

Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation? Revisited¹

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ABSTRACT: The article discusses a link between interest representation and its importance for democracy. After looking at the pluralist, corporatist and neo-pluralist approaches, the article focuses on the role of interest groups in associational, deliberative, and participatory democracies. I debate whether or not interest representation is a necessary element of democracy and whether the theoretical background can help us grasp it across all political systems. I address this question in the context of young, post-Communist democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). I argue that in the CEE countries when studying interest groups' populations and organizational behaviour, we have to take into consideration a number of internal and external factors that impact perceptions and actual activity of interest groups when it comes to countries' democratization.

KEYWORDS: Democracy; interest representation; interest organizations; interest groups' population; Central and Eastern Europe; Lithuania; Poland; Slovenia; lobbying; advocacy.

¹ The origins of this article lay in the introductory chapter to the volume Rozbicka et al. (2021) 'Achieving Democracy Through Interest Representation. Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe' Palgrave Macmillan. The chapter, even at the date of its publication, due to various developments required an update and revision of the approach to study interest groups within democratization process. The new version of the text was presented at the International Political Studies Association (IPSA) Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 2023, panel: Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. I would like to thank all the panel members for their feedback and constructive criticism that led to the development of the current version.



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1 Introduction

Understanding interest groups' systems remains crucial to understanding the functioning of advanced democracies, especially in states that have undergone the democratization process only recently. The pluralist argument that without groups there would be no democracy retains much plausibility, which finds a resonance in the social capital research (Putnam, 2000; Beyers et al., 2008). The neo-Tocquevillian approach emphasizes the importance of internal aspects of associational life for the proper functioning of democracy and democratization (Kaufman, 1999). From that perspective, interest organizations are viewed as central democratic partners in the policy process, enhancing its open, transparent, and participatory character. Thus, the emergence of interest groups should be treated as one of the prerequisites of a successful democratization.

In the post-Communist CEE countries, contrary to Western democracies, the emergence of modern civil society and the political system was not the effect of century-long processes but rather the rapid and unexpected regime change in 1980-90s. The regime change created a shock to the system, creating opportunities for interest communities to change, emerge, and, in some cases, disappear. Using Gray and Lowery's (2000) population ecology approach, the regime change created circumstances allowing the observation of rapid changes in the density and diversity of interest groups in given CEE political systems, making them an ideal candidate for observing the dependence between country democratization and interest groups presence (or lack of).

The collapse of Communism and transition to democracy introduced a set of internal and external factors, which further influenced the formation and maintenance of groups' populations (Crawford and Lijphart, 1995), suggesting interdependence rather than causality between democratization process and interest groups' presence. Fink- Hafner (2011) contended that an institutional choice in the transition to democracy (internal factor) was not only about the relations between the democratic opposition and the *old regime* but also formed idiosyncratic opportunity structures which influenced the early processes of interest group formation (in particular, the socio-economic partnerships). In the case of external factors, the key aspect was the process of Europeanization (Berglund, 2003; Maloney et al., 2018). The countries from the CEE, due to external pressure, implemented reforms to meet various economic and democratic criteria, including the Copenhagen Criteria to join the European Union (EU), as well as the liberalization process along the lines of the Washington Consensus, to have access to the World Bank and IMF credit lines (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007). The implementation of these was viewed by outside observers as symptoms of emerging democracies and a move towards creating a functional and representative civil society.

The assessment of the quality of democracy through the study of organized interest in the post-Communist CEE has only recently been explored (see Rozbicka et al. 2021; Dobbins & Riedel, 2021), laying down a sound basis and the provision of empirical data and its initial analysis for future research.

Taking theoretical, conceptual, and methodological basis from existing Western democracies' research, the recent developments avoid the risk of heroic empiricism. They unify relatively fragmented research on CEE countries from a comparative perspective and provide a more robust and consistent research agenda.

The reminder of this article outlines interest representation and its importance for democracy in more detail, underlining the place of this discussion in a broader political science debate. In particular, it focuses on an evolution from the pluralist and corporatist perspective to the neo-pluralism. I consider different elements of the participatory, representative, and associative democracy; and further support the argument by referencing the Tocqueville's associationalism. To contrast the intellectual principle of interest representation as a necessary element of democracy, the second part of the text discusses the explanatory case study of CEE countries, and in particular, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia, indicating an impact of a broader democratisation process on interest groups density and diversity. The conclusions suggest an interconnection between the democratization process and interest groups' presence rather than a simple causality explanation. The article concludes with an overview of key arguments and results from the ongoing debate.

