Have they already emerged? Mapping the population of national interest organizations in the Post-Communist Poland

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Abstract:

While political parties provide a key channel for political representation, organized interests can also provide important mechanism for it. A valid question is whether the system of interest groups is capable of ensuring the representation of variety of public and private interests. Addressing this conundrum requires data that maps the essential traits of the population of organized interests. This article explores the density and composition of the Polish system of organized interests. The previously unexplored system-level approach delivers insights into the nature of the system, as well as, provides a framework for subsequent conceptualisation of advocacy and lobbying dynamics.

Key words: Population ecology, interest organizations, interest groups' population, Poland, lobbying, advocacy, democracy.

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A corner stone of any democratic society is the capacity for its citizens to have political voice so that citizens 'can express their views, preferences, and interests towards political institutions and hold public officials to account' (Fraussen and Halpin 2016, p. 476). Although political representation is achieved through voting for or joining and supporting political parties, elections are rare occurrences (every 4 years in Poland) and scholars question the participatory character of parties (e.g. Marsh 2006). The well-documented debate regarding the transformation of party political systems in Western democracies (expressed through, for example: by electoral volatility and the fragmentation of party landscapes) and the dissatisfaction with the representative system of government, has pushed scholars to explore the role of interest groups as mechanisms of political expression (e.g. Fraussen and Halpin 2016, but also: Klüver 2015; van Biezen and Poguntke 2014).

Against this background, a crucial inquiry is the potential of the interest group system to address these democratic challenges and whether it can ensure the representation of a variety of public and private interests; i.e. who gets mobilised, who is politically active, and who entertains access to the policy process (Lowery et al. 2015). The composition of the group system - its density and diversity - is an important way to judge on such questions. It allows us to assess the crucial linkages between the state and society, but also if system is biased towards a particular interest representation (and is lacking a diversity) and where access and influence are skewed towards small number of well-resources interests (and a system is lacking in its density). To fully assess groups' density and diversity, we turn in this text to the population ecology approach developed by Lowery and Gray in 1995. Inspired by core theories of population biology and organization ecology, Lowery and Gray (1995) argued that characteristics of interest groups population in a given system shape organizations survival and adaptation, the strategies and tactics organizations employ, but also how relevant are those in political context. The study of population ecology focuses not only on groups themselves, but also the context in which they exist allowing us to better identify factors influencing their creation, maintenance, and mortality.

As indicated by Gray and Lowery (2000), and confirmed by Berkhout et al. (2015), the study of the essential traits of populations of organized interests has grown steadily since 1990s. The research within this area has been applied to a wide range of political systems allowing for reliable vast comparisons. The largest concentration of studies focused on the analysis in the United States (see for example: Nownes 2015, Walker and McCarthy 2010, Brulle et al. 2007, Nownes 2004), Western European countries (e.g. Van Waarden 1992, in the Netherlands; Naurin and Boräng 2012, in Sweden; Mohan 2012, in England; Klüver 2015, in Germany; Fisker 2013 and Christiansen 2012, in Denmark) and in the EU (see for example: Berkhout 2015; Berkhout and Lowery 2010; Coen and Katsaitis 2013). The notable publications on the composition of organized interest 'systems' in the Post-Communist democracies include: Slovenia (Fink-Hafner 2011; Fink-Hafner 1998; Maloney et al. 2018), Lithuania (Hrebenar Ronald et al. 2008), Czech Republic (Císař and Vráblíková 2012; Císař 2013), and the Western Balkan

countries (Cekik 2017). While these countries established democratic elections, modern judicial systems, and institutions of representative government, the most of the literature agrees that successful democratization requires the construction of a civil society provided with functional channels of interest representation (see especially: Hrebenar et al. 2008). The studies of interest organizations in the Post-Communist countries are still a rarity, they are primarily based on normative assessment and lack empirical base (Dobbins and Riedel 2018) and focus on the intrest groups poulation.

The lack of study of groups' populations from the Central and Eastern Europe is surprising, as it would provide a unique opportunity to observe a new environment - created by the extended focus events: the collapse of Communism and transition to democracy. Distinctively, those realities introduced a set of internal and external factors, which have characteristics that influence formation and maintenance of groups' populations (Crawford and Lijphart 1995). Fink- Hafner (2011) contended that, in particular, an institutional choice in the transition to democracy (internal factor) was not only about the relations between the democratic opposition and the *old regime*, but also it formed idiosyncratic opportunity structures which influenced the early processes of interest group formation (in particular, the socio-economic partnerships). In the case of external factors, the key aspect was the process of Europeanization (Berglund 2003; Maloney et al. 2018). The countries from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), due to external pressure implemented reforms to meet various economic and democratic criteria, including the Copenhagen Criteria to join the European Union (EU), as well as, the liberalization process along the lines of the Washington Consensus, to have access to the World Bank and IMF credit lines (Bohle and Greskovits 2007). The implementation of these was viewed by outside observers as symptoms of emerging democracies and move towards the creation of functional and representative civil society. Yet, the studies dealing with population ecology in those countries are still a rarity, despite the fact that they present a unique case that could explain drivers behind population's growth and downfall, by use of internal and external factors. To strengthen the argument here, while we are talking about events that took place over 30 years ago, authors agree that changes within population ecology are slow and it takes major focus events to alter them (Gray and Lowery 2000). The events altering the population do not have to be of exploding nature, rather, similar as the change, they can take place over extended period.

