A Policy Communities Approach to Enlargement: British and Spanish Accession Negotiations in the Agricultural Sector

During both British and Spanish accessions to the EC, agriculture was the most difficult area to negotiate. This paper will explain why the institutional configuration of the EC has contributed to the resistance of the agricultural sector to change, in particular, by facilitating the existence of a ‘policy community’, as defined by Marsh and Rhodes.\(^1\) The peculiarities of the institutions which manage this sector at the European and national levels, facilitate the existence of an unusually tight policy community, which has been successful in ruling out certain policy changes brought to the agenda by the prospect of enlargement.

The first section explains how enlargement negotiations are ‘unpacked’ into different chapters which correspond to the different policy areas into which the EC is institutionally divided. It is argued that each policy area has its own ‘local rationality’, so change is differentiated across sectors. The second section looks at the institutions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), following North’s analysis of the role of formal and informal rules, their hierarchy and linkages, and the way in which they affect policy change.\(^2\) It is argued that historical institutionalism can help us to understand why the CAP has developed a logic of its own which favours an incremental style of policy change. Enlargement has been managed with minimum changes in this area, and the CAP institutions have survived largely untouched.

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Despite the inefficiencies and disfunctionalities which threatened to bankrupt the EC in the early 1980s. The third section focuses on the ‘actors’, that is the organizations which operate within the CAP institutional framework. The degree of insulation of the decision-making process from other sectors, membership and exclusion from the policy network, resource dependencies, frequency of interactions and ideological consensus are analyzed. It is argued that the policy community approach can be useful to understand the way in which actors relate to each other inside a network, and the way in which they reinforce the institutional rigidities which resist and, to a large extent, condition and define change brought by the accession of new members to the EC.

1. Unpacking enlargement: the sectoral division of the EEC

Once the decision to accept a new member has been taken at the highest level, and negotiations get started, the broad objective of enlargement has to be ‘unpacked’ into a set of more manageable and concrete issues.\(^3\) The way in which this unpacking occurs is strongly determined by the institutional configuration of the EC at the time when the applicant tries to get in.

Among the various criteria which guide institutional partitioning, the one built around the division of labour and technical specialization was among the main features in the design of EC institutions. The functionalist vocation of the European integration project, based on the idea of depoliticizing issues by breaking them down to make them susceptible to rational policy-making (the ‘Monnet method’), is at the origin of the strong lines which divide the Community’s institutions vertically.\(^4\)

Hence, there are functional divisions inside the Commission with a number of sectorally defined Directorate Generals (DGs). Even the Council of Ministers, representing the member states (territorial partition) is divided into specialized Councils. The fact that accession negotiations are broken down into different ‘chapters’ which correspond with such functional divisions inside the EC is an example of how the institutional structure affects the shape of the enlargement process.

By suppressing links across partitions, this division of labour creates areas of ‘local rationality’ with self contained collections of rules, which evolve independently in

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\(^4\) Jean Leca, ‘European Government or Governance in Europe?’, *European International History Seminar*, European Studies Centre, St. Antony’s College, Hilary Term 1996.
different domains. As a result, the nature and contents of the *acquis communautaire* to be adopted by the applicant varies from one policy area to another. In some areas, adopting the *aquis* might imply a fairly simple alignment with Community regulations (or de regulation), while in others, it might require more assertive actions, like introducing taxes, shifting subsidies or transferring resources, which entail highly visible cost, and mobilize opposition more easily. In this respect, agriculture is substantially different from the other sectors of EC activity, for its high degree of public intervention and protectionism.

Another substantive variation across chapters can also be observed in the number and intensity of ‘linkages’ they have with other policy areas. One of the consequences of sectoral division is the problem of horizontal coordination and consistency across the boundaries of the various policy areas. In reality, issues are connected to each other, but their deconstruction for processing by a fragmented structure can end up producing incoherent results. For example, inside the Commission, various aspects of the same issue are processed by different DGs, who follow different procedures and pursue dissimilar -or even conflicting- goals. This has created the problem that each DG has been jealous of its competence and is often reluctant to cooperate with other DGs. The discrepancies in size and political weight of each DG have made some sectors like agriculture disproportionately powerful, with DG VI controlling nearly 70% of the Community’s budget until 1988.

This vertical division is clearer in the various Councils of Ministers. The strong institutional insulation between sectors has allowed agriculture ministers in the Council to oppose their own national finance ministers, thus amplifying the coordination problem which is already acute in some member states. For example, during the Spanish negotiations, this sectoral division allowed West Germany to oppose a reduction of agricultural prices in the Agriculture Council while, at the same time strongly advocating financial discipline in the Council of Finance Ministers (CFM). The vertical insulation of the Agriculture Council is reinforced by the existence of the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA). It is a special bureaucratic body, composed of senior national civil servants who prepare the meetings of the Council of Agriculture Ministers (CAM), a job which, in other policy

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8 *Agra Europe*, 15 February 1985, P/1.
areas, is done by the Comité de Représentants Permanents (COREPER). The separation from COREPER means that agriculture ministers are not subject to the same pressures as other ministers of having to take into account other sectoral interests in the formulation of their positions. Most of the intersectoral coordination occurs in this body at the EC level, since it is composed of the Permanent Representations (PR) of the member states in Brussels, who in turn are normally in charge of ensuring the coherence of their governments’ national positions.

The Community has devised several ways of coping with the problem of intersectoral coordination. Inside the Commission, there is the role exercised by the Presidency, and the establishment of special groups of Commissioners to handle clusters of related issues. In May 1983, for example, the Council instructed a working party of Directors General to examine the main outstanding problems in the areas of Mediterranean agriculture and its financing, to un-block the Iberian negotiations for the Stuttgart summit of the European Council.

The main way of overcoming coordination problems between the Councils of Ministers of the different policy areas is similar to that which exists inside member states: to take the problems to higher decision-making instances. This is the role taken on by the six months rotating Presidency and of the meetings of the heads of state and government at the European Council. This mechanism was not present when the British were negotiating their accession, so the highest level, where horizontal coordination took place, was at bilateral meetings of the heads of state and government (e.g. Pompidou-Heath summit in 1971). In the Spanish case, bilateral meetings with the French at Rambouillet were also important to the un-blocking of the negotiations. On the other hand, the fact that heads of State and government in the European Councils of Stuttgart and Fontainebleau had to discuss the details of agricultural prices and quotas was a symptom of a horizontal conflict (or lack of coordination) at lower levels of the decision-making structure in the Community.

This observation circumscribes the intergovernmentalist view of the state as ‘gatekeeper’ and ‘aggregator of preferences’ (the Putnam/Moravcsik model) which sees the state as coming to the Community bargaining table with a clear agenda where issues and policy goals have previously been established and prioritized at the domestic level. The ‘national interest’ is never so neatly defined. It is not even the

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case for member states, like the United Kingdom or France, which have centralized foreign policy coordination machineries, and it is clearly visible for more decentralized states like Germany or Belgium (see the last section below). Therefore a chapter like agriculture which requires a high degree of coordination with the budgetary one to avoid inconsistencies, is likely to complicate negotiations and climb up to the higher levels of the decision-making structure, where a vue d'ensemble is possible.

Another way in which the adoption of the acquis varies from one sector to another is according to whether the institutional changes required by enlargement are only necessary for the new member, or whether they also call for a revision of existing Community rules. At first glance, it would seem that the ‘Community method’ of enlargement, reflected in the insistence by the Commission on the inmutable nature of the acquis, puts all the burden of change on the new member.12 Successive applicants have been told that they have to adapt to the Community, and not vice versa. However, in some policy areas, like agriculture, the redistributive nature of existing rules and procedures is such that new actors cannot be included without some EC modifications. Thus, the institutional structure of the EC establishes which policy areas the applicant needs to change, and those which are also bound to create disruptions for the existing member states and for the Community as a whole. In the areas or chapters where changes are required on the part of the Community, negotiations are likely to be more complex, because the existing members have to agree on such changes first -if they do. This is why agriculture was problematic in these two cases of enlargement, despite the diametrically different characteristics of the applicant countries.