2 Interest representation and its importance for democracy

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Until the mid-20th century, research on interest groups' participation in the decision-making processes did not consider the question of democracy in detail (Jordan and Maloney, 2007). The initial wave of positive research on the topic was linked with the pluralist celebration of groups as a means of face-to-face interactions to enhance social integration and direct democracy itself. Since then, however, the debate on the democratic deficit and questions regarding the role citizens' participation should play in the political process has given way to a more normative body of literature on the role of the 'organized civil society' (in particular, for the EU related debate see: Saurugger 2008). Following Tocqueville's approach, the new approach considers associations and interest groups as crucial actors in a "truly" democratic system.

Historically, the two most established schools on the role of interest organizations in the policy process are pluralism and corporatism. No matter their differences with regard to group involvement in the political system, in their perception of the balance of power between groups, or whether or not such associations enhance or undermine the governance solutions, both schools cast interest groups in a significant role as a part of the democratic life. To pluralists, interest groups are core legitimate actors in the policy-making process. They assume that the free interplay of interest groups leads to a system of 'checks and balances', preventing the potential dominance of a particular societal group or of a powerful state. Interest groups are assumed to contribute to a more reasonable process of policy-making, mainly by providing information and analysis based on a multitude of different perspectives (Watts, 2007: 14-21). For pluralists, effective interest representation is enabled by the mobilization and

representation of a plurality of social and economic interests that organize interest associations (Dahl, 1961; Truman, 1958). Pluralist writers portray interest organizations as having a compassionate impact on the political system. Far from posing any form of threat, their existence serves to enhance democracy. Indeed, they are the very stuff of the democratic process (Watts, 2007).

The corporatist perspective favours a strong role for interest groups in policy-making, but only under the overarching leadership role of the state (Hosli et al., 2004: 46-47). In the corporatist systems, interest groups gain access to the formal decision-making process if they provide compliance with the agreements reached and thereby add to the overall steering capacity of the state (Lehmbruch, 1979: 52). Due to increased demands, the state depends on the assistance of societal actors in formulating and implementing policies (Lehmbruch, 1979: 52). In particular, there is a demand on the part of the public actors for the expertise and compliance of private actors (Wonka & Warntjen, 2004: 17). Actors involved in a policy formulation (in opposition to those uninvolved) are expected to be more eager to implement its outputs quickly and with more engagement. Thus, the output democracy is being enhanced (Schmalz-Bruns and Jessop, 2002; Heinelt et al., 2002: 17-18).

Pluralism and corporatism are widely discussed; however, more and more attention has been given in the literature to normative questions, such as the general desirability of interest groups, the potential biases in access, the attention different societal interests gain, and the societal consequences generated by interest group activities. Interest groups are often perceived as advocating for the interests of powerful business or small sections of the public which conflict with the public good or the preferences of the majority of citizens (Flöthe and Rasmussen 2018; Schattschneider 1948). The questions have been raised regarding interest groups' transparency, accountability and representative character. Given that interest groups lack an electoral mandate or formal authorisation from a clearly defined constituency (Halpin, 2006), how their substantive representation should look remains a tricky question. Who are interest groups actually representing when acting in the interest of represented?

In response, neo-pluralism acknowledges that mobilization of groups is not a one-dimensional process, and it often involves competition between groups themselves. Interest groups interact with policy-makers but also themselves in stable or more *ad hoc* coalitions. As Saurugger (2008: 1277) underlines, organised interests are only imperfectly constrained by democratic politics. They still have ample opportunities to influence politics in ways that may not fully reflect the democratic conceptions of the pluralist idea. Secondly, neo-pluralism takes into account that not all policy issues might be equally represented, and some of them might indeed be mostly biased towards elites. Further, the neo-pluralist perspective assumes that groups face political contexts and constraints in policy influence. Neo-pluralism thus encourages research, which looks beyond groups themselves and asks for a study of the context in which groups are placed and act.

Could organized interests provide a core contribution to reducing the democratic deficit? One basic assumption of traditional democratic theory is that those who are affected by a decision also must be given a right to participate in the decision. Thus, even if the final decision is not based on their ideas,

they must have had a say and a chance to make their argument heard. Secondly, the participation of a broad range of interests, if undertaken in an open and free manner, makes everybody provide the best reasons for their position. This can help to eliminate both egoistically and logically erroneous positions. Finally, following Lindblom (1965), those given the right to participate might have the relevant knowledge to help produce better results, combining the ideas of corporatism and focus on output democracy.