The focus of our analysis are interest organizations and their population ecology in Poland. The selection of this case study is twofold. Firstly, Poland is uncharted territory, as there has not been any previous, comprehensive large-scale research on organized interest. The existing studies can be divided between three groups: (1) edited compendiums on lobbying that include chapters on Poland (see for example: Michałek 2017), which however are

minimalistic and rarely comprehensive; (2) publications that incorporate interest organizations into a larger discussion of civil society in Poland (eg. Jacobsson and Korolczuk 2017), which focus on political activism outside of formal participation in policy processes, thus excluding lobbying activities; and, (3) texts in Polish, that have limited comparative aspects, but also require an update, as in case of Jasiecki (2011); and focus only on the early years in the post-EU accession period, or Kurczewska (2016), who wrote only about business groups.

Secondly, Poland has several distinctive characteristics compared to other CEE counties. The transition to a capitalist economy and new liberal-democratic order was done through economic shock therapy, in contrast to for example, a much smoother process in Slovenia (Maloney et al. 2018). In terms of vibrancy of the interest groups system, it is quite dissimilar to its Western peers with extremely low numbers of associational engagement. In particular, the associational engagement in voluntary organizations have not reached 25% within last decade, recording only 34% at its heyday in 2013 (Adamiak 2013). The country also incorporates a mixture of neo-corporatist traditions - through, for example, the socio-economic councils - but tries to maintain a pluralist approach – through public consultations, challenging the traditional corporatist/pluralist divide.

The challenge is how we can built on these research foundations in such a way as to say something more concrete about the size (density) and composition (diversity) of the aggregate system. First, we report on the construction and content of the interest groups' dataset that captures the density and diversity of the group system in Poland. We use this data to answer some fundamental questions, such as: how big is the system and what is the balance between different types of interests? These questions relate to major topics within interest groups research, namely representation and bias. Without system-level data, these topics cannot be fully explored. The second objective is to offer a basis for further research on the interest groups population in Poland. Our aims, while we engage in a pioneering systemic study, is to report a small number of facts about a large number of groups. We seek to create general framework for interpretation that will bring new life to existing studies on Polish case study.

The article starts from the information on data collection and evaluation of available sources from which we obtained the material to reconstruct interest groups' population. Related work in other countries participating in the Comparative Interest Groups Survey Project (CIGs)[2] mostly utilised lobby data or information available on stakeholders participating in national consultations, or relied on data from formal associational registers. As no equivalent, ready-made data set concerning advocacy activity exists for the Poland, we utilise a number of resources and contrast them with sources available in other countries to provide reliability check. As it will become

[2] http://www.cigsurvey.eu, last accessed: 16/01/2020.

evident, we argue that different sources have to be cross-checked and require an intervention. We outline the modifications, coding decisions, and conceptual distinctions required to make those sources work for a larger research community. After clarifying how we used sources to provide an estimate of the Polish interest population, we provide an analysis of the size, composition, and diversity of the Polish interest group system. More specifically, we consider the balance between different organizational types (including resource levels) and the age dimension of the Polish interest group system. We also look into the size of the population in a comparative perspective and areas of groups' activity. In the conclusion, we highlight our main findings and suggest some promising avenues for future research.

Data collection, evaluation of available sources, and groups' numbers

We mapped the population of Polish interest groups at the national level between 2016-2017 as part of the Comparative Interest Group Survey Project (CIGs). Similar attempts, but to a much smaller degree, were previously conducted within the INTEREURO Project[3] (locating, among many others, Polish interest groups active in the European level consultations between 2008-2010) and EUROLOB II[4] (investigating business associations' activities in policy-making between 2010-2016). Our data collection was informed by these attempts, helping us to avoid their pitfalls and shortcomings (e.g. focus on a limited activity type and level, as well as, a particular group type). Further, looking into the list of groups identified in those projects we established an absolute base line of groups that we should identify in our exploration. Up till date, the CIGs Project covered only three other Post-Communist countries (Lithuania, Montenegro and Slovenia), two post-authoritarian (Spain, Italy) and three established democracies (Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands). The project focused on a number of issues related to interest groups activity, including their organizational capacity, contacts with policy-makers, strategies and lobbying activity. The main point has been however comparative analysis on a large scale, aiming at distinguishing unique national characteristics.

Nownes (2015) established firmly that claims to provide definitive interest groups' populations at either national or international level are illusory. This is not only because there is a disagreement on how to define interest groups (even with our attempt at it above), but that the sheer number of groups makes counting them a labour intensive

[3] http://www.intereuro.eu/public/, last accessed: 10/01/2020.
[4] http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/d7/en/projects/eurolob-ii-europeanization-of-interest-intermediation, last accessed: 21/01/2020.

action. Thus, what we report here is best understood as a very good estimate of the Polish population. Importantly, our research approach's reliance on a number of resources and their very detailed analysis in a comparative perspective means that any omissions are systematic across all teams within the project. From our thorough investigation of content of our database and those from other teams, we can say that the datasets: do not include organizations only barely established (explained by a lag between formation of organization and its entry in any directory), consequently disproportionately undercounting very new groups and groups with little or no policy engagement. This is consistent with specialists' findings that suggest that well-known groups, owning to their larger resources, are more likely to be listed in these kind of directories (see: Fraussen and Halpin 2016; Johnson, 2014; and, Walker et al. 2011). In contrast, such data collection is unlikely to miss the most active, large and policy-relevant organized groups at a national level. These issues are important to be aware of but they are not critical. Our main goal is to have a well-researched and reliable dataset that is a good proxy (with the above limitations stated upfront) for the population at large and thus a legitimate population from which to assess the size and diversity of the Polish interest group system and to sample from in the future research.

