The Position of Interest Groups in Eastern European Democracies: Maturing Servicemen or Trojan Horses?

This paper proposes that as long as civil society groups are not internally democratic, they cannot serve as schools of democracy for their members. This argument seeks to contemplate on Tocqueville’s understanding of civil society acting as ‘schools of democracy’ for its members. I base my proposal on the results of my research on Hungarian, Polish and Romanian interest groups. The results illustrate that internal decision making structures are democratically weak in these groups and respondents have certain confusion over the concepts of democracy and substance of related terms. In general, the respondents stay ambiguous between their elite-orientations and egalitarian attitudes. Along with this ambiguity, however, sometimes certain elitist tendencies are also very strong.

I have two hypotheses to explain my findings and I discuss them in this paper. The first one suggests that there is democratic deficit in the internal decision making structures of interest groups due to maturing democratic culture in Eastern Europe. Therefore, this hypothesis sees civil society actors in the region as ‘maturing servicemen of democracy’. As a sign of this maturation, civil society still suffers from a role ambiguity, conceptual ambiguity and representational ambiguity. On the basis of this hypothesis one would expect that in time as democratic political culture takes stronger roots, civil society would assume a ‘school of democracy’ role for large sectors of citizenry. A school as such, in time, develops associational life, promotes modern types of citizenship and engages in democracy building as well as creating channels for the articulation of interests and opportunities for participation. As Ágh also argues, mass emergence of democrats can be observed only after a long process of democratisation when the democratic political culture permeates all walks of life.

1 de Tocqueville, Alexis (1835), Democracy in America, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1998. It is also possible to approach this understanding from an institutions-to-values angle, as elaborated by Rohrschneider, Robert (1999), Learning Democracy. Democratic and Economic values in Unified Germany, Oxford: Oxford University Press, esp. p. 11.

This will be a turning point for a self-sustaining democracy or perhaps ‘invention of democratic tradition’ in Eastern Europe.

The second hypothesis suggests that democratic deficit in internal decision making within interest groups is due to inherent self-concerned and elitist behaviours of leading strata in interest groups. This hypothesis sees undemocratic civil society as some form of a ‘Trojan horse’ in democratic consolidation theory, given the crucial position it occupies. On the basis of this second hypothesis, the prevailing expectancy is such that traditional elite-oriented behaviour is there to stay in Eastern Europe as against an egalitarian one. Civil society is also under the spell of this elitism. As such, this hypothesis is prone to bring out a discussion on ‘values-to-institutions’, that is, how individual values shape the configurations of civil society in Eastern Europe. The paper is based on a discussion of these two hypotheses one after the other.

Hypotheses testing will rely on primary data collected through interviews in Hungary, Poland and Romania. I carried out 63 interviews with representatives from trade union confederations and federations as well as employers’ organisations and agricultural producers’ associations from March 2001 to August 2001. I categorised the first two groups under the title ‘labour’ and the latter two under ‘job-provider’ due to their structural similarities. In Hungary, the questionnaire was mostly introduced in Hungarian, whereas in Romania English and French were widely used. In Poland, however, I introduced the questionnaire in Polish with the help of a translator. Levels of democracy within internal decision making were tested through formal questions, informal talks and a thorough study on internal statutes of interest groups where available. Overall, I believe that the results of these interviews give crucial hindsight into the way interest groups operate in Hungary, Poland and Romania.

Social Networks, Development of Civic Culture: An Explicit Political Culture for Eastern Europe?

More a decade after initial democratic transitions, quality of consolidating democracy in Eastern Europe is under discussion. Despite the fact that institutional and formal

---


4 Rohrschneider, 1999, p.11.
infrastructures of democracy are in place, the way these institutions operate are often questionable from a democratic point of view\(^5\). In this context, Ágh makes a clear-cut differentiation between democratic transition, early\(^6\) and mature consolidation\(^7\). We come across a similar differentiation between the first and the second\(^8\) transitions in Mainwaring \textit{et al.} Thus, main task of democratic transition is arguably institution building, while democratic consolidation comes as a sort of \textit{cultural revolution}. This revolution is bound to involve the emergence of civic culture and civil society as well as invention of democratic traditions\(^9\). Finally, consolidation comes up with the “inculcation of democratic values at both elite and mass levels”\(^{10}\).

In Tocquevillian understanding\(^{11}\), the more individuals get used to the idea of coming together for economic, social or moral purposes, the more they enrich their civic culture. A productive interpersonal interaction and collaboration at the level of individuals come through asociational activities. In an effective civil society, citizens would not remain atomised and certain social networks will be well developed. This social activity serves for strengthening social bonds, reduces dangers of anomie, nourishes the habits of civic engagement and shapes deliberation in democratic public institutions. In this context, the closer we come to the realm of the pluralised civil society, the more the institutional and cultural sides of democracy become inseparable. At the same time, macro political institutions cannot work properly without active and participatory citizenry. This framework provides a safeguard against any majoritarian attempts\(^{12}\). Civil society benefits from social networks

---


\(^6\) The push from early consolidation to mature consolidation came with the emergence of dynamic market economies (Ágh, p.92).


\(^8\) The first transition is the process where power is being transferred from the old nomenclatura to the democratically elected political forces, while the second transition refers to institutionalised democracy as a consolidated political system.


\(^11\) II, p. 15.

characterised by relatively weak and hence permeable boundaries and such networks facilitate cooperation. Uncivil society appears in the altogether absence of social networks or society made up of strong, but closed social networks. Social networks become a means of transmitting innovative information and values as well as assisting social learning within transitional polities. In these polities, after all, a democratic civil society is the basic arena to foster democratic values and attitudes as well as mechanisms through which power is restrained and monitored. Hence, civil society encourages ordinary people to participate in governing, thereby strengthening relations between citizens and their state. As a result, along with institutional factors, a successful transition requires a citizenry willing and able to participate in ensuring the representation of their own individual and collective interests.

Pridham argues that, civil society in this standard sense has been slow in developing in Eastern Europe. This is not totally surprising, given the atomising effects on society of the communist rule. In a fully atomised society, citizens could acquire information exclusively from impersonal sources while only a certain strata -with the highest levels of civic capacity- encounter a larger environment of opinions. People who are better educated and organisationally involved, are the very people who are most likely to encounter this larger environment. Hence, education as such becomes a crucial factor in affecting people's abilities to develop social capital even in atomised societies. A definition of the democratic citizen is, however, built on active political communication beyond the boundaries of closed social cells.

Many analysts argue that, radical individualism, social anomie and distrust characterise politics of Eastern European polities. Free and open political discussion

---

14 Gibson ibid.
15 Pridham, 2000, ibid.
18 Pridham, 2000, ibid.
did not take place during communism and thus citizens are not practised in civic-engagement. Associational development has been seriously hampered, among other reasons by the Communist legacy. Along with a traditional elitism in the region, also came the communist frames of interest groups as transmission belts, which made top-down decision making and atomisation prevalent. As a result, even after the transition to democracy, “learned helplessness, receptivity to paternalism and a confrontational attitude towards conflict” still have a certain impact on interest groups members\textsuperscript{21}. Despite transition to democracy, mass-level attitudes change more slowly whereas political elites speed in adapting to democratic politics. The infrastructure of socio-economic pluralism has remained weak, although some improvements have occurred with transition, notably the change in the legal status of associations as well as, indeed, some growth in membership\textsuperscript{22}.

Increasing number of non-governmental organisations in Eastern Europe has also been taken as a sign of increasing public interest and participation into politics. A counter-argument follows from two angles. The first is that most of time, it is not citizens’ wish to participate into the daily politics but citizens’ distance and feeling of exclusion from daily politics which determine their likelihood of joining social movements\textsuperscript{23}. As such, the sheer number of civil society organisations is not very significant for the saliency of civil society. The second counter argument is the role of individuals rather than masses in these civil society organisations\textsuperscript{24}. This brings a question on the place of elitism in Eastern European politics and its effects on the way social networks have been carved within civil societies. As I am to illustrate later, there is a remarkable democratic deficit within interest groups at the face of sedimented oligarchies and leadership structures. Internal decision making within interest groups is far from being transparent and participatory. All these illustrate a

\textsuperscript{21} Gibbon, 2001, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{22} Pridham, 2000, ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Luong, Pauline Jones & Weinthal, Erika (1999), “The NGO Paradox: Democratic Goals and Non-Democratic Outcomes in Kazakhstan”, Europe-Asia Studies, 51, 7, November, pp: 1267-12 85. This argument holds true especially in the case of environmentalists. There is a distinct separation between local activists and professionals in the environmental NGO sector in Eastern Europe. For more information, see Korkut, Umut (2001), “The Government and Civil Society Interaction in Hungary in Crisis Management: The Case of Floods and Pollution in River Tisza”, 4\textsuperscript{th} meeting of Hungarian Studies, Jyvaskyla, Finland, 2001.
weltering picture for the salience of civil society in the region, if one is to contemplate on their expected role as schools of democracy.

