

CORPORATISM AND NEW FORMS FOR REPRESENTING AGRICULTURE INTERESTS: A THEORETICAL APPROACH¹

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ABSTRACT - The goal of this article is to analyze the emergence of new forms of interest representation in agriculture based on a broad interpretation of corporatism (neo-corporatism). I attempt to demonstrate why hegemony is no longer exercised through the singular representation of the sector, but replaced by the hegemony of specialized organizations linked to specific products or producers. In addition, I look at how new spaces of negotiation between producers and agribusinesses have been constituted within the organizations that bring these two segments together.

Key words: Corporatism, representation of agricultural interests, rural business organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of large corporations, whether devoted to economic activity (big businesses) or to the articulation of civil society (large-scale civil organizations), has been explained as the convergence of diverse factors, some of the most important of which are: further developments in the social division of labor, greater rationalization and institutionalization of collective action, and the regulatory action of the State through public policies (Giner and Pérez-Yruela, 1979). The purpose of this paper is to analyze the interest articulation in

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agriculture using a broad theoretical notion of corporatism as a process in which interests are represented through the dominance of a small group of formal organizations that act as social intermediaries for those they represent.

Within the framework of what is considered a process of economic and social corporatization, we can say that the articulation of the diverse interest groups in advanced industrial society has undergone a gradual process of concentration and functional specialization. This has led to the hierarchical structuring of its representational entities and to the consolidation of its highest level leadership. This leadership then holds a monopoly on organizational power in the name of a class or a class faction.

The concepts used in the contemporary corporatist approach originated in the second half of the last century when corporatism, linked to Catholicism, presented itself as a kind of “third route”–between liberal individualism and socialist collectivism. Starting in the mid 1970s, other approaches to corporatism were developed; this development continuing throughout the eighties but has slowed in the present decade.

State welfare policies were put into effect after the end of the Second World War by the governments of advanced capitalist countries, especially those adhering to democratic social ideologies, through the intensification of negotiating practices with business and labor organizations. These practices became the objects of reflection for economists, sociologists, and political scientists interested in the nature of the State and its relationship to civil society as they sought an alternative to the pluralist approach that was dominant in earlier decades.³

Within the context of the consecration of general interest and the negotiated regulation of class conflicts, some social scientists have noted similarities between the old corporatist phenomena of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries and today’s corporate realities. This has compelled them to dig up the old terminology and utilize some of

³ For a review of the pluralist approach and the variations that have been made upon it, see M. J. Smith, “Pluralism, Reformed Pluralism and Neo-pluralism: the Role of Pressure Groups in Policy-making”, *Political Studies*, XXXVIII, 2, 1990, pgs. 302-322.

these earlier concepts. **Corporatism** itself became one such up-dated concept. Depending upon their intellectual tradition, our era's social scientists have created distinctive variations of the old corporatist philosophy to reflect a modern version of the relationship between the State and civil society.

The concept of **corporatism**, as the term was coined in the last century, can be linked to two important references. Durkheim, in his *Division of Labor in Society* [1893], discusses modern societies' tendency toward the constitution of a "vast system of national corporations." In the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Lionus XIII (1891) represented the Catholic Church's reaction to the period's hegemonic ideologies: liberal individualism and socialist collectivism. The *Rerum Novarum* offered a third route – corporatism – as an alternative ideology, an alternative in which capitalist entrepreneurs and workers could (should) integrate themselves within one same institutional structure, thereby neutralizing the Marxist principle of class struggle as the motor of social change. Within this context, a model of social and political change emerges that, adopting the Catholic term, would be called **corporatism** by the analysts of that period. Corporatism finds its sharpest political expression in the totalitarian regimes of the century, such as *Salazarismo* in Portugal, Italian fascism, the Franco regime in Spain, and even some of the authoritarian regimes of Latin America: the Brazilian *Estado Novo*.

Nonetheless, due to the level of economic development and the nature and political structure of modern capitalist societies, the analysis of the contemporary corporatist phenomenon — the hegemony of collective actors organized in corporations that monopolize or "oligopolize" the representation of different interest groups in order to introduce important changes in the relationship between the State and civil society – requires a revision of earlier concepts. In effect, current negotiating practices, as they are generated in contemporary democratic societies, share only a *formal* similarity with the old style corporatism, which has led social scientists working in this area to change the terminology's meaning, using the terms **corporatism** or **neo-corporatism** to refer to the new phenomena. They have making a semantic distinction in relation to earlier practices of social mediation

that had occurred directly through the State.⁴

However, these precautions notwithstanding, the modern corporatist debate has been accompanied by a certain amount of controversy regarding terminology, precisely because these terms have been coined *ex novo*. The meanings of most of these terms originated in the past and were incorporated into common speech, which has led to confusion when the terms are used in academic language.

Lastly, the use of the term **corporativismo** has always caused certain difficulties, due to its association with the above-mentioned authoritarian regimes of this century. In Latin languages, in which the correct translation of the English term **corporatism** would be *corporativismo*, some authors – such as the Spanish sociologists Giner and Pérez-Yruela (1979) – have followed the lead of German and Italian sociologists, opting to eliminate the syllable “vi”. Thus, in order to avoid the pejorative connotation associated with the earlier term, they use the neologism *corporatismo* to refer to the phenomena of intermediation of interests. The basic characteristic of *corporatismo* is its reference to the existence of large formal organizations (corporations) that engage in social intermediation.

