

## STRATEGIES FOR ACTION AND PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE THIRD DEGREE COOPERATIVES IN ARGENTINA

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### SUMMARY

This paper researches the impact of the Argentine cooperative entities representing the contemporary public policy. We present a case study of the two largest third-degree cooperatives in the country, discuss the goals and strategies in interactions with State agencies. The results of the actions of actors define goals and strategies that can be convergent and / or divergent. We conclude that the links have been built with the State federations selected characteristics of complementarily and cooperation in general. Also, the power to influence the organizations surveyed in the definition of public policies is not only equity, but mainly the political opportunities and the ability to inter-stakeholder alliances through collective strategies.

**KEY WORDS:** Third Degree Cooperatives; Public Policy; Social Economy; Action Strategies.

### INTRODUCTION

In the last decade the social economy has become more relevant in academic studies in Latin America and the world. In Argentina, from the National Plan Let's get down to business

launched in 2003, work programs and public works such as the Federal Housing Scheme and the most recent one Social Income Program Work carry out greater attention and promotion of cooperative sources of employment and local and social development.

For its part, the Argentine cooperative movement has a long history which geStated links among heterogeneous organizations second and third degree and with the State. The first degree cooperatives, more than 12 000 today and across all sectors of economy activity, represented by more than one hundred associations, and four national confederations. The latter are to defend and represent the interests of the federation in particular and of cooperatives in general being a superior type of aggregation of representative inter-cooperation.

In order to inquire about the third degree and cooperative relationship with the State in the construction of public policy, we review theoretical and methodological perspectives and propose a framework of institutional analysis for the Argentine case. In order to address the research problem presented in case studies of public policy impact in two third degree cooperatives. This paper seeks to contribute to the knowledge of these organizations, with spaces for learning and solidarity and political construction, of which researches are not available in Argentina and there are few contributions in other countries.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **The construction of public policy: from the problem to the government agenda**

The civil society organizations may have different resources to influence public policies, among which, from a structural perspective, constructivist distinguishes the political capital, economy capital, organizational capital and symbolic capital (Leiras, 2007). These capitas can be exchanged and accumulated, and also decreased according to the efforts of their members and their perceptions about the possibility of achieving the Stated objectives, they are key to the strategies implemented by organizations in the structure of political opportunities and scenarios incidence. The opportunities of political incidence vary depending on the extent of participation and

competition policy, government system and its processes, the capabilities of the State to set and achieve goals and objectives of the organizations. Incidence scenarios are unique and depend on the sector to which policy is directed, i.e., about which you want to influence, levels of government involved and the stage of development in which the public policy is, and these are: the constitution of the agenda, its definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is understood that the government's agenda is as "a set of problems, complaints, questions and / or issues that have been selected and ordained by the rulers as objects of action and, more properly, as objects that they have decided they must act or considered that they must act upon "[Aguilar Villanueva, L., 1993, p. 29]<sup>(4)</sup>. In the process of its constitution Kingdon (2003) distinguishes three areas: problems, policies and politics. The parties recognize problems, generate policy proposals and engage in political activities such as campaigns and / or pressure or lobby groups. In general, actors specialize in one area, may limit or promote a topic from the list of priorities, contrary to incorporate an alternative or remove it from the agenda.

There are situations that can become problems and others which do not. Some are more likely to be defined as problems when the company and / or the actors think they should do something to change. Officials and policy makers and government actors define situations as problems in various ways.

Additionally, problems may lose visibility for various reasons. One is when the government is or intends to do, focusing on another topic. Others refer to whether the conditions of the situation that characterized the problem changed, that people become accustomed to the situation or the problem has been re-conceptualized, or when new situations arise and pressure changing priorities. Consider that there are cycles of attention with high and low degrees, and ups and downs.

Finally, the recognition and definition of the problem significantly affect the outcome of the process. However, regardless of the recognition of the problem or the development of policy proposals, circulating political events according to their own dynamics and rules. A new administration, a new government, in general, change agendas and approaches to problems and

policy proposals.

The consensus is built in the political negotiations rather than persuading. There are actors visible and hidden actors. Visible actors, the President and his cabinet, parliamentarians, media, political parties, affect the agenda; define which issues go into and out of the list. While hidden actors, academic specialists, civil servants and advisers, design alternatives affect the problems on the agenda.

