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## Democracy Models in Non-profit and Economic Interest Groups Involved in Rural-environmental Policy: a Quantitative Analysis

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### Abstract

The patterns of collective action and the process of decision-making gain in research interest in a world which suffers severe poverty problems. The organised participation of people in environmental policy-making through interest groups is decisive for achieving a fair world. But this is only possible if these groups are as “democratic” as possible, namely if the interests they express find the widest possible acceptance and do not serve only political elites or industrial monopolies. The purpose of this article is therefore to contribute to a better understanding of the democracy models found in interest groups. The percentage of qualified members influences the participation of the members in the process of decision-making of their interest group and noticeably determines which type of democracy model takes place within the group. According to results gathered by a pan-European survey through out the years 2002–2003 — the collected data was afterwards processed through cross-sectional analysis-, non-profit groups have more members with university degrees than economic groups (e.g. federations of enterprises, associations of land owners and entrepreneurs, and syndicates of employees). In the former, the members participate more extensively in the General Assembly but less in the process of Agenda-Setting, while the inverted behaviour is observed in the latter organisations. The former present characteristics of developmental democracy and protective/ competitive elitist democracy in General Assembly and Agenda-Setting respectively, while the latter competitive elitist democracy and participative/ developmental democracy respectively. Advantages and disadvantages of the democracy models, organisational requirements and conditions that support each democracy model are discussed.

**Keywords:** Democracy models, interest groups, participation