Handbook of Migration and Globalisation

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INTRODUCTION

Critical observers in International Relations have been sceptical of global governance studies that ‘typically claim that the state has lost power to non-state actors and that political authority is increasingly institutionalized in spheres not controlled by states’ (Sending and Neumann 2006: 651). This apparent rejection of the State and fascination with non-State actors may be the case for much of the scholarship in global governance. However, actors that usually acquire labels such as third sector, civil society, community actors or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are far from being a primary focus of mainstream research on global migration governance. The State-centred focus in much of prominent migration governance scholarship (Aleinkoff 2007; Hansen et al. 2011; Koslowski 2011; Newland 2005) is well known and has been the object of various types of critique (Badie et al. 2008; Korneev 2017; Rother 2013).

Such State-centrism is rather unfortunate since, as emphasised by Badie et al. (2008: 82), ‘given the contributions already made by civil society with regard to migration, its role in global governance should be more fully recognized and integrated into the consultation and negotiation procedures carried out between States’. We add to this that the role of civil society in (global) migration governance should be better recognised, understood and conceptualised in scholarly works.

This is not to say, however, that civil-society actors are totally absent from research on migration governance. On the contrary, attention to such actors has gradually increased among migration and globalisation scholars alike. NGOs have actually played a very important role at the very start of discussions on global migration governance, effectively providing knowledge and practical expertise as well as their former personnel to intergovernmental organisations (IGOs). A typical case is Patrick Taran, a former Senior Migration Specialist at the International Labour Organization (ILO) who joined this specialised UN agency from the World Council of Churches, where he worked to promote migrants’ rights.

This chapter seeks to uncover the roles played by multiple actors from the globalised third sector in the migration policy field. It presents major strands of literature dealing with various aspects of such involvement, illustrating its main points with examples from Europe, Asia, the post-Soviet region and the global level, starting with research on civil society in migration governance at the local and national levels.
CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

Civil-society organisations are prominent players in the field of migration politics and policy at the local and national levels. Their involvement in the migration policy field has grown steadily since the mid-1990s. While political scientists in the main were blind to this phenomenon in its early stages, a number of scholars in Social Anthropology, Sociology and non-mainstream Political Science quickly realised its significance while exploring mobilisation across civil-society organisations with pro-migrant agendas (Geddes 1998; Morris 2002; Odmalm 2004).

At a later stage, others developed similar research in relation to ‘proper’ immigrant organisations heralding processes of diaspora formation (Betts and Jones 2012; Koinova 2009; Ragazzi 2009), ethnic localised (Vermeulen 2005; Hooghe 2005) or transnational mobilisation (Adamson 2005; Collyer 2006; Danese 1998; Kluczewska and Korneev forthcoming), particularly in Europe. Still other academic works have examined the reasons behind the emergence and persistence of immigrant organisations despite the abundance of existing pro-immigrant NGOs (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). However, within this pioneering research on immigrant organisations, there was a surprisingly overwhelming emphasis on the perspective equating immigrant organisations with ethnic organisations (Jacobs and Tillie 2004; Jacobs et al. 2004; Moya 2005). This obviously overlooked other significant trends in immigrant associational activity, such as the sans-papiers in France (Garcia 2006; Fuchs 2006; Simeant 1998), Spain (Frank, 2006) and Belgium (Cauderlier 2005; Korneev 2006).

As a critique of this type of ‘ethnic’ approach to the study of civil-society activism in the migration policy field, others have attempted to understand what the often non-ethnic character of formalised NGOs and other more ad hoc migrant groupings can tell us about migrant activism and the scholarship on such mobilisations (Korneev 2006; Simeant 1993). This research argues that (irregular) immigrants’ organisational activity cannot be studied successfully if locked within migration research, but should be framed within the realm of social movement theories (Korneev 2006; Simeant 1994). This is because, first, to apprehend the logic behind irregular immigrants’ organisational activity, it must be seen in the context of the broader phenomenon of immigrant mobilisation underlying social movements. Second, and very importantly for future theoretical elaborations, identifying the particularities of irregular immigrants’ organisational activity helps us understand both the social conditions and the political forces behind the emergence of some significant social movements which, paradoxically, have been kept on the periphery of research.