In short, we can define corporatism as the hegemonic presence of corporate structures that channel the mediating dynamic of interest groups to solve social conflicts in a relatively peaceful manner, whether this mediation is involved with the distribution of goods, incomes, benefits, and/or privileges.

In Brazil, where this theoretical approach has only recently come into use, the term **corporatismo** is also being used; although, this word is not actually recognized in the Portuguese language.⁵ One way or another, it is important to distinguish between “the old corporatism [that] was associated with authoritarian regimes and was normatively imposed, suppressing political and ideological pluralism, in short, imposing class collaboration from above, and the current form of corporatism (or neo-corporatism) (...) which has emerged within democratic societies, in which social classes and interest groups

⁴ Perhaps one exception would be Martínez Alier (1985) for whom the difference between older and modern forms of corporatism is not merely formal.

⁵ See Graziano da Silva (1992) and Soto (1992).

voluntarily enter into processes of negotiation, spurred on by the changes and new situations that have to be confronted.” (Giner and Pérez-Yruela, 1985:10-11) (my emphasis).

The theoretical approach to corporatism is, in my judgment, one of the richest areas of possible discussion of the phenomenon. Rather than interpreting it in a strict sense, limiting it to tripartite negotiation involving governments, trade unions, and entrepreneurial organizations, I advocate the broader interpretation. Through use of the expanded interpretation of corporatism, we are allowed to shed some light on the diverse forms for the restructuring of social relations that can be observed not only in advanced countries but also in those that exhibit lower levels of development, if only because the processes of globalization forces their inclusion.

In societies such as Brazil, the importance of a broader approach to corporatism lies in the possibilities for an analysis of the most developed part of its economy and of sectors excluded from the development processes, which create their own organizations – or, more correctly, counter-organizations – in order to articulate and represent their respective interests.

A precept of the broader approach to corporatism is that civil society, due to growing segmentation, tends toward structuring through formal organizations (corporations) and to articulation through representational leaderships. Furthermore, there is a tendency for the society to organize itself into corporations whose leadership become responsible for the processes of social intermediation. This interpretation does not necessarily imply the existence of tripartite bargaining agreements between governments, unions, and business organizations as proof of the presence of corporative phenomena, since such agreements are just one manifestation of corporatism. Tripartite agreements are always linked to a particular context and can be seen as the “epiphenomena” of corporatism.⁶

The broader approach to corporatism presents several definitive advantages: First, corporatism is seen as a lasting phenomenon rather

⁶ A broader conception of corporatism can allow us to analyze the older (or State) form of corporatism, as well as the modern (or social) version, in spite of the partial nature of their historical continuity. For a more detailed analysis of the corporatist approach, see the first chapter of my doctoral dissertation (Ortega, 1995).

than the result of particular experiences pertaining to a specific juncture in time; Second, it recognizes the presence of social conflict, whether based on class or other social relations; Third, it does not necessarily imply tripartite bargaining, and thus allows the analysis to be extended to diverse sectors of society and even to less developed societies. Lastly, the State retains relative autonomy, as it is recognized that the State itself is subject to the guidelines of generalized corporatization, becoming itself a corporation *par excellence*.

It is important to emphasize, nonetheless, that the corporatist approach, even in its broadest interpretation, should be situated within specific dimensions without transforming it into a general theory that attempts to explain the complex transformations occurring within this century's capitalism. As Giner and Pérez-Yruela (1988) recognize: "the corporatization of advanced modern societies is only one facet of a much wider reality, part of which is beyond the scope of corporatism itself. The view of contemporary society as a 'corporate society' or a society permeated by corporatism is then not more than a relative approach with pretensions no larger than to shed light on certain interesting and characteristic aspects of a world that in no way is completely comprehended and explained by that approach. The view of advanced modern society as a corporatist society is, in our case, solely a perspective that sheds light on some crucial aspects of this society but certainly not all." (p.22)

In my use of the corporatist approach here, I adopt Moyano's (1988) hypothesis, arguing that agriculture is one of the few sectors, if not the only one, in which there is a passage from traditional to modern corporatism without discontinuities. The modernization of the agriculture sector—with its effect of economic and social differentiation at the end of the 50s and throughout the 60s, in the more developed countries, and some time later in most of the developing world—created changes in terms of new forms of agrarian interest representation, in consonance with those already in place in other areas of activity.

SPECIALIZATION AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION IN AGRICULTURE: THE ROAD TO CORPORATIZATION

With its worldwide expansion and development, the new agricultural model was a result of several factors, such as industrial innovations spurred by the Second World War and the Cold War led to the implementation of technological advances that heavy industry and chemical and seed companies incorporated into the agrarian sector; and the intense process of internationalization of multinational capital known as the **Green Revolution** that diffused the new technological standards for agriculture. Without entering into the details of this process, at present it suffices to say that these new technological standards allowed for a spectacular increase in agricultural productivity through the usage of selected seeds and the heightened use of machinery and chemicals, especially fertilizers and pesticides. In truth, a good part of this technological package was already known and had been adopted in the United States, albeit partially, beginning in the thirties. However, the widespread implementation of this technological package in the 60s was due mainly to the role played by international agronomy research centers, which perfected research methodologies for the discovery and improvement of new plant varieties and animal breeds.⁷

In addition to the positive results brought about by the increase in agricultural productivity, this process of technological transformation made production more homogeneous worldwide, allowing trading companies' access to a wider variety of agricultural products and food processing industries' access to more standardized raw materials. These advances also allowed new territories that had not traditionally produced certain crops to enter into international trade in these commodities and dispute places in the international marketplace that had, until then, belonged to the countries that were traditional producers of those crops.