So, having established that different policy areas present differing institutional configurations with their accompanying ‘local’ or ‘bounded’ rationalities, which shape the way in which enlargement negotiations unfold, it is now time to turn to the detailed analysis of the agricultural sector. The rest of this paper will explain why this sector has been so successful in resisting reform in the face of the significant exogenous pressure to change which enlargement entailed, by analyzing first the rules and norms which guide behaviour in this area, and then the actors which operate within that institutional framework.

2. The institutions in question: formal and informal rules

It is important to clarify that this paper uses the concept ‘institutions’ as defined by North, which has the advantage of limiting the use of the term ‘institutions’ to refer only to rules or ‘arenas’, and distinguishes them from ‘organizations’ which are the players or actors that operate within that framework. This allows more precision in analysis of the EC, in the sense of conceptually differentiating between the norms, rules and procedures (i.e. Treaty of Rome, Agricultural code of 1962, voting rules in the Council) which constitute the ‘institutional framework’, from actors or ‘organizations’, like the Commission or the Council of Ministers, which are also referred to in the literature as ‘institutions’.

Another advantage of North’s definition is that, with other ‘new institutionalists’ he incorporates both ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ rules. While ‘formal rules include political (and judicial) rules, economic rules and contacts’, informal rules ‘come from socially transmitted information and are part of the heritage that we call culture’. This concern with beliefs, codes, knowledge and ideology helps to guide the analysis of the evolution of ideas within institutions, and also of the different ‘institutional cultures’ embedded in different parts of the Commission or the Council, i.e. the ‘local rationalities’ mentioned above. The distinction helps to understand why, despite changes in formal rules, old practices and interpretative filters remain. It is therefore pertinent to use this distinction between formal and informal rules as a guide to the study of this policy area. Let us look at ‘formal’ rules first.

2. 1. Formal institutions

The setting up of the ‘formal’ institutions which constitute the framework of the CAP was created in a series of ‘history making decisions’ which set out the constraints and opportunities within which agriculture would be subsequently managed at the Community level. North explains that rules are organized hierarchically, and vary from a general level, at which he locates constitutions (the Treaty of Rome in this case), to specific regulations and contracts. The higher up in the hierarchy, the more costly it becomes to alter these rules, because other sets of

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13 North, *Institutions*, p. 3.
rules depend on them, which explains why changes are more likely to occur at the margins (re-contracting under the same framework) than at the level of general principles. The Treaty of Rome, where the objectives of the CAP were set out, and the Budget Treaty of 1970, which established its funding with the Community’s ‘own resources’, rank high in the hierarchy of rules which constitute the CAP system of ‘governance’. As such, they proved very resistant to reform in the course of the two enlargements studied here, as will be explained below.

At the next level down the hierarchy of rules, the Agricultural Code of 1962 specified that the key instruments for the implementation of the CAP were to be guaranteed prices and Community Preference, marginalizing the option of structural measures, which largely remained under the control of national authorities. These decisions, designed to promote self-sufficiency and cushion farmers from ‘market failures’, were based on a tight equilibrium and consensus among the Six, which reflected the ideas, goals and relative power of the existing players. But what is important here is that, as they were being struck, these bargains became the framework for subsequent decisions, and triggered the creation of further and more detailed rules and organizations to put this policy into practice (the ‘constitutionalization’ of international treaties). This triggered the establishment of the various commodity markets from 1962 to 1969, constituted by a myriad of regulations and directives for implementation. Over time, this institutional level has experienced the highest rate of change, as actors have had to adapt to exogenous changes, like variations in world prices and production. Most of the changes brought by enlargement (which can also be seen as an exogenous factor) took place at this level, leaving the principles of the CAP intact.

In the British case, the Community agreed to a series of specific changes, like quotas for New Zealand products and sugar from the Caribbean, but rejected an outright revision of the principles (increase production, maintain farmer’s incomes) and instruments (guaranteed prices, community preference) of the CAP, which Britain openly questioned. Equally, the unfavourable British position with regard to the budget was corrected by devising a ‘special mechanism’ which applied only to its particular case, instead of revising the overall budgetary arrangements, from which Britain had been excluded and which were actually the origin of the problem. It is worth noting here, that this rebate was negotiated after Britain had joined the EC and its bargaining power had increased substantially. In contrast to the previous position of negotiating with the Community from ‘outside’, not only did Britain now have the capacity of using its veto, but it even envisaged the prospects of leaving the Community, as the re-negotiations and referendum in 1975 under Wilson show. However, not even from the new and more powerful position as full member of the EC could Britain obtain a substantial modification to either of the two kinds of
problems raised by its accession, because they would have entailed a substantial revision of the two sets of interlocking rules, establishing the nature of the agricultural *acquis communautaire* and its link with the budget, at the highest level.

Similarly, the Spanish accession triggered a series of revisions and changes in the regulations and directives concerning Mediterranean products (wine, olive oil, fruits and vegetables), which eventually resulted in the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs). These programmes were called ‘integrated’ because they contained both guarantee and guidance measures.\(^\text{16}\) Although the use of this previously marginalized policy instrument reflected the prevalent concern at the time to curb spending, it did not challenge the fundamental idea that agriculture ought to be subsidized, or the way in which the Community obtained its ‘own resources’. Moreover, what is astonishing in this case is that, even under the most severe budgetary pressure, with FEOGA (*Fond Européen d’Orientation et Garantie Agricole*) spending approaching the budget ceiling since 1980, and the additional pressure for reform brought by the prospects of incorporating Spain, neither the Commission nor the Council did anything radical to cut CAP spending. Instead, at Fontainebleau, the European Council agreed to add a further 5 billion ECU to the budget, by means of raising the VAT based levy on member states, and to accept a re-negotiated ‘British rebate’.\(^\text{17}\) These ‘changes at the margins’ or ‘re-contracting within the same broad framework’ did not really tackle the underlying problem of overproduction, and by 1987, the Community found itself facing exactly the same problem: the exhaustion of ‘own resources’.\(^\text{18}\) Moreover, had the problems of the first enlargement been addressed fully, the second one would not have faced so many obstacles: one of the main causes delaying the Spanish accession was precisely the row about the British rebate.

Therefore, these two cases of accession negotiations were not only similar in the sense that they challenged the CAP and its tight budgetary arrangements, but also in the way in which this challenge was met: by introducing the minimum of change needed to meet new conditions. Incrementalism, that is the continuation of past policies by making minor adjustments, is what seemed to prevail, not ‘rational policy-making’.\(^\text{19}\) As Gardner noted, for the external observer the technical rational solution to the problem of CAP overspending was simple: since the expensive

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surpluses were caused by a ‘fundamentally inappropriate policy’, all that was needed to solve the problem was to change the policy. However, this has not been the case, and the persistence of this set of institutions, despite their poor performance and the pressure for change brought by these two enlargements, is what needs to be explained. Here, historical new institutionalism can offer several valuable insights.

The first one is path dependency. The existence of previous rules and regulations in a given policy area favours what Helen Wallace has called a ‘reactive’ approach to policy-making on the part of all actors, including the Commission. In other policy areas, an ‘active’ style of policy-making (in the sense of introducing new ideas) is necessary, given the absence of a corpus of previous policies. But the CAP, being one of the eldest common policies, the agricultural acquis was already by 1969 very large, technical and detailed, so change has proved to be only ‘incremental’, with the member states and the Commission becoming prisoners of their own policies, and predisposed to marginal adjustment rather than radical change. Duchêne explained that for the case of the Spanish negotiations, ‘the outstanding characteristic of the agricultural policies of the Nine, either nationally or expressed through the Community, is their inflexibility. This is the real problem, technical and political, of the enlargement of the Community.’

A second insight brought by the institutionalist perspective is that, although the institutional constraints may not be efficient, and some actors like Britain might have incentives to restructure them, the same set of institutions can reflect ‘as efficient a bargain as possible’ for the other actors to achieve other goals, in this case, the Six, who did not share Britain’s fundamental objections to the CAP. Third, interest and power are also determined by institutions. North argues that, in a world of zero transaction costs, ‘history would not matter; a change in relative prices or preferences would induce an immediate restructuring of institutions to adjust efficiently.’ But, for a number of reasons, ranging from the way in which the mind processes information, to transaction costs and imperfect feedback, it is previously existing institutions which determine power relations, perceptions, preferences, and strategies of actors. To put it on more concrete terms, one needs to look at institutional constraints to understand why France, the West German Minister of Agriculture, or indeed DG VI ‘thought it was in their interest’ to maintain the CAP as it stood, notwithstanding all the signs which pointed to its malfunctioning.