Schmalz-Bruns further concludes that direct inclusion and involvement of citizens, both individually and collectively (through associations), is an obvious solution to the deficit of democracy (2002: 59). He suggests there is a direct and mutually reinforcing link between the virtues of direct participation on the one hand, and the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of policies that emerge under the structural shortcomings of representative institutions within a system characterized by dispersion, poli-centricity and fragmentation on the other. From a more ethical perspective, the experience of a plurality of views on a subject matter is expected to heighten participants' awareness of differences and thus their moral sensitivity towards each other. This could have the effect of a willing identification not just a particular project and group, but also with wider and more encompassing concerns and activities in which they are embedded. Interest groups are seen as a substitute for other forms of democratic legitimization, ensuring that different types of interests are taken into account in policy-making (Greenwood 2007; Heritier 1999). In national contexts, it is a commonly held assumption that group involvement in policy-making boosts legitimacy, in some respects, acting as a surrogate for the public in the policy processes (Lundberg and Hysing 2016).

Although democratic legitimacy is a core concept in political science research, it is certainly not the only relevant or possible criterion for normative evaluation. According to Knill & Lehmkuhl (2002: 85), private governance contributions might compensate for the decreasing capacities of national governments in defining and providing public goods in light of the internationalization of markets and the emergence of transnational information and communication networks. The limited problem-solving capability of authoritative regulation (and technological solutions) creates the need for a more cooperative, consensual, and inclusive policy style (Lenschow, 1999: 42). The perception that successful policy depends on economic and private actors has further consequences for the choice of policy instruments, implying a more prominent role for market-oriented, self-regulatory, as well as informational and communicative instruments. Decision-makers and legislators, on matters involving technical understanding and policy implementation, rely on the advice and assistance of well-resourced groups (Watts, 2007: 78-79).

A cornerstone of any democratic society is the capacity for its citizens to have a political voice so that citizens 'can express their views, preferences, and interests towards political institutions and hold public officials to account' (Fraussen and Halpin, 2016: 476). Although political representation is achieved through voting for or joining and supporting political parties, elections are irregular occurrences, and scholars question the participatory character of parties (e.g., Marsh, 2006). The debate on fragmentation and electoral volatility of party systems in Western democracies and the

dissatisfaction with the representative system of government has pushed scholars to explore the role of interest groups as mechanisms of political expression enhancing the quality and breadth of political participation (e.g., Fraussen and Halpin, 2016 but also: Klüver, 2015, van Biezen and Poguntke, 2014), focusing on the principles of associative, deliberative, and participatory democracy.

The associative democracy theories incorporate the neo-Tocquevillian approach, emphasizing the importance of internal aspects of associational life for the proper functioning of democracy and democratization, viewing interest organizations as central democratic partners in the policy process and enhancing its open, transparent, and participatory character. Voluntary associations became the basis of contemporary conceptions of a third sector between market and state. Neo-Tocquallians, Berger and Neuhaus (1977), in particular, used the notion of non-profit and civil society organizations as mediators between citizens and government. The associations provide information to policy-makers on members' preferences, equalising representation, promoting citizens' education, and offering alternative implementation governance and administration. The associationalist acknowledge that for their system to work and equally represent all interests in the society, within democratic decision-making, the state has to monitor the functions and composition of associations (Hirst, 1994; Cohen and Rogers 1995a): either through state 'sponsoring' emergence of groups, where they would do not so naturally (Cohen and Rogers 1995b); or, limiting state engagement, to avoid state's favouritism (Hirst, 1994, Carter, 2002). The principles of associative democracy see organized interest groups as actors responsible in the democratic system for the provision of information and expertise to policy-makers, representation of excluded and marginalised groups, and democratic capacity building.

The deliberative democracy, as an alternative to the diminishing citizens' participation, understands a democratic policy process differently under different concepts: from Rawlsian theory of public reason, Dahl's non-participatory pluralism, Arrow's social choice, Riker's rational choice and the Habermasian theory of communicative action (or discursive account of decision-making; Zeleznik 2016). The analysts propose numerous solutions to improve political participation, from the involvement of deliberation in well-constituted forums (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004: 10) to 'macro deliberative' theorist contributions to improve the quality of political participation. In principle, however, deliberative democracy is about communication and the willingness of the sides to change their views (Dryzek, 2000). Within an engaged, 'deliberating' society, Habermas (1996) distinguishes between groups that engage in 'clientele bargaining' with the state, such as business associations, labour unions, and 'supplier' groups. Supplier groups give voice to social problems, make broad demands, articulate public interests or needs and attempt to influence the political process from a normative point of view.