Along with the changes that were introduced into the

⁷ Similar to what occurred at an international level, in the 70s Brazil adopted a model of research and diffusion based on product innovation, through the creation of the *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (Embrapa)* and the *Empresa Brasileira de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural (Embrater)*, and thereby endorsing the above-mentioned "technological package". For more on this topic, see Albuquerque et. al. (1985) and Aguiar (1986).

agricultural production model, there were also changes that took place in the model of agricultural interest articulation, both in terms of organizational form and in relationship with the State. The changes that institutionalized public policies for agricultural sector regulation must be analyzed dynamically. They are situated within the process of capitalist development and were generated not only by the needs of the agrarian sector but also as imperatives of the economic system (Moyano, 1984:84-95)

Large fluctuations in the volume of agricultural production, food product demand instability, the atomization of properties, and the weak negotiating position of producers when facing oligopolies have led farmers to seek protection from public powers. Generally, farmer demands are only partially attended to, given the interest in sustaining farm system reproductive capacity with a minimum of social costs. In conjunction with this interest comes an attempt to discipline producers, with the goal of reducing instability in agricultural products supply. As Moyano (1984, 1989) correctly points out, the institutionalization of agrarian protectionism should be understood as a two-fold process, with demands coming from above, (the State), and from below (farmers).

For my purposes here, it is important to emphasize that the implementation of protectionist policies entailed improved forms of farmer unification, initially provoking the development of trade unions or other types of political organization, such as the so-called professional agricultural organizations, which are characteristic of European agriculture.⁸ During critical stages of the structural modernization process, these organizations functioned as privileged representatives engaged with public powers in the application of diverse programs for the sector.

Nonetheless, various factors relating to the particularities of rural society and the singular characteristics of each country's agrarian structure influence the development of these trade union type

⁸ In France, the term *profession agricole* is used to refer to the entirety of unions, cooperatives, credit associations and other organizations that represent and articulate the general interests of agricultural producers. Consequently, the word *interprofession* — a term I use here — refers to corporations that bring together the organizations of agricultural producers and industrial sectors, into the same productive chain or agro-industrial complex.

organizations, shaping the organizational models and the groups that composed them.⁹ These factors include those related to the heterogeneity of production, the particular condition of the farmer as head of production, the structure of landed property and land ownership regimes, as well as socio-cultural factors (Moyano, 1984). Some of these factors will be analyzed below.

Productive heterogeneity is the result of the agricultural specialization processes. The growing specialization of rural production creates a specific problem connected with each product produced, both with regard to the markets for which they are destined and the agrarian policies that farmers demand. The establishment of increasingly specific and differentiated claims makes it difficult to reconcile diverse agrarian interests within a program of common demands. This explains the difficulties that large-scale, general and unitary organizations encounter in maintaining a broad, cohesive social base. It also explains the tendency toward articulation through sectorial and product-based organizations. The final result of this tendency toward the sectorialization of demands is an increase in integration among farmers that produce a specific product for other segments in the agro-industrial complex. This is the basis for the creation of new, inter-professional organizations.

The developmental peculiarities of agricultural productive activity influences the articulation of agrarian interests, to the extent that each producer maintains a high degree of autonomy as manager of his/her own activity. According to Moyano (1984), this autonomy secures a very individualistic dimension in farmers' economic, social and political activities. This individualism, along with the geographic isolation and dispersion characteristic of rural society, partially explain the difficulties found in the process of agrarian interest articulation, notably in the consolidation of distinctive associative forms, such as unions and cooperatives.

Property structure also plays an important role in the organization of agrarian interests. "The structure of landed property

⁹ For more on this topic, see the work of the European research group R-Europa, published in French under the supervision of Hervieu and Lagrave (1993) and in Spanish, coordinated by Moyano (1993). It includes diverse monographs on 11 countries of the European Community, and contains analyses of the processes of interest articulation and the distinctive associative forms employed by farmers.

and forms of *landholding* determine, to a large extent, the form that the process of interest articulation in the agrarian sector takes on" (Moyano, 1984: 99-100). In a structurally differentiated zone, one unique form of agricultural representation should not be expected, since farmer specific problems with regard to property size induce the creation of diverse interest organizations, especially where the heterogeneity of agrarian structure differentiates productive activity. In more homogeneous regions, the opposite phenomenon can be observed: concentration around a single representative organization. In turn, forms of *landholding* are not the decisive factor behind the forms of representation adopted by agrarian interests, despite their influence through the introduction of certain elements of distortion in the internal dynamic of organizations. For example, if both landowners and renters participate in the same organization, they are, for the most part, unable to articulate their interests separately, although they may experience a conflict of interests.

Finally, in order to understand the particularities of the process of interest articulation in the agrarian sector, socio-cultural and ideological factors should be considered. These factors create a kind of collective identity through which small, medium-sized, and large-scale producers subordinate the diversity of their private interests to a hypothetical, rural world common interest vis-à-vis external agents (intermediaries, industries, merchants, consumers, environmentalist groups, etc.). External agents are viewed as being responsible for all the evils afflicting agricultural producers. This situation, which Moyano (1984) refers to as the **syndrome of marginality**, is precisely a reflection of the traditional agrarian elite's loss of hegemony within the spheres of public power in favor of urban and the industrial elite, which in many cases explains the formation of "agrarian fronts" to defend the interests of agricultural producers as a whole.