23 North, Institutions, p. 93.
expressed in surpluses and rows about the budget. Furthermore, the institutional constraints, like decision-making procedures, also shape the way in which power is distributed among actors, (in terms of access, veto points) and thus whose ideas and preferences prevail in a bargain. But before turning to analyze these issues it is necessary to make a few observations about the nature and role of ‘informal’ rules.

2. 2. Informal rules

First, these rules are not a mere complement to formal constraints. These ‘cultural filters’ are important in themselves, since they constitute a major source of continuity in behaviour, even after significant changes in formal rules have taken place.\(^\text{24}\) Second, and more importantly, informal constraints highlight the fact that the ‘logic of appropriateness’ rather than of ‘maximizing’ seems to be what determines the choice set faced by actors. This line of inquiry has been expanded by the literature on ‘administrative cultures’ and ‘policy styles’.\(^\text{25}\) For example, the position of the French minister for agriculture with regard to CAP reform in the face of British or Spanish accessions was not only determined by his bargaining power at the Council (veto), or the French ‘national interest’ (however defined), but also by past decisions, routines, codes, interpretative frameworks, and a subjective preference for a dirigiste policy style on the part of French public administration. Without an analysis of the role of ideas and ideologies, it seems almost impossible to understand why individuals and organizations do not follow the ‘most rational’ course of action (as perceived by the external observer) and instead, struggle to maintain a system which, downstream, is producing negative outcomes. These ‘lock in’ situations can be explained by the role of ‘informal’ rules, yet, new institutionalists recognize the limits when trying to analyze them.\(^\text{26}\)

Beliefs and ideas are difficult to identify most of the time, and our knowledge of the workings of the mind is still limited, so it is easier to find empirical evidence for the role of ‘formal’ institutions and their effects on outcomes. However, the study of formal rules alone (Treaty of Rome, Agricultural Code, etc.) would not be sufficient to understand institutional change and make sense out of history, so several approaches have been devised to tackle this problem.

North’s own view, ‘to examine empirically the costs of expressing convictions’, can be useful: if such costs are low, then subjective preferences have a great input in determining choices. For example, the Commission paid a high cost, after the ‘empty

\(^{\text{24}}\) North, *Institutions*, p. 36


chair crisis’ of 1965, for expressing ‘its own’ views about the budget and the role of the European Assembly, which were contrary to those of a powerful member state, France. What this episode showed is that it is costly for the Commission to have a ‘subjective’ or ‘independent’ point of view from those of the member states, while the latter’s subjective preferences have a lot more impact in policy choices. Furthermore, from the Luxembourg Compromise onwards, there seemed to be an informal rule developing in the interactions between the Commission and the Council, by which the former would not even think about formulating a proposal that it knew in advance would be rejected by the Council. This dynamic accounts for the ‘shyness’ of the Commission in its proposals to reform the CAP during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Finally, the emergence of this informal rule in the decision-making process, reveals the importance of the role of adaptive behaviour and learning of actors in rule creation and change. Another example of this is the frequent horse trading that occurs in the Council, as ministers have learnt over time that expressing a ‘subjective’ preference through the use of the veto can be more costly than is implied by the formal decision-making rules. The so called ‘feedbacks’, and ‘reality checks’ which individuals and organizations receive as a result of their interaction with their environment lead to the formulation of new strategies, attitudes, beliefs. So informal rules are also a source of change, not only of continuity.

So far, the analysis has concentrated on rules and norms, but cannot go further without turning the focus to the actors, defined as the organizations which interact with the above described institutional framework. And here, North’s historical institutionalist theory can be complemented by other ‘meso-level’ approaches, which are more adequate for the operationalization of variables like ‘administrative culture’ and facilitate empirical research. Organizational theories and the recent literature on ‘policy networks’ and ‘policy communities’ have more precise instruments for the study of specific policy areas and concrete decisions, as well as the understanding of the actors’ preferences and behaviour.

3. The European agricultural policy community

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27 According to Ludlow, ‘even the most ambitious Commissioners have always been exceedingly cautious about going over the heads of member-state governments’, Peter Ludlow, ‘The European Commission’ in Keohane and Hoffmann, The New European Community, p. 102.

The ‘policy network’ model as developed by Marsh and Rhodes offers particular advantages in the study of change and continuity in policy-making, because it works with three sets of variables which are clearly identifiable: membership, interactions and resources. By looking at these elements inside a policy network, it is possible to classify the way in which interest intermediation occurs between private and public actors, as well as national and supranational ones, in the agricultural sector. This is important because not all policy areas are configured in the same way. While some may be pluralistic (like technology) others may exhibit some corporatist tendencies (like agriculture), and this difference largely accounts for particular policy outcomes and the extent to which policy changes. According to Marsh and Rhodes’ typology, policy networks can vary from tightly integrated ‘policy communities’, where such ‘corporatist’ tendencies are visible, to loosely linked ‘issue networks’, at the other end of the spectrum. The model is summarized in the table below.

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30 See Jeremy Richardson, ‘Policy-making in the EU: Interests, ideas and garbage cans of primeval soup’, in Richardson, European Union, p. 10.

31 Taken from the table 11.1, which summarizes the model. David Marsh and R. A. W. Rhodes, ‘Policy Communities and Issue Networks: Beyond Typology’ in Marsh and Rhodes, Policy Networks, p. 251.
Two ideal types of policy networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Policy Community</th>
<th>Issue Network</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Membership:</strong></td>
<td>- Small and closed</td>
<td>- Large and open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Permeability</td>
<td>- Economic and/or professional interest dominate</td>
<td>- All interests affected</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Type of interest</td>
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<td><strong>2. Interactions:</strong></td>
<td>- High and intense</td>
<td>- Low and irregular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Frequency</td>
<td>- Membership, values and outcomes persist over time</td>
<td>- Access fluctuates significantly</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Continuity</td>
<td>- All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome</td>
<td>- Some agreement exists, but conflict is ever present</td>
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<td>- Consensus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Resources:</strong></td>
<td>- All members have resources. Relationship is of exchange.</td>
<td>- Some participants may have some resources, but they are limited, and basic relationship is consultative</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Distribution within network</td>
<td>- Hierarchical</td>
<td>- Varied and variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distribution within participating organizations</td>
<td>- Positive-sum if community is to persist</td>
<td>- Zero-sum as a result of unequal access and resources</td>
</tr>
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The rest of this paper argues that the European agricultural policy network exhibits all the characteristics of a policy community, and that this is crucial to understand why reform is so difficult in this sector. Through restricted and stable membership, which ensures ideological consensus among the actors inside the community, a ‘local rationality’ has developed which excludes radical ideas about reform and the actors who uphold such views. The structural dependencies between the actors of this community tend to reinforce such consensus and exclusion.