Bauman\(^{25}\) thinks that elitism was a result of late modernity in Eastern Europe, which emerged as an unplanned outcome of social change. Intelligentsia came in sight in the region first in order to consciously embrace goals of this new modernity. This helped the intelligentsia to develop self-awareness, as a group both internally united and externally separate. A form of partnership or relationship between the elites\(^{26}\) and the masses have, however, been historically missing in Eastern Europe (Ágh, ?). Although ideologically egalitarian, even communist regimes turned into a means to justify governing of elites. Konrád & Szelényi argued that it was the state and the party bureaucracy in communist countries, which formed the intellectual classes. Later, the party became an instrument for this new \textit{caste sociale} in order to consolidate their positions in power\(^{27}\). János Kis\(^{28}\) asserted that intelligentsia survived in a \textit{sui generis} class society existing alongside capitalism, called Soviet-type society. A sub-group of intellectual workers, whose members were in regular contact with the process of cultural and scientific creation, were co-opted into the system by the party. This elite turned into some form of a bureaucracy and closed its ranks to outsiders\(^{29}\). A separate stratum of elites, however, maintained their independence at the expense of complete marginalisation from political power. This stratum turned into dissident intellectuals and came closer to workers and the political prisoners in Poland, through KOR movement\(^{30}\). In other cases of democratic transitions however the link between masses and the elites were missing\(^{31}\).

\(^{26}\) I use the term refined by Lasswell, who calls all individuals elites, who either occupy a high office during some period or all those without high office, but still perceived as highly influential in political decisions as ‘power elite’. See Lasswell, Harold D. (1977), \textit{On Political Sociology}, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
\(^{28}\) Kis, Janos (1978 with pseudonym)
\(^{31}\) Higley, John & Pakulski, Jan (1992), “Revolution and Elite Transformation in Eastern Europe”, \textit{Australian Journal of Political Science}, 27, pp: 104-119; Burton, Michael; Gunther, Richard & Higley,
Soon after the transition to democracy, fragmentation, individualisation and the absence of the co-operative interdependencies of interests became predominant characteristics, combined with a new elite bid for leadership over ‘the people’\textsuperscript{32}. This coupled with a permanent effort to monopolise power through exclusion, and denial of social dialogue\textsuperscript{33}. Gáspár Miklós Támas\textsuperscript{34} wrote that “while in the West, the purpose of foundations is to use private funds . . . for public purposes, under post-communism the aim of foundations was to use public funds for the private interests of self-serving individuals”. These elitist and self-fulfilling tendencies raise questions on how democratic institutions both in the political and civil spheres operate in practice.

A civil society undermined by radical individualism, social anomie and greed, however, will fail to build effective ways of citizen participation\textsuperscript{35}. Only non-hierarchical, participatory, internally democratic civil groups can inject virtues of democracy on their members. In other words, in order for civil society to become agents of democratisation, they themselves need to operate democratically\textsuperscript{36}. Attributes, such as organisational structures, routes of participation for members or local/regional groups, social networks within civic groups, and membership procedures speak to a great deal about the democratic potentials of civic groups. In Putnam\textsuperscript{37}’s terminology, only if civil society is organised around horizontal bonds of mutual solidarity rather than vertical bonds of dependency, will it produce trust and co-operation. Horizontal decision making procedures allocate an equal voice to all.

\textsuperscript{37}Gibson, 1998, ibid.
members. Collective participation as well shapes the 'consciousness' of individuals as it shapes their interests, their commitments and understanding of the situation. A vertically organised civil society, however, can be in itself an obstacle to democracy. Civil societies are not formed to privilege certain strata or to tolerate rent-seeking behaviour. Collective action and organisation should empower a civil society supportive of democratisation. As such, these organisations shift power away from solid domination of a small minority onto a more open and equal network of interaction of equals.

Only those civil societies that create cross cutting cleavages and a consciousness of common interests will produce necessary patterns for healthy democratic governance. Schmitter argues that those associations with a broader scope will play a more significant role in the consolidation process than a great multiplicity of narrowly specialised organisations. Along with this, civil groups should also have a clear representational domain. They should be able to determine by themselves whom they wish to represent. A vibrant civil society comes through well-developed social networks, as a means of transmitting innovative information and values. Those with more developed networks are more likely to have adopted democratic values through social learning. They will also be more likely to support various aspects of democratic institutionalisations and processes. If political institutionalisation as such fails to be forged, according to Huntington, political cultures will be more amenable to be marked by suspicion, jealousy and hostility towards everyone who is not a member of a family or a tribe. The remaking of political culture may imply a fundamental change that really occurs only in a democratic framework and is thus open to the impact of democratic institutions. Political-cultural remaking takes time so that

40 Berman, 1997, ibid.
meanwhile a country’s political culture is bound to compromise both with remade elements and those deriving from the past⁴⁴. Based on this theoretical discussion and my primary data, the next two sections will test my two hypotheses.

**Hypothesis I: Undemocratic Internal Decision Making within interest groups is due to Maturing Democratic Political Culture in Eastern Europe**⁴⁵.

This hypothesis is based on the idea that interest groups have an ambivalent and inconsistent conceptualisation of democracy, given their position as maturing servicemen in a ripening democratic political culture. This ambivalence can be visualised in respondents’ evaluation and apprehension of internal democracy, member participation, and relations with political society. My argument is that mass emergence of democrats can be observed only after a long process of democratisation, when democratic political culture permeates all walks of life⁴⁶. Hence, interest groups in Eastern Europe suffer from role ambiguity, conceptual ambiguity and representational ambiguity. In the following section, I will try to illustrate how these ambiguities manifest themselves in interest groups.

I. Role Ambiguity: Members’ roles and duties within interest groups, borders of political and civil spheres and ways of pursuing member interests are not clear for interest groups. Complexities in conceptualisation of membership, understanding of group structures and appropriating what interest groups can do for their members and how, are quite related to role ambiguity. If we are to pursue Schmitter’s understanding that broader scope and clear representational domain are crucial characteristics for a democratic civil society and hence democracy supporting civil society⁴⁷, role ambiguity tells a great deal on Eastern European groups.

---

⁴⁴ Pridham, 2000, ibid.
⁴⁵ I came across Tvedt (1994) presenting a similar argument for Spain in Edvardsen (1997). Tvedt’s point was that due to lack of involvement by the masses in Spanish transition, in the aftermath public’s general political sophistication and mobilisation remained low. This argument might also be applicable to Hungary and Romania, where transition was either through elite pacts or revolution. Nevertheless, it is not as applicable to Poland where a mass involvement through Solidarity was the case. Tvedt, Kurt-Henning (1994), “Usikkerhetens slør – Uvitenhetens slør” Norsk Statsvitenskaplig Tidskrift, vol. 10, pp: 173-194.
⁴⁷ Schmitter, 1992, ibid.
My first hunch was to perceive representational domain of interest groups.

Employers’ organisations in Eastern Europe gave an impression that they functioned as if they were some forms of consultancy firms rather than interest groups. They provided their members with relevant information and advice on European Union accession, tax policy, business contacts, and legal and economic issues in return to membership fees. Padgett likens this relationship to entrepreneurial models in which individuals initiate organisations for commercial profit or to provide themselves with the organisational resources to launch political careers. Employers’ organisations also had difficulties in denoting their membership basis. They named their members such as companies, federations, associations, county level representations or individual businessmen. As such, a clear representational domain was missing and social networks mainly revolved around entrepreneurial benefit. Thus, a role ambiguity arises for employers’ organisations between a civil society group and an entrepreneurial organisation.

There are two explanations for this. One argues that the entrepreneurial ethos is weak among the Eastern European business people and this de-motivates their group mobilisation. The very fact that the new private sector is created by a rapid top-down distribution of mechanisms instead of an evolutionary bottom-up accumulation means that the new private entrepreneur class remains disorganised and fragmented in fractions of political networks and clientele. They have not yet begun to conceive themselves as a class. The second approach is that the weak group mobilisation is due to the atmosphere of distrust and conflict in the new entrepreneurial world in Eastern Europe. Both of these arguments have some relevance to the role ambiguity.

---

48 Anheier (2000) also argues that many non-profit organisations have come to embrace the language, the management, even the culture of the business world. Accordingly, their main motive behind this embrace is to matter economically as well as politically as much as possible. See Anheier, Helmut K. (2000), “Managing Non-profit Organisations: Towards a New Approach” Civil Society Working Paper I, London: Centre for Civil Society, LSE, January.


When we come to agricultural producers’ associations in Hungary, Poland and Romania, my perception was that there were two distinct types. One group were those, who adopted themselves in a market economy and turned into business groups\(^{52}\). They gave the impression of entrepreneurs, who tried to run their privately owned business after the transition to market economy. Another group were those who did well during the socialist epoch\(^ {53}\), but now in severe difficulties. Implications of transition to market economy for these groups were a shift from an economy of shortages to an economic system of overproduction. Most of the members of these groups are old peasants, who are fast decreasing in number. Under these circumstances the largest and the most efficient agro business have a better chance to survive. Giving a proper definition of ‘membership’ can be problematic for agricultural producers’ associations. The answer categories varied from everyone who pays agriculture tax or ‘millions’ to co-operatives, companies or individual landholders. Therefore, same problems on defining a clear representational domain repeat themselves for agricultural producers’ associations.