To identify a representative population of Polish interest groups, we followed a mixture of a top-down and bottom-up approaches. Our main source of information on the Polish interest organizations was the National Court Register (KRS),[5] supported by the voluntary non-governmental organizations' registration page *fundacje.org*. The Registry was created based on the 1997 Act on the National Court Registry and has been operational since 2011. Its main function is the provision of information on economically active, registered organizations, including for example their financial situation and way of representation. It includes all entities of interest and separates them on the basis of legal form (i.e. companies and corporations, associations of professionals and trade unions, foundations, but also NGOs and civil society organizations). The reliability of the source was confirmed by: inquiries with the webpage developers, by monitoring how and when the database was being updated (every 6 months) and by comparing its content with information available in the governmental database when available. However, we encountered a number of problematic issues: a substantial number of repeated entries (e.g. any adjustment in the situation of the organization, new status, financial situation update, new contact detail, resulted in the new entry in the registry without removal or update of the old one), the registry maintained in the database also included organizations which ceased to exist or were in the process of liquidation (e.g. some of the trade

[5] https://bip.ms.gov.pl/pl/rejestry-i-ewidencje/krajowy-rejestr-sadowy/elektroniczny-dostep-do-krajowego-rejestru-sadowego/, last accessed: 18/05/2017.

unions which went through process of centralisation 2011 were still visible in the set), and incomplete information (e.g. lack of address, information on the organization's type of activity).

For comparability reasons, we confirmed that identical databases were also identified in other CIGs counties, for example, the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises (Kruispuntbank) in Belgium similarly provides information on all economic entities. However its search system is better organized with specific sub-codes for different types of organizations. In Slovenia, the source of information on economic entities is the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (Fink-Hafner et al. 2015), which had to be further supported by the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. In Lithuania, due to a lack of official and publicly available interest groups register (similarly as in Italy), a directory of Lithuanian business entities, *Rekvizitai.lt*, with similar characteristic to Polish KRS was used (Šarkutė et al. 2017). In contrast, Polish databases and registries are far behind the ultra-transparent Swedish system. There, access to all incoming mail to the government ministries is made public providing a very solid overview of politically active interest organizations (Boräng and Naurin 2017) removing a need to double check groups' activity status.

Facing problematic issues with KRS in the second step, we used the *fundacje.org* database (Nationwide Catalogue of Public Benefit Organizations), which covers: foundations, associations, societies, unions and clubs, expanding our list of identified groups by foundations and charities potentially active on policy-making. The voluntary character of this registry (similarly as in case of the Italian 'Guida Monaci', even if expanded by other types of groups) means that by default it is not a full database. Moreover, contrary to the KRS, the lobbying registry in the Parliament, or for example the EU Commission Transparency Register, the base of registration is not economic nor political activism, but rather any form of social activism (i.e. charity events, fundraising and provision of aid, next to potential engagement in political arena).

After downloading information from these sources and initial clean-up of repetitions and invalid entries (occurred due to technical issues with datamining), we identified ~25.000 organizations in the KRS and 5.600 NGOs and charities from *fundacje.org*.

Both the sources' imperfect organization, as well as, broad focus meant that many entries did not meet our definition of interest group, which we conceptualised as collective membership organizations (individuals or institutions), with defined constituency, representing interests of others or themselves, that are substantively engaged in public policy (Jordan et al. 2004) or their political activity is latent (Fink-Hafner et.al. 2015). Latent activity refers to a situation when (or where) groups have an interest in being active and a capacity to act, but most

of time their activity is not political. When they encounter a new political issue of interest, they may become politically active. This definition of interest groups included business organizations, professionals associations, trade unions, identity and cause groups (including religious groups and to a degree leisure groups; see Table 1 for code scheme and descriptors). We excluded law firms, consultancy firms, and all types of private companies. We only took into consideration national level groups and excluded those from the regional and local levels. We identified groups as inactive and excluded them from the sample if: the organization had no website or a social media profile – Twitter, Facebook, the organization had a website, but we could not find any position papers, raised issues or news about the political activity of the organization, and neither did any additional search (conducted at the final stages of the database cleaning) confirm political activity. If we could not find the page, but were able to obtain information on the group's activity and contact details from other resources, in particular email, we kept them in the sample.

We ended up with 1,546 organizations which can be defined as national level interest organizations according to criteria indicated above. Table 1 provides an overview of the organizational types identified in our set and a short description of their key features. The table distinguishes between a number of categories: business, professionals associations, labour unions, identity groups and cause groups. We also included leisure groups and institutions. All identified are collective in their nature and have an advocacy component. The last category ('rest') includes networks, think tanks and foundations. While they do not fit exactly within the above, a number of these groups conduct lobbying activities, and a number of authors advocates their inclusion in interest groups' analysis (see for example: Berkhout 2015; Fraussen and Halpin 2016).