All of the factors mentioned up to now, some favoring the dispersion and atomization of agricultural producers and others conducive to the creation of unitary organizations, enable us to assert that there is a sort of **dispersion/concentration** dialectic in the process of interest articulation within agriculture that makes it difficult to consolidate a stable, representational structure of for the exercise of social dialogue. The tendency towards general societal corporatization

thus comes up against serious difficulties within the rural world; although, this does not block the interference of forces external to the sector which motivate its corporatization.

One of the most significant forms of interference comes from the State in its role as regulator, insofar as the State promotes the emergence of certain organizations and impedes the appearance of others. In other instances, political parties are the actors interested in favoring particular agrarian organizations as a rural support base for electoral campaigns.¹⁰ Finally, the very integration of agriculture into agro-industrial complexes is a factor that interferes in the process of rural producer articulation.

A BROAD INTERPRETATION OF CORPORATISM IN AGRICULTURE

Typical tripartite agreements, involving government, unions, and business organizations, take place more frequently in the industrial sector and have been the empirical basis of a narrower view of corporatism. The relative absence of this phenomenon in the agricultural world thus justifies the choice of a wider interpretation of corporatism, which should then be more useful in explaining the processes of social articulation within the sector. It is in this decade that corporatism has become more prevalent within certain segments of Brazilian agriculture, as is the case with coffee growing and the creation of the *Conselho Deliberativo de Política Cafeeira*.¹¹

Nonetheless, in the case of agriculture, it is extremely important to distinguish between the old corporatism and neo-corporatism. As I have previously discussed, agriculture is perhaps one of the few economic sectors in which the passage from older to newer forms was a continuous one. Therefore, defining the differentiating characteristics of both systems of interest representation and their empirical correlates becomes pertinent.

¹⁰ In electoral systems in which the rural population's support is fundamental to election outcomes, this is a question of enormous importance.

¹¹ For more on this matter, see Farina (1996).

The passage from one system of representation to another can be seen with clarity in the very evolution of associative forms in agriculture. For this purpose, Moyano's (1988) model on the socio-genesis of agrarian corporatism can be useful.

According to this model, it is possible to roughly identify three stages corresponding to distinct moments in the agricultural development of each country. Advanced countries generally pass through these stages over a short period of time. In the Brazilian case, there are some temporal differences in that historical process as compared to its evolution in countries of the developed world.

A first stage, in which the genesis of the first forms of association in agriculture emerge, can be characterized by the prevalence of a multi-functional model of organization, within which the organization that elaborates sectorial demands has other functions. This phase corresponds to the initial stage in agricultural development, marked by the limited social and economic differentiation between agricultural producers and a notable heterogeneity of productive activity. The multi-functional model of organization, which has been called **boutique unionism** in French literature, took its ideological inspiration from traditional corporatism, a defensive, unitary, ruralist ideology (Berger, 1975). In Brazil, this stage began at the start of the last century, with the *Casas da Lavoura do Estado de São Paulo*, the *Assembléias Agrícolas do Rio de Janeiro*, and numerous expositions and agricultural fairs that brought agricultural producers together. Within this context, the first trade union type organizations emerged, such as the **Sociedade Nacional da Agricultura (SNA)** and the **Sociedade Rural Brasileira (SRB)**, both founded in the first third of this century (Hidalgo da Silva, 1992).

In the second stage, with the advance of capitalist development in agriculture, a process of increasing socio-economic differentiation takes place in the agricultural and rural world. There is a parallel functional specialization within agrarian associationism, which is distinguishable, on the one hand and above all, from cooperative organizations, and on the other hand, from trade union type organizations. The process of social and economic differentiation also made the old ruralist ideologies increasingly less congruent with empirical reality. In this way, "the supposed 'homogeneous corps' of the past, fragments into many pieces and corporatist ideology is

questioned by an ideology of pluralism and diversity in the agricultural and rural world” (Moyano, 1988). This fragmentation reveals associative forms not inspired by the unitary model of traditional corporatism.

In Brazil, this stage began with the crisis of 1930. The first fissures in the Brazilian oligarchy led to the emergence of differentiated demands from the regional oligarchies. The regional oligarchies were specialized in activities other than coffee growing, which up to that moment had been the hegemonic sector around which a cohesive group of agrarian entrepreneurs had formed. The crisis in the coffee sector stimulated differentiation within that sector in the traditional coffee growing states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais; States that had maintained distinct interests with regard to the coffee crop.

Finally, as a result of agricultural modernization and industrialization, a third stage brings the intensified integration of agrarian activities and **agricultural complexes**. This process breaks definitively with the old rural and agrarian particularities and subsumes the interests of rural producers to the chain to which they belong; though, this does not signify the complete loss of these producers particular activities and specificities.¹²

With regard to the characteristics of corporatism in agriculture, Moyano (1989) notes three fundamental traits that were emphasized in the old or traditional form of corporatism. The first is the diffusion of a unitary and defensive ruralist ideology among agricultural producers. The second is the need for State protectionism as a guarantee for dominant agricultural models. Lastly, there is the utopian pretense of self-management and self-regulation within the agrarian sector.