**3. 1. Membership and the ‘mobilization of bias’**

The first question to address when analyzing a policy network is: who has an interest in this policy problem? The fact that we all need food to survive means that, theoretically, everyone has an interest in this policy area, and its centrality in the economic structure further links it to a number of other sectors. However, not all the actors who have an interest are mobilized and represented in the decision-making process. The ‘mobilization of bias’, that is, the way in which institutions structure conflict and distribute power unequally among actors by giving them different degrees of access to the policy process is one of the main concerns of ‘new institutionalist’ literature as well as a central concept in policy network analysis. This is why Smith distinguished between the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ circles of a policy

It could be said that consumers, taxpayers, environmental groups, and the applicant countries belong to the ‘attentive public’ or ‘outer circle’ of the European agricultural policy community, in the sense that their access to the decision-making process is limited and sporadic, although they are potential ‘stake-holders’ in the policy outcomes. In contrast, the ‘inner circle’ is limited to those actors who participate regularly in the formulation and implementation of the policy. Who are they? First, there are the national governments, more precisely, national ministries of agriculture, represented in the final decision-making body which is the CAM, where they have a veto point. All of them have close relationships with their national farm organizations and see it as their role to win the best possible deal for their own farmers. Their attitude partly accounts for the rapid rise in the cost of the CAP in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Second is DG VI of the Commission which is in charge of the formulation of CAP proposals as well as of their implementation, and therefore has a major interest in the development of this important policy. It has been argued that DG VI resembles a ministry of agriculture in its size and operations: it is, today, the second largest DG, it has over 5000 staff spread across eleven administrative units to address the full range of agricultural policy issues, from managing the various commodity markets, to international trade. O’Hagan explains that, the burden of managing such a complicated policy as the CAP has made DGVI partly responsible for the incremental policy-making in the sector, and its routinized procedures are behind DG VI’s reputation for conservatism.\footnote{O’Hagan, \textit{EU Agricultural Policy Making}, p. 253.}

Last, but not least, there are the producers, organized in associations or lobbies which can be articulated at local, national, or transnational level through COPA (Comité des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles des Pays de la Communauté Economique Européenne), the umbrella organization which groups most European agricultural associations. The monopoly of farm representation through COPA was intended to spare the Commission from having to wrangle between conflicting agricultural interests, by subsuming and aggregating their enormous diversity under a single voice.\footnote{Jean Meynaud and Dusan Sidjanski, \textit{Les groupes de pression dans la Communauté Européenne, 1958-1968: structure et action des organisations professionnelles}, Brussels, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Institut}
interest intermediation are among the fundamental characteristics of corporatism, as defined by Schmitter. And in terms of the Marsh and Rhodes model, they are one of the most common ways of restricting membership of, and access to, a tight policy community. Limiting access, also reduces the number and nature of demands on the system, making outcomes more predictable. It is therefore a primary source of policy inertia.

As many experts have repeatedly explained, the point about representation through interest groups is that it is largely government sponsored or, at least encouraged, because the latter needs to consult the interests affected and involved by its decisions. The fact that governments have traditionally intervened in agricultural markets, and become the ‘paymasters’ of the industry, has made farmers’ associations powerful, particularly because their cooperation is indispensable at the formulation and implementation stages. This relationship is reproduced at the European level in a larger scale, where DG VI of the Commission, despite its size, is still understaffed if compared to national ministries. In this way, the high degree of mobilization of farmers at the European level is not only due to the fact that their incomes depend directly on the decisions taken in Brussels, but also because EC authorities need. This is both a result and a reinforcement of the fact that, at the national level, the farming sector in each of the member states exhibits an unusual degree of organization when compared to other sectors, and farmers have tended to capitalize on their electoral significance as well as on their capacity to mobilize their members and take them onto the streets if necessary.

A common feature of this kind of interest intermediation is the division between elites and lay members inside the associations. Many organizational studies, since Michels famous ‘iron law of oligarchies’, have pointed out that elites must behave in a way which encourages government officials to believe ‘they are worth listening to’. Therefore, they must have the technical knowledge and information, and appear to be moderate and sensible. Moreover, they have to be rich enough to put aside the necessary time and work away from their farms. In this way, elites differ sharply

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from the apathy and technical incompetence of most ordinary members. The hierarchy inside farmers’ organizations, and, collectively, among them when they are grouped in COPA, accounts for the CAP’s ‘perverse’ distribution of resources: the Commission has estimated that 80% of CAP expenditure goes to 20% of farmers.\footnote{Rieger, ‘The CAP’, p. 112.}

It is clear that the membership of this policy network has been reduced (to DG VI, the CAM and producers organizations) and stable over time (in the sense that no new actors have been included), both of which are characteristic of ‘policy communities’ as defined by Marsh and Rhodes. More important, all these actors seemed to share an ‘ideology’, that is a set of common beliefs and views about the goals of the CAP. Whether one talked of ministers of agriculture, farmers’ association representatives, or Commission staff from DG VI, the idea that the EC should intervene in agriculture to provide price support and to encourage increased production was omnipresent. In this way, the issue of change, when faced by those within the European agricultural community, was not about whether agriculture should be subsidized, but how, to what extent, and whether such subsidies should take the form of guidance measures instead of guaranteed prices.

The next issue which needs attention when studying a policy community is the way in which it deals with those interests which are affected by its actions, but kept outside its boundaries. As noted above, the role of consumer associations has been practically non existent since the creation of the CAP. The ‘under-representation’ of consumers is one of the main reasons why objective e) of the CAP (reasonable prices for consumers) has always been ignored in favour objective b) which is ensuring a fair standard of living for the ‘over represented’ producers.\footnote{The objectives of the CAP were set out in the Rome Treaty, Art. 39 (1).} The exclusion of consumers, who could be envisaged as the ‘natural enemies’ of producers, can be explained in three main ways. First, as Meynaud and Sidjanski noted, EC institutions and activities are built in a way to emphasize production, and the exclusion of consumers is not unique to the agricultural sector, but can be found in most other areas, despite the efforts of the Commission to help them organize and to have them represented.\footnote{Meynaud and Sidjansky, Les groupes de pression dans la CE, pp. 349-381.} Second, the complexity and technicality of the rules which operate in the agricultural sector ensure that those actors (individuals or organizations) who lack the specialized knowledge to discuss the agricultural \textit{acquis} are excluded. The depolitization of the issue, by breaking it down to very technical details discourages participation from outsiders, and automatically reduces their demand for
representation in the policy process. The average European consumer is not aware of the detailed workings of the CAP and, therefore, finds it difficult to articulate his or her interest in the terms and language defined by the policy. Third, in contrast to farmers’ interest groups, consumer associations lack resources of their own and the capability to mobilize members and ‘take to the streets’. In addition they have to monitor a very large number of policy areas apart from agriculture, which is, on its own, very demanding in terms of specialized personnel required. Their actions tend to be dispersed, and their power diffused by such constraints. Furthermore, the Comité de Contact des Consommateurs de la Communauté Européenne (CCCCE) which is the umbrella organization representing consumers at the EC level, has complained about not being consulted at the stage of policy formulation, but only at an advanced stage, after the essential principles of a proposal have been set up, which reduces their influence. In this way, the informal rules about consultation, which are part of CAP institutions, contribute to the exclusion of consumer views.

If the Community’s consumers are excluded from the policy process, what room is there left for the accommodation of the applicant countries, or third parties? Not much. In the British case, Commonwealth sugar producers often complained that they ‘did not have votes to set against the power of the beet sugar lobby in France’, which advocated the strictest application of the ‘Community preference’ principle to their detriment, via the French agriculture minister in the CAM. Spanish interest groups were also excluded from the process of reforming the acquis for wine, olive oil and fisheries, the central issues of the negotiations. The way in which accession negotiations are conducted tends to favour existing member states’ interests over those of the applicants, with the result that the crux of enlargement negotiations tends to concentrate in formulating the ‘Community position’ (negotiations among existing members and their and sub-national components) rather than on negotiations between the Community and the applicant. In both cases, the negotiations with the applicants on these important areas for them took place during ‘marathon sessions’, with the deadline for conclusion looming dangerously close. This put the applicants in a ‘take it or leave it’ situation in which the Community could resist changing its position, itself, the result of a laborious compromise.

At this point it is interesting to note that this observation challenges one of the most common assumptions of bargaining theory: in a negotiation between an individual and a group, the individual has an advantage, being able to play on

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42 Meynaud and Sidjansky, Les groupes de pression dans la CE, p. 361
divisions within the group. But in these cases, given that the Community comes to
the negotiating table with an already established ‘common position’, it is difficult for
the applicant to reshape the established coalition, which has settled for a particular
bargain, leaving him with little room for maneuvering and obtaining concessions.\textsuperscript{44}
The Commission had been clear on this point in its 1967 Opinion about British entry.
The opening paragraph of the section on agriculture reads: ‘This policy is the result
of long and difficult negotiations.... Any calling into question of the essential features
of this policy upon the accession of new members is therefore ruled out’.\textsuperscript{45}

One of the main consequences of this process is that the applicant eventually pays
most of the costs of adaptation, while the existing members manage to minimize
their prospective costs during the process of negotiating the common position (e. g.
elaborating the Mediterranean \textit{acquis} before presenting the common position in fruits
and vegetables to Spain). As a consequence, once in, the new members attempt to re-
agree the most unfavourable terms of their accession which they could not
modify from outside: this was the case for Britain and the budget rebate. So the fact
that a state attempts to re-negotiate its terms of entry once it has become a full
member is an indicator of the previous exclusion of its interests in accession
negotiations.