Contrary to students of immigrant organisations, scholars working within the burgeoning field of social movements have studied the nature and character of pan-ethnic immigrant mobilisation and organisational activity which distances itself from pro-immigrant associations. This is perfectly illustrated by the works of Simeant (1993, 1994, 1998) and later referenced by such prominent social movements theorists as Charles Tilly (1999). Such research has shown that both migrant and pro-migrant organisations have played an important role in lobbying for regularisation of irregular migrants as well as in attracting wider attention to problems of human rights violations and migrant exploitation (Korneev 2006; Simeant 1998; for the relevant context, see De Bruycker 2000). This research has also shown that migrants’ active involvement in political life beyond
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ethnic-based mobilisation can have important implications for social and political processes within so-called host societies, providing important stimuli for the mobilisation of ‘native’ social forces across political, ethnic and religious spectrums.

The often ambiguous and problematic relationships between migrants, migrant organisations and pro-migrant civil-society actors have fast gained prominence in this type of research. Scholars, thus, have drawn attention to the troubled reciprocities as well as implicit one-sided dependencies that develop between these actors and often lead to mutual disillusionment and mistrust. It has been noted that securitisation of immigration is indirectly manifested in the activity of pro-migrant organisations (Bigo 2002; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2005) when many of them become reluctant to deal with the problems of irregular immigrants, conditioning their assistance by paradoxical demands of ‘any papers’ (Morris 2002). Relatedly, the problem of trust (or confidence) with a focus on relations between immigrants and pro-immigrant organisations or volunteers in terms of ‘gift-giving’ and reciprocity is widely discussed in anthropological literature (Çağlar 2002; Cauderlier 2005; Engbersen 2001). More specifically, it has been emphasised that irregular migrants might experience lack of trust in various influential actors in the immigration policy field, including multiple pro-immigrant organisations losing legitimacy in front of their ‘focus groups’ (Korneev 2006). This is, perhaps, one of the most important lessons for migration governance drawn from research on migrant and pro-migrant civil-society organisations across the volatile European political landscape of the 1990s and 2000s.

Scholars of migration governance are showing renewed interest in the role and impact of civil-society actors in the migration policy field at the national, regional and global levels (Barbulescu and Grugel 2016; Kaunert and Léonard 2012; Kaunert et al. 2013; Piper 2009, 2015). In the context of globalisation, dynamics of both migrant and pro-migrant activism have crossed the boundaries of the nation-States; this has been conceptualised in the critique of ‘methodological nationalism’ (Glick Schiller 2010; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Below, we focus on these dynamics and explore how they interrelate with the rapidly developing processes of globalisation and global governance.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN GLOBAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Research on the role of civil-society actors in the global migration policy field can be analysed along several different lines.

Local and Global Actors

Existing research has captured differences between local and global civil-society actors in migration governance. In other words, it probably makes sense to talk about two distinct, albeit overlapping, phenomena: the emergence and development of new local migration-related NGOs, including intensification of their transnational ties and mobilisation; and the increasing involvement of large international NGOs in migration governance, both substantially and geographically.

In the first case, research interest is being spurred by a new historical development: the global spread of local and national NGOs active in migration-related issues (Alpes 2013; Barbulescu and Grugel 2016; Grugel and Piper 2011; Piper 2015; Rother and Piper
This strand of research, in many ways, follows the path of migration scholarship discussed above, with its attention to micro- and meso-dynamics of civil-society engagement with migration-related issues. Such studies uncover complex patterns of interactions established between NGOs and the State and NGOs and external actors, as well as among NGOs that do not all share the same agenda. Such research also emphasises an important distinction between service-providing NGOs working on the ground and transnational advocacy groups defining the limits of civil-society activism (Barbulescu and Grugel 2016; Kalm 2010; Piper 2015). Interdependence of stakeholders and, largely, dependence of civil-society actors on the State are also recurrent themes discussed in such studies.

