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CORPORATISM AND BEYOND:
AN ASSESSMENT OF RECENT LITERATURE

JOSÉ LUÍS CARDOSO

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

PEDRO MENDONÇA

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

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José Luís Cardoso

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Pedro Mendonça

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract

This paper gives a comprehensive account on the general tendencies of the study of corporatism throughout the last forty years (1970-2010). After a brief introduction that explains the basic features of the literature subject to this survey, we proceed with analysis at two different levels. We begin by labeling 630 articles according to five broad categories for a wide-scope view of the study of corporatism. The subsequent stage comprehends 315 articles sampled from three leading journals where each article was coded for 23 fields of inquiry. At this second stage we discuss the general perceived tendencies in theoretical construction and deployment, in the evolution of statistical data and techniques, the geographical coverage of empirical studies, and the changing nature of the concept. We then discuss the global meaning of this literature and point out the reasons for its changing but lasting relevance in political science studies.

Keywords:

Corporatism, varieties of capitalism, interest representation, intermediation, social concertation.

Resumo

Este artigo fornece descrição exaustiva do estudo do corporativismo nos últimos quarenta anos (1970-2010). Após uma breve introdução sobre as características centrais da literatura em questão procedemos a uma análise mais detalhada a em duas fases. A primeira fase conta com uma classificação de 630 artigos de acordo com cinco categorias de modo a permitir uma leitura geral do estudo do corporativismo. A fase subsequente de análise compreende 315 artigos recolhidos de três revistas académicas de destaque em que cada artigo foi codificado em 23 campos. Nesta fase são examinadas a dinâmica da construção teórica e seus usos, a evolução de técnicas e dados estatísticos, a cobertura geográfica dos estudos empíricos, e a natureza cambiante do conceito. Terminamos com uma discussão do significado global desta literatura apontando as razões para a sua relevância oscilante mas permanente no contexto da ciência política.

Palavras-chave:

Corporativismo, variedades do capitalismo, representação de interesses, intermediação, concertação social.

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Introduction

In 1974 Philippe Schmitter contributed, with an acclaimed and widely read paper, to re-launching in modern terms the debate on the meaning and relevance of corporatism for political science studies (Schmitter, 1974). Almost forty years later, the prudent doubt given to the title of that seminal article could just as well be the motto for the present analysis: was it indeed the twentieth century “still the century of corporatism”? This article, however, asks instead: how long did “the century of corporatism” last in the scientific research realm, how has it evolved, and why has it declined?

In this paper we present an analysis of new data pertaining to the late history of the concept as a field of academic interest from 1970 to 2010. Arguably, what corporatism is or should be has never been settled despite its long existence as subject of inquiry. This state of affairs has not impeded, however, burgeoning research heralding its effects and causes, continuous theoretical work on its essential features, and countless analytical sub-categories. While it is still a contentious concept it appears to have moved away, in the last decade, from the centre of academic concerns in political science. New vocabulary has been mobilized to address the issues that were once in the corporatist turf, much like corporatism came to dispute previous pluralist empirical grounds. A large share of this new vocabulary falls under the literature of the varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001) and it has, along with studies on corporatism, contributed to shape the ever more distinct field of political economy. But corporatism’s relevance and need of examination did not remain confined within this field. Due to its complexity and ductility the concept raised important questions pertaining to state theory, democratic theory and, consequently, to studies of political behaviour and public policy.

One of the challenges of the analysis conducted was to delimit the concept of corporatism so that its use could be treated in a quantitative fashion, and simultaneously honour its plastic and ubiquitous quality. While it would be interesting to trace how corporatism made its way through all these sub-fields of inquiry, what seemed more compelling to understand was its decreasing presence, and this would be a manifold story, creating pretext for many literature reviews. To choose was imperative and the bias in this paper follows that of the literature — as confirmed by the data — towards economic issues. Therefore, we present an outlook of how, in the more orthodox approaches of political economy, the concern with corporatism was progressively diluted.