According to Fung (2005: 671) deliberative democratic mechanisms are a crucial component of the democratic policy process, but they are insufficient, and participation needs to be improved. A response to that seems to be provided by the participatory democratic theory, which understands democratic notions regarding direct empowerment vs representation. Participatory democracy also addresses the need to focus on democratic procedures that facilitate inclusion (Cunningham, 2002).

Among others, Baker et al. (2009)'s characteristics of participatory democracy include widespread political participation through different forms of association, which must be diverse and representative (including marginalised groups), committed to democratic ethos and open to deliberation. It is based on a qualified delegate model with an assumption of accountability. While primarily applied to the role of elected representative and political parties, this approach also offers insights how interest groups might establish their representative legitimacy. Interest organizations can serve here as spaces for deliberation, where interests can be articulated, developed, and negotiated to be later passed and negotiated with the local and national state institutions (Wainwright, 2003: 188). Groups can be a mechanism by which citizens can hold governments accountable for their actions and strengthen democratic structures. This way, interest organizations are acknowledged as actors contributing to participatory democracy. The participatory democracy recognises the challenges of working within the state that is not supportive towards groups, that does not create the conditions for participation, realising rights and securing outcomes of deliberations.

In the above understanding, the three concepts (associative, deliberative, and participatory democracy) should be incorporated equally and in mutually comprehensive terms within the institutions of representative democracy to fully grasp the importance of interest groups for democracy. Interest groups can hold the democratic state accountable; they can act as advocates for better democracy; can build democratic capacity (enhancing citizens' indirect participation); can create spaces for discussion, debate, and deliberation; facilitate representation of excluded communities; and can provide expertise to policy-makers. It is not, however, without limitation or necessary control. The regulation of access is one of the central arguments stressed by the theorists of associative and participatory democracy (Saurugger 2008: 1277). Contrary to classic pluralist assumptions, public intervention is necessary to guarantee equal representation of all groups. Secondly, resources (understood broadly, beyond the financial funds) are crucial for interest groups to intervene in the public, political and private debates to the degree required by the three models.

Neo-pluralism and participatory democracy, in particular, have offered frameworks to analyse the democratic legitimacy of interest groups' participation in the different Western political systems. While neo-pluralism acted till now as a framework to structure empirical research on normative premises within a number of those democracies, participatory democracy approaches have led to a large number of normative studies on how interest groups can and must participate in decision-making to increase a democratic nature of a system in which they partake.

3 Interest representation in Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia – a bird-eye view

Concluding the above paragraphs, it could be argued that the emergence of interest group politics is one of the decisive factors in democratic transformation, and the phenomenon should be identifiable in post-Communist societies. But we need to ask about causality: is it the group's presence

and/or emergence that influenced the democratization process or rather the democratization process resulted in the enhanced presence of interest groups (improving their density and diversity)?

Although all the CEE Communist countries have undergone democratic transformations, the region is characterised by a high degree of political diversity, with considerable cross-national variations in the existence and pace of the transformation process. It has been argued that during the early 1990s, the most advanced and consolidated democratic systems were found in Czechia, Hungary, and Poland, followed by Slovenia and Slovakia, with Balkan countries lagging behind (Pagett, 1999: 23). The theoretical explanations of differences in the trajectory of democratization in those countries were linked to a number of factors. Socio-economic developments across the region (Huntington, 1991; Lipset et al., 1993) are argued to explain a growth in the scale and complexity of government and the accompanying diffusion of political power. The diffusion of power brought in its wake a more open and participatory political style conducive to associational activity. This perspective brings a sharper focus on the relationship between economy and democracy, locating the socio-economic foundations of associational activity in patterns of social stratification generated by market relations (Pagett, 1999: 24). Following this perspective, we would expect to find a correlation between pluralism and the more rapid market transition found in Poland and the Czechia. By contrast, stunted economic transformation in the Balkan countries can be expected to constrain the pluralists' developments.