In the second case, we see attention trained on the increasing involvement of major international NGOs in global migration governance. This new research agenda builds on seminal studies of international organisations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004) and broader developments in global governance scholarship emphasising the need to focus on various types of global governors (Avant et al. 2010) in order to account for drivers, dynamics and impacts of governance. Global governors can be understood as ‘authorities who exercise power across borders for purposes of affecting policy. Governors thus create issues, set agendas, establish and implement rules or programmes, and evaluate and/or adjudicate outcomes’ (Avant et al. 2010: 2). Their authority and interactions are said to be at the core of transformations within global governance; thus both IGOs and international NGOs have been conceptualised as important global migration governors (Korneev 2017).

Such research seeks to break new ground in the analysis of international organisations (IOs) as key objects of study in the broader research field of global migration governance, exploring their impact on migration governance in the absence of a global migration regime. This shifts the focus from global migration governance as an emerging structure to global migration governors as sources of agency and, consequently, to the outcomes that flow from interactions between various agents. These interactions and their outcomes contribute to global governance denoting a complex structure of power relations between various governors (States, IOs, NGOs, community actors) that seek to impact on migration policymaking (either globally or regionally), mainly by influencing governments in destination and transit countries (Betts 2011; Geddes 2010, 2012; Kunz et al. 2011). Large international NGOs – often specialised in distinct issue-areas of migration governance – may have significant impacts on individual States. Such examples come from works analysing involvement in migration and related governance fields of actors as Anti-Slavery International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Save the Children and Caritas in countries as diverse as the United Kingdom (Balch and Geddes 2011), Spain (Barbulescu and Grugel 2016) and Morocco (Wunderlich 2010, 2012).

Certainly, actors like the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Amnesty International, HRW, Save the Children, Open Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS) differ significantly in their mission, size and financial and institutional capacities. But these and other referent and non-referent international NGOs (Betts 2013) play an active role in various migration governance and management projects (Geiger and Pécout 2010, 2013; Georgi 2010; Guchteneire et al. 2009; Hess 2010). Georgi, in particular, asserts that while various pro-migrant social movements and ‘more radical NGOs like Migrant Rights International’ promote the rights-based approach to migration, many other big NGOs support market-oriented ‘liberal global migration governance’ (2010: 64–5).
Relevant empirical research also demonstrates that an important distinction also plays out at the regional and global level between service-providing NGOs working on the ground and transnational advocacy groups pertinent at the local and national levels. However, another key difference – between pro-migrant NGOs usually animated by members of the host society and proper migrant organisations created by migrant themselves – that has already been thoroughly discussed at the local and national levels (Korneev 2006; Simeant 1998) is still a rather marginal topic within discussions of global migration governance, with rare exceptions (Betts and Jones 2012; Piper 2015).

Migration-Related Issue Areas

A second line of research on civil-society actors’ role in the field of global migration policy involves grouping relevant studies along different migration-related issue-areas. Research on migration and development is certainly an area where civil society is given substantially more attention than within broader migration governance studies. The role of civil-society structures in fostering development, either through channelling remittances or through other types of engagement with emigrant communities, has been emphasised within international political economy, global governance studies, development studies and, certainly, migration studies (De Haas 2012; Muniandy and Bonatti 2014). Positive examples can be drawn from the workings of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), where:

migrant-led parallel processes like the PGA [the People’s Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights], which could be considered part of an emerging ‘global migration governance from below’ . . . Regarding more concrete outcomes, the landmark ILO convention on ‘decent work for domestic workers’ (including migrant domestic workers) was achieved not primarily by ‘like-minded states’ but by massive efforts from civil society organization and trade unions; they are the ones now who are most vocal in fighting for the ratification of the convention. (Rother 2013: 369)

At the same time, research critical of the managerial ‘migration and development’ paradigm (De Haas 2005, 2012; Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002) – and specifically of the massive promotion of remittances by various international actors – points out that international financial institutions attempt to instrumentalise NGOs for purposes of migrants’ financial education (Cross 2015). Civil-society actors also often come under scrutiny in research that deals with various forms of diaspora development, politics and policy of and on diaspora (Bauböck and Faist 2010) – an area closely overlapping with politics and policies on migration and development. Within this established and rather mainstream field of studies there are some recent innovative works that emphasise the agency of migrants and diasporas, as well as their dependency on other non-State actors often acting as sponsors and promoters of diaspora development (Betts and Jones 2012; Gamlen 2014; Ragazzi 2009).

