working on economic issues submitted their proposals within the economy priority. These results indicate that actors respond to opportunities related to their core business. However, in the theoretical part we argued that having a stake is not sufficient to actually mobilize. We hypothesize that governance levels and resources also matter to make the decision to become active, meaning in our case to submit a project proposal to a specific call. In the next paragraphs we test for these additional features.

**INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

Table 3 presents the data on the distribution of stakeholders according to the type and the level of mobilization. Institutions (N=217), Public Authorities (N=216) and Non-Profit Organizations (N=175) are by far the stakeholders that have mobilized the most. In addition, Table 3 points out that most of the stakeholders work on sub-national levels, namely local, provincial and regional levels, whereas only a few of them operate on European, international or a mix of levels. Therefore, we find a strong confirmation for our second hypothesis, which expressed the expectation that the level of the organization matters. Clearly the multilevel character of the EU funding context triggers the participation of actors of particular governance levels.

**INSERT TABLE 3 HERE**

We also find a strong confirmation for the third hypothesis. Most of the stakeholders that have mobilized are the ones that have developed a more direct dependency from EU funding. Table 4 shows that the three largest types of stakeholders that mobilized are non-profit organizations (22,2%), Public Authorities (27,4%), and Institutions (27,5%)vii. These stakeholders are mainly non-profit based, meaning that they have more direct dependency on funding in general and EU funding in particular to carry out projects or to achieve their organizational objectives. Moreover, the profit-maximizer actors are far less represented: 12,9% of all the mobilized stakeholders are firms, 0,3% are peak business associations and 4,2% are sectoral business associations. These actors are less or indirectly dependent on EU funding; because of their business nature, they are more able to generate resources in other ways. Another factor that may explain their low mobilization is that business-oriented stakeholders were only eligible for the first time to apply for Interreg Flanders Netherlands in the period
2007–2013. Perhaps, it takes some time to learn and to convincingly convey their arguments, but this can only be tested when data on the current funding period become available.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Finally, we looked into the resource level of the stakeholders, expecting that actors from less prosperous areas would apply more than actors from relatively more wealthy areas. Table 5 explains how we computed the ranking ordered correlation. We ranked the provinces according to the representation of stakeholders, meaning that the more stakeholders are working in a particular province, the more the province is represented and thus mobilized. Second, we created an ordered ranking of provinces, relating to their GDP per capita, using Eurostat Data\textsuperscript{viii} at the NUTS 2 level. These data were available from 2007 until 2011. Since there are no strong fluctuations in the GDP per capita levels over the years, we decided to use the 2007 data for our analysis. For clarification, we eliminated the categories Other and Mixed\textsuperscript{ix} Provinces. Table 5 describes the results.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

We hypothesized that those stakeholders that are working in more peripheral provinces are more dependent on the EU funding, and thus will mobilize more, while stakeholders coming from core provinces will be less dependent on EU funding, and therefore will mobilize less. The Kendall’s tau b correlation tells us if there is a significant correlation between the core-periphery variable and mobilization. Clearly, Table 6 shows that there is not a significant correlation between the two variables: there is no correlation between the province where a stakeholder works and its actual mobilization for EU funding. The less prosperous and therefore more resource dependent provinces are not necessarily the ones that mobilize the most. This suggests limits to the resource dependency theory.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE
Conclusions

This paper examined the features of stakeholders that mobilize for European Union funding opportunities, with regard to cross-border cooperation programmes, more in particular the Interreg Flanders-Netherlands Program for the 2007 – 2013 time frame. The paper contributes to the literature that deals with the mobilization of stakeholders in a multilevel setting. We generated our arguments based on the main claims of the multilevel governance and resource dependence theory and illustrated that the operating level of stakeholders, their dependency on EU funding, their financial means and the policy issues they deal with, triggers differential levels of mobilization.

Our findings indicate that having a stake in EU funding programs is not sufficient to actually mobilize. We showed empirically that mobilization is also triggered by the multilevel setting in which such actors operate. We found that most stakeholders that work on sub-national and national levels, will mobilize more often for EU Funding than actors from higher governance levels. We also found that NGOs and societal actors that are situated in the non-profit sphere mobilize more, confirming our hypothesis that having direct dependencies on EU funding triggers activities targeting these funding programs. On the contrary, because of their profit-driven profile, market oriented (economic) actors mobilize far less as they develop more indirect dependencies on EU funding. Surprisingly, the empirical analysis does not support the expectation that stakeholders that work in periphery provinces mobilize more. While the European Commission developed such programs to reduce disparities between regions, stakeholders from most prosperous regions are found to apply more. Hence, resource dependency helps to understand mobilization when looking at capabilities of individual actors, but not when looking at where they are located.

The results of this research are a first step towards more in-depth case studies focusing on the mobilization of individual stakeholders. Because the literature so far has produced only little knowledge on the determinants of the allocation of structural funds within regions (DELLMUTH and STOFFEL, 2012), a next step to be taken is to explore why stakeholders within those regions receive the funds, whereas others do not. In addition further investigation on stakeholder’s collaborations for coalition-formation processes that occur when mobilizing for the EU funding schemes, deserve scholarly attention.
Bibliography


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2. For example, if an NGO has its offices in Antwerp, but works at the national levels, we coded it as a national stakeholder – meaning that it spreads its work and influence all across Belgium, not simply in the city where the office is located.
4. Information was deducted from Eurostat Website: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database)
5. For more information, see the UN Website: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regcst.asp?Cl=27](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regcst.asp?Cl=27)
7. We coded as Institutions: foundations, university colleges, and other stakeholders that have a non-profit stake.
8. Information was deducted from Eurostat Website: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database)
9. Other means that the actor is working in other provinces, than the ones eligible for the programme. Mixed means the actor is working in more than one province, thus multiple provinces.
Table 1. Number of participating Stakeholders according to the Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>54,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>44,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>788</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Table 2. Spearman's Correlation for the Social Sector of Stakeholders (using the UN List of Social Sectors) and the Programme's main themes (where stakeholders submit their applications)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Social Sector of the Stakeholder</th>
<th>The Programme Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Spearman's Rho Correlation Results</strong></td>
<td>CorrelationCoefficient</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Programme Priority</strong></td>
<td>CorrelationCoefficient</td>
<td>.161**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)
Table 3. Stakeholder's distribution according to their type and level of mobilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Non-Profit</th>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Peak Business Association</th>
<th>Professional Association</th>
<th>Public Authority</th>
<th>Research Institute/Univ</th>
<th>Sectoral Business Association</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>103</td>
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Source: Author
Table 4. Stakeholder’s distribution according to their sector and country—direct vs indirect dependency towards the EU Funding

Table 5. The ranking of stakeholder’s representation in relation to the provinces where they work; and the ranking of the GDP per capita for those provinces (using the NUTS 2 level from the Eurostat data, 2007)

Table 6. The results of Kendall’s Tau B, - a Ranked Order Correlation for Provinces (accordingly with stakeholder’s representation from these provinces) and their richness (accordingly with the GDP per capita based on the NUTS 2 level)

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