[Table 1 about here]

The density of the Polish interest groups system

The main goal of this article is to generate a map of the Polish interest group population ecology focusing on its density and diversity. The estimates that would allow us to check for reliability of our results are hard to come by. As indicated before (see: Introduction), the comprehensive large-scale study of Polish interest has been a rarity. Reasons are various. Michałek (2017) suggests that it is due to uncomprehensive registration system. Jacobsson

and Korolczuk (2017), similar to other analysts, do not distinguish interest groups from a broad category of civil society thus inflating the numbers. Other texts are outdated (see for example Jasiecki 2011, whose book focuses on pre-2004 population). Comparable numbers that are available are always focusing on particular categories of groups and identified population is extremely small. The EUROLOB II Project identified 56 Polish national level business interest associations (Kokler-Koch et al. 2013). The INTEREURO Project, while looking into the activities of different interest groups on the European level issues, found only 15 broadly defined Polish interest organizations active within the EU consultation process.

The comparison to other CIGs countries brings a bit more reliable information due to comparable sampling procedures (see above), but points also to a few problematic issues (see Table 2). Poland is the third largest when considering population (giving way to Spain and Italy) and third when it comes to the country size (after Spain and Sweden). The identified set of organizations is the fourth largest, closely resembling the numbers in Italy. In smaller countries, the density of interest groups is proportionally higher (for example 1.203 interest groups in Slovenia with 2 million citizens). Values per square km resemble those in Spain and Italy, both countries with similar density of citizens' population (Sweden here being an outlier). In contrast, smaller countries like Slovenia and Lithuania, show an extremely high concentration of national level interest organizations per 1000 citizens (respectively: 0.582 and 0.320), with Polish groups' concentration of only 0.04 per 1000 citizens. How can we explain a phenomenon of a rather small national level interest organizations' population in Poland?

[Table 2 about here]

Lowery and Gray (1993) point to a fact that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the density of interest group system do not increase with economic complexity nor the size of the state. The relationship between economic size and interest groups system density is generally negative; as size increases, the average economic base of interest groups increases, indicating a decline in density (Lowery and Gray 1993, p. 204). The relationship between two variables is curvilinear, so that as size of economy increases, the decline in density diminishes. Finally, for the smaller states, density appears to be an artefact of what the authors labelled 'natural groups' (i.e. groups that represents interests that must be actively represented in any state irrespective of size or complexity, which would explain situation in countries like Slovenian, Belgium or the Netherlands). Thus, our understanding of interest groups system density links to other state's characteristics, incorporating noneconomic factors as well.

Crawford and Lijphart (1995) argued that to fully understand current 'realities' of Post-Communist countries the legacy of the countries' past and essentials of liberalization have to be taken into consideration as alternative causal internal factors explaining trajectories of regime and system change. They added that effects of those on the norms, institutions, should equally be viewed through the lens of international pressures. The most significant internal factor for the most CEE countries was the institutional choice in the transition to democracy, which introduced new interest representation structures and development of appropriate regulation supporting active participation and inclusion of interest groups in the policy process (Fink-Hafner 2011). These changes were further enhanced by external factors: the CEE's countries accession to the EU and external pressures from the EU to implement democratic criteria (for detailed analysis in Polish case, see especially: Letki and Evans 2005; Welsh 1994; Letki 2002).

In case of Poland, the beginning of the democratic transition was very promising with regard to potential increase of groups' numbers. Already between 1980s and 1990s, *Solidarity* – a social movement and trade union – had been very active, pushing for democratic reforms, and ultimately being a part of the Round Table Talks with the Communist regime (February-April 1989). The optimism of people could be clearly felt between 1989 and 1991, particularly in the form of civic and political engagement, as *Solidarity* was seen as a success story of a genuine social movement, not only a workers' organization. However, it did not last long, as the discrepancy between elites and masses arose regarding the implementation of the economic and political transformation. As Blanchard and Diamond (1992) noted, workers who have helped bring down the Communist regimes were now thought to be part of the problem and the 'practical issue' became not how much control to give workers, but how much to take away.

As a continuation of a departure from labour-friendly policies, Poland introduced the guidelines of embedded neoliberalism as a default type of capitalism (Fink-Hafner 2011; Apeldoorn 2009). The solution embedded the idea of hegemonic articulation of the dominant neoliberal perspective, with remaining elements of neo-mercantilist discourse. As Apeldoorn (2003) explained, embedded neoliberalism emphasized the primacy of global market forces and the freedom of transnational capital. As a result, markets became increasingly disconnected from their post-war, national, social institutions. In case of Poland, it meant the maintenance of a broader public sector presence on the supply side of the economy, while pursuing deep and often rigorous market oriented reforms, which were anti-trade unions. The implementation of that solution, *the Balcerowicz Plan*, lead to a shock-therapy, transforming ownership structures in the country into those found in the advanced industrial economies (Plehwe et al. 2006). The major goal of the Plan was to tackle hyperinflation and make the Polish

economy sustainable in a long run by reducing government spending, liberalizing trade and privatization of state-owned companies. As the urgent need for reforms was never questioned, the main criticism of the Plan focused on its harshness and rapidity (Glasman 1994; Kołodko 1992). The reformers assumed that rapid reforms make citizens adapt faster than changes introduced incrementally.

The effects of the Plan on *Solidarity* and other workers' movements were dramatic. In the span of 22 years, the number of union members went down from 4 million in 1991 to 1.5 million in 2012 (Kamiński and Rozbicka 2016). Equally, the rise in the numbers of different level trade unions, by proxy also, employers' associations, and business organizations, was not that impressive, registering a rise from 2.300 in 1997 to only 3.600 in 2012 (Statistical Office of Poland). The economic shock-therapy had negative effects on those types of interest representation.