Problem areas, policies and politics converge when urgent problems demanding attention and a policy proposal is associated, or when a political event calls a change of address, where the policy proposals that fit partnering come to the forefront associated to the political climate.

A complete link combined together the three areas in one package. The actors take advantage in a political environment and position the policy proposal as the solution to an urgent problem. Also, Also the actors concerned about a particular problem search for solutions in the field of policies to which to associate, and then try to take advantage of political receptivity and pass the package of the problem and solution.

An open policy window is an opportunity for advocates to promote domestic solutions or direct attention to certain problems. Proponents of specific issues, government and those who are around, keep available their proposals waiting for these opportunities.

### **Perspectives on the relationships between society organizations with the State**

In order to inquire about the third degree and cooperative relationship with the State in the construction of public policy, we review different perspectives that address the relationship between NGOs and government links.

Najam's study (2000) notes a trend toward increased interaction between NGOs and government, understood that it is a complex, sometimes not sufficiently understood, and often simplified. Proposes an analytical framework based on institutional interests and preferences for political ends and means, identifying relationships of cooperation, confrontation, co-option and / or supplementation. Each institutional actor (government or not) pursue certain goals and establishes

a preference for certain media. Both types of stakeholder organizations working in the field of policy, finding each other and can identify four main combinations: 1) if they seek similar ends with similar means, cooperative relationship, 2) if you are looking for different purposes by different means: confrontation relationship, 3) if they seek similar ends by different means: complementary relationship and 4) if you are looking for different purposes with similar means: the cooptation relationship.

From the economy theory of rational choice (Young, 2000), the relationship between government, private and nonprofit can be evaluated as an additional action as satisfiers of public goods demand unmet by the government, which would retract when the State took care of it. In its complementary role, the non-profit organizations are considered partners or peers, helping with the distribution of public goods financed by the government. Finally, a performance of the opposition non-profit organizations urged the government to make public policy changes and keep the public informed of its expenses, while it tries to influence the behavior of organizations, regulate their services and taking into account initiatives.

The typology developed by Proulx et al. (2007) of relations between the government and third sector organizations in the province of Quebec, Canada, identifies four types: outsourcing, coexistence, complementarily and joint construction. The parameters used were: the opening of the government towards the third sector, including sector activities in public policy, the coincidence of objectives in the interaction, the presence of criteria to guide the interaction, the intensity of formalism relationships, methods of financing given by the government sector, the degree of autonomy of the third sector (autonomous mission management and autonomy), the degree of institutionalization of the interaction and co-construction of the objectives and rules of the relationship.

Depending on the interest of this work and from the conceptual perspectives mentioned, developments will be used by Proulx et al. (2007) to research the nature of the link between the State and selected confederations. Consider Najam's (2000) type and the contributions of Kingdon (2003) to analyze the cases.

## **Cooperative Articulation of second and third degree**

The Confederations are voluntary organizations formed by second degree cooperatives, which hold the joint authority, act in a coordinated manner in the interests promoting cooperative union representation and, separately, in terms of specific purposes, keeping its members autonomy (Alfonso Sanchez, 2003). They constitute a central body with permanent staff, common goals and interests and delegate some activities.

These structures of second and third levels are regulated by law to channel corporate aggregation processes between cooperatives and other associations.

In Argentina, the law provides for entry into higher-level cooperatives for the implementation of economy, cultural or social, with a minimum of seven partners (Law 20.337/1973, Art.85).

The literature has not identified cooperative studies of the third degree. In Spain, the work on second-degree cooperatives focus on business analysis, features and integration processes in cooperative and in accounting and / or tax (Puentes Poyatos, 2004). Another study, focused on Spanish law and regulation: what are traditionally known as "cooperative of cooperative"(Vázquez Pena, 2002). Finally, we found the article by Puentes et al. (2007) aimed at analyzing the particularities of the legal relationship between the federations and their members, the primary cooperatives in Andalusia. In Canada, a study on the case of a federation that created a separate subsidiary structure to stimulate innovation in the overall system (Ketilson, 1998). In Argentina, on the one one hand there has been a study on the representation of cooperative work in two federations in the province of Buenos Aires (Roggi, 2003) and on the other hand, the analysis of cooperation between cooperatives and strategies development in the case of a wine federation (Acosta and Verbeke, 2009).