In Europe, this type of corporate organization – which can be identified with what Schmitter has called State corporatism – appears explicitly in the period between the two world wars and continues into the Second World War. State corporatism was supported by the expansion of authoritarian regimes, characteristic examples of which were Portugal under Salazar, fascist Italy, Franco’s Spain, France under

¹² According to Graziano da Silva (1992), the concept of agro-industrial complex is the result of a historical process that began with the transformation of traditional agriculture into industrialized agriculture, culminating with its complete integration with agro-industry and thereby provoking important changes in the forms of articulation and representation of agrarian interests.

the Vichy regime, and Nazi Germany. In this midst of these authoritarian governments there is the exceptional case of Holland, where corporative organizations of a traditional style were created, while maintaining the democratic nature of the political regime.¹³ In Brazil, the model of State corporatism studied by Schmitter¹⁴ in one of his first papers, was adopted by the Vargas regime when it established the *Estado Novo* in the 1930s.

In all these cases, the representation of agricultural interests is structurally and vertically organized in a similar fashion, both in terms of entrepreneurial and worker representation, and tied to the State apparatus through juridical forms, such as *Câmaras Agrárias* or *Conselhos* and other such corporations of Public Law. This unitary model for the representation of agrarian interests takes its inspiration from an ideology that reflects a reaction to the upset of traditional order brought about by industrialization. It also presents itself as a step beyond liberal individualism and socialist collectivism, proposing an alternative model based on harmony between social classes and the respect for social institutions as set forth by the doctrines of social Catholicism. Traditional corporatism was, in ideological terms, “a conservative ideology that proposed the preservation of the fundamental values of traditional society: hierarchical order, corporative articulation, and the respect for authority...” (Moyano, 1989:4)

Within this traditional corporatism, agriculture is considered a homogeneous sector, separate from the rest of society, and deserving of preservation and protection from the industrial sector. The latter is seen as a source of conflicts, a threat to social order and stability. It is in this context that farmers have demanded that the State allow them the power and resources for self-regulation, with the idea that this will permit them to preserve rural particularities. Even today, the legacy of this antiquated corporatist ideology makes itself felt in the discourse of some rural leaders, who argue that the way out of Brazil's current

¹³ For more on the models of agrarian organization for Holland, France, Denmark and the United Kingdom, see Chapter 4 of my doctoral thesis (Ortega, 1995).

¹⁴ In 1971, Schmitter published a work on Brazilian corporatism, entitled *Interest conflict and political change in Brazil* (Stanford University Press). In evaluating the pertinence of his conclusions for the reality of European countries, he found, in the bargaining practices of the latter, similarities between the experiences of the countries under authoritarian regimes in the 30s and the Brazilian *Estado Novo*.

economic crisis is the prioritization of agriculture, in view of its peculiarities — the country has a supposed “agrarian vocation”.

Paradoxically, in this stage of state corporatism there is considerable mistrust of State regulatory action on the behalf of agrarian interest groups. State protectionism is accepted only as the lesser of evils, for moments of extreme crisis (Servolin, 1988). It is important to emphasize that “as an ideology and a political practice (the old corporatism is) only an echo within agriculture and the rural world, permitting us to assert, in a general sense, and differently from other social groups and sectors of activity, that the farmers of pre-war Europe and their organizations requested a corporative model for the agrarian sector from the State; a model based on compulsory affiliation and the cited principles of ruralism, unitarism, and protectionism.” (Moyano, 1990:100)

Later, once the process of agricultural industrialization and its new form of integration with the economy was initiated, there is an observable tendency toward the greater economic and social differentiation of farmers. Their specific problems came to arise from and depend on the characteristics of their activities and the products they cultivated. This introduces important changes in the terrain of interest representation and interest defense.

Traditional corporatism, in the form of a particularist representational system and the unitary defense of interests, loses its viability as agriculture is transformed; agriculture is no longer a “world apart” but just one more branch of the economy. Thus, a substantial part of the basis for rural “particularism” becomes undone, and farmers are increasingly encouraged to participate as citizens in political events, no longer wielding any special prerogatives linked with their condition.

This marks the entrance of corporatism, or neo-corporatism, onto the modern stage, a stage in which the old idea of agrarian sector unity is substituted by the recognition of diversity. The emergence of new agrarian organizations is a reflection of this. These new organizations arose to defend farmers’ general interests and the interests of specialized producers. The new conflict dynamics inaugurated with the coming of agriculture’s full integration into markets and agro-industrial complexes is, to a large extent, the result of the peculiarities of each of these complexes and of the singular relationships established

by each producer with the agro-industries. In other words, the definition of agrarian interests comes to depend on the degree of each producer's integration with industry, on his/her social position as a producer, and on the specific problems linked to the region where production takes place and the product produced..

In this stage of the neo-corporate relationship between the State and civil society, during which the idea of the diversity of interests is accepted by all social actors as something intrinsic to social and political dynamics, agrarian policies become a **political issue** rather than a simple instrument of public management. Thus, different interests and ideologies come to bear on policy decisions. These influences come not only from civil society but also from the sphere of public administration, which itself is structured through interest areas that maintain a privileged relationship to one sector or another.

The corporatist model in modern agriculture may be the result of a process of integration and agrarian industrialization, a process which modifies the system of agrarian interest representation in order to make it compatible with the economic transformations that have vertically integrated agriculture and industry. In other words, during this phase of neo-corporatism, a large number of interest groups emerge. The interest group's membership is constituted from specific sectors of production and is comprised of public and private agents.