If we treat trade unions as the first institutionalised interest groups in a very young democracy, we could potentially conclude that it was not a good time for grassroots movements. Yet contrary evidence comes from the look at the rise in numbers of associations. The rapid growth of associations is really impressive, from an initial 20.700 in 1997 to 69.500 in 2012 (3.36 increase; Statistical Office of Poland). The economic reforms activated civil society across all levels. It can be however questioned, if activation was a result of adaptation to reforms, thus a shift towards neoliberalism associated with the state's democratization (Makowski 2015) or rather, an effect of increased opposition and dissatisfaction with changes and a need for an organized interest representation to deal with reforms' negative effects. That argument is in particular convincing when linking it with embedded neoliberalism's main side effect – progressive detachment of the market from its post-war, national and social institutions. In the new arrangement, political elites became obsolete (Gliński 2006) and there was a necessity to replace them as channels of communication with policy-makers, with other forms of representation.

Having said that, the increase in the number of associations is also linked in Poland, similar as in the other CEE countries, with EU accession (see especially: Berglund 2003; Fink-Hafner 2011; Fink-Hafner 1998; Črnak-Meglič and Rakar 2009). However, it has to be specified that we see it, similar to Gliński (2006) or Císař and Vráblíková (2010) in the Czech Republic, as a complimentary cause to the above analysed internal factor and they should be considered in conjunction. Specifically *the EU's Copenhagen criteria* introduced in 1993 merely reinforced already existing dynamics in the area of stable civic institutions guaranteeing democracy, the existence of a functioning market economy and the other obligations of EU membership. Although the candidate countries were

meant to implement civil society friendly policies, as these implementations were already underway it is difficult to disentangle the 'added value' of *the Copenhagen criteria* in this process.

Nevertheless, the immediate increase in the associations' number around the time of Poland joining the EU (2004) cannot be denied. Back then, the rise in numbers was linked to forthcoming EU funding and requirement of none-governmental organizations inclusion in their distribution (Jasiecki 2011, Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot 2016). A similar upsurge was also identified recently in new accession countries: Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia (Cekik 2017). Moreover, the reforms ignited by the EU accession increased pressure on national legislators leading to new regulations on social dialogue, public consultations and non-governmental, voluntary and public benefits organizations (Koźlicka 2002), introducing in Poland the Act on Lobbying (in 2005) among many others. All of these sparked a wave of registration of different issue-oriented organizations, which were created in response to formalisation of the process.

The above paragraphs tells us just the half of the story. There has been stagnation in the numbers of trade unions and a jump in the numbers of associations all the way up till 2012; and we can link those to a number of factors as indicated above. However, the available information on organizations' population priory to the CIGs project data collection is not perfect. The historical data (1992-2012) was obtained from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, which is the main government agency charged with collecting and publishing statistics related to the country's economy, population, and society, at the national and local levels, which guarantees its reliability. But, it misses the differences between regions and does not distinguish between organizations on the national and local level. As the further analysis shows, those distinctions are quite important when expanding to comparative research between interest group populations in different countries. In addition, the categorisation of interest organizations, leaves us puzzled about business associations. While included in the category together with trade unions as business organizations, it would be highly unlikely that their number would remain stagnant on the eve of Poland becoming a member state of the EU and in the years after; especially in the face of deployed, large, economic reforms and increase in their numbers in other CEE countries (Demidov 2017; Fink-Hafner 1998). Yet, we lack better sources and the comprehensive analysis of organizations' population ecology in Poland is even more urgent.

As shown above, the process of democratic transition does not fully explains the density of interest organization's population at the national level. Demidov (2017) suggest that explanation can be found in administrative organization of the country. Following re-democratisation of the country, due to a series of acts passed by the

Polish Parliament in 1998, the country's administrative division was revisited reducing decisional centralisation characteristic to the previous Communist set up. Currently, Poland has a three level division of the state's territory. The basic (lowest) organizational unit is 'gmina', an urban or rural administrative district, followed by 'powiat', and uniting a few of those, at a regional level, 'województwo' (a voivodship). Local governance is conducted through the Councils, which are decision-making and supervisory bodies operating at the gmina's level. They have a mandate to control a vast majority of areas, including but not exclusively: local jurisdiction, supervision of the budget, imposition of local taxes and charges (on the grounds of existing national legislature), environmental protection and nature conservation, supply of energy, public transport, health care and welfare, adopt resolutions on matters of property rights, but also supporting and popularising the self-government and cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other associations. They possess quite some independence as implementing agencies due to wider regionalization in the country (Demidov 2017). Taken the high degree of independence of those Councils, it is not surprising that the vast majority of lobbying takes place at the lowest possible level reducing a need for the existence of the national level representation. That would also account for a proportionally larger number of national interest groups in smaller countries, like Slovenia or Lithuania. It might be that because Poland is much bigger that those countries, it makes more sense to lobby on the regional level than the national.

A significant reason for a small number of the national level organizations is also a relatively short history of professional lobbying within legislative procedures in Poland. The process was not formalized till 2005, when the Law on Lobbying Activities was produced by the national parliament.[6] In principle, the law regulates only professional lobbyists, requiring to register their interest in such activity under a financial penalty of performing lobbying without registration. After the registration, the lobbyists receive a 3 months certificate that has to be presented by the professional lobbyist while contacting a politician or representative of the public administration. On the other side, the politicians, and with even larger emphasizes public administrators, are obliged to prepare a detailed report on every contact with professional lobbyists, including level of lobbyists influence on the decision made by the public body. Such reports are supposed to be made public. The analysis conducted by Kwiatkowski (2016) and corroborated by experience of Michałek (2017), clearly shows that the law is ineffective. It imposes extensive obligations and restrictions on the professional lobbyists in their contacts. But, it also imposes additional extensive and detailed reporting requirements on policy officials and administrators, who as a consequence, tend

[6] Act on Legislative Lobbying (2005) as published in the OJ 2017 poz. 248: Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 2005 r. o działalności lobbingowej w procesie stanowienia prawa (tj. Dz.U. 2017 poz. 248).

to avoid contact(s) with professionals. By default, lobbying activities move towards lower administrative levels, where registration procedure is not required.