These findings support Pridham’s argument that conditions of changing economic structures affect current configurations of civil society in Eastern Europe\(^ {54}\).

We can only talk about a group consciousness in terms of labour organisations. For them the constituencies were clear and the respondents from this sector presented a much better understanding of their respective roles towards their members. This relative professionalism was most probably due to the communist legacy and trade union structures inherited from the old system. Still my interviews illustrated that, respondents both from labour and job provider groups believed that common benefit was more important than personal benefit. This might suggest that a group identity is developing in interest groups.

---

\(^{52}\) Hangya from Hungary, Fundaţia Casa Fermilatilor from Romania and Federacja Związków Pracodawców Rolnych were the examples to this group in my study.

\(^{53}\) Nutricomb and Asociaţia Naţională Acţionarilor din Agricultura from Romania, MOSz from Hungary and NSZZ R I, KR and KRIR from Poland can be included in this category.

\(^{54}\) Pridham, 2000, ibid.
Quite related to group consciousness and role and duties vis-à-vis members was how interest groups incorporated their members into internal decision making and pursued their interests. I directed a question on the routes which interest groups utilised to contact their members on governmental policy proposals. Almost all groups contacted their members on policy proposals. Most common routes were conferences or executive committee meetings. The frequency and duration of these conferences, however, were insufficient to be conceived as efficient routes for incorporating members into internal decision making. Almost all conferences took place every 4 or 5 years and lasted only a few days. Executive committee and presidium meetings were also mentioned as other possible routes. Still, I kept my scepticism as to what extent these routes could incorporate members into decision making. My reading of internal statutes of interest groups demonstrated that secondary decision making bodies were extremely self-contained and oligarchic. Even the detailed accounts of proceedings were unlikely to be published, though decisions were briefly mentioned in the union press. Quite important for membership, sometimes these newsletters conveyed clarifications on some new law or common matters by legal or educational expert. These results were already telling about the organisational structures and the routes of participation.

In my informal talks, I came across an ambiguity in respondents’ minds as to where the limits of members’ rights and roles should lie in internal group decision making procedures. Some respondents first praised the need for involving members in internal decision making while immediately inserting limits. In theory, Mr. Filipsz László argued that interest groups should provide their members with opportunities, but this did not mean that they should give them the right to decide. For Mr. Sáling József, members only had a right to ask political questions, but members could not audit financial matters. Mr. Tadeusz Zawadzki however expressed the need for the smallest number of decision takers in order to avoid controversy.

55 Presidium answers are also included in the executive committee.
56 Magyar Közoktatási és Szakképzési Szakszervezet Alapszabály (MKSZSZ Statute); Az MSZOSZ Alapokmánya (1998) (MSZOSZ Statute). For the rest of the interest group statutes, please consult web pages listed in the appendices.
57 MOSZ (National Federation of Agricultural Co-operators and Producers), Hungary.
58 KASZ (Union of Commercial Employees), Hungary.
59 Solidarity Transportation Workers’ Trade Union, Poland.
Another sign of this role ambiguity asserts itself as to what interest groups can do for their members and how. It appears that interest groups are ambiguous on these terms, due to the nature of political system in the aftermath of regime change. It is also interesting to see groups still complaining about the effects of systemic transformation more than 10 years after the regime change. Mr. Trenka István and Ms. Kónya Gusztavné complain about the regime change, its negative impact on trade unions and how trade unions need to learn lobbying to affect governments in the new system. For Mr. Márkus Imre, however, says that after the regime change solidarity is weak among people. Now, people have many other interests and that is why they do not come together.

Statements above illustrate that interest groups find themselves in a vacuum. Aspects related to the political culture of all post-communist transitions are fragmentation of the political scene, political cynicism and apathy. They realise that they are weak on lobbying. Regime change did not bring consolidation of civil society as yet and solidarity is not sufficiently developed among people. De-politicisation and apathy demonstrates itself in Mr. Constantin Nicolae Barnă: he puts forward that he only fights for restitution of property rights and is not even interested who governs the country.

Relative strength of party politicians in policy making also make interest groups face with a role ambiguity as to how to pursue members’ interests in political systems. Ágh argues that in Eastern Europe the new political elite is not ready to accept civil society and its representatives as partners. Legislature and government either attempt to weaken and exclude interest groups from policy making or to strengthen and include them in policy making through co-opting them into political

60 Közlekedési Dolgozok Szakszerveinek Szövetsége, Hungary.
61 SZTDSZ (Welfare Workers’ Union), Hungary
62 Vasutás Szövetsége (Union of Railway Workers), Hungary.
64 A.N.A.A., Romania.
movements\textsuperscript{67}. Most of the time, interest groups opt to use personal links to reach government on policy related issues rather than structured formal dialogue in interest representation\textsuperscript{68}. A long term engagement with a political party is also wise option for interest groups\textsuperscript{69}. This brings the leaders of interest groups closer to political elite. Rather Machiavellist, politicisation as such sometimes brings even a complete self-transformation into a political party. This is either due to the failure of institutionalised channels of social dialogue for interest articulation or to the political aspirations of the leaders. As a result, there is a certain shift from the civil sphere into political sphere. I will discuss the conditions and terms of this engagement in the coming sections.

This section attempted to demonstrate that there were problems in conceiving membership and common interests among interest groups’ ranking tendencies. Representational domain was also in the making. Second, organisational structures and routes of participation were not completely democratic. Therefore, internal democracy was not fully entrenched within the interest groups. The next section will contemplate more on this issue in terms of presenting an ambiguity between elite-oriented and egalitarian approach among interest groups.

II. Conceptual Ambiguity: The immediate implication of this ambiguity is that interest groups are not sure about the substance of terms relevant democracy, accountability and legitimacy as well as possible implications. Quite common, I came across


\textsuperscript{68} Korkut (2002b) ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} CNSLR-Fraţia, BNS from Romania, Solidarity from Poland and MSZOSZ from Hungary are good examples to this attitude among trade unions. The rapprochement between trade unions and political parties have been more common compared to other interest groups. However, it is also possible to see groups from the ‘job-provider’ sector coming closer to political parties in Hungary, Poland and Romania. As my following discussion will present there is a more visible tendency among labour groups to be engaged in a relationship with political parties. In Poland and in Hungary, this affected the respondents from job provider sector on evaluating the impact of ‘personal links between the ministries and the interest groups’ on success of an interest group. In Romania, however, it is the labour groups, who think that personal links are important more so than their job provider counterparts. For details see Korkut (2002).
contradictions between assessments of internal democracy in the formal questionnaire and informal talks. Besides, as I worked on available internal statutes, contradictions started to be more significant. I reckoned that this was due to lack of clarity of the concepts and their implications in minds. Hence, I argue that there is a conceptual ambiguity between an elite-oriented an egalitarian approach. The table below gives a rough assessment on various internal decision making components and their impact in interest groups in Hungary, Poland and Romania.

Table I: List of Internal Decision Making Components and Mean Calculations of Ranks Assigned by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conferences</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affect decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>executive committee</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affects decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>president affects decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local branches affect decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experts of our organisation affect decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ordinary members affect decisions of our organisation</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we are to expect ‘conferences’ as the most democratic means of decision making, then Hungarian and Romanian interest groups appear to be more democratic than their Polish counterparts. The Polish respondents stated ‘conferences’ as the third most effective decision making structure after ‘executive committee’ and ‘presidents’. Local branches, experts and ordinary members do not appear to be effective in internal decision making as regards to this table. Nevertheless, many respondents asserted that local branches and ordinary members were already included in internal decision making through conferences. Yet as I argued above, conferences happened quite infrequently in interest groups and decision making rested on some
unaccountable secondary decision making bodies almost all the time\textsuperscript{71}. Hence, what the table above conveys is rather simplistic. As I engage in a more detailed assessment of internal decision making within interest groups, the task to measure internal democracy, however, becomes more complicated.

I come across some inconsistencies while,
1. assessing the ranks assigned by my respondents to certain bodies in terms of their respective effect in internal decision making;
2. evaluating respondents’ description of levels of hierarchy in their organisation;
3. appraising levels of autonomy from or dependency on members during internal decision making within the interest group;
4. testing respondents agree/disagree tendencies with certain statements on internal democracy;
5. elaborating respondents’ considerations of crucial factors for the success of an interest group.

I think answers of these questions convey participatory versus individualist, hierarchical versus non-hierarchical, horizontal versus vertical paradoxes from the ranks of interest groups. Answers to these questions also provide crucial insight into interest groups’ understanding of dependency on members versus elitist perceptions of internal decision making. As such, these results are crucial to test democratic and democracy supporting tendencies among Eastern European interest groups. I will go through these ambiguities case by case in Hungary, Poland and Romania. I account what is said in quotations and then present some other results from interviews to demonstrate where conceptual ambiguities appear.