International protection of forced migrants is another area within global migration governance that is often linked to civil-society actors (Ferris 2011; Loescher 2001). Here, scholars exploring the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, specifically, its operations on the ground could not avoid also examining its numerous local partners – NGOs involved in various aspects of grassroots work, lobbying or media campaigns and
often funded by international bodies or the State. Loescher and Milner, in particular, note that, ‘unable to pursue its mandate independently . . . UNHCR is structurally and operationally linked to a wide range of other actors in the international system, including donor and refugee-hosting states, other UN agencies, international, national and local NGOs’ (2011: 199). Furthermore, exploring the constellations of actors within the international refugee protection regime, Orchard (2014) argues that various civil-society organisations acting as ‘norm entrepreneurs’ are capable of effectively lobbying for new important norms in this field.

There are, certainly, prominent NGOs with a long history in the field of refugee protection and care. Such groups include ECRE, the World Council of Churches, Caritas International, VluchtelingenWerk and other religious organisations. Most began their activity from a small number of European countries and gradually globalised. However, the overall trend noted by several migration governance scholars is for a proliferation of NGOs claiming refugees and migrants as their populations of concern. It is, indeed, possible to talk about a ‘mission creep’ of non-migration NGOs – such as the IFRCRCs or the International Rescue Committee (IRC) – similar to that happening across various IGOs (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

Regional Studies

Regional studies and, especially, studies of regional integration have also made a significant contribution to the field of migration research. Different regions receive different degrees of attention, and there is an imbalance in the geographical focus of works addressing the role of civil society in migration governance. Not surprisingly, pioneering studies have been based on empirical material from the European Union (EU), as well as from Asia and Latin America – regions where dynamic integration processes have a rather long history.

Perhaps the first pool of studies on the role of civil-society actors in regional migration governance has emerged within studies of EU migration politics and policy, particularly those looking at the EU’s area of freedom, security and justice. Here, scholars have focused on the phenomenon of pro-migrant lobbying at the EU level (Geddes 1998, 2000) or on transnational mobilisation around migration issues across the EU (Guiraudon 2001). Recognising the potential importance of NGOs in the EU migration policy field, Geddes believes their influence at the time of analysis was at best limited. At the same time, Guiraudon (2000) – although sceptical of the ability of ‘migrant aid groups’ to influence closed policy venues at the EU level – demonstrated their growing impact at the level of individual EU Member States (2001). Increasingly more attention to NGOs has been given in the context of research on EU migration politics and policies in recent years. There is a growing Europeanisation of migration policies (Bonjour and Vink 2013), albeit with scholars reaching opposite conclusions. For instance, Menz still sees Member States as the most important players and, hence, as the primary targets of pro-migrant lobbying, disregarding opportunities emerging at the level of EU institutions that acquired more competences in this field. Thus, he insists that unless civil-society actors ‘can build successful coalitions, as German NGOs with the Green Party, at the time part of the coalition government . . . their influence appears limited’ (Menz 2011: 458).

However, Kaunert et al. (2013: 194), having examined the role of refugee-assisting
NGOs in the process of EU asylum policy-making, conclude that ‘the current configuration of the EU asylum policy venue offers significant opportunities for NGOs to influence the content of EU asylum policy and thus co-determine the general framework within which national asylum policies are formulated’. They note a significant increase in the number of advocacy groups attempting to influence EU institutions (2013: 192). Significantly, they emphasise that, in the context of European integration, development of a genuinely common EU immigration policy has been a crucial positive factor, changing the restrictive nature of EU-level policy venues into more open ones and, thus, allowing more active participation of non-State actors (see also Kaunert and Léonard 2012).