## **Third-degree cooperatives Argentina**

There are four confederations of cooperatives in the country, the oldest dating from the mid-twentieth century, ConinAgro (Inter-Cooperative Agricultural Cooperative Federation Ltd., 1958) and Cooperar (Argentine Cooperative Confederation., 1962). The third was created in the early

years of democratic restructuring after the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), Cecovira (Confederation of Cooperative Housing Entities of Argentina Ltd, 1989), and most recently, CNTC (National Confederation of Work Cooperatives Ltd., 2009), account for significant growth and development of government work cooperative after the 2001 crisis.

### Overview of the agrarian confederation: the ConinAgro case

The Coordinating Council of Agricultural Interco and Arbitration, established by the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Cooperatives in 1953 by the National Government are the history of ConinAgro, founded in 1956. Its consolidation came with the addition of the two most important of the period: ACA (Argentine Cooperative Association, 1922), and SanCor (San Carlos Co-operative Union Ltd. 1928).

Currently there are ten nuclear member federations and five attached, estimated at twenty thousand farmers partners of about seven hundred eighty cooperatives (see Table 1). Between 2006 and 2008, 798 cooperatives re-registered engaged in agricultural activities, of which 473 registered in the Census Sector for Economy Co-operatives and mutual INAES (2008) reported that they were composed of 112,081 members. 57.3% of surveyed cooperative entities adhere to the second or third degree.

**Table No. 1. Economy activity and jobs for agricultural cooperatives in Argentina**

Indicators	Values
Permanent and Transitory workers	150,000
Posts in work first and second degree agricultural cooperatives	40,000
Posts in additional indirect work (outsourcing of transport and distribution)	20,000
Invoicing	7,500 million pesos per year
Exports	3,000 million pesos per year
Contribution to IGP	6.00%
Representation in agro-feeding industry	9.00%
Total participation in primary and agro-industrial exports	5.6%
Sale of field production	In Average 22% (The most representative: tobacco, dairy products, Yerba (ilex paraguayensis) grain, tomatoes, pepper, honey, must, and wine

Source: Argentine Cooperation Congress, 2004

## **Review of cooperative utilities: the Cooperar case**

As a trade union and representative, Cooperar, currently consists of 35 federations and member cooperatives (see Table No. 2), mostly engaged in the provision of public services (electricity and gas). It has actively participated in the public scenario and dialogued with various government agencies for better regulation, defense and promote the cooperative sector in Argentina, with institutional support from the national government under President Raul Alfonsín (1983-89).

The public services cooperatives, made up of solidarity mutual associations to meet their needs through self-management arose mainly for generating and distributing electricity. Electricity cooperatives set up and expanded distribution services in the communities in which they operated, both as an element of welfare and as a basic lever for many industrial enterprises (Callejo, 2000).

In recent years, development of cooperation has evolved in accordance with the new technological conditions for the provision of service and has attached to its main activity important complementary functions, improving the quality of life of the population with drinking water supplies, sanitation, telephones, communications, collection of household waste, the implementation of urban paved roads, postal service, public works, among others.

It is estimated that nearly a thousand cooperatives provide public services to nearly three thousand locations in the country, reaching over seven million people. Of the 1,237 re-registered cooperatives between 2006 and 2008, 789 were surveyed and accounted for 1,558,662 members. 83.9% of surveyed cooperative sector entities adhere to the second or third degree (INAES, 2008).

The joint management between the municipalities and cooperatives has made it possible to provide social services such as funerals, community centers and sports facilities, nurseries, own cemeteries, tourism enterprises, insurance, credit and housing. In relation to health, their provision is growing, blood banks, ambulance, dental services, pharmacies and nursing facilities have added to their activity.