\textit{Hungary:}

Certain respondents\textsuperscript{72} present a conceptual ambiguity in ways that they praise hierarchy and limited involvement of members in internal decision making [elite-oriented approach] while still assigning conferences the first rank among components

\textsuperscript{70} Mean calculations on ranks rest on the assumption that there are equal differences between each and every rank.
\textsuperscript{71} See Korkut (2002).
\textsuperscript{72} Kónya Gusztávné, SZTDSZ Trade Union of Social Workers, Hungary; Sárközi István, LIGA Trade Union of Iron and Metal Industry, Hungary; Antalffy Gábor, KISOSZ (National Federation of Traders and Caterers), Hungary; Benkő István, MSZOSZ (Confederations of Hungarian Trade Unions), Hungary.
of internal decision making [egalitarian]. Hence, in their minds there is no contradiction between a limited inclusion of members in internal decision making and being dependent on members during the same process. Striking enough, even though these respondents praise hierarchy in their informal talks, they do not think that ‘hierarchical decision making’ is important for the success of an interesting group. A possible way of interpreting these inconsistencies is assuming that respondents are not very clear in their minds as how to model and to describe internal decision making in their organisations. It also appears that certain forms of democratic decision making (importance paid to conferences) are entrenched, while some others (means of egalitarian participation) are still in the making. Or else, these respondents do not understand the substance of the terms they choose to describe their organisations.

A number of other respondents assign highest ranks to conferences for their impact on internal decision making of their organisation, and state that their groups are very dependent on their member. This still goes with their keen convictions that it is difficult to involve members in internal decision making due to problems to do with members themselves. They also implied that involving many actors in internal decision making might hinder efficiency. Hence, there is a realisation on the part of the respondents as regards to the relative importance of incorporating members in internal decision making along with a conviction that this might create complications. Respondents, having realised the importance of members’ involvement, still could not confide a full trust in their members. This is a reflection of an elite-oriented approach. Therefore, what appears is that interest group role as certain schools of democracy is missing. In Mr. Filipsz László’s understanding, it is the role of the elites to direct ordinary members towards real interest. Elites can “provide members with opportunities, but this does not mean that [they] should give the members the right to decide. Sometimes if some members are more active than average, [they] try to reciprocate”. As such, there appears a conceptual ambiguity between an elite

---

73 Sáling József, KASZ (Union of Commercial Employees), Hungary; Filipsz László, MOSZ (National Federation of Agricultural Cooperator and Producers), Hungary; Bánk Gábor, ÉSZT (Confederation Unions of Professional), Hungary; Szőke Károly, VASAS Federation of Hungarian Metal Workers, Hungary.
74 MOSZ (National Federation of Agricultural Cooperators and Producers), Hungary.
oriented approach and an egalitarian one. This also illustrates that vertical bonds of dependency are more important than horizontal.

Another respondent from the ‘job-provider’ sector illustrates a very evident example of ambiguity between egalitarianism and elite-orientation in his evasion of discussion and factionalism in internal politics of their group as well as certain apathy.

“Members are always invited to talk about common problems, but members cannot take part in everyday decisions. We have open elections to discourage people from running. In any case, why Kis János is better than Nagy János. We don’t want opposition or too many quarrels. In business environment, there is one interest. Those who pay, play the tune” Károlyi Miklós, VOSZ (National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers), Hungary, (translated from Hungarian).

This is despite his assigning the first place for conferences in terms of internal decision making. Therefore, it is not very clear to him how to carry out decision making first and foremost through conferences while keeping opposing voices low.

In Hungary, in general, it appears that respondents assigned higher ranks to conferences and then contradicted themselves with an evident elite-oriented approach towards decision making. Hence, it is plausible to contemplate on an ambiguity between an egalitarian approach and emphasising a prominent role for elites in decision making. In the absence of fully fledged participatory measures respective roles for schools of democracy will remain to be missing.

**Poland:**

In Poland, contrary to Hungary, some respondents were quite keen on members’ participation in internal decision making but assigned lower ranks to conferences compared to other decision making components. Mr. Kubowicz, as an example, first inserted that there were no certain hierarchical boundaries to members’ activities but later he gave a hierarchical description of his organisation. He asserted that internal decision making should be open to those members with expertise and contribution. Despite his pro-hierarchical image, he did not think that hierarchical decision making necessarily brought success to an interest group. His conceptual ambiguity was in his

---

75 Stefan Kubowicz, Solidarity Teachers’ Union, Poland; Slowamir Broniarz, ZNP, OPZZ Teachers’ Union, Poland.
stated preference for hierarchy, skilled leadership and expertise in formal questionnaire and his stated belief in members’ participation in internal decision making in our informal talks.

In terms of members’ involvement in internal decision making, Mr. Broniarz made a difference between decisions for strike actions and other decisions. He believed that “significant decisions other than strike were taken by individual actors, including the president himself”. Yet, he later stated that internal decision making should be open to all members all the time, regardless of members’ expertise or contribution. This was contrary to his placing significant decisions aside to be decided by a vague group of ‘individual actors’. Despite his statement that his group was dependent on their members, he later assigned the first rank to the president and lower ranks to conferences and local organisations with respect to their effect in the internal decision making. Still, in his mind presidents should act with certain responsibility and should not try to predominate. His expectancy was that presidents would remain as a certain responsible philosopher king for the union. As such, it was a very elite oriented approach towards internal decision making despite his emphasis on the need to involve members in internal decision making.

Two other respondent from Poland, Mr. Roman Wierzbicki and Wladyslaw Mucha present an ambiguity between their account of the autonomy of leadership from ordinary members in their groups [elite-orientation] and their positive stance on the effect of local branches and conferences in internal decision making [egalitarianism]. They rank the executive committee and president of the organisation the first in terms of decision making, while later stating that with the involvement of local branches conferences can be as important as the two former bodies. Mr. Roman Wierzbicki has a certain belief in ordinary members’ abilities to solve practical problems. Despite this, he later states that his group is very autonomous from its members and somewhat hierarchical. Therefore, my perception is that there is a conflict between his understanding of the role of members in internal decision making and interest group leaders’ autonomy from the same members. This brings to mind a certain ambiguity along with a failure to clearly conceptualise modes of decision making in his union.

---

76 NSZZ RI Solidarity Farmers’ Union, Poland.
Mr. Kazimierz Jakubiak\textsuperscript{78} appears as a further example from Poland who is conceptually ambiguous between egalitarianism and elite-orientations. Despite his stated wish to limit number of participants in internal decision making, later he disagrees that enlarging participation in internal decision making hinders efficient internal decision making. Similarly, respondents from the Gdańsk Employers’ Association\textsuperscript{79} also favour involvement of the few in internal decision making, yet still account that their organisation is dependent on their members.

The last example from Poland perhaps is the very best example of confusion. Mr. Bonisławski ranks the president (Mr.Władysław Serafin) and executive committee as the most important components of internal decision making. He does not assign any rank to ordinary members in terms of internal decision making, saying that “the organisation is just too big\textsuperscript{80}”. He thinks that enlarging participation in internal decision making hinders efficient decision making. However, he later states that they are ‘somewhat dependent’ on their members during internal decision making. Their organisation is somewhat non-hierarchical, despite its size. On a list of factors affecting the success of an interest group, hierarchical decision making comes the last. His conceptualisation of structures and terms illustrates a repeated ambiguity between elite-oriented and egalitarian approaches.

Therefore similar to Hungary, in Poland conceptualisation of dependency on members is problematic. Despite praising conferences and member involvement during informal talks, later respondents demonstrate actual vertical bonds of dependency within their organisation. As a result, Polish interest groups also draw a conceptually ambiguous picture and as such prepare the grounds for their questionable position as schools of democracy.

\textit{Romania:}

More similar to Poland than Hungary, for Romanian respondents skilled leadership is extremely important for the success of an interest group. Expertise has also been

\textsuperscript{77} OPZZ Miners’ Trade Union, Poland.  
\textsuperscript{78} Association of Chambers of Agriculture, Poland  
\textsuperscript{79} Jerzy Kopik, Jan Klapkowski, Ryszard Smulewski.  
\textsuperscript{80} Accordingly, The National Union of Farmers, Farmer Circles and Organisations has over 1 million members.
highly praised by the Romanian respondents\(^{81}\). Possibly as a sign of this personality oriented attitude, Mr. Ionescu\(^{82}\), for example, equalises members’ right to affect decision making through their becoming presidents on a rotating basis in his organisation. This rotating presidency, in itself, can be taken as a sign of democracy. Yet, it can only work in a small organisation. Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether ordinary members will not have any influences on internal decision making, had they not become presidents themselves. Another respondent\(^{83}\), this time from labour sector, emphasises charisma. As such, “presidents of trade unions can only become more influential if they know how to use their charisma”. I take these tendencies mentioned above as evident signs of an elite-oriented approach.

In Romania, an appeal for the role of presidency in internal decision making has repeated itself in informal talks more frequently than the other two cases. The respondents, however, are rather circumspect while later assigning ranks to presidents as internal decision making components.