The diversity of the Polish interest groups system

In the first part of this section, we focus our attention on the balance between different group types, as well as, the age of these organizations (Table 3). Subsequently, we examine some of the resources at groups' disposal when they engage in policy advocacy. We link our findings in this regard to broader debates on interest group bias and inequality and dominant presence of business groups.

[Table 3 about here]

The first obvious feature of data is the overwhelming numerical dominance of cause groups. They account for 49% of the entire national system. The numerical dominance is not in itself a proxy for power. In fact, it has been argued that the predominance of one category of interest groups can be interpreted as a sign of lack of unity, and hence of power (see or example: Jordan and Halpin 2012). In contrast, smaller number of groups representing the economic sector (business with 22% share of the sample and unions with 3%) could be a sign of strength, as those seems to unite number of interests and seem to be speaking with single voice for entire domain and could be more effective in threatening policy-makers with economic pressure (Lowery 2015, p. 1220). Yet, viewed from a purely pluralist perspective, it does give a sense of the skewed nature of the voices organized in the Polish political system, as cause groups seems to dominate the set. The high number might be caused by the weakness of the state in early 1990s (which corresponds with growing number of interest groups established after 1989). That result reflects the argumentation presented above: the decline of economic interest representation and increase of none-governmental organizations numbers in 1990s. However, it is contradictory to the pattern present in most of the Western democracies, which register profuse bias of business organizations (see for example: Boräng and Naurin 2017, in Sweden; Frausen and Halpin 2016, in Australia; Grey and Lowery 2000, in the USA; Klüver 2015 and Kohler-Koch et al. 2013, in Germany).

Related to the question of power are resources. Our data include a measure of the number of staff each group has, defined by the full time equivalent (FTE). It is immediately visible that identity groups have the large numbers of

permanent staff. While low numbers for other types of organizations may be surprising against common perceptions, they reflect findings in other countries. Both, Scholzman (2012), for the American organizations, and Fraussen and Halpin (2016), for Australia, conclude that the stereotype about interest groups having extensive offices with resources should be abandoned. Most of the organizations, due to their increased professionalization, operate on the basis of one or two in-house lobbyists or services of a single outside firm (Scholzman 2012, p. 35). A similar result is also visible in other CIGs countries, with groups in the Netherlands employing median of 1 FTE, and, for example those in Sweden employing 3 FTE. A slightly larger number of permanent staff employed in the identity groups may suggest that they will be more prone to deploy more resource-intensive lobbying campaigns. However, without available data on the exact budget of the organizations, we cannot conclude as such with certainty.

Taken the regime changes and intensive democratisation of the country in the 1990s, as described above, it is not surprising that most of the groups are relatively young. The median of year of establishment for the whole set is 1999. The amalgamation overtime (Figure 1), sustains a conclusion from the above: the majority of the organizations started their activity in late 1990s following the democratisation process, with its culmination in early 2000s preceding Poland's accession to the EU. That makes the population of Polish interest groups relatively young in comparison to other countries in the CIGs group (i.e. Belgium with median of 1975, the Netherlands with median of 1986, and Sweden with median of 1980), but equal in age to those of Slovenia and Lithuania, where more than 70% of groups are younger than 30 years.

[Figure 1 about here]

Another interesting element of the groups' age story is variation by group type. Labour unions are on average much older than other categories (median 1983), with the oldest still in operation founded in 1872. In the case of the trade unions, we know from the other work that there has been a strong process of consolidation of unions over the years in Western democracies, where older groups swallowed up many of their contemporaries (Levesque and Murray 2010; Halpin and Jordan 2012). The similar process took place gradually also in Poland, with its culmination in 2011, albeit, as indicated above, caused by quite unsupportive for the unions' changes to the economy that undermined the union's role. Furthermore, our data confirms a rapid increase in numbers of identity groups and cause groups starting from 1990s (up to the early 2000s; to some degree also for business and professional associations) reflecting the democratisation process and implementation of extensive reforms to

engage with civil society. However, for all groups, we see a rapid decline in number of the new groups established after the mid-2000s. That corresponds with the date of Poland's accession to the EU and decline in the EU accession-related funding (Cekik 2017).

As a final point, we take look at the relative numerical dominance of different industry and social sectors in the interest groups system (Table 4). Using the collected data, we can examine the declared areas of activity that are represented by Polish population of national interest groups. The findings demonstrate that in most policy areas linked with economy (i.e. economic and monetary policy, energy policy, agriculture, development policy, transport) business groups are the most active. Similar, we have declared high level of cause groups activity related to human right, cultural policies, social and gender policies, as well as health policy. Professional, labour unions, as well, as leisure groups are active in several policy areas, however they are not a dominant presence in any of them.