**Table Nº 2. Composition and institutional participation of the Confederations**

	Cooperar	ConInAgro
2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree associated and adhered entities	35	15
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree Entities associated and attached	1.882	780
Entities associated to 1 <sup>st</sup> degree*	5,490,212**	20,000
Public agencies with interests in national public Commissions and Councils	7	14
Participation in committees of social economy and private entities, national and international	10	9
Internal commissions, committees and Existing Working Groups	10	22
Extent of participation in ordinary Associated Assemblies	Medium-high	Medium-high

\* People may be associated with several entities simultaneously; therefore the number of registered partners can hold more people.

\*\* Estimated total associated cooperatives: 5,904,458, according to the INAES (2008) Census on the basis of 2,024 cooperatives. If we consider entities re-censed to 2008 the estimated number of members reached only 1,385,351 (a total of 9,392,713 members).

**Source:** Own, based on reports and balance sheets (2009-2010 and 2008-2009 ConinAgro), interviews with representatives of the same, Census and re-registration of cooperatives (INAES, 2008).

### The relations between the Argentine government and third-degree cooperatives

Relations between the Federal Government and ConinAgro and cooperatives (see Table No. 3), adapting the criteria Proulx et al. (2007), we note that in recent years, for each parameter one can distinguish relations of exclusion, coexistence, complementarily and construction (see Table Nº 3).

**Table Nº 3. Relationship between the Argentine and cooperative confederations**

Parameters	Kind of Relationship			
	Exclusion	Coexistence	Complementarily	Joint construction
State Opening to the sector	X	X		X
Inclusion in public policy	X		X	X
Coincidence of objectives		X		X
Criteria Guide		X		X
Formality of relationships		X	X	X
Public finance to the sector	X		X	X
Sector Autonomy		X		
Institucionalization in interaction		X	X	
Co-construction goals and interaction rules	X			X

**Source:** Adapted from Proulx et al. (2007)

**Aperture of the State to the sector.** It refers to the kind of openness of the State towards the sector, which can vary from an attitude of resistance and exclusion to an open predisposition to institutional pluralism. ConinAgro actor's perceptions about the State's actions indicate a lack of recognition of agricultural cooperatives as agents of economy and social development, identifying relations of coexistence and / or exclusion. For their part, Cooperar as part of the Cooperative Committee of the Consultative Council of Civil Society, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, and integrates the Mercosur Specialized Cooperatives, accounting for a relationship of joint construction.

**Inclusion in public policy.** It is understood as the inclusion of cooperative activities in public policy. Given the large number of cooperative activities one considered the most significant demands of the sector in the last three years. Both participated in the drafting of Article 90 of the new Education Law No. 26,206/2006 that incorporates the principles and values of cooperatives and mutual societies in the curricula of all levels. Although it is an achievement, since the entities are claiming their general application. Regarding the communication media, Cooperar integrates the framework integrates the Federal Council of Audiovisual Council, and has strengthened networking within the National Plan of the Ministry of Connected Infrastructure of Argentina. Moreover, the two entities joined the Advisory Board of the Province of Buenos Aires Social Work Income Program, although it did not participate in its design, while some of its local partners are implementing it. The enactment of a law on work cooperatives is an unmet demand in the sector, having presented several projects over the last decade. While it achieved the expansion of the powers of the cooperative credit unions with the enactment of Law No. 26,173/2006, it has not yet obtained a specific policy for the cooperative credit or the recognition of the public service financial entities. Both entities maintain the claim of non-exclusion of cooperative activities (PEN Decree No. 2,015/1994 PEN and Article 40 Labor Law No. 25.877/2004, etc.). While Cooperar requested to form part of the political dialogue, it was not invited to the Roundtable on Minimum Wage. In reviewing relations with the State, we observe that they cover a wide spectrum from the joint construction (education and communication), complementarity (labor and finance) to the non

exclusion in activities in which formal institutions offered their participation.

**Coincidence of objectives.** Corresponds to interaction situations in which the parties share or not the main targets. ConinAgro participates in numerous advisory committees of public organizations<sup>1</sup> in which we find positions of agreement and disagreement with the government position. Their proposals were approved by the dairy corridor, while on the Strategic Agriculture Plan there were no coincidences (ConinAgro, 2009). As to employment issue, its trajectory has been characterized by the joint construction of objectives, by supporting actions to strengthen the rights of workers and safety and hygiene, through its participation in the National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) and the National Agricultural Work Committee. For its part, Cooperar has coincided with the main objectives of the Law on Audiovisual Communication Services No. 26,522/2009 and Education Law No. 26,206/2006. However, the lack of enforcement and regulation of the legislation, institutions carry out actions that complement and / or coexist with public policy. In the area of employment, the goals also coincide, for example, against the international financial crisis of 2008 in support of jobs. That is, although we identified a set of actions agreed targets were not consistent enough to realize a joint work<sup>2</sup>.