> “Ordinary members are supposed to discuss all problems at the conference. Consultations can only happen at the base level, but not at the presidential levels. President is not obliged to consult the members. Members have to be conveyed, should there be anything important” Ioan Georgescu, Agro-Frația, Romania (translated from French).

Mr. Georgescu ranks conferences the first among decision making components. In his ranking, presidents are at the third place in internal decision making. This is in contrast to what he states in the quotation above. His organisation is assertedly dependent on its members, though it is still hierarchical. There is a conceptual ambiguity as regards to his appeal to conferences as a crucial decision making structure [egalitarian] and then his picture of president as an aloof figure from ordinary members [elite-oriented]. He also argues that enlarging participation in internal decision making can hinder efficiency. This can be taken as another indication of an elitist appeal.

The last two examples present a consistent picture. Still, notice that the first respondent can only develop his arguments on participation while implicitly

---

\(^{81}\) See Korkut, 2002.  
\(^{82}\) AOAR, Romania.  
\(^{83}\) Petru Sorin Dondea, CNSLR-Fratia, Romania.
besetting president, while the second respondent cannot clearly present that her organisation has internal democracy without mentioning a predetermined role for president.

“Conference of the federation is just like revolutionary mass. It is the general meeting of the electors. Each elector elects some Cartel-Spreanza member. To identify with the trade union, this is very important. Voting makes people members of the trade union in their minds. In our decision making, affiliated trade union leaders are also very important. Presidents on the other hand do not have a right to vote. If I were to decide, I would have gone for electing presidents not only through 16 federations, but also through everyone active at the factory level. There are two types of president. One is the leader and the other is the conductor. The conductor is the representative of the workers. Yet, the leader shapes the membership demands” Nicuşor Mihai Ciobanu, Cartel Sprenza, Romania (translated from Romanian)\(^84\).

“Everyone is in a position to propose something. Conference makes the final decisions. You cannot do without permanent connections between the members and the leadership. Succursales [local organisations] can make decisions concerning their own fields. If anything more, they control central bodies. Within the organisation, we expect everyone to voice his or her interests. This would increase our credibility. Still, our statute says that presidents can take certain decisions only by themselves” Sabina Hariga, Nutricomb, Romania (translated from Romanian)\(^85\).

In Romania I came across a very interesting employers’ organisation, AOAR. This organisation presents a contrary picture to a possible understanding of groups, which might suggest that, the smaller the group the less hierarchical it becomes. Although this group has only 46 members, they have statedly a very hierarchical mode of decision making along with an unaccountable body called the ‘Senate of Founding Members’. This body comes at the top of the internal decision making of AOAR. Schmitter argues that narrowly specialised groups are not expected to act as schools of democracy\(^86\) and this group is an example to what he fears from small and close civil society groups in terms of their place in democratic consolidation. In line with Schmitter, the ‘social-cohesion model’ developed by Huckfeldt et al. also expects that

---

\(^{84}\) Mr. Ciobanu did not give any ranks for decision making components.

\(^{85}\) Ms. Hariga ranked conferences as the first decision making component and she put president at the second place in her rank.

\(^{86}\) Schmitter, 1992, ibid.
in settlements as such intimacy rather than merit becomes a precondition for influence\textsuperscript{87}.

Another crucial thing for Romanian interest groups was their avoidance to comment on whether there are any political parties sympathetic to their position. Almost two thirds of all respondents shied away from this question. This finding is in line with Mondak’s study that, in developing democratic political cultures party evaluation is quite weak\textsuperscript{88}. That means that a maturing democratic political culture and hence a conceptual ambiguity between elite orientations and egalitarianism repeats itself in Romania as well. Yet, an appeal for elitism and expertise is more emphasised.

Moreover, conceptualisation of roles of decision making organs, their functional differentiation, their places in interest group decision making hierarchy are also ambiguous for respondents. Equally, conceptualisation of some terms and their implications proved to be ambiguous. I hypothesise that this is due to maturing democratic political culture and conceptualisations will be clearer in time as interest groups become more experienced servicemen. Certainly, in order to be exact on this hypothesis, one has to repeat the same study with the same respondents in the following years. Another reason why there have been as many inconsistencies can be due to a representational ambiguity that respondents felt facing a foreign researcher. A simultaneous attempt on the part of the respondent to underestimate some undemocratic features of internal decision making to illustrate a good image while overestimating democratic features might have caused these inconsistencies. The next section will discuss this last form of ambiguity.

\textit{Representational Ambiguity}: When respondents are to present evaluations of their countries in some regional or sectoral comparison, they find themselves in a conflicting posture. They can either truthfully narrate the way things work in their countries or elide genuineness in order to exhibit a good image. Given that a foreign researcher has carried out this survey, in certain number of cases respondents preferred the second option. Along with the conceptual ambiguities, my impression is

\textsuperscript{87} Huckfeldt, Robert \textit{et al.} (1995), ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Mondak, 1998, ibid. p. 630.
such that, a representational confusion as to how to put forth reality was evident for the respondents.

Exhibiting a good image to a foreign researcher and displaying a better position in a comparison affected certain respondents while answering even rather simple questions. Providing me with the establishment date of their organisation was an example. Various groups from all sectors emphasised their interwar, even 19\textsuperscript{th} century founders. In Poland, for example, it was quite common to emphasise the previous role of mother organisations during the Polish partition of 1862, and various uprisings. In Romania, as an example, two employers’ organisations have been in conflict over the name of their group. As a result, one of them ended up calling itself UGIR 1903 in an attempt to emphasise its turn of the century founding organisation, while the other was simply called UGIR. These different histories and stories about their groups and rival organisations were frequently narrated as an introduction to my questionnaire. It seems plausible to me to reckon these long narratives as indications of an attempt to display a good image –or perhaps a better image than the rival group possibly exhibited- to me, as a foreign researcher.

My coming from Budapest has had different implications for different interviewees. In Romania, people tried to impress me by trying to give a better image of their country and to show how helpful they are to some ‘assumably Hungarian’ researcher. I guess this was an attempt to overlook ‘assumed’ aversion between two countries. In Poland, on the other hand, people mostly approached me as a ‘brother’. In Hungary, however, I have been noted as the ‘angol diák’ (English student) in certain cases. I was asked about my nationality somewhere in the middle of the interview as the interviewee realised that we were speaking in his/her own language. I always told them my nationality (if I did not forget in one or two cases). This had very different implications in all three countries. People would expect either a ‘westerner’ to be interested in such affairs or someone of their own, but it was certainly not very intelligible to them to see a Turkish being interested in such details.

*Some Concluding Remarks:*
Throughout, I attempted to illustrate effects of a maturing democratic political culture in Eastern Europe on interest group through an evaluation of answers to interview questions. I developed my argument with an emphasis on role ambiguity, conceptual ambiguity and representational ambiguity. In this picture, conceptual and role ambiguities can be perceived together. This is mainly due to ripening routes and models of interest articulation even within interest groups themselves. Representational ambiguity might seem to be the least important. Still, it might be the main reason of contradictory and ambiguous answers from interest groups, depending on how the respondent positioned him/herself in front of a foreign researcher. Therefore, it is important to perceive these ambiguities all for one and one for all.

I interpret these ambiguities as signs of weltering within Eastern European civil society. Civil society is far from acting as schools of democracy from this perspective and illustrate a confusing picture. Although I think that these ambiguities are mostly due to rather recent configuration of independent interest groups in Eastern Europe, elites are also responsible for this slow development. Much of the existing literature suggests that, interest representation in Eastern Europe has been sidelined during the early stages of political consolidation. Early stages of democratic consolidation have been characterised by the rapid consolidation of political parties and the emergence of a small, exclusive elite, dominating political life alongside a weak civil society. Along with these two factors, however, is a rather inherent character of politics in the region: elitism.

II. How Inherent Is Elitism?

The previous section tested a hypothesis that a democratic political culture was still maturing in Eastern Europe. Yet while testing this hypothesis, I presented an ambiguity between an elite-oriented approach and egalitarian approach in responses. While some of the elite-oriented responses (especially those to do with understanding the substance and significance of the terms used) may be explained by maturing

political culture approach, a certain set of responses is an evident preference for elitism in internal decision making. Hence, this section commits itself to fill in gaps in my previous hypothesis with a complementary hypothesis that, an appeal for elitism is still inherent and intact within the political culture in Eastern Europe and this affects civil society. Civil society, if under the spell of elitism, cannot serve positively to democratic consolidation. Hence organisations as such, can only be Trojan horses in the process democratic consolidation.

In order to test this second hypothesis, I believe studies on various forms of elites and forms of capital can offer explanations. Therefore, I will present a short theoretical discussion on and my understanding of elitism in Eastern Europe. An illustration of indications of elitism in my respondents’ answers to certain questions will follow this discussion. I see elite-oriented tendencies in interest groups closely associated with political power pursuit of interest group elites or their fear of losing positions. Hence, I will try to trace two forms of elites in interest groups: political power aspirants and interest group bureaucrats. The first groups is there to carve political routes for themselves whereas the second strata sees interest groups as some form of sheltering auberge in order not to go back their previous ranks. In my evaluation of various responses, I will continue with Bourdieu’s ‘concept of habitus’. This concept accounts for “the embodied transposibility of class-based differences in linguistic structures and orientations”. In Bourdieu’s view, discourse is the product of social differences in the ability or propensity to speak. As such, he sees individual utterances as being structured by social structure.