There are few curious results. Business associations indicate high level of activity within policies which commonly are associated with cause groups and or identity groups (i.e. environmental policy, consumer protection), and those important for trade unions (i.e. employment policy). Following Fraussen and Halpin (2016) argumentation, we could suggest here that, for some predominantly social policies, the absence of dedicated advocacy groups (i.e. identity and cause groups) is often accompanied with a larger number of non-advocacy service related organizations (i.e. business). But, that is contradictory to the fact that cause groups in Poland constitute almost 49% of the whole population, far exceeding numbers of business associations.

[Table 4 about here]

Conclusions

This article started from the assumption that a more nuanced and detailed study of interest group population in Poland will profit from an overview of the groups' broader universe. To realise that, we have mapped Polish national level interest groups and analysed their typology and areas of activity. The descriptive analysis presented in this article gives tentative insights into the key features of Polish interest groups population. The data set can be used to further elaborate on groups' typology and subsequently examine the organizational differences between these groups, or their varying degree of political engagement. While, the article focuses on the Polish interest

groups' population, it can act as a critical case representing some broader characteristics present in the post-Communist world in CEE. As it is a first attempt at the presentation of study of the Polish national level interest groups, the article sets the baseline from which future developments related to the mobilisation of interests and lobbying activities of particular groups might be assessed. It is first, but necessary step, on the way to provide an assessment of the extent to which dense and diversified interest groups' population may fulfil democratic aspirations of developed society.

In the article, we have discussed a number of resources used for identification of interest groups, pointing to particular issues of sources reliability, accuracy and a lack of up-to-date character. We estimated the density of national level interest organizations barely passing the marker of 1.500 groups. The number, however, did not come as surprising, especially when compared to other countries studied in the CIGs Project.

Following conclusions from the research done on other CEE countries, we focused on internal and external factors influencing density of the population and its adjustments. The evidence from the Polish case collaborates the conclusion on a raise of civil society organizations' numbers during transition process to democracy. While initially based only on strengthening the numbers of trade unions, we identified a rapid growth in groups' density associated with the Polish accession process to the European Union. Contrary to the findings in the Western democracies, we identified cause groups as more numerous. However, resource wise they are similar to their pears elsewhere. There is a potential reason for concern about small numbers of active groups representing interests of professionals and labour unions. However, as suggested above, their power should not be measured by their numbers, but rather available resources, which puts them on equal footing with other groups.

An important limitation of our study, and the CIGs Project itself, is the focus on national level groups. In the context of the size of Poland and its administrative organization, the work we have done here warrants further development at the regional level. Studies on the federal systems of United States (Gray and Lowery 1996) and some of the Benelux countries (Vollard et al. 2014) provides a sense how useful it may be clearly indicating flows of the interest groups population away from the capital. A promising research avenue is how groups organize in multi-layered systems, how they align their internal structures to the policy demands of a multi-layer system, and how they deal with competition and cooperation between national and sub-national level groups? Finally, while the CIGs Project is helpful in making cross-country comparisons allowing for accounting for the system-level differences, more countries should be added allowing for broader analysis.

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Table 1 An overview of organizations' typology

Organizational type	Description
Business	Organizations that have business companies as members, e.g. The American Association of Car Manufacturers, or umbrella organizations whose members are organizations with companies as members, e.g. The International Association of Car Manufacturers.
Professionals	Organizations bringing together professional individuals as doctors, teachers, lawyers, e.g. The Belgian English Language Teachers Association, or an umbrella association of such organizations, e.g. European Lawyers Association.
Labour unions	Organizations of individual employees (trade unions) or their umbrella organizations, e.g. European Trade Union Confederation.
Identity groups	Organizations bringing together individuals with characteristic identity: ethnic groups, elderly groups, patient organizations, as well as religious groups; and their umbrella organizations, e.g. European Disability Forum. This category also include organizations which indicate no formal membership on their website (but for example get donations or involve volunteers).
Cause groups	Cause groups, e.g. Plan België, Quart-Monde, consumer organizations, and their umbrella organizations, e.g. European Environmental Bureau. This category can also include organizations which indicate no formal membership on their website (but for example get donations or involve volunteers).
Leisure	Sport, arts, music, literature groups, for instance sports associations like the Dutch Rowing Federation, and their umbrella organizations, e.g. The International Rowing Federation.
Institutions and public authorities	Organizations that have public authorities as members, i.e. authorities that are part of the political system. These are cities, provinces, mayors, etc. Not included are organizations that are part of the bureaucracy such as hospitals, police forces, or schools, e.g. EUROCITIES; and their umbrella organizations, e.g. the International Association of Cities. Organizations that have non-profit institutions as members (i.e. public or semi-public organizations without members such as hospitals, schools, universities, etcetera), e.g. European University Association; and their umbrella organizations, e.g. The International Hospital Federation.
Rest	A network or coalition of interest groups. This is a group of interest groups that cooperate, but there is no (formal) hierarchy within the network, e.g. the Alliance of Energy Intensive Industries or the Green 10. Research organization/think tank. The primary function of this organization is to do research, e.g. CEPS – Centre for European Policy Studies Foundation. Organizations that are funded by one or a few persons. Key is that they do not depend on members for financial survival, although often people can also contribute to these organizations, e.g. the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Table 2. CIGs countries – Comparison of interest organizations per country size and population