**Criteria guide.** It concerns the presence or absence of criteria to guide the interaction between the parties, as well as the powers that the entities hold in the various organizations that concern them. In 2003 it was reached that cooperatives and mutualism were majority in the INAES board. Thus, the cooperative and the State jointly developed criteria that guide the interaction in the Institute, predominantly building a relationship together. In 2004, the confederations signed an agreement with the INAES to design and implement a Strategic Plan for Cooperative Development and a Federal Program for Promotion of Cooperatives to ensure the use of the resources of the Cooperative Education and Promotion, and prioritize the implementation of the Cooperative Education Law No. 16,583/1964. Then the Sunchales Consensus (2006) and INAES confederations signed a new agreement updating the guiding criteria of interaction and the

1 At national level it participates in a Senate Commission, two of the Chamber of Deputies, in 5 national ministries (in more than 30 commissions, boards, and advisory councils), two autarkic national organisms, and in ministries and organizations in 7 provinces (memoria 2008-2009 and 2009-2010)

2 Cooperar had solicited the National State financing facilities to cooperatives, to contribute to the objective of generating employment.

definition of common objectives for the development of the sector as a column over the production and organization of society. While the confederations are part of various advisory committees they do not necessarily constitute decision makers that can or cannot guide the interaction. Then, we identify different types of relationships between actors, including arrangements for joint construction (such as participation in the INAES board) and coexistence (in numerous advisory committees).

**Intensity and relations formalism.** It shows the degree of intensity, regularity, continuity of interaction and its formalism, if they are legally recognized, and if their representatives have the capacity to decide. Both organizations participate in the Committee on Cooperative, Mutual and NGOs, National Chamber of Deputies, establishing agreements to work together as updating the inventory of bills contained in the Commission. ConinAgro has representatives on the Committee on Agriculture and Livestock, of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Also, because the entities are part of the INAES Board, they maintain constant formal relations, and have decision-makers capacity. ConinAgro also has representatives on the boards of the Institute of Argentina Beef Promotion, National Institute of Agricultural Technology, the National Health Service and Food Quality, and of the RENATRE, which has decision-making power, with regular and formal relations. Their involvement in over thirty different advisory committees of national and province ministries, through continuous interactions and formal relationships does not account for joint construction, predominant links coexistence and complementarity. Cooperar also participates in nine formal representations in government agencies, national and four province bodies as well as in numerous local authority entities. We can say that the ability to decide between the parties has remained stable until 2003, the year that the cooperative increased its representation on the INAES board.

**Public financing to the sector.** One can distinguish, in the financing modalities: project benefits, exemptions and contracts. The INAES has subsidized various projects and coordinated by the confederations, highlighting the Interagency Cooperation System, for which Cooperar through 44 projects and ConinAgro executed 20 projects for a total of 3 million pesos each between 2005 and 2006. Additionally, the entities perceived contributions via subsidies Cooperative Training Fund, to

support training, vocational and educational travel. The two confederations ask to be included in the allocation and control of resources at the national and province Health Promotion and Education Fund Cooperative (Law No. 23,427/1986). It is a historical demand of the industry to get a tax treatment according to the nature of social organizations, non-profit. Entities require the formalization of specific funding mechanisms to the activities of the sector. So on the one hand, they perceive themselves excluded from the mentioned Fund's decision, and on the other hand, their participation in the INAES strengthens their construction relationships and / or complementarity between the parties in the shared funding projects.