Another actor which is kept at the sidelines of the agricultural policy community is
the Council of Finance Ministers (CFM), which is in charge of approving the budget.
Finance ministers, could be seen, like consumers, as the ‘natural enemies’ of the
highly subsidized and privileged agricultural policy community. The fact that they
have to approve the budget means that, in principle, EC institutions empower them
to question projects and to reduce expenditure. At the domestic level, as Wilson
explained in the British case before joining the EC, the process of coordination
between policy areas in Whitehall was the equivalent of a system of checks and
balances which ensured that there was a limit to farmers associations’ influence in
policy outcomes. In Britain, the Treasury had been a possible brake on any policy
that cost more money to the taxpayer.\textsuperscript{46} However, the addition of the EC
institutional level in the decision-making structure has reduced the role of the
national budgetary constraint. For all member states, membership of the EC meant
that national controls of agricultural expenditure were almost eliminated because
prices were now determined by the CAM. So, even if there is pressure from national
 treasuries that the agriculture minister should resist an increase in prices, the formal

\textsuperscript{44} I must thank Prof. Guy Peters for pointing this out.
\textsuperscript{45} CEC, ‘1967 Opinion’, § 53.
\textsuperscript{46} Wilson, \textit{Special Interests and Policymaking}, p. 48.
and informal rules inside the CAM indicate that if he finds himself in a minority of one, there is very little he can do.\textsuperscript{47}

Furthermore, the vertical divisions in EC institutions mentioned above combined with the insufficient horizontal coordination mechanisms have contributed to the institutional insulation of this policy community from finance ministers. As explained above, the existence of the SCA as separate from COREPER, is an example of such insulation from horizontal coordination with other areas. This is accentuated by the fact that agricultural guarantee spending, which is the largest item in the budget, is part of the Community’s legal commitments. This has greatly reduced the moderating role that the CFM or the EP (whose budgetary competences have increased since 1975) could have played as checks on agricultural spending, despite the fact that they are called into the policy process by means of the annual budgetary cycle.\textsuperscript{48}

The major consequence of excluding those individuals or groups who disagree with the way in which the CAP is run, is that there is naturally a clear consensus inside the policy community which reinforces the common ideology. The consensus and the technical rationality of the policy support the actors’ belief that there is only one possible agricultural policy. The next question which needs to be addressed is how the existence of such a closed community is maintained. Marsh and Rhodes suggest that here, it is necessary to look at the way in which actors relate to each other, and whether their resource exchanges produce positive outcomes for all, since this would constitute the main incentive to keep the system as it stands. This is the subject of the following section.

\textbf{3. 2. Interactions: resource exchanges and structural dependencies}

The first element which has to be taken into account when analyzing the peculiar way in which the actors of the agricultural policy community exchange resources is the framework which structures such exchanges.\textsuperscript{49} The CAP framework, as Harrison argues, ‘represents a distortion of original EU principles’.\textsuperscript{50} It ignores the general

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{47} Smith, ‘The Agricultural Policy Community’, p. 31.
    \item \textsuperscript{49} Following Marsh and Rhodes, the present analysis focuses on structural resource dependencies rather than in personal relationships between individuals, as suggested by the alternative model developed by Wilks and Wright; see Stephen R. M. Wilks and Maurice Wright, \textit{Comparative Government-Industry Relations: Western Europe, the United States and Japan}, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987.
    \item \textsuperscript{50} David Harrison, ‘The division of labour and the division of Europe: extending western economic integration to Eastern Europe’, Seminar at St Antony’s College, Oxford, 25 November, 1997, mimeo, p. 27.
\end{itemize}
preference for market mechanisms for the allocation of resources in favour of public financial intervention with redistributional purposes. Prices are not set according to supply and demand only, but are decided by public authorities on the grounds of a socio-political objective: to ‘ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community’. This is important because it suggests why this policy sector has promoted ‘rent-seeking’ behaviour on the part of actors and produced inefficient outcomes downstream. For this reason, Rieger has insisted that the CAP is ‘a self contained world’ which cannot be judged on purely economic criteria of rationality or efficiency.51

Not only did the management of an interventionist CAP require a higher degree of centralization in the decision-making process than in other areas, but also, it needed a pool of resources to pay for it. The introduction of a common guaranteed price for the Six implied a centralization of decision-making in the Commission and the Council of Ministers. These bodies are always susceptible to being influenced by the plethora of organizations that surround them, as they provide vital information for drafting policies and help in their implementation. The interventionist nature of the CAP is therefore at the origin of the way in which actors inside this policy community (DG VI, the CAM and producers’ associations) relate to each other.

The timing and nature of the involvement of farmers’ interest groups in the policy process has increased with respect to their previous position in purely national settings, because the EC institutional layer has provided more ‘access points’ to the decision-making process.52 First, in the consultation phase through the ‘commitology’ procedure, farmers’ associations have direct access to Commission officials and thus influence proposals by providing information and maintaining a permanent contact. COPA, indeed, has ‘constitutional rights’ of consultation in the policy-formulating process, and the leader of COPA, meets with the Commissioner of DG VI every four to six weeks.53 The Commission itself encouraged the unifying of agricultural interest groups into COPA at the European level, at the Stressa conference, and has subsequently tried to channel all contacts through it, because this simplifies the consultative process.54 This organization is thus a key player in the

agenda-setting and it has performed as a ‘sounding board for the Commission on which it could test its proposals’.

During the second phase of the policy process, inside DG VI where the proposals are discussed and drafted, the internal politics of this DG, which is composed of civil servants who are appointed by their national governments, are likely to produce a series of pressures which will contribute to determining the shape of the proposals. Therefore, in the ‘drafting’ phase, the influence of agricultural lobbies is felt through their contacts with personnel in the Commission. Influence through connationals inside the Commission is not unheard of, despite the normative convention that they are supposed to pursue only ‘European’ interests. Moreover, given the high degree of technical specialization, there seems to be considerable job mobility for individuals from posts in farmers associations to work in the national ministries of agriculture and DG VI, which is an additional source of personal contacts among the three sets of organizations inside this policy community.

When defending a distinctively national agricultural interest the influence of these groups also depends on how much pressure they can put on their own governments at home. It is vital to have a voice in national domestic politics, in order to make governments defend their sectoral interests at the European level. This is done through their representatives in the SCA and the CAM, where Commission proposals are discussed, and approved or rejected. In most cases, as will be explained below in more detail, there is a close policy community at the national level which defines private/public partnerships which then work for the defense of the national agricultural interests at the European level. Many of these associations also participate in the last part of the policy process, implementation, and in doing so, they further interact with national public administrations.