Apparently, NGOs also manage to gain influence in other regional integration settings, although in a rather different context. Thus, Rother (2013: 369) provides a detailed analysis of the situation in Asia:

Cooperation regarding migration remains in its infancy among nation states in Asia . . . Umbrella organizations of migrant NGOs and grassroots organizations have now become relevant actors in the region. In some cases, they take over governance contributions, which the sending states are not willing or able to provide: assistance to migrants, information campaigns about their rights, etc. But they also try to influence migration governance at the national, regional and global levels by providing shadow reports on migrant issues, forming alliances with trade unions and lobbying inside and outside global institutions. Migrant organizations, which constitute a heterogeneous group . . . have become relevant and influential actors in their own right, not only by providing services (thus sometimes addressing shortcomings in governance by the sending or receiving states), but also by applying the full spectrum of social movement strategies: agenda setting, alliance building, blaming and shaming and exerting political influence and pressure on the local, national, transnational, regional and global level.

NGOs are also important players in the migration policy field across the former USSR, in particular in post-Soviet Central Asia. Migration governance constellations in this region involve such international non-governmental actors as the IFRCRCS, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Danish Church Aid and others. Unfortunately, together with their main partners – various IGOs – many international NGOs perpetuate misperceptions of the poorest post-Soviet States (such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzistan) as countries of emigration, thus hampering efforts to promote other ideas and schemes of economic development.

Normative Dimensions of Research

There are significant rifts in the normative dimensions of research on the globalised third sector in the field of migration policy. In order to grasp these divergences, one needs to analyse the small pool of existing research on civil-society actors’ roles and impacts on global migration governance through broader academic discussions on the role of non-State actors in international politics and global governance. These discussions revolve around various, somewhat conflicting, claims. For instance, Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that numerous non-State actors have become significantly more powerful in international politics, while the power of the State has diminished—a claim expounded by a growing body of scholarship (Risse et al. 1999; Risse 2002; Rosenau 2002).

Literature on the role of non-State actors in migration governance mostly follows
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this claim. Moreover, such literature evokes an important normative dimension that suggests that non-governmental actors’ more dynamic involvement in migration governance is generally a good thing (Piper 2015; Rother 2013; Rother and Piper 2015). This literature tends to portray NGOs as intermediaries, helpers and democracy-promoters as it emphasises their overall benevolent character. A less popularised and more cautious view highlights the sometimes ambiguous role of NGOs. This perspective is rooted in important traditions within international political economy and critical security studies that attribute a market logic to the activities of many non-State actors in migration policy (as well as to the ambiguous effects of these activities). Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen (2012) rank NGOs among the five groups of actors within the globalised ‘migration industry’ since they play several important roles at both the grassroots and policy levels, thus significantly contributing to the development of migration governance. As Simeant (2005: 851) emphasises: ‘The growing competition between NGOs encourages them to turn “global” in order to adapt themselves in order to expand their ability to obtain human and financial resources, both public and private, which seems analogous to the effect that the processes of internationalization has on transnational firms.’

There is also scholarship that builds on studies in governmentality and strands of research within critical theory or social anthropology. These studies recognise a certain role for non-State actors in globalised migration governance, but express doubts about their unequivocally benign effects. Such sceptical views are mostly based on theoretical constructions and empirical analysis pointing to the fact that, instead of being good independent players acting from the standpoint of resistance to the State, non-State actors often become an instrument of the State in its neoliberal art of governance (Sending and Neumann 2006).

Indeed, civil-society actors have an important role in promoting official conventions developed by the UN and the ILO (Pécoud 2009) and pushing for minimum standards that are vital for creating and sustaining opportunity structures in the field of global migration governance. However, NGOs are not solely benevolent actors whose mission is to guarantee and protect the rights of migrants. They are also involved in the control (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud 2007) and ‘disciplining’ (Geiger and Pécoud 2013) of migrants, thus fulfilling some of the core roles of the State. This control function – in the sense of governmentality implied by Foucault – relates to a more general observation of an ambiguous relationship between NGOs and States made by Sending and Neumann (2006).