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In comparison, Szablowski and Derlien (1993) suggested that variation between post-Communist countries comes from the different patterns of elite interactions that accompanied regime change. They argued that the transition process left economic elites relatively undisturbed, and the associational order was likely to be marked by the persistence of old structures and modes of behaviour. Where regime change was done through negotiations between Communists and counter-elites, as in Poland and Hungary, interest group politics can be expected to assume a dual character, with familiar patterns of association persisting along emergent pluralist forms. When democratization process was the result of the collapse of the old regime and involved a radical elite turnover, as in Czechia and Slovakia, we might expect a cleaner break with the past. When we combine the ethno-linguistic conflict, as in the Balkans, associational activity on socio-economic lines is likely to be darkened by more fundamentalist forms of mobilization.

Let's focus on three explanatory examples: Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia. All three countries have non-federal/centralised systems, albeit to a different degree (with Poland, due to its size, showing signs of significant decentralisation). In Poland, the transition to a capitalist economy and new liberal-democratic order was done through economic shock therapy, in contrast to, for example, a much smoother process in Slovenia (Maloney et al., 2018). In terms of the vibrancy of the interest groups system, both Lithuania and Poland exhibit extremely low numbers of associational engagement (i.e., Poland not reaching 25 per cent within the last decade and only 34 per cent in its heyday in 2013, Adamiak 2013; and in Lithuania, the civil society being judged to be weak and poorly empowered, Freedom House, 2018; Sustainable Governance Indicators 2018). While Slovenia is neo-corporatist, Poland incorporates a mixture of neo-corporatist traditions - through, for example, the socio-

economic councils - but tries to maintain a pluralist approach – through public consultations. In contrast, Lithuania does not show much evidence of neo-corporatism as it is more common in other European countries. In 2008, Hrebienar et al. concluded that the Lithuanian system could eventually evolve into a modified form of ‘corporatism without labour’ as labour is very weak in Lithuania; however, for now, it remains, at least in general terms, a pluralist model with minor elements of the corporatist set up (2008: 62).

The legacy of the old political system and the transition to the democratic regime left a lasting effect on the interest group system and its development in all three explanatory countries. The post-Communist transition to democracy still has an impact on interest groups and national systems as well as different approaches to the market economy (Rozbicka et al., 2021), evidenced primarily by the mushrooming of interest groups population, the lack of the institutionalised involvement of interest groups in policymaking and interest groups relationships with political parties. The interest group population experienced rapid growth in the three countries soon after the change of political system. However, the system remains largely un-professionalised, inexperienced in lobbying strategies and dependent on volunteer work. The heritage of the old Communist system and the characteristics of an interest group system that is predominantly young and inexperienced in lobbying inhibits the development of the unbiased inclusion of interest groups in decision-making.

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There are also adverse effects of the transition. Working with political parties is seen as a betrayal of ideals, especially after the times of Communism when civil society was under the party's control, enormously decreasing interactions between various interest groups and national parties. With low trust levels in political actors and a negative image of politics, interest groups avoid direct and clear linkages to individual political parties. The position of political neutrality is essential to maintaining a good public image and support from members. The historical and political conditions, particularly, influenced the relationships between trade unions and political parties (Kaminski and Rozbicka, 2016). Trade unions in the CEE countries never had stable and strong relationships with political parties and did not become long-term intermediaries between society and political parties. Despite some initial tandem-like relations with parties in the early years of independence, their links became even less stable with time, which is also evidenced in the rest of Europe. However, it is also evident that the problematic position of political parties in the three explored countries encourages predominantly direct lobbying, but only that addressed towards the executive, governments, and ministries, rather than towards parliamentary actors.

All three countries have been undergoing the process of Europeanization, beginning with meeting the criteria for EU accession and introducing the Euro currency (except Poland) and then maintaining the implementation of EU laws and norms. However, the process of the Europeanization of interest groups in the CEE countries started long before the date of the countries' accession to the European Union (pre-2004) and expanded both vertically and horizontally. While the change to the democratic system has been, to a large degree, responsible for the increase in the groups' density, the processes linked with the EU accession increased the diversity of groups active in the national systems

and, at least theoretically, at the democratic arena. The Europeanization process has also been responsible for developing the institutional structures supporting interest groups' inclusion in the decisional circles. The accession process contributed to developing consultation mechanisms and encouraged more inclusive policy-making.

Additionally, the multi-level policy-making structures opened new access points for interest groups that are being exploited to a limited degree. However, as evident in ongoing research (Rozbicka et al 2021, Dobbins & Riedel 2021), many developments introduced in the early 2000s lost their meaning directly after the accession. They were later followed only to a minimal level. Moreover, the initial reliance on EU funding around 2004 has decreased. Currently, groups do not rely on funding from the EU or do so to a minimal degree compared to other sources.

