

Invitation to a book presentation and discussion on:

Organized Business Interests in Changing Environments. The Complexity of Adaptation.

Jürgen R. Grote, Achim Lang and Volker Schneider (eds.)

Palgrave Macmillan, November 2008.

You are kindly invited to a book presentation on recent advancements in international interest group research. All three of the editors (Jürgen Grote, Achim Lang and Volker Schneider) will be present. They will highlight the state of the art in modern interest group research as well as the historical pathways this subdiscipline of social science has taken over the past century - from state corporatist visions and realities; over pluralist theories and practices; to neo-corporatist interest intermediation; and more recent contributions by the policy-analytic school of thought.

The meeting, which is hosted by the director of CESES, Martin Potůček, will also shed light on places and people that have influenced modern research on interest intermediation under conditions of increasing globalization and Europeanization. The core question to be addressed, however, will be the extent to which internationalization has influenced the strategies, the behaviour and the structures of established interest systems at the national level.

Over the past few decades the political systems in advanced industrial societies have sailed through turbulent times. The globalization and liberalization of markets – driven in part by a revolution in communication technologies – coincided with an unprecedented mobility of capital, goods and services as well as increasing dependence of national polities on political and economic processes beyond their immediate control. Although these changes did not seal the end of the nation state, as some alarmist accounts had predicted, it undoubtedly transformed political power structures. An important question is how this deep structural change has affected the political sub-system of associational interest intermediation.

The authors follow up that question by leaning on established accounts of collective action research and including more recent insights from organization theory, evolutionary theory and theories of complex adaption. One of the most important contributions of this new publication is the systematic use of techniques of empirical network analysis. In their study of a number of core sectors such as, in particular, the chemical industry and information and communication technologies (there are also chapters on the dairy sector and on the automobile industry), the authors have consistently employed an identical questionnaire. They are thus in a position to present these sectors' associational systems in form of network-analytic graphs and visual representations that have never been available so far. The authors present empirical results

having been obtained from hundreds of interviews with Chief Executive Officers of business associations in the US, Britain, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

After the presentation, there will be ample room for discussion. We may address the question as to whether the times in which organized interests have been accredited a crucial role for the governance of highly industrialized nations have withered away, or what interest group research could offer in terms of both practical and theoretical insights and implications for the governance of countries such as the Czech Republic.