Summing up, the organizations which represent the agricultural producers intervene at all the stages of the policy process, from consultation to implementation. In the consultation phase they lobby the Commission directly, through COPA. In the other phases, they lobby indirectly, through personal contacts or their national governments and their representatives in Brussels in the SCA and the CAM. The fact that this is an interventionist policy means that public authorities (both the Commission and the national ministries for agriculture) cannot work in this area

56 Greenwood and Jordan, ‘The United Kingdom’, p. 81. At this stage of the policy process, individuals and informal rules, rather than structural dependencies seem to have great incidence on outcomes, as suggested by Wilks and Wright.
57 The importance of this links is evidenced by Danish and Dutch efforts to get their appointees in DG VI, as mentioned below.
without two precious resources which the farmers’ associations possess: detailed and specialized information, and the organizational infrastructure for implementation and political control. There is a clear ‘structural dependency’ on farmers associations on the part of DG VI of the Commission and national agricultural ministries, which has resulted in the creation of another informal rule: there is a tacit understanding that the Commission and the CAM propose and agree only on what is acceptable for COPA.\footnote{58} In North’s terms, this informal rule reflects the fact that it is costly for DG VI or the CAM to express ‘independent’ preferences from those of producers, given the crucial role played by farmers associations in formulating and implementing agricultural policy. This coincides with Marsh and Rhodes’ view that the key resources which give interest groups privileged access to the decision-making process are economic position and specialized knowledge. In this way producers and professional groups are consulted and incorporated, and they dominate the policy community, keeping it closed to outsiders.\footnote{59}

However, as mentioned before, farmers are also dependent on public authorities for their incomes, and this makes them ‘structurally dependent’ on the Commission and their respective ministries of agriculture who defend them in the CAM. Their dependence on each other for precious resources explains the ‘symbiotic’ nature of their relationship as well as their persistence and stability. The symbiosis is such, that the roles of actors appear to have been reversed. The elites of farmers associations ‘sell’ to their members the agricultural policy decided by the authorities, and use their organizational capacity to exercise political control. On the other hand, ministers of agriculture voice farmers’ demands and concerns and fiercely defend their interests, while DG VI of the Commission ‘sees its role as that of farm support organization’.\footnote{60} This confusion of roles is possible because there is an underlying ideological consensus among the actors, which also facilitates job mobility among the three kinds of organizations (national ministries, DG VI and farmers associations) and the perpetuation of a semi-corporatist relationship.

Stability is also explained by the fact that the CAP, one of the EC’s oldest policies, requires at least an annual review of prices. Over time, this has made relations between the groups highly stable and institutionalized in regular meetings and informal events. The above mentioned meetings of COPA with DG VI are but one example of routinized interactions. This stability is an uncommon feature in other EC policy areas, where, according to Richardson and others, uncertainty prevails and

\footnote{58} According to Gardner, this is visible in the unpublished Commission and Council working group papers between 1978 and 1984 to which he had access. Gardner, ‘The CAP: The Political Obstacle to Reform’, p. 171.
\footnote{59} See Marsh and Rhodes, ‘Beyond Typology’, p. 257.
\footnote{60} Smith, ‘The Agricultural Policy Community’, p. 31.
the rules of the game are still disputed.\textsuperscript{61} Needless to say that such stability, which results from heavily routinized relationships explains both the incremental nature of policy-making, and widespread resistance to change, as noted above.

3. 3 National policy networks

To gain a better understanding of how the agricultural policy network functions, it is indispensable to make a brief overview of the national networks, particularly those of France and Germany, as they have an enormous influence in determining common policy outcomes. By examining the main national farmers’ organizations and their relations with the public authorities of the member states, the importance of their links to the EC policy process will become clear. This is significant because the degree to which particular national interests influence the Commission or are defended by governments in the SCA or the Council of Ministers varies considerably from one country to another, and in some cases this is true even between regions. Although the CAP is about transnational coalitions and supranational decision-making, it still remains strongly related to the internal problems of the member countries and to the domestic political control of agrarian interest groups.\textsuperscript{62}

3. 3. 1. Germany

Kohler-Koch explains that, in Germany, the greatest distortion in the structure of interest representation resides in the farming community. As in other member countries of the EC, the influence of German agricultural interests is out of proportion to farmers’ negligible economic contribution to GNP (about 1.7%). Like in most EC members, German farmers are highly organized and mobilized, because their incomes and sometimes even their existence depend on the regulations on prices, subsidies and production quotas.\textsuperscript{63}

A peculiar characteristic of the German agricultural associations is that, in contrast to associations in other sectors, their structure is very decentralized. The \textit{Deutscher Bauernverband} is a federation of regional agricultural associations. Their preferred channel of access to public authorities is through the \textit{Länder}, which is a mechanism favoured by the federal structure of the Republic. Elections take place every year in the \textit{Länder}, and in some, like Bavaria, agricultural issues are far more important than at the federal level. In that region, the agricultural vote is virtually monopolized by

\textsuperscript{61} Richardson, ‘Policy-making’, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{63} Kohler-Koch, ‘Germany’, p. 43.
the Liberals and Christian Democrats, which is an important point, especially when Germany has been governed by right wing coalitions. As a result the CSU has been in charge of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for many years, one of the few German ministries to be ‘captured’ by interest groups. Its position has become ‘strong enough to overrule competing interests, like budgetary stability propagated by the Ministry of Finance, or trade liberalization by the Ministry of Economics’.64 This is particularly revealing about the over-representation of farmers in the German political system, especially if we take into account the fact that with the exceptions of agriculture and insurance, all other economic interest organizations are in favour of an open market economy, free trade and private enterprise. The situation is exacerbated because of the decentralized, compartmentalized and not always well coordinated nature of the administrative structure of the Federal Republic, which can make the German voice in Brussels sound somewhat ‘polyphonic’.65

Moreover, the German associations provide considerable more expert knowledge to the Commission, when compared to their European partner organizations. They are well staffed, have at their disposal considerable budgets, and their internal information and communication systems are well organized. For all these reasons, German farming interests are rarely neglected by EC policies, and their influence is considerable and visible.66 German farmers are among those who have benefited most from the CAP, and they have been responsible for the high levels of some guaranteed commodity prices, like milk and cereals, as well as for the use of certain policy instruments instead of others.67 Yet, without external support, German agricultural interests would not be so powerful abroad and at home, for a minority position at home can more easily be offset if there is a consensus with the French farmer’s position, for example, in opposing a cut in subsidies.68 Many associations in other member states have also discovered this strategy and used it extensively.

It is important to stress both the power and the degree of insulation that farmers have achieved in the German political system, and by extension, German EU policy, because it is often assumed that Germany, as the main contributor to the EC budget, is always ready to push for limits to CAP spending. However, the reality is much

67 Germany has resisted the turn towards the use of more structural measures in the CAP, because these are still in the hands of the national and regional administrations; and since they involve direct payments, they are important for the maintainance of clientelistic relations between private and public actors; see See Neville Rolfe, The Politics of Agriculture, p. 90.
68 Kohler-Koch, ‘Germany’, p. 44.
more complicated than that, and the behaviour of the German Minister of Agriculture has never supported this assumption, single-mindedly defending agricultural interests independently of the federal government’s policy line on the budget issue.\textsuperscript{69} In this way, it is possible to argue that the fight for CAP reform to cut expenditure, is to a great extent a German domestic conflict, and not a mere intergovernmental fight between the Northern contributors and the Southern recipients, as it is often portrayed. Actually, an intergovernmentalist perspective would assume that German (or any other member’s) EC policy is coherent across policy areas, and that inter-ministerial conflicts are ironed out domestically before reaching the EC level of decision-making. However, it is precisely the fact that this inter-sectoral conflict remains unsolved at the domestic level in Germany, as well as in other members, which accounts for the intractability of CAP reform.

3.3.2. France

Until recently, not many pressure groups were active in France: the state has traditionally claimed a monopoly of interest representation. In France, EC lobbying was thus something that concerned first of all the State, because in foreign affairs, a centralized executive administration discourages any attempts at ‘parallel diplomacy’, which would be regarded as a threat to the unity of the state and the indivisibility of sovereignty.\textsuperscript{70} This unitary style of diplomacy, which is closer to the intergovernmentalist view of the state as ‘gate-keeper’, may explain why, in the case of the Spanish accession, the French delegation expressed its concerns about the implications for its agricultural sector outside the CAM (for example in the Council of Foreign Ministers or the European Council), in contrast to the Germans or the Italians, who shared the same concerns, but limited the treatment of these issues to the CAM. In this way, French agricultural interests are ‘louder’ or more visible than German ones at the EC level, because they get incorporated in the state’s unitary style of foreign policy, instead of being dissimulated by a more fragmented diplomatic structure.