**Sector Autonomy.** It alludes to the independence in the mission and management of cooperatives. Third-degree cooperatives are organizations independent of the State which themselves have defined their mission, and operate within existing regulations. Their governance and management is carried out according to self-determination and democratic definition of its partners. Members of the Board of Directors, responsible for the internal management of its resources, are elected by the assembly of partners, regardless of the views or preferences of other actors. In order to defend their interests the entities are represented in various State and non State institutions, with various internal mechanisms to select their representatives and present their positions in debates of interest of its associates and / or society in general. Then the autonomy to govern itself and manage its activity in the entities can be observed in the non dependence of state resources for its functioning, as it is sustained with own means, mainly obtained by the social quota; the subsidies do not constitute a means of financing in the daily activities of the entities.

**Institutionalization Interaction.** It is for the programming, ruling and distribution of the power process, to permit the development of projects or activities, in a major scale. The institutionalization of the relation between the INAES, and the entities, is seen in the enlarging of the Board, in the collaboration agreements signed and in the design and execution of diverse strengthening projects. The confederations and the diverse public organizations have been institutionalizing their interactions, formalizing their intervention so as to promote the involvement of the parties, and the backing of public policies. The participation of the entities in numerous government spaces, gives

the idea of heterogeneity of characterized situations, mainly by the coexistence and-or complementarity.

**Co-construction objectives.** Refers to the joint elaboration and not to the aims and the establishing interaction rules. Although programs were executed from the Social Development Ministry (MDS), which involved the cooperative sector, in general, the positions of the confederations were not contemplated, as to their aims and management tools. In the elaboration of specific actions directed to the sector on behalf of the INAES, the interaction rules and the agenda were co-constructed. The increase of the INAES board has contributed to the co-construction of objectives, while at ministerial level, there prevailed an exclusion relationship, as in the design of the Program of Social Entrance with Work.

### **The third degree cooperatives in the construction of government agendas and public policies**

The analyzed confederations occupy themselves in the representation and defense of the trade unions interests of their associates, trying to make known the value of cooperatives as they have gathered a group of claims from their members, informing the public commissions in which they participate and the corresponding organisms. For that they have elaborated public policy projects, generating alliances, with other organizations be they public or private.

#### **Case study I: ConinAgro and the retentions policy**

This confederation established an alliance with other agro entities of the sector, at the beginning of 2008, conforming the Link Board, (together with the Argentine Rural Confederations, the Argentine Agro Federation and the Argentine Rural Society) facing the national government to modify the export taxes, commonly known as retentions, as to some cereals and oil cereals, under the mobile percentage modality, according to the level of international prices. The Link Board, with the objective of derogating the tax modification established by Resolution N° 125-2008 of the Ministry of Economy and Production, through different strategies, (pickets, strikes, parades, public

acts, communications), managed to place the matter as a problem in the government agenda, and in the public opinion. Having the backing of hidden and visible actors, legislators and functionaries opposed to the President, drew the attention of the citizens and established it as an urgent matter. The media coverage, was determinant to make into a problem which affected the national humor – the public opinion, involving the citizens in a debate which resulted in a binary opposition of backing or against the government, without necessarily involving a real interest in the rural conflict, canalizing social bad feelings, in diverse social groups.

Due to the repercussion generated around Resolution N° 125, the members of the Link Board, did not have time to negotiate in the definition of the matter as a problem, other sector problems and policy proposals. The alliance made up of four heterogeneous entities in composition, ideology, origin of its members and general objectives, would have been unthought-of some years before, (Merlo and Muro de Nadal, 2010). The roughest point of the problem was in July of the same year, when the Senate repealed the Resolution. Also, the forwarding of midterm national legislative elections influenced the media attention and those involved, which began to concentrate on the candidates, the agrarian problem reached a saturation status.

Two years from the self-proclaimed rural victory with the repealing of Resolution N° 125, for the Confederation, the sector problem, was not solved, today there are still the conviction and the need of a different policy for the sector. But its media treatment during so many months and the high attention caused in the public caused its saturation, without being present in other actors' agenda.

### **Case study II: Cooperar and Media Law**

The cooperative claim on the restrictions to the liberty of expressions, which infringes the Radio Transmission Law N° 22,285-1980, was incorporated into the agenda, when the Government established as a problem, the regulation of the media and the access for them to guarantee equality and freedom of speech. Thus a window was opened of political opportunity in the legislative debate, present since the last military dictatorship, and the project of a law,

elaborated in democracy. In it, the cooperative movement, participated actively in the whole country, and working together with the INAES, an actor which is more hidden than visible, in terms of constituting the agenda of public policies; reaching through the sanctioning of the new Law on Audiovisual Communication N° 26,522-2009, occupying two places on the organism created, for the regulation of audiovisual media, the Federal Council of Audiovisual Media.