RELATIONS BETWEEN NGOS AND OTHER GLOBAL MIGRATION GOVERNORS

A significant, albeit largely underexplored, dimension of civil society’s role in global migration governance is how local and global civil-society actors interact with other global migration governors. While there is not much attention paid to NGOs as governance actors on a global scale, recent research has shown that they are important, and often indispensable, partners of other global governors (Avant et al. 2010) such as States and IGOs. Both local and international NGOs develop highly complex relations with IGOs. Ambiguous, often problematic, relations between various NGOs and IGOs have attracted the attention of scholars, particularly in the context of countries with a weak civil-society
sector that is substantially dependent on the financial and intellectual resources of international donors (Regamey 2011; Korneev 2013; Rother and Piper 2015).

On the one hand, international NGOs are important ‘moral actors’ (Orchard 2014), offering an important critique of various stakeholders and providing other global actors with grounds for action. For instance, the IOM used the Human Rights Watch (2010) report on migrants’ exploitation during the tobacco harvest in Kazakhstan to bring together State officials and transnational companies in a special working group to address these abusive practices. This reliance on knowledge produced by one of the most influential human rights NGOs helped the IOM demonstrate its adherence to a rights-based approach to migration governance and reinforce its position as a ‘reputational intermediary’ (Broome 2010) between business and government, thereby reinforcing its position within the migration governance field.

However, prominent international NGOs are also becoming competitors of established referent IGOs in the global migration governance field. Importantly, non-referent IGOs often have greater influence when they succeed in linking migration issues to their own referent fields. An example is how IFRCRCS ‘mission creep’ (Barnett and Finnemore 2004) has essentially challenged the IOM in its efforts to expand its work into issues such as migrants and health. The IFRCRCS secured important donor support from the EU to launch advocacy and grassroots campaigns enabling migrants’ access to healthcare. Such projects were piloted in Central Asia in 2010 and are now a regular component of IFRCRCS activities in the region. Based on interviews with IFRCRCS Central Asia, there is also evidence suggesting that similar programmes targeting a particular sub-field of migration governance might be developed elsewhere.1

IGOs often create conditions that facilitate the involvement of local NGOs in migration governance processes. IGO activities contribute to important changes in structural conditions – that is, political opportunity structures – enabling specific types of social mobilisation by local NGOs that usually act as IGOs’ major local partners. Unfortunately, however, local NGOs often fall victim to unequal partnerships with IGOs implementing large migration management projects. Numerous examples come from the post-Soviet region, with its volatile migration politics and policies, weak governmental institutions in this field and local civil-society dependence on external donors. In Tajikistan, the World Bank and the IOM have been successful in promoting the Philippines’s migration management model among Tajik officials and local NGOs despite significant criticism from the International Federation for Human Rights. The latter has been emphasising the crucial differences between the Philippines (with significant demographic pressure) and Tajikistan (with its small population and disproportionate out-migration) as reasons for this model’s ‘non-fit’ with the local realities (FIDH 2011).

Moreover, despite being omnipresent and indispensable actors in the field of migration governance, NGOs face problems of access to certain policy venues and other policy actors. One very important challenge is gaining equal access to participants of various Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) mushrooming around the world (Thouez and Channac 2006). Some scholars are very optimistic about such informal forums and do not see any particular problems of access faced by NGOs (Rother 2013). Others, however, are more cautious about the actual role played by both local and transnational NGOs within RCPs. This is especially the case for some of the RCPs developing across the post-
Soviet region, where established NGOs lament the lack of transparency of IGOs leading these RCPs and criticise work formats that IGOs promote in the region (Korneev 2017; Orchard 2016).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to identify trends in research on the third sector in the migration policy field, focusing on relevant theoretical and empirical contributions analysing various issues and actors involved. While the scholarship on migration governance remains largely State-centred, there is a growing literature on the role of non-State actors in this field. The main focus, though, is placed on IGOs as global migration governors. However, there is also a relatively recent, emerging literature on the role of civil-society actors in influencing migration policies, with first contributions from the mid-2000s. At present, the volume of this scholarship remains modest, but content-wise it is scattered across different aspects and geographical areas. The picture of the third sector which emerges from the existing literature clearly shows that, as in other fields, in global migration governance the third sector is not a unified actor – it is, instead, very diverse. In the first place, the third sector encompasses organisations with very different missions and institutional and financial capacities. It is also divided across local and global actors that focus, respectively, on tackling local migration-related issues and large-scale, if not global, migration governance projects. Other divisions can be drawn between service-providing NGOs and advocacy groups, as well as between pro-migrant NGOs and proper migrant organisations.