Within this context, general-type organizations lose their functionality as channels for the promotion of agrarian interests in favor of **sectorial organizations** and **interprofessions**, which are more representative models for the current stage of development, a stage in which agriculture is integrated into agro-industrial complexes. These new forms of interest representation, which will be cited below, have their own norms for internal functioning: they are not ephemeral, are hierarchically structured, and possess explicit goals, thus responding to a particular model of corporatism.

Industrial development has therefore meant the full integration of agriculture into agroindustrial complexes, its penetration into the economic logic of capitalism, and the increasing reduction of its importance as a productive activity within the economic system. It is important to note that the industrialization of agriculture has not only led to its integration with industry but also that it produces according

to the logic of industrial production: in other words, as a determined raw material is transformed into a finished product, through a specific technology and as a relation of production that is typical to the capitalist mode of production (Graziano da Silva, 1992).¹⁵ All of this leads the entire agrarian sector into a process of economic and social differentiation, affecting both farmers and rural wage earners. In spite of the array of class conflicts that this differentiation process leads to, I will limit my analysis here to the representation of farmers' interests, rather than referring to rural wage earners..

From the perspective of this paper, we cannot speak of agriculture and the rural world using the old corporative notions of rural unity and particularism, given that this world is now extremely heterogeneous and differentiated by interest groups. Within it, the old differences between the rural and the urban, especially in Europe, are becoming diluted, forming an integral conception of space and territory on that continent much more as "habitat" than as the specialized environment of agricultural production. In this sense, protectionism—the bastion of the old corporatist ideology—is questioned insofar as it has been considered responsible for agricultural surpluses (as in the European case), international marketplace distortions, and budgetary difficulties that make its maintenance unfeasible.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that agricultural protectionism, at the present stage of economic development, is on its way out. I am arguing that important changes are taking place leading to the creation of differentiated protectionist policies to deal with specific situations, much more as social, regional, and income policies than as policies related to production. This can be observed in the European community where, even after reform (PAC), there still are concerns about keeping a certain part of the population in the countryside. On the one hand, protectionism is a way to avoid worsening the problems linked to urban agglomeration; on the other, it is the result of the mobilizing power that certain agricultural organizations still retain. In addition to this, there are environmental protection policies in certain areas that allow for the perpetuation of protectionism, although not

¹⁵ Obviously this does not mean that all the specificities of agriculture, when compared to those of industry, have been suppressed; rather, it means that there has been a closer linking of one to the other. For more on this question, see Veiga (1991).

without an important change in its nature and content.

One of the principal characteristics of the present associative forms of agrarian corporatism is functional specialization, an aspect that is congruent with the above mentioned sociogenesis. Farmer's incomes, at the present stage of agricultural development, depend on a wide number of factors that, for most part, cannot be controlled by individual actions but require diverse forms of collective action. This explains why agriculture has generated a structure of well articulated organizations that carry out collective action in different arenas, both to make demands heard and in defense of interests.

In order to classify this associative diversity, I rely on Moyano's (1988) typology, which is based on Weberian ideal types that, although not found in pure form within social reality, are useful for understanding associative phenomena.

The first ideal type of association refers to **revindicative** or union styled organizations, the most significant examples of which are unions or agrarian professional organizations. This type of associationism can be characterized by specific traits: a) their **integral pursuit** of a goals, seeking to defend the entirety of interests of the social group that is represented, without any limitations on the way these interests are defined; b) the **universalist** nature of their activity, taking actions that are not directed exclusively toward their own members welfare but to the whole social reference group; and c) the **ideological nature** of their discourse.

The second type of association can be referred to as **non-revindicative**¹⁶ and can be characterized in the following way: a) the **non-integral** pursuit of goals, in that they defend limited and explicit interests, b) the **exclusivist** nature of actions that are directed exclusively to its members benefit and not to all those who make up its social base, and c) the **non-necessarily ideological** nature of discourse.

Cooperatives are one of the main forms of non-revindicative associationism. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the

¹⁶In most of his work, Moyano speaks of economic associationism. However, I don't consider this to be the best way of defining this second type of association, since they do not only include economic associations that produce goods and services (such as cooperatives). Thus, I prefer to call them non-revindicative associations, in order to distinguish them from organizations of the first type.

organizations that bring grass-roots cooperatives together for the general defense of the cooperative movement are associations of the revindicative type. They possess the integralist and universalist characteristics mentioned above and, although less-explicitly, maintain an ideological discourse. An example of this type of organization is the *Organização das Cooperativas do Brasil (OCB)*.

Other types of associations, sometimes analyzed in a way that produces confusion, are organizations that are specialized by product. Strictly speaking, these organizations are also revindicative and possess all the above described characteristics, even the ideological nature that is quite often denied by their leadership. The goals that they pursue and the results that they obtain through their actions affect all the producers of a particular sector indiscriminately, whether organization members or not.

According to the previously formulated thesis, these are the specialized organizations, together with those of an interprofessional character, referred to here as **non-union revindicative organizations**, that are becoming the privileged channels of interest representation within agro-industrial complexes. These specialized organizations increasingly transform themselves into the most representative interlocutors negotiating with public powers. This rise of specialized associations and interprofessions does not necessarily imply the disappearance of the old models of interest representation based on general agrarian professional organizations, but does mean that the latter must make important changes in their organizational structures. They must focus, for example, on the creation of bureaus for dealing with specific products, thus competing with specialized organizations.