However the joint work with public organizations and other associations of the social economy, the backing of some politicians and social organizations, Cooperar has not managed to install the problem of legislation for work cooperatives in the Government's main agenda, leaving it behind to the INAES private agenda, and other Commissions which do not have deciding capacity, such as giving the bands for mobile phones to telephone cooperatives, pending the approval of a regulatory framework, adequate for the public services cooperatives, among others, they have not reached visibility, and so they are not considered as problems.

So as to influence in the sphere of the Confederation representatives policies, they recognize the lack of resources, the scarce visibility of the cooperative sector in general, and the little developed links with the visible actors and; consider necessary to increase its technical personnel, to elaborate proposal policies.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In this article we have noted the difficulties of the major Argentine confederation to influence the process of establishing the public policy agenda, in which many different issues are possible and valid to be chosen as alternatives. The problems built by the entities may be considered in particular agendas, not to become more widespread and visibility, operating within the sphere of hidden actors, whose power and capacity for action are below the visible actors.

The case of ConinAgro, due to the sectoral composition of its representation, is oriented predominantly inter-cooperative mainly of the economy kind. Economy integration implies alliances and joint trade operations to develop a single activity or are within the same sector, operating as a

mechanism of economy and institutional strengthening.

The cooperatives of public services through the representation of Cooperate, has claimed for years for the recognition of the regulation of mass media, presenting it as a significant issue for discussion in the public agenda. However, it was not until a window was opened of political opportunity that Cooperate got involved in the area of problem definition and the policies for their treatment. Being placed the issue on the list of public priorities, it emerged from a historically relegated place to the secondary agendas, where it remained not as a problem but as a public matter.

Because relationships between actors are dynamic and subject to political and social changes, it is not possible to distinguish only one type of linkage between cooperative actors and State through time. The links are processes in continuous movement and development, being able to differentiate periods and areas of interaction between the confederations and the State that has prevailed in a relationship.

Overall, in recent years, ties have prevailed in joint co-construction of interactions between the parties, as in the direction of INAES of RENATRE and other confederations which are members of the board. Coexistence and complementarity relationships have followed in importance. We note the coexistence in employment policies by the State and Cooperar, given the coincidence of their objectives and parallel actions. Complementation ties have been recognized between the parties, as in projects coordinated and technically assisted by the confederations, funded in part by the INAES. Finally links were identified for exclusion, particularly in the non-recognition of ConinAgro as productive and cooperative actor also in the non-inclusion of the confederations in the MDS policies.

For ConinAgro, situations of confrontation in defense of objectives by different means, have not interrupted the dialogue between the actors, keeping the institutional channels open and active. Also, towards the democratization of access to the media, there was a convergence of goals and some strategies implemented by the cooperatives and the government. This relationship has been, in general terms, cooperation in the period in which the government placed the issue on the top of

the agenda. However, this relationship can also be characterized as complementary, as Cooperar was bound to awareness of the issues and developing advocacy strategies for several years before the government addressed the issue and build it as an urgent problem.

The conflict of the rural entities with the government also opened a window of political opportunity for change in the sector, to which we ask ourselves, could the cooperative act on the problem definition and on specific public policies? ConinAgro entities allied itself with different ideologies, which did not share the same values, social concerns or specific problems with heterogeneity in terms of hectares under cultivation and production volumes at individual levels of its associates. Their claims as a confederation failed, did not reach effective representation, social visibility or definition as a problem in the sectoral agenda, contributing through their strategies only the positioning and visibility of the overall sectoral problem, reduced to the issue of retentions.

From the cases analyzed, we understand that the power of third-degree Cooperar and Argentine ConinAgro cooperatives, to influence the definition of public policies, results not only on the own resources, but mainly, on the political opportunities and the ability of inter-stakeholder alliances through collective strategies. Thus, specific demands of the cooperative movement have been recognized as public problems for their treatment, with diverse results for the dynamic linkages of the confederations with sectors of society in particular historical contexts.

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