Following Bourdieu, Szelényi (1993) thinks social structures as multi-dimensional spaces in which location of individuals are affected by their access to different forms of capital. Distinctly, there have been three forms of capital under communism: economic (measured by material wealth), cultural (measured by educational credentials) and political (measured by party membership under communism). Szelényi thinks that post-communist society can be best described by the domination

of cultural capital, the deflation of former political capital and by the ascent of new economic capital. In addition to the first three, I will also try to locate ‘social capital’. My understanding of this term is that the social capital is a by-product of personal networks and the social interactions. I, however, argue that two types of social capital are produced within interest groups. La Due Lake and Huckfeldt\(^{92}\) introduced the first one and denoted it ‘politically-relevant social capital’. The production of politically relevant social capital is a function of the political expertise within an individual network of relations, the frequency of political interaction within the network and the size or effectiveness of the network. The second one is ‘participatory social capital’. I argue that this form of social capital arises as a result of members’ participation into interest groups’ decision making processes. For the rest of this section, I will try to trace these two different social capitals as well as how expertise [cultural capital] serves politically-relevant social capital both within the interest groups and during interest group/political party rapprochement. On this basis, I will try to locate the boundaries of an elite-oriented appeal within the interest groups in order to see interest group capacities to act as schools of democracy.

**Cultural Capital and its Transformation into Politically-Relevant Social Capital at the Group Level:**

My perception is that, possessing cultural capital draws the border between elites and the ordinary members in interest groups. This form of cultural capital is germane to be transformed into politically relevant social capital at the interest group level, since it legitimises elites’ claim to rule. Participatory social capital, however, is created through ordinary member participation into the politics of an interest group. Voting makes people identify with the group in their minds\(^{93}\) and also permanent links between presidency and the membership\(^{94}\) are important for the development of a participatory social capital. In an evaluation of my informal talks with interest group representatives, however, I came across that possession of cultural capital determines relative positions of actors within internal decision making, more so than participatory social capital. For the rest of this section, I will deal with this issue from the democratic point of view.

---


\(^{93}\) Mr. Nicusor Mihai Ciobanu, Cartel Sprenza, Romania.

\(^{94}\) Ms. Sabina Hariga, Nutricomd, Romania.
Mr. Kerpen and Mr. Molnar\textsuperscript{95} think that predominance of members with cultural capital in internal decision making is a recent phenomenon for trade unions. It is a result of increasing professionalism within trade union movement, rather than people equally possessing knowledge as it used to be in the first part of the 90s. Yet, as the next examples will demonstrate cultural capital is already entrenched in the minds of respondents and it is a special determinant of politically relevant social capital at the interest group level. Expertise, says Mr. Albu\textsuperscript{96}, should determine the mode of participation from trade union federations into confederalational decision making. Mr. Szőke\textsuperscript{97}, on the other hand, makes a differentiation between tactical procedures in their trade union federation and financial and working procedures. Hence, involvement into tactical decision making requires some form of expertise. In Mr. Filipsz\textsuperscript{98}’s mind, local branches and ordinary members, without expertise, are just being obstacles for a fast and swift process of decision making. That is why, Mr. Benkő\textsuperscript{99} thinks that “decision making should reside where the information resides. If the information is at the central level, then decision making should happen at the central level”. In Mr. Antalfy\textsuperscript{100}’s mind, cultural capital is closely related with hierarchy in decision making. Even at conferences, he states that, only professionals could question decisions. Mr. Zawadzki\textsuperscript{101} thinks that cultural capital is required for decision making in order to avoid controversy from the masses. Thus he prefers proceeding with decision making with those who possesses cultural capital rather than opening decision making to masses in order for it to gain democratic legitimacy. These arguments certainly illustrate an elitist bias and fall short of democracy supportive expectancies from interest groups.

In a separate question, I introduced a statement that “internal decision making should be open to those members, who had the greatest expertise on issues in question”. In an aggregate evaluation of results from three countries, this statement received the second highest approval rate. This illustrated a yearning among the respondents for

\textsuperscript{95} PDSZ (Trade Union of Pedagogists), Hungary.
\textsuperscript{96} Meridian Trade Union Confederation, Romania.
\textsuperscript{97} VASAS Federation of Hungarian Metal Workers, Hungary.
\textsuperscript{98} MOSZ (National Federation of Agricultural Co-operators and Producers), Hungary.
\textsuperscript{99} MSZOSZ Trade Union Confederation, Hungary.
\textsuperscript{100} KISOSZ (National Federation of Traders and Caterers), Hungary.
\textsuperscript{101} Solidarity Transportation Workers’ Trade Union, Poland.
members with expertise. Nevertheless as I was to look into evaluation of experts’ actual role in internal decision making, only 11% of the respondents assigned an important role to experts with either the first or the second ranks. In my mind, these two results imply that experts are needed and their role in internal decision making is not enough. Experts receiving lower ranks may be a result of an understated need to put checks and balances on their actions during internal decision making. Mr. Mucha102, as an example, thought that leadership should check and balance expertise [cultural capital], while inserting that expertise cannot be politically right all the time. Interpretation of experts’ decisions should be up to the presidency of the union. There may also be other problems related to financial costs of expertise103 or their scarcity104 or just due to the complexity of introducing experts in internal decision making105. On the other hand, those groups with better financial resources106 or more cultivated and limited membership107 prefer using experts widely.

**Politically Relevant Social Capital and Cultural Capital: How are they transformed into Political Capital?**

A simultaneous perception of politically relevant social capital, cultural capital and political capital is recurrent. In Mr. Simion108’s arguments, it appears that ‘politically relevant social capital’ can be converted into political capital and vice versa in his trade union’s relations with PDSR and PD. They have had some of their members from their executive committees elected into parliament through these parties. Good relations109 with politicians110 are also indicators of politically relevant social capital. For Mr. Márkus111, this form of social capital is to be supported by cultural capital since professional qualifications are always important for politicians, and these qualifications accrue from interest groups. Therefore, social capital is supported by

---

102 OPZZ Miners’ Trade Union, Poland.
103 Gecov Krisztna, MOSZ (National Federation of Workers’ Councils), Hungary; Kónya Gusztávné, SZTDSZ Trade Union of Social Workers, Hungary (translated from Hungarian).
104 Báik Gábor, ÉSZT (Confederation Unions of Professional), Hungary (translated from Hungarian).
105 Károlyi Miklós, VOSZ (National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers), Hungary; Petru Sorin Dondea, CNSLR-Fratia, Romania; Vasile Berinde, Patronatul, Romania.
106 Roman Wierzbicki, NSZZ RI Solidarity Farmers’ Union, Poland; Urszula Karpinska, PKPP (Polish Confederation of Private Employers), Poland.
107 Vasile Lazar, ADER, Romania.
108 CNSLR-Fratia, Romania.
109 Ms. Sabina Hariga, Nutricomb
110 Mr. Barna, ANAA, Romania
111 Railway Workers’ Federation, Hungary.
cultural capital and they can both transform themselves into political capital\textsuperscript{112}, if needed. Still according to Mr. Márkus in case there is too much social capital, the system can be just blocked. Mr. Sastinszky\textsuperscript{113}, in a way, also agrees with Mr. Márkus. His problem, however, is too much political capital that left-wing trade unions raise out of their social capital, generated through their links with MSZP. That is why perhaps, Mr. Molnár, Mr. Kerpen and Mr. Gergély\textsuperscript{114} insert that they would like to use their social capital as a means to check clientelist contacts that politicians employ.

Not all the time, simultaneous transformation of politically relevant social capital and political capital into each other helps the groups. The relationship between Solidarity trade union confederation and AWS is a very good example of this. During my interviews with Polish trade union confederations and federations, a repeated topic was how possessing abundant politically relevant social and political capital backlashed and did not necessarily bring any success for the Solidarity trade union.

Cultural capital, in itself, can be transformed into political capital. This is especially true for the first group of interest group elites, who can be denoted as political power pursuers. My interviewees give me certain clues as to how cultural capital has been transformed into political capital within certain political systems. Mr. Albu asserts that political parties have a certain interest to recruit people from the interest group ranks. According to him, in this way training does not cost any money for parties and they can attract well-trained people among their ranks. Similar to Mr. Albu, Mr. Andrei\textsuperscript{115} and Mr. Ionescu\textsuperscript{116} draw my attention to the fact that it is the political parties who benefit out of an interaction between interest groups and themselves. Mr. Andrei inserts that “political parties have an interest in interest groups. They need our help to formulate industrial strategies. We provide them with expert information. Our president in return became the Minister of Industry”. Last but not the least, Mr. Filipsz argues that interest groups should be a school for training future politicians. His

\textsuperscript{112} Mr. Szabo from Hangya, Hungary also agrees to this as he says that his work at the ministry helped him to establish links with the other people working at the Ministry and through this he can represent the interests of his group much better. Interviews with Mr. Solti, IPOSZ, Hungary and Mr. Kaczmarek, OPZZ, Poland can also be mentioned as examples for transformation of social capital into political capital.