This is why, the first two years of delays during the Spanish negotiations were interpreted by many as inspired by French domestic concerns, and the outraged and impatient Spanish press increasingly depicted French farmers as the ‘villains of the story’. However, although France showed the strongest opposition, similar


objections were observable in the attitudes of other governments.\textsuperscript{71} And as Ambassador Bassols soon discovered, although the other European countries tried to appear scandalized by the French attitude, which took the blame for the delays and pauses, the other European governments quietly welcomed them, as all had worries about some aspect related to the Spanish entry.\textsuperscript{72}

Nevertheless, this unitary picture of French EC policy-making needs to be qualified, since the Ministry of Agriculture, one of the most experienced in dealing with EC affairs, has managed to maintain more autonomy than other ministries in the face of internal coordination procedures. It has its own Bureau des Affaires Juridiques Européennes, in contrast to all other ministries which, for specialized knowledge on legal matters, depend on the Quai d’Orsay or the SGCI (Secrétariat Général du Comité Interministériel pour les questions de coopération économique européenne), which are in charge of coordinating French EC policy. At the French PR in Brussels, which is another key body in charge of coordination, there is a special Délégué pour les Affaires Agricoles, who is in regular contact with his ministry. In this way, the Ministry of Agriculture enjoys the privilege of not having to go through the SGCI to send instructions to the French PR.\textsuperscript{73} At a general level, the capacity of the SGCI to coordinate policy has also varied over time. In the period between 1981 and 1984, when the Spanish accession negotiations were paralyzed, the SGCI had been put under the authority of the Minister Delegate for European Affairs (instead of the Prime Minister) with the effect of turning French positions in Brussels unusually inconsistent.\textsuperscript{74} The insulation of the agricultural policy community in France, although not so strong as in Germany, reinforces the vertical divisions at the European level which make the task of inter-sectoral EC coordination so difficult. Moreover, it accounts for the persistence of French positions towards the CAP, always against cuts in spending and market reforms, despite the fact that, with the Spanish accession, France became a net contributor to the EC budget. Again, like for the case of Germany, an intergovernmentalist perspective would run into trouble when trying to account for this inconsistency.

With regard to farming interest groups, it is notable that, twenty years ago, they were among the few French lobbies to have a direct representation in Brussels, in addition to enjoying the almost unconditional support of French representatives in


\textsuperscript{74} Lequesne, \textit{Paris-Bruxelles}, p. 135.
the Commission, the SCA, the CAM, and beyond the boundaries of the agricultural policy community, with the Foreign Minister or even the President. French farming interests were mainly articulated through COPA, which they tended to dominate, and on which they could impose their views, being the largest group of producers in the Community. According to Legendre, French farming interests have at present lost much of their political influence, but there were times, when ‘one listened to Henri Cayre, who represented the French beet-growers, as if he were the Pope’, and the president of the association of French corn-growers was treated as a ‘minister’s equal’.\(^75\) At the national level, agricultural associations have maintained very close contact with governmental authorities and the administration. Since 1971, under Giscard d’Estaing, an annual conference chaired by the president or the prime minister with the agricultural establishment was instituted to formalize the \textit{ad hoc} personal contacts which already existed between farmers and the executives in Paris and in the local \textit{préfectures}.\(^76\) Through this close partnership, not only have French agricultural interests been dominant in the configuration of the CAP, but the French public administration’s preferences for a \textit{dirigiste} policy style have also prevailed.

In addition the power of the agricultural vote has been enormous since the XIX century, when the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie discovered that a contented peasantry was the most effective measure against urban revolution, so the demarcation of electoral districts has tended to over-represent rural votes in France.\(^77\) Therefore, the support of the farming vote has been particularly important for Presidents of the right, as de Gaulle discovered after his ‘empty chair’ EC policy. The farming establishment was one of the strongest critics of the government’s withdrawal from the Council of Ministers, and just before the presidential elections, in October 1965, the \textit{Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d’Exploitants Agricoles} (FNSEA) distributed to every farmer a booklet attacking the government for putting at risk the CAP. As a result, the rural vote for de Gaulle reached only 38% in contrast to the 44% of the national average, and it has been argued that this was the reason why he did not obtain a clear majority in the first round. Even Mitterrand, coming from the left, could not afford to ignore rural interests, as evidenced by his meeting, in October 1984, with the regional farming organizations of southern France (which

\(^{75}\) Legendre, ‘France’, p. 64

\(^{76}\) Neville Rolfe, \textit{The Politics of Agriculture in the EC}, p. 122.

\(^{77}\) In the XX century, the general outlook of the chambers and their leaders has tended to be conservative; for a detailed analysis of the electoral implications of the CAP in France, see Neville Rolfe, \textit{The Politics of Agriculture in the EC}, pp. 104-108 and 128-143.
had provoked several incidents that year) to explain how important it was to ‘tie Spain to Europe’.78

Another unique feature of France is that, given its geographic situation, it produces the widest variety of products, from temperate to Mediterranean, and has therefore had considerable input in the setting up and management of almost all of the commodity regimes.79 This diversity is undoubtedly related to the difficulties encountered by the FNSEA in maintaining the unity of the ‘monde rural’ and the monopoly of farm representation. Regional, generational, religious, ideological and class cleavages cut across the French farming ‘community’ and have produced internal splits and minorities breaking away from FNSEA as well as a more chaotic government system of supports and aids.80 The leadership of FNSEA has also had problems in controlling the rank-and-file members and local associations of small-holders. In the early 1980s, many Spanish lorries loaded with fruits and vegetables were attacked and set on fire, in opposition to the official views of the FNSEA leadership. Nevertheless, the latter failed to condemn this actions which, in a way, can turn into strength for putting pressure on governments concerned with maintaining public order. Moreover, this lack of control has been limited, and in general terms FNSEA achieved by the 1970s a certain amount of consensus from farmers and confidence from the government.81 The idea that agriculture needs public support is, again, widely extended among all groups, as well as the government, including the president, more so if his support comes from the right.

Having reviewed the main general features of the French and German national agricultural policy communities, and the way in which they reinforce the main characteristics of this closed community at the European level, it is pertinent to make a few remarks about the other members.

3.3.3. Other members

The case of Italy is almost the opposite to that of France. Italian agricultural lobbies are organized and very skilled, but very often their efforts are counteracted by the

78 Ambassade de France à Londres, ‘Excerpts from the speech of Mr. F. Mitterrand at a luncheon with representatives of regional farming organizations’, Service de Presse et d’Information, 11 October 1984.
80 See Neville Rolfe, The Politics of Agriculture in the EC, pp. 112 and 119.
81 As Schmitter explains, these ‘rank-and-file revolts’ are a common reaction to over-aggregation of interests in single peak associations, since their practices of oligarchic co-optation, centralized organization, bureaucratized exchanges, and interdependence with public authority, make these associations vulnerable to member dissatisfaction, ‘but normally these revolts are easy to encapsulate or even exploit for corporatist ends’; Schmitter, ‘Interest intermediation’, p. 320.
lack of government support and they are held back by the inefficiency of the political and administrative system in Italy.\textsuperscript{82} This is mainly due to the fact that, at the national level, the Italian political and administrative system is dominated by political parties (\textit{partitocrazia}), which are fragmented by factionalism and regionalism, and interest groups are secondary actors in the national policy-making process. Thus relationships between public authorities and farmers’ associations are not so close and stable as in other countries, and the dominance of political parties inhibits the influence of these groups. This means that, at the EC level, farmers’ associations have good access to the Commission, but they are not always strongly backed by their government representatives in the SCA and the CAM. Furthermore, until the accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal, Italian agricultural interests did not have many opportunities to form transnational alliances, apart from those with French southern producers, which in turn were not the most powerful inside FNSEA. This one of the main reasons why the market organizations for Mediterranean products were the last ones to be set up. Even this alliance was difficult, given the preference of the Italians for ‘structural’ policies (direct income support), which set them against the French who favoured the use of market intervention mechanisms, like price guarantees and export refunds. These disagreements were at the origin of the ‘wine wars’ between France and Italy, which paralyzed discussions with Spain on that issue, until late 1984.\textsuperscript{83} The fact that the ‘guidance’ section (structural programmes) of FEOGA represents today only 5\% of the total (even after the creation of the IMPs), certainly reflects the weakness of the Italian agricultural interests in the shaping of the CAP.