So what roles do NGOs play in the globalised migration policy field? Because of the differences and divides within the third sector, it is hard to assess their roles univocally. Still, several trends can be discerned, based on the outreach that the third sector has in global migration governance. With regard to positive developments, the work of NGOs active at local and national levels and drawing attention to problems of specific groups of migrants can have a spillover effect in increasing global awareness of issues of human trafficking or labour exploitation of migrants. In this respect, international NGOs like Human Rights Watch or Caritas can be more vocal and better heard, and their advocacy work has had a significant impact on migration policymaking nationally and regionally, as well as setting new trends in migration governance globally. Moreover, NGOs often perform the role of research partners for IGOs, providing them with knowledge and expertise from the ground, which the latter, in turn, use while negotiating changes in migration policies with States. Thus, although the profile and visibility of NGOs remain lower than those of IGOs, they are often behind the curtains, not only informing IGOs but also influencing their positions. In other cases the process is reversed: NGOs are responsible for the diffusion of international norms. As the case of the ILO convention on ‘decent work for domestic workers’ shows, third sector actors are the ones that lobby for the adoption and implementation of key documents at national levels.

On the other hand, the fact that NGOs are not integrated directly in processes of global migration governance is very telling about how they are viewed by other migration governors. NGOs are still not recognised as equal actors existing and acting on their own. Rather, they are perceived as intermediaries supporting diffusion of norms orchestrated
by IGOs, or service-providers of IGOs, that struggle to pursue their mandates, like the UNHCR. As a result, NGOs often enter global migration governance in the capacity of sub-contractors in large migration management projects of IGOs. Another object of critique is the mission creep of various NGOs, which fosters competition for funding and reputation and hinders cooperation and coalition-building. Finally, NGOs often take over some of the functions of the State, going as far as replacing it in its control function, as shown by cases of NGOs supporting management of refugee camps or irregular migrants’ detention camps.

As a concluding remark, it is worth emphasising that there are wide spaces for both conceptual and empirical work on the third sector in migration governance, including on immigrant organisations at the local and national levels. First, there is a need for contributions which would go beyond immigrant organisations in Western European countries, since they are not the only destination countries of migrants worldwide. Second, scholarship on immigrant organisations could benefit from research that abandons ethnic lenses and looks at other drivers of associational activities – for example problems shared by migrants in similar socio-economic or legal conditions rather than belonging to one ethnicity; or by common goals such as liberalising immigration policies in a destination country.

On the global level, research would benefit from contributions that could build bridges with other fields, such as literature on social movements, human rights, social justice, environmental change or even religious studies. Looking at these fields is important as they help us understand principles that may underlie the foundation and missions of NGOs and in this way (indirectly) influence migration governance within and across States. Furthermore, there is a need for research that uncovers the agency of global migration governors by focusing on patterns of interactions between local and international NGOs and other actors in the field of migration governance. This is important not only because the third sector is not a unitary actor, but also because it does not exist on its own; rather, it is involved in constellations of power relations (including negotiations, conditional-ity, manipulation and so on) between States, think tanks, IGOs, trade unions and other actors.

NOTES

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1. Interviews with IFRCRCS Central Asia were carried out in Almaty, Kazakhstan in April 2011 and August 2015.

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