Country	Full interest organizations' population	CIG-s interest organizations' population[7]	Country size (km²)	Population (mln)[8]	Interest organization per square km	Interest organizations per capita (per 1000 citizens)
Spain		2,636	505,990	46,423,064 *	0.005	0.057
Sweden		1,542	450,295	10,023,893***	0.003	0.154
The Netherlands		2,479	41,543	17,100,475***	0.060	0.145
Lithuania	~ 13,200	905	65,300	2,827,947***	0.014	0.320
Italy		1,594	301,338	60,674,003 *	0.005	0.026
Belgium	~19,200	1,352	30,528	11,250,585**	0.044	0.120
Slovenia	~18,250	1,203	20,273	2,065,879**	0.059	0.582
Poland	~25,000+5,600	1546	312,679	38,454,576**	0.005	0.040

[7] Source: National CIG Survey reports, available at: http://www.cigsurvey.eu/data/, last accessed: 27/05/2017.
[8] Source: List of European countries by area and population, Wkipedia.org, * 2015, **2016, ***2017

Table 3. Polish national interest groups dataset, by type

Type	n	%	Staff (FTE, median)	Foundation (median)
Business	336	21.73	2	1999
Professionals	88	5.69	2	1998
Labour unions	51	3.30	0[9]	1983
Identity groups	139	8.99	6	1999
Cause groups	751	48.58	3	2000
Leisure	58	3.75	1	1995
Institutions and public authorities	15	0.97	2	1994
Rest	108	6.99	6	2002
Total	1546	100	3	1999

[9] With mean of value 5.

Figure 1. Year of foundation

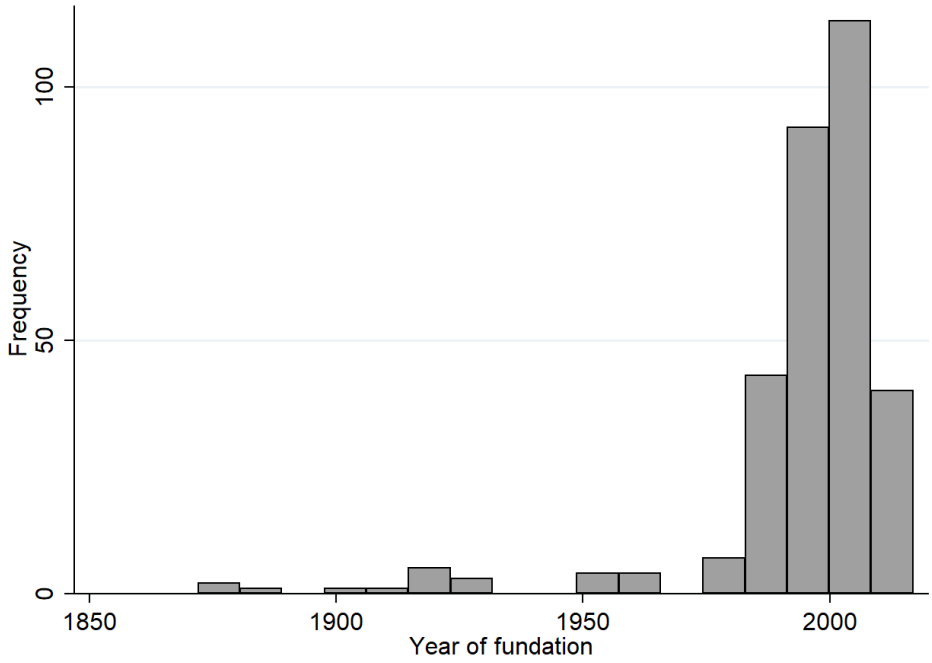

Table 4. Interest groups diversity by declared area of activity

Areas of activity	Business	Professionals	Labour unions	Identity groups	Cause groups	Leisure	Ins. & public authorities	Rest	Total
Migration policy	27.27	0	9.09	22.73	31.82	0	4.55	4.55	100
Economic and monetary policy	63.46	11.54	5.77	1.92	7.69	0	1.92	7.69	100
Health policy	8.33	1.67	6.67	18.33	61.67	1.67	1.67	0	100
Fight against crime	30	10	5	20	30	0	0	5	100
Energy policy	48.28	3.45	10.34	10.34	17.24	0	6.9	3.45	100
Education	21.43	2.38	3.17	15.08	48.41	1.59	1.59	6.35	100
Gender policy	23.08	0	2.56	15.38	48.72	2.56	2.56	5.13	100
Social policy	11.96	3.26	4.35	19.57	52.17	1.09	2.17	5.43	100
Environmental policy	41.38	1.72	0	12.07	34.48	1.72	3.45	5.17	100
Consumer protection	73.53	5.88	0	2.94	11.76	0	2.94	2.94	100
Agriculture policy	65.22	8.7	0	8.7	8.7	0	8.7	0	100
Fundamental rights of EU citizens	2	4	8	26	46	2	4	8	100
International development policy	48.57	5.71	5.71	5.71	20	0	2.86	11.43	100
Foreign policy	42.11	0	15.79	10.53	21.05	0	5.26	2.26	100
Defense policy	14.29	0	14.29	28.57	28.57	0	14.29	0	100
European integration and cooperation	37.5	2.5	5	15	25	2.5	5	7.5	100
Scientific research policy	34	4	6	6	38	0	2	10	100
Regional or cohesion policy	44.83	6.9	6.9	6.9	20.69	0	6.9	6.9	100
Human Rights	2.13	4.26	6.38	17.02	59.57	2.13	2.13	6.38	100
Transport policy	66.67	4.76	14.29	4.76	4.76	0	4.76	0	100
Cultural policy	10.81	2.7	2.7	13.51	51.35	5.41	5.41	8.11	100
Employment	46.15	2.56	10.26	10.26	20.51	2.56	2.56	5.13	100