

Reorganizing Popular Politics: Participation and the New Interest Regime in Latin America



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A historic shift has occurred in the organizational structures through which the lower classes in Latin America express voice and find political representation. With the political and economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, networks of community-based associations and nongovernmental organizations replaced party-affiliated labor unions as the predominant organizations to which the lower classes turned. This volume examines the new "interest regime" in Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela through two extensive surveys—one of individuals and one of associations—undertaken in those nations' capital cities.

Contrary to common perceptions, the new interest regime is neither a vibrant, autonomous civil society nor a set of weak, atomized organizations. Participation in associations is generally high, compared to "direct action" as a strategy for pursuing collective interests, and associations more frequently coordinate and engage the state than has sometimes been assumed. However, various forms of interaction with the state pose a classic trade-off between representation and state control, and the new interest regime is marked by representational distortion, in that the lower classes are less likely to use the new structures than the middle classes. Within these general patterns, distinct national models are emerging.

This volume represents the most ambitious and systematic effort to date to examine individual participation and associational life in Latin America and to carry out a cross-national analysis of new forms of political representation.



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