4 Lobbying in the CEE countries and 'Achieving democracy'?

The population ecologies in the explored countries vary from their counterparts in Western democracies. Cause groups are more numerous in Poland, and professional organizations are more numerous in Slovenia and Lithuania. However, resource-wise, they are similar to their peers elsewhere. There is a potential reason for concern about the small number of active labour unions across the three countries.

The institutional structure that should support interest groups is currently fairly favourable in Slovenia but is challenging in Lithuania and problematic in Poland, especially with an increasingly right-wing government. Additionally, the heavy reliance of non-governmental organizations on their membership base and various donations while making them independent from the government in power means that demobilized members and an apathetic civil society could bring negative consequences for the civil society organizations' well-being. In the future, we can expect that the effect of the heritage of the old systems will slowly die out. With the changing effects of these processes, the characteristics of the interest group system will change. At the same time, the effects of the processes of globalisation and Europeanisation will probably intensify. The opportunities for national interest groups from CEE countries to participate in the policy-making process will become, in this way, more and more dependent on the politics of national governments and parties in power, as well as the politics of the EU.

This article contributes to debates on the performance of democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, where scholars argue that there is a 'democratic crisis' and democratic fatigue. By focusing on associational vibrancy, I looked into the possibility of CEE organizations bridging the 'democratic deficit' by bringing citizens closer to their policy-makers. The argument picks up on the tension between a 'liberal' and 'pluralist' idea of democracy in which interest groups can thrive and, in contrast, a more 'plebiscitarian' and 'populist' idea of democracy, which sees interest groups as enemies

of the people. A word of warning on the future of ‘lobbying’ in the current political and social environment in the CEE countries and their effects on the quality of democracy in those countries.

The evidence provided in most recent studies indicates that there will not be much progress in establishing a working relationship between policy-makers and interest groups until there is a better understanding among political elites, but also within society, of the role organized interest representation plays in modern democracies, which leads to a better quality of adopted law. Another barrier is the somewhat negative image of lobbying among the public and the assumption that lobbying is connected with corruption and unfair practices. In CEE countries where corruption incidents have particularly threatened the new and still fragile democracy, these issues must be resolved before interest groups can get a more important and prominent role in policy-making.

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Alcançando a democracia por meio da representação de interesses? *Revisitado*

RESUMO: O artigo discute uma ligação entre a representação de interesses e a sua importância para a democracia. Depois de analisar as abordagens pluralista, corporativista e neo-pluralista, o artigo centraliza-se no papel dos grupos de interesses nas democracias associativas, deliberativas e participativas. Discuto se a representação de interesses é ou não um elemento necessário da democracia e se a base teórica pode ajudar-nos a compreendê-la em todos os sistemas políticos. Abordo esta questão no contexto das jovens democracias pós-comunistas da Europa Central e Oriental (PECO). Defendo que, nos países da Europa Central e Oriental, ao estudarmos as populações e o comportamento organizacional dos grupos de interesses, temos de ter em consideração uma série de fatores internos e externos que influenciam as percepções e a atividade real dos grupos de interesses no que diz respeito à democratização dos países.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Democracia; Representação de interesses; Organização de interesses, População de grupos de interesse, Europa Central e Oriental, Lituânia, Polônia, Eslovênia, Lobby, Defesa de interesses.

Logrando la democracia a través de la representación de intereses? *Revisitado*

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza la relación entre la representación de intereses y su importancia para la democracia. Tras examinar los enfoques pluralista, corporativista y neopluralista, el artículo se centra en el papel de los grupos de interés en las democracias asociativas, deliberativas y participativas. Debato si la representación de intereses es o no un elemento necesario de la democracia y si los antecedentes teóricos pueden ayudarnos a comprenderla en todos los sistemas políticos. Abordo esta cuestión en el contexto de las jóvenes democracias poscomunistas de Europa Central y Oriental (ECE). Argumento que en los PECO, al estudiar la población y el comportamiento organizativo de los grupos de interés, debemos tener en cuenta una serie de factores internos y externos que influyen en las percepciones y la actividad real de los grupos de interés en lo que respecta a la democratización de los países.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Democracia, Representación de intereses, Organizaciones de intereses, Población de grupos de intereses, Europa central y del Este, Lituania, Polonia, Eslovenia, Lobby, Defensa de intereses.