In view of all these changes in the representation of agricultural interests, general agrarian unionism has tried to adapt to the new reality to hold its own vis-à-vis other associative forms. This is precisely why it has become increasingly difficult to find the previously described "ideal types." Many unions are now trying to broaden their field of action and incorporating new areas of activity somewhat removed from those that led to their original identification as revindicative organizations. One example of this is the provision of services to members

THE INTERPROFESSIONS, OR THE MOST DEVELOPED STAGE IN THE PROCESS OF AGRARIAN CORPORATIZATION

Interprofessional organizations bring farmers' associations and agro-business associations together in a singular representational structure. These organizations seek the integral defense of the supposed common interest of all the groups involved in the corresponding agro-industrial complex. Interprofessional organizations are created as a result of the institutionalization of relationships between the different segments of a particular agro-industrial complex and between the latter and other sectors of society and the State.

The process of integrating agriculture and industry serves as the backdrop for discussions on interprofessional organizations and leads to the topic of economic and political leadership within agro-industrial complexes. This relationship between both extremely well-integrated and very differentiated agents, as is the case for farmers and agro-industries, always requires coordination that goes beyond mere technical coordination to an authentic adjustment or "reconciliation" between the sector's segments. This does not mean that conflicts within each agro-industrial complex disappear but that these conflicts are mediated in such a way that they are resolved within each interprofession. Mediation transform the conflicts from "zero-sum" results to "non zero-sum," through adjustments made between the different segments that make up the interprofession.¹⁷

The degree of integration between producers from different segments of the productive process is, thus, a determining factor for the emergence of an interprofession. It is important to remember that the interprofession is put together for the defense and internal coordination of the common interests of an agro-industrial complex. The functions to be carried out by these organizations are, in many cases, similar to those carried out by an agrarian professional organization. However, the fact that they are made up of agricultural

¹⁷ Examples of this can be found in Brazilian coffee culture, with the constitution of the *Conselho Nacional de Política Cafeeira*, and within the poultry industry, with the constitution of the *União Brasileira de Avicultura*, among other experiences.

and industrial entrepreneurs and that they represent the interests of a particular agro-industrial complex imposes certain specificities on their actions transforming them into a distinct type of organization. With regard to non-revindicative activities, the functions of interprofessional organizations tend to be extremely varied, such as publicity campaigns, quality improvement, the establishment of price agreements between the different phases of the productive process, the determination of production quotas, the creation of incentives for the P&D policies of firms, etc.

Just as occurs within the agrarian professional organizations with regard to the articulation of demands and the defense and representation of interests, the interprofessions also seek to exercise their influence in decision-making. They direct their influence toward agrarian policies and other types of policies that can affect the agro-industrial complex, and they develop strategies that are appropriate for this purpose.

Finally, the interprofessions have an important participatory role in the application of certain public policies, as centers of professional training, as negotiators between their members and other social groups, and as facilitators technology's diffusion throughout the society.

According to Cawson (1986), the emergence of sectorial organizations such as the interprofessions depends on the nature of the product, the relative proportions of multi-product firms, the presence of multi-national firms, the degree of international competitiveness of the sector, the technological maturity of the sector, and the degree of economic concentration within the sector.

Among the factors that positively influence the emergence of interprofessional organizations, the following deserve special mention: the process of agricultural specialization and integration with agro-industry — leading to the emergence of agro-industrial complexes —; the degree of concentration of agro-industrial firms¹⁸; the technical

¹⁸ Some authors argue that in the sectors where multinational firms prevail, there is an intrinsic difficulty in the constitution of corporatist relations, which influences even the question of governability (Cawson, 1986). Nonetheless, this argument should be relativized, since there may adjustment practices occurring from above that work to facilitate corporatization (adjustment or reconciliation of interests) at a lower level. One example of this is the Brazilian experience of the end of the 50s, within which there is a real reconciliation between multinational capital, the domestic private sector and the State, turning the multinationals into veritable participants within a determined project and stimulating corporatization within the sectors in which they are involved.

specificity of agricultural products; the economic and social characteristics of farmers; the type of State intervention in the sector, and the social and economic importance of the product.

Interprofessional organizations are frequently found where there is a high level of interrelationship between agents working in the agro-industrial complex, in other words, in the sectors in which a structured type of contract based agriculture exists, since the experience negotiating facilitates agreements to achieve common goals.

With regard to the relative influence within the interprofessions, the oligopolistic nature of agro-businesses firms is a crucial factor that diminishes the influence of farmers, who themselves are submerged in much more competitive markets. The power of agro-businesses comes, therefore, from their economic power and from the ease with which they are able to adjust to the moves of their competitors, given the reduced numbers of actors in the sector. On the other hand, farmers' influence comes from their ability to organize collectively to confront agro-businesses. This then provides evidence that the creation of an interprofession does not represent the end of conflicts within agro-industrial complexes, but that these conflicts are recognized by the agents involved and are dealt with through corporatist representational strategies.

Based on the arguments presented to this point, interprofessions can be considered to be associations engaged in diverse activities, reivindicative and otherwise. For this reason, I find it necessary to revise Moyano's (1988) typology, summarized above in relation to agrarian associationism, and to introduce new elements of analysis incorporating the phenomenon of interprofessional type organizations. These associations may include the characteristic traits of reivindicative associations, such as **universality**, insofar as part of their gains are shared among all members of their social base, farmers and agro-businesses alike, whether affiliated or not, due to the simple fact that they belong to the same agro-industrial complex. When interprofessions promote a publicity campaign to increase consumption of their member's products, the gains obtained are enjoyed by association members and non-members alike. In this case, the efforts are of a clearly reivindicative sort.