\textsuperscript{113} Munkastanacsok Transportation Federation, Hungary.

\textsuperscript{114} Autonom Trade Union Confederation, Hungary.

\textsuperscript{115} Cătălin Andrei, UGIR 1903, Romania.

\textsuperscript{116} AOAR, Romania.
argument shows the most direct route of transformation of cultural capital from interest groups into political capital. Yet, this argument does not necessarily entail that interest groups will be schools of democracy for their members. Mr. Wierzbicki\textsuperscript{117} states that, interest groups benefit out of this transformation of cultural capital into political capital. Previously, two members of their organisation entered politics as a result of their expertise. It was only through their two members’ conversion of cultural capital into political capital that, their group could be influential in decision making. In this context, Mr. Bonislawski\textsuperscript{118} makes a difference between those working for their organisation at the central level and those at the provinces. He asserts that members at the central levels are rich in cultural capital compared their peers in the provinces. That was the reason why shifts into politics from the central levels are more common.

\textit{How are internal oligarchies formed within interest groups?}

Internal decision making seems to rest on three major and three minor pillars in interest groups. Major pillars are conferences\textsuperscript{119}, president and secondary decision making organs\textsuperscript{120}. Only executive committee has been included in the statistical calculations and interpretations. I evaluate the impacts of other secondary organs on the basis of quotations from informal talks with my respondents and my studies on the statutes of interest groups. Experts, local branches and ordinary members are the minor pillars of internal decision making. I classify local branches and ordinary members as minor pillars due to my respondents’ classification of these two under the conferences in terms of internal decision making. ‘Members’ category covers ordinary members, federations, branch, professional and representations, depending on the group under study. In very few cases, the links between ordinary members and the rest within this category have also been bureaucratised through secondary structures.

\textsuperscript{117} Roman Wierzbicki, Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych – Solidarność (The Independent Autonomus Trade Union of Individual Farmers – Solidarity), Poland.
\textsuperscript{118} Czesław Bonisławski, Krajowy Związek Rolników, Kołek Organizacji Rolniczych (The National Union of Framers, Farmer Circles and Organisations), Poland.
\textsuperscript{119} What I mean by conferences is general assemblies or general congresses of interest groups. Notice that, interest groups tend to differentiate between congresses and conferences, as the former happens in between two conferences.
\textsuperscript{120} As it will appear in my later discussion, these are as follows: Operational board, board of directors, national council, steering committee, college of directors, confederal committee, coordination committee, management council, general committee of directors, managerial college, senate, general assembly, presidium, grand presidium, main board, syndical council, collective of co/presidents, confederation board, council of affiliates.
Needless to say descriptions of how unions are administered, inevitably invite discussion of the practice of internal union democracy. Internal union democracy requires unions to be under the complete control of the members in the most direct way possible. It involves active participation of the rank and file in all aspects of union life; membership control of the legislative and executive functions; low levels of hierarchy and high union dependency on its members and leaders regularly elected and immediately accountable to the members (Carew, 1976). These, however, are not as easily guaranteed in the actual configurations of decision making within Eastern European interest groups.

The previous discussion on conceptual ambiguity presented aggregate results of means values calculated for ranks assigned by respondents to internal decision making organs. After having presented that table, I inserted that an interpretation of results solely based on this table would be very simplistic. Now along with the results in the previous table, I would like to introduce certain other repeated factors to unearth hidden elitism within the interest group structures.

I tested the effects of number of members, skilled leadership, involving many experts in decision making and hierarchical decision making structures for the success of an interest group. Interest groups have repeatedly inserted ‘skilled leadership’ as an important factor for the success of an interest group. Less in Hungary, but predominantly in others ‘skilled leadership’ received either the first or the second rank among factors to affect the success of an interest group. Hungarian labour groups have evaluated ‘number of members’ to have the same effect as skilled leadership for the success of an interest group. On the other hand, Polish labour groups were singled out with their higher ranks appropriated to skilled leadership for the success of an interest group. Number of members and role of experts came the second to affect success. Romanian labour groups demonstrated the most elitist picture. Skilled leadership and expert involvement in internal decision making were the most appreciated factors. This clearly set them apart from Romanian or Polish labour

---

121 Mean calculation on ranks rests on the assumption that there is equal distance between each and every rank assigned.
groups. One thing extremely crucial in Romania was lower ranks interest groups assigned to the number of members for the success of an interest group. As such, quality is mentioned more so often than quantity by interest groups in affecting success.

Almost all job-provider groups assigned the highest ranks for ‘skilled leadership’. Number of members had quite an insignificant effect on the success of an interest group for Hungarian job provider groups. They considered that experts and skilled leadership would be more crucial to affect success of an interest group. Hence, there is a tendency to appreciate hierarchical structures more so than an egalitarian attitude in internal decision making. Polish job provider groups also present a significant reliance on experts and skilled leadership for the success of an interest group. Yet, number of members is equally associated with the success of an interest group as involving experts in internal decision making. In Romania, for job-provider groups, skilled leadership proves itself to be unavoidable for a successful interest group. Number of members is considered to have a similar effect as involving many experts in internal decision making for employers’ organisations.

Another tendency among the respondents in all three countries is to argue that local bodies are completely independent in their decisions. Some respondents state that local branches have the highest rank, concerning their own decision making procedures. As we look at the internal decision making structures, however, it appears that local branches are heavily affected by the decisions of central authorities. Be that as it may, in return, local branches, ordinary members or federations can barely establish a limited influence. This influence is rather indirect, only through sending delegates to local and national conferences. Yet, quite often, these delegates do not even elect members of main decision making bodies. In my mind, this is another sign of inherent elitism.

---

122 Among the labour groups, 11 out of 18 in Hungary, 5 out of 7 in Poland, and 10 out of 12 in Romania stated that ‘skilled leadership’ is very important for the success of an interest group.

123 Internal decision making statutes give a detailed account on the roles and duties of these organs. I illustrated these structures in diagrams in an earlier work of mine. Please refer to Korkut (2002b) for that.

124 I came to this conclusion after my study on statutes of various interest groups in Hungary, Romania and Poland. Those examined statutes are listed in the reference section.
Consequences of Elitism for Civil Society:

What is notable from the discussion above is the following:

1. There are links between the interest group elite and political elite in one way or another. Expertise [cultural capital] and politically relevant social capital mutually support each other, and political capital is determined by their simultaneous existence.

2. Quality is more emphasised than quantity by the interest groups among the factors affecting the success of an interest group. Interest groups look for skilled leadership and expertise rather than more members.

3. Those who are located at the central structures have more effects on decision making compared to their peers at the localities.\(^{125}\)

As such, these factors close routes of participation and hinder possibilities of interest groups acting as schools of democracy. Another issue is that, exclusion of ordinary members from internal decision making and political aspirations of the interest group elite can be considered interrelated or at least together. This is very much due to the vertical structures of hierarchy. Consequences of elitism and lack of participation are quite grave for civil society as well as the shift of interest group leaders into political arena.

Neumann suggested that a vast majority of civil society activists were gradually seeking activities other than unions.\(^{126}\) Many of the movements’ founders, national leaders, staff members and even experts took part in forming political parties, promising success and swift promotion, or in thriving business enterprises in the rapidly growing private sector. Though it is difficult to prove empirically, in the beginning of this section I proposed a twofold perception of elites in the interest groups interviewed: those political power aspirants and those who fail to rear a political career for themselves. For the first strata, interest groups are some forms of steppingstones for political power. This group seeks to carve interest groups into some form of oligarchies in order to hinder other power aspirants from getting into

\(^{125}\) See Korkut, 2002a for the internal decision making diagrams for countries and the relative position of ordinary members in internal decision making.

politics. This leads to superficial divisions –not justified in ideological terms- within movements especially within the labour movement as well as the employers’ organisations. The previous parts on capital transformations gave some idea on the respective position of political power pursuer elite strata.

One reason of this fragmentation according to some respondents is the egotistical behaviour of leadership structure in interest groups. Long fights for leadership positions and financial assets among the trade union confederations have had negative influences on the rank and file. Besides, political power aspirations among the leadership strata adversely affect ordinary members. Still, there is a visible propensity among the leadership strata for political power. In order to understand the extent to which interest groups prepare their leaders for politics, I asked my respondents whether interest groups are important for the recruitment of future political leaders. The mean calculations of Romanian respondents’ scores displayed the highest acceptance. Polish evaluations came the second, while almost all Polish trade union federations gave the highest scores to this statement. Hungarian evaluations are the lowest, while evaluations from labour groups have been significantly higher than the country average and than evaluation results from the job provider sector.