In the Netherlands, by contrast, the relationship between agricultural interest groups, related business sectors, political parties, and the relevant government branches is so close that it ‘has an almost corporatist status in civil law.’\textsuperscript{84} Agricultural interest groups are active in COPA and, through their links with the Ministry of Agriculture, have had strong channels of influence in the EC system, both with the Commission and the Council of Ministers. The Dutch government has therefore ensured that its farmers profit greatly from the CAP. The Ministry of Agriculture, has lobbied actively in the draft phase, as well, several times nominating a Dutch Commissioner (Mansholt, Lardinois, Andriessen) to DG VI. It has also striven for representation of its people inside this DG and in the various


committees. As a ‘small’ member of the EC, the Netherlands, like Denmark and Ireland after joining the EC, have compensated for their weakness by focusing on just the few crucial areas for them, like agriculture.\(^85\)

Finally, and contrary to what could be expected, the UK is not the great exception to all these patterns.\(^86\) The British agricultural sector is rather small, but highly productive and mechanized and, as such, it has greatly benefited from the CAP. Even the British Minister for agriculture has managed to isolate himself behind CAP jargon.\(^87\) The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) also has a long tradition of monopolizing relations with government representatives, given the pre-accession system of the Annual Review.\(^88\) The two main differences are that these groups would rather utilize their domestic links, than engage in a Brussels ‘free for all’, so their action abroad is more focused on specific bilateral or multilateral alliances, rather than being directed through COPA.\(^89\) Second, the high degree of inter-ministerial coordination of the British government, while reducing the ‘polyphony’ characteristic of other countries like Germany, has undermined the representation of British farmers’ interests (who benefit greatly from the CAP system as it stands) in government positions towards the CAP, centered around reform and cuts in spending.\(^90\)

Conclusions

In sum, this paper has argued that the agricultural policy network at the European level presents all the characteristics of a policy community as typified by Marsh and Rhodes. With regard to membership, the number of participants is limited to DG VI of the Commission, the CAM and the farmers’ associations, who lobby collectively through COPA or through national channels. Producers’ interests have clearly dominated policy outcomes, while actors which could present a potential threat to the status quo (consumers, the CFM, applicant countries) are consciously excluded by


\(^{86}\) Cf. Young, Terms of Entry, p. 76.

\(^{87}\) Even for Britain, which is often pictured as the most effective national coordination machinery, the extreme specialization of EEC agricultural policy mechanisms and the CAP jargon have consistently allowed UK ministers and civil service advisors, to ‘obscure the true path of British agriculture policy from certainly the national press and the House of Commons, but probably also from the Cabinet’; Gardner, ‘The CAP: The Political Obstacle to Reform’, p. 177.

\(^{88}\) Wilson, Special Interests and Policymaking, p. 45.

\(^{89}\) Greenwood and Jordan, ‘The United Kingdom’, p. 76.

\(^{90}\) Lorena Ruano, ‘Elites, public opinion and pressure groups: the British position in agriculture during negotiations for accession to the EC, 1961-1975’, Journal of European Integration History, [forthcoming]
institutional and cognitive barriers. DG VI still allows little access for consumer
groups and environmentalists, arguing that they do not really represent the interests
of their constituents.91

With regard to the degree of integration of the policy community, it has been
shown that interactions between the organizations are not only frequent but are also
routinized by consultation, decision-making, budgeting and implementation
procedures. This results in a high degree of continuity in the membership and
values, based on a consensus about the basic aims of the policy and the legitimacy of
its inefficient outcomes. This is the reason why the belief that farmers should receive
a high level of support is rarely questioned.

With regard to the distribution of resources and how they are exchanged among
actors in the community, it has been established that there is a web of clear
‘structural dependencies’, which make the relationships between actors go well
beyond consultation, with each one holding resources which are indispensable for
the others. Therefore, the agenda in this policy area was dominated by DG VI and
COPA. Member state control in the CAM has not been a counterweight, since
national ministries are ‘captured’ by farmers, so both the SCA and CAM are part of
the policy community and share the same ideology. Furthermore, the EC has
provided farmers with several channels, in addition to the ones they had in national
settings, through which to influence outcomes, which makes them more powerful.
Inside farmers organizations, the structure is hierarchical (i. e. division between
elites and lay members), which facilitates the solution of internal conflicts and the
articulation of a single and coherent voice coming from each group. However, inside
COPA, relationships between different national farmers’ organizations are not
formally hierarchical, and although the majoritarian French delegation has tended to
dominate, dissident views are not easily suppressed, since they keep having open an
alternative route to access the decision-making process through their national
ministries of agriculture. In this way, the national organizations’ influence has
persisted, as the hard battles in the CAM testify, despite the efforts of the
Commission to neutralize them by restricting access to DG VI via COPA.

Finally, Marsh and Rhodes say that there must be a positive-sum game (all actors
must win something) for such community to persist. Evidence of this may be that
DG VI has gained in political (as well as budgetary) resources vis à vis other
departments, because it has close relations with the farmers. Both DG VI and the
CAM have increased their autonomy by excluding non-farming interests, and even
market forces.92 For national agriculture ministers, the CAP has yielded various

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benefits, by offering supranational instruments and funds to structure and influence their farming sectors, while, at the same time, reducing the constraints that their national parliaments and treasuries used to impose on farm spending. Of course, farmers, particularly the rich and well organized ones, have been the great beneficiaries of the CAP, and the most vociferous in their hostile response to any attempt at reform.

At the national level, in all the member states there is a close interweaving of producers’ associations and public authorities, which varies from the corporatist style of the Netherlands and Denmark to the weaker links of the Italian system. In most cases, it is difficult for agriculture ministers to agree in Brussels with decisions which could affect their domestic constituencies, on whose cooperation they depend heavily for obtaining information, implementing policies and even for electoral support. The degree of coordination of EC policy-making between the different government ministries of each state has a decisive influence on the way in which farmers’ interests are translated into the European arena, since they contribute in different ways to the institutional insulation of this policy community. The French ‘unitary’ and coordinated style of EC policy amplifies the farmers’ voices and makes them echo outside the CAM, while the German ‘fragmented style’ has often put its own national ministries of finance and agriculture at odds with each other. Also, with the exception of Britain, it is interesting to note that all the members states appear to have a strong interest in maintaining a high level of public support for agriculture. In particular, small states, have tended to concentrate their efforts almost exclusively in this aspect of European policy. For all these reasons, policy-making in this area has been based on compromise and ideological consensus, not on economic rationality. Therefore, the consideration of new ideas and radical proposals has proved almost impossible, with the result that change in this policy area has only been incremental.

How did the policy community respond to the pressures brought by the prospects of these two enlargements? In the British case, the Commission indicated in the 1969 ‘update’ of its Opinion that the reforms to agriculture proposed in the Mansholt Plan needed to be set in motion before accession negotiations could begin. The failure of the Mansholt plan is well known, and its consequences varied from the subsequent disputes about the British rebate to the surpluses and bankruptcy of the late 1970s. By the time Spain attempted to join the EC, the situation had become untenable, and enlargement negotiations were continually facing stand-stills related to the discussions on the 1980 May Mandate for CAP reform and ‘indigestion from the first

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enlargement’, in the form of rows about the British rebate. By the early 1980s, the policy community had been undermined by the costs of overproduction, but in the end, it managed to limit the damage that Spanish entry could have provoked: there was still no overhaul of the CAP and governments agreed to pour in additional resources. Moreover, the policy community reacted by taking the lead in reform, by advocating a switch to developing structural policy, as exemplified by the creation of the IMPs. The discussion thus remained within the boundaries of what was acceptable to this closed policy community, and it was a question of changing the kind of subsidy, not of reducing or eliminating it. In this way, while the general discussion in the Council of Foreign Ministers or the European Council at the time was dominated by the need to limit spending and avoid bankruptcy, inside the agricultural policy community, more support and protective measures were being devised for Mediterranean farmers.

Another example of the successful management of pressures for change by the policy community is the fact that farmers have obtained ‘set aside’ grants, and are paid for producing less (!), as a response to the problem of over-production. Reforms resulting from enlargement have thus ensured the continuation rather than substantial changes to the policy. As a result, the same problems keep re-appearing today in the enlargement negotiations with the Central European countries and the controversies around the Commission’s Agenda 2000 programme for reforming, among other areas, the CAP and the budget.

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