However, when an interprofession brings its members together

to set the agricultural produce prices to be paid by the associated agribusinesses or when the association determines the farm production quotas, the interprofession is engaging in an endeavor that is economic rather than revindicative, and the gains obtained are limited exclusively to its members.

Thus, an interprofessional organization frequently incorporates characteristics of Moyano's two ideal types. In the study of concrete cases, the question then is whether we find a particular interprofession engaged in more revindicative or more economic action. This in turn will define whether the discourse takes on a more ideological nature or not.. Therefore, the type of discourse developed is intimately linked to the defining characteristics of associational forms, more ideological in the case of the interprofessions that are more revindicative and less economic in nature. The content of these discourses may vary (for example, advocating more **liberal** or more **interventionist** policies) from one interprofession to another, depending not only on the economic or revindicative nature of their actions but also on whether or not the State recognizes them as legitimate representatives of their group.

It is important to note that the existence of a particular juridical framework for the regulation and constitution of interprofessions can have an extraordinary influence on the nature of these associations, leading them to take on more economic or more revindicative characteristics.¹⁹

In addition to the topics discussed above, questions regarding open conflicts between the groups that make up an agro-industrial complex or questions related to incentives for the institutionalization of the relationships between these groups can be important. Conflicts and incentives encourage the creation of interprofessional organizations, regardless of the previously existing level of organization among the actors involved. Other factors favoring the creation of an interprofessional organization can be technical, such as industrial

¹⁹ At present, the European community is discussing the formalization of a specific juridical framework for the interprofessions, which most certainly will push these organizations to take on a more economic character. For more on this topic, see Ortega (1995, chapter 4).

processing requirements which involves raw materials standardization for particular agricultural products (sacarose content, fat content, thickness). In these cases, an interprofessional organization encourages the implementation of technological standards.

When analyzing interprofessions, we need to pay due attention to “the historical process that led to their formation in each country, the context within which they were consolidated, the reasons they developed, and the political powers attitude toward them.” Furthermore, “their development is also closely linked to the history of each *filière* (or agro-industrial complex), that in turn is conditioned by the existence of interprofessional tendencies and professional organizations.” (Langreo and García Azcarate, 1992:4) (my parentheses).

Nonetheless, I am unable to agree with Langreo and García Azcarate (1992) when they argue that the existence of interprofessional organizations is “**unthinkable**” without the existence of strong professional organizations in the distinct stages of the agro-industrial complex’s productive process, and the “existence and strengthening of organizations in each one of these stages” is fundamental for the emergence of an interprofession. Certainly, associative union in different phases of the productive process facilitates the appearance of interprofessional organizations; however, this is not indispensable, and their creation can be favored, as discussed earlier, by other factors, such as through technical questions linked to the characteristics of the specific product of a particular agro-industrial complex.

In more developed countries, where farmers’ organizations have a tradition of social representation and significant political power, the assumption that prior organization of a social base is necessary for the constitution of a corresponding interprofessional organization can be relevant. However, in the case of later developing capitalist countries, the formation of agro-industrial complexes and the integration of producers within them may be lead by the agro-industries themselves, before agrarian professional organizations have reached an advanced stage in their organizational process.²⁰ In these countries, other

²⁰ We can speak of a corporatization “from the outside in” as Moyano (1988) emphasizes when referring to the articulation and representation of agrarian interests.

motives—economic, political, and social—lead to the emergence of interprofessional type organizations in diverse sectors, which is good reason to argue for the specific analysis of each interprofessional organization.²¹

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have analyzed the articulation of interests within agriculture using a broad theory of corporatism to examine a process in which interest representation is based on the hegemony of a small group of formal organizations that negotiate the social interests of those they represent. I see agriculture as a particularly interesting sector through which to study the dynamics of social restructuring and the relations between the representative organizations and the State, as State intervention policies have given the sector special attention.

Parallel to the institutionalization of agricultural policies, the socio-genesis of associative forms of interest representation, which lead to the consolidation of systems of representation. Interesting practices of interest adjustment between public powers and agrarian organizations are developed within these systems. The process of the socio-genesis of agrarian associationism is a response to a logic that evolved from the capitalist development of agriculture.

Thus, I analyze general professional organizations, which claim to represent the entire agrarian sector, as an appropriate associative form for social representation during an early stage of structural modernization when public powers require spokespersons that represent general interests and offer an integral conception of agricultural problems. In a more advanced stage of capitalist agricultural development, in which agrarian and industrial production is integrated, these models for general representation become incapable of articulating

²¹ In the Brazilian case, as Ortega shows (1995, chapter 6) the constitutional stage of agro-industrial complexes, provides incentives for the emergence of sectorial organizations of farmers, with particularities that lead to the formation of interprofessions, which in turn take the lead in various sectors, where professional agrarian organizations had not been able to play such a role (in this stage of neo-corporatism within agrarian associationism). In other words, what I try to show in this chapter is that, in Brazil, the hegemony of professional organizations was much less important than in countries such as those of Western Europe, a fact which becomes evident when we observe the current Brazilian inability to give farmer's interests their due.

specialized interests emerging from product-based sectorial organizations or interprofessions, which are organizations that more fully represent agrarian interests.

These processes of interest unification, following patterns that are distinct from those that characterize traditional general organizations, are conducive to the formation of interprofessional organizations that coordinate the interests of agricultural producers and of the *d'amont* and *d'aval* industries according to the guidelines of a presumed general interest.

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