---
128 Solti Gabor, IPOSZ, Hungary; Konya Gusztavne, SzTDSz, Hungary; Kajtarne Botar Borbala, MKSzSz; Tamas Erika, VDSZSZ, Hungary.
129 Albu, Paszternák, Broniarz & Ciobanu interviews gave long accounts on how the assets of the former communist trade union were distributed in Hungary, Poland and Romania respectively.
In a separate question on links with political parties and running in the elections, interest groups gave the following answers.

Table II: Number of Interest Groups with Political Links in Hungary, Poland and Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of groups with political links</th>
<th>Number of groups which cooperate with political parties</th>
<th>Number of groups who had any member from its executive committee running in the elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Total number of Interviews: 41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job provider</td>
<td>Total number of Interviews: 22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job provider</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job provider</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job provider</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it appears, every 1 out of 3 labour groups has either a member who hold a position in a ministry, parliament, government or a formal agreement on cooperation with political parties or someone from its executive body running in the elections. For job provider groups, level of formal cooperation with political parties is much lower than their labour counterparts. On the other hand, every 1 out of 2 job provider groups has a member who hold a position a ministry, parliament, government or has someone from its executive body running in the elections. Interest groups in Poland seem to be the most politicised. Almost two thirds of Polish labour groups state political links or aspirations. Almost all Polish job provider groups have leaders working with political parties or who are political power aspirants. In Romania and Hungary, double membership between political parties and interest groups, formal agreements on cooperation and number of political power aspirants are lower than Poland. It reaches barely 1 group out of every 3 in Romania. In Hungary, ratio is much lower. In the job provider sector, double membership between political parties and interest groups is prevalent in all 3 countries. Every 2 group out of 3 have such members. Also you can find political power aspirant leaders in 1 out of every 2 groups.
For the second strata, interest groups are some form of sheltering *auberge* in order not to go back their previous positions. In some cases, this strata was active within the dissidence movements. After the transition to democracy, however, they could not enter into politics as some of their peers did and hence ended up among the ranks of civil society. Lomax and MacShane also argue that those who pursued a career in trade unions were divorced by education and social background from the categories they previously stood to represent. This second strata can be visualised as some self-appointed bureaucratic fiefdoms, who make a living out of the pretence of representing workers’ interests. The second group of elites are hidden in the internal hierarchies of interest groups. This second strata of elites do not want to get back to their previous positions and enjoy their newly acquired white collar status. Eyerman differentiates between mental and physical labour. Accordingly, non-manual occupations are characterised as intellectual labour. This is characterised by those tasks, which provide actors with the chance to ‘live off’ knowledge based skills, where mental knowledge outweighs manual effort. Social movements are the places where ‘intellectuals’ can be made. A movement must train its own specialist, use those already trained in other contexts or hire professionals. These intellectuals are called ‘movement intellectuals’, that is, those who gain the status and the self-perception of being intellectuals in the context of their participation in political movements. Union office, after all, helps them to become important and lack of internal democracy implies security. The more truly democratic the system becomes, the more chances that union officials will lose their privileges. Thus, they are exclusivist for rather obvious reasons of guaranteeing their places.

**Conclusion:**

In this paper, I tried to test two hypotheses in order to see Eastern European interest groups’ capacity to act as schools of democracy. The result of hypotheses testing is rather pessimistic for the capacities of the Eastern European interest groups to act as

---


131 See Korkut, 2002b.


133 Lipset, ibid, 1960.
schools of democracy. Individualism in forms of elitist behaviour and vertical bonds of dependency seem to be more developed than participatory, common interest oriented, horizontally organised interest groups. In this sense, if we are to accept interest groups as maturing servicemen then it will be plausible to argue that interest groups present a confusing picture to their members. If we are to take elite-oriented results as a sign of an Eastern European post-communist political culture, then civil society along with political society is very much affected by elitism. Hence, once again it is plausible to argue that roles of interest groups would be very unsatisfactory as schools of democracy. Elite shift from interest group circles into politics can be given as another impediment for the school of democracy argument. In this case, a Trojan horse argument is winning against the maturing servicemen approach. It is also very interesting to see that all three countries and both labour and job-provider groups converge to a large extent on their answers. As a result, this essay suggests an argument that in order for civil society organisations to act as schools of democracy, perhaps they should have provided internal democracy first and foremost. Yet, this takes time in Eastern Europe, given the inherent political culture.
List of websites consulted:

Hungary:

http://www.munkastanacsok.hu

http://www.iposz.hu

http://www.mgyosz.hu

http://www.eszt.hu

http://www.mszosz.hu

http://www.aszasz.hu - Autónóm Trade Union Confederation

http://www.liganet.hu

www.kisosz.hu

Romania:

http://www.aoar.hu - Romanian Businessmen Association

http://www.ccir.ro - Bucharest Chamber of Commerce

http://www.ces.ro - The Economic and Social Council


http://www.ugir1903.ro

http://www.cnsl-fratia.ro

http://www.alfa.elt.ro

Poland:

http://www.opzz.org.pl

http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl

http://www.prywatni.pl

List of Interviewees

Romania:
Labour:

Ioan Georgescu, Agro-Frația (Food Industry),
Daniel Nagoe, FSIA (Food Industry),
Adrian Marin, FSL din Morarit și Panificare (Food Industry),
Cătălin Croitoru, FEN (Education),
Gheorghe Isvoranu., Spiru-Haret (Education),
Răzvan C. Bobulescu, Alma Mater (Education),
Stefan Mladen, BÂNESÁ Airport Transportation Trade Union (Transportation),
Dorel Racolta, Umetal (Metal Industry),
Marin Condescu, Centrala Naționala Confederativa a Sindicatelor Miniere din România (Mining Industry),
Nicușor Mihai Ciobanu, Sprenda-BNS (Metal Industry),
Gheorghe Simion, CNSLR-Frația Confederation,
Petru Sorin Dondea, Cartel-Alfa Confederation,
Ion Albu, Meridian Confederation,
Gheorghe Câpățână, BNS Confederation.

Job Provider:

Radu Colceag, FSLIA-Agricultural Industrial Federation,
Mircea Ionescu, AOAR,
Vasile Berinde, Patronatul,
Stefan Várfaivli, UGIR,
Ion Pop, Bucharest Chamber of Commerce,
Constantin-Nicolae Barna, A.N.A.A.,
Sabina Hariga, Nutricomb,
Emilian Grasu, Fundația Casa Fermierului,
Cătălin Andrei, UGIR 1903,
Vasile Lazăr, ADER,

Hungary:

Labour:

Trenka István, Közlekedesi Dolgozók Szakszervezeteinek Szövetsége (Transportation),
Konya Gusztavne, Szociális Területen Dolgozók Szakszervezete (Welfare Workers),
Sáling József, KASZ (Business Workers),
Sarkozi Istvan, Vas és Femipari Szövetsége (Metal Industry),
Bereczky András, Federation of Agricultural Workers (Food Industry),
Borbáth Gábor, PDSZ (Education),
Tamás Érika, VDSZSZ (Transportation),
Pasztormák György, VDSZ (Metal Industry),
Márkus Imre, Vasutás Szövetsége (Transportation),
Szöke Károly, Vasas (Metal Industry),
Sastinszky László, Munkástanácsok (Transportation),
Kerpen Gábor & Molnár Péter, PDSZ (Education),
Kajtárné Botár Borbála, MKSZSZ (Education),
Kollér Érika, LIGA Confederation,
Gergély Pál, Autonóm Confederation,
Bánk Gábor, ESZT,
Benkő István, MSZOSZ,
Gecov Krisztina, Munkástanácsok Confederation.

Job Provider:

Filipsz László, MOSZ,
Szabó Zoltán, Hangya,
Solti Gábor, IPOSZ,
Boros Terezia, MGYOSZ
Antallfy Gábor, KISOSZ,
Károlyi Miklós, VOSZ.

Poland:

Labour:
Sławomir Broniarz, ZNP (Education),
Władysław Mucha, Związek Zawodowy Górniów w Polsce (Mining Industry),
Mirosław Nowicki Solidarność- Przemysłu Spożywczego (Food Industry),
Henryk Latarnik, Solidarność - Górnictwa i energetyki NSZZ (Miners’ and Energy Workers’ Secretariat),
Stefan Kubowicz Solidarność Confederation and Education Branch,
Krzysztof Trzosowski, OPZZ – Federacji Związków Zawodowych ‘Metalowcy’ (Mining Workers),
Tadeusz Zawadzki, Solidarność - sekretariat transportowców (Transportation Federation),
Wojciech Kaczmarek, OPZZ Confederation.

Job Provider:

Czesław Bonisławski, Krajowy Związek Rolników, Kolek Organizacji Rolniczych (The National Union of Framers, Farmer Circles and Organisations),
Roman Wierzbicki, Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych – Solidarność (The Independent Autonomus Trade Union of Individual Farmers – Solidarity),
Stanisław Wittek, Federacja Związków Pracodawców Rolnych,
Kazimierz Jakubiak, Krajowa Rada Izb Rolniczych (National Council of Agricultural Chambers),
Jan Klapkowski, Jerzy Kopik and Ryszard Smulewski, Gdańsk Employers’ Association,
Urszula Karpińska, PKPP.