In the first section an overview of the study of corporatism in the macro-economic polity is offered, trying to present the different interpretations and meanings of the concept. Next, we proceed to a description of the methods and data of the analysis followed by the presentation of the results. Analysis takes place at two different levels. We begin by labeling 630 articles according to five broad categories for a wide-scope view of the study of corporatism (categories described in appendix 1). The subsequent stage comprehends 315 articles sampled from three leading journals where each article was coded for 23 fields of inquiry (described in appendix 2). For the data analysis of articles covered the paper develops Munck and Snyder's (2007) study applied to comparative politics. Finally, the last section presents a discussion on what our results suggest about the relationship between the study of corporatism, the academic community and the shifting material realities ascribable to the concept. We then conclude by discussing the global meaning of this literature, pointing out the reasons for its changing but lasting relevance in political science studies.

Setting the scene: interpretations and definitions

Schmitter's interrogation referred to above — “still the century of corporatism?” — was itself a pretext to address the claim put forward by Mihail Manoilescu in one of the most remarkable books on economic, social and political corporatism published during the interwar period (Manoilescu, 1934). That time still held the belief of a perennial system that could be the watermark of the twentieth century. For the most part Manoilescu's ambitious vision did not materialize, though his reflections did provide grounds for legitimating an alternative social system to both capitalism and socialism. Schmitter's own reading of Manoilescu's work, while seeking to reinvigorate its latent reformist ambition with renewed doctrinal guidance for processes of social transformation, did not restore the corporatist coinage that would presumably characterize it. But it did transform corporatism in one of the quasi-compulsory subject matters of political science for the last forty years.

Schmitter has heavily influenced most of the conceptual systematization for the manifold modalities of corporatism. This indebtedness regards especially the rehabilitation of an idea for which previous corporatist experiments of authoritarian fascist-like political regimes contributed in a very negative way by damaging a

concept that would otherwise be a useful analytical tool for capturing and understanding significantly distinct historical realities.¹

Through Schmitter's perspective, corporatism could be rescued from the reputation to which it had been cast both as an analytical tool for polity matters and as an historical experiment of socio-economic organization.² The keys to refurbishing corporatism and guaranteeing axiological distance from the stigma that the quasi-original sin of totalitarian ideologies had built laid on its remote historical origins, its linkages with organicist and solidarist traditions, and social Catholicism. From this line of reasoning, present in the works of Schmitter, Wiarda and others, followed the growing acceptance of the designation of democratic corporatism in contemporary political literature,³ an expression that could adequately address the phenomena of interest representation and the interplay between popular demands, reciprocity compensations and state support taking place in advanced societies throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. As Schmitter synthesized:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands of supports (Schmitter, 1974, p. 13).

The 1980's showed a widespread usage of the term corporatism to describe a landscape of interest intermediation, thus providing an alternative to the conventional focus on organized interests mediated through a competitive electoral process between rival parties (cf. Williamson, 1989). This translated in a building momentum around the belief that besides classical mechanisms of political representation in advanced democracies there were forms of organization and representation beyond the sheer logic of political markets:

Corporatist authors are not only concerned with the representative, democratic implications of group politics. They also devote considerable attention to the role that corporatism can play in ensuring the maintenance of political stability, or governability, in liberal democracies and in improving the effectiveness of interventionist policies (Williamson, 1989, p. 3).

Besides representation, interests came to be conceived as also subject to intermediation and regulation, a significant analytical shift in all that pertained to the

¹ On the importance of Schmitter's oeuvre in the redefinition of the research agenda for corporatism, see the ensemble of works dedicated to him and collected in cf. Crouch and Streeck (2006).

² Identical position found in Wiarda (1974) who firmly rejects the idea of a bounded association of corporatism to fascism or any other reactionary and backward-looking ideology.

³ Cf. Panitch (1979) Newman (1981) and Schmitter (1984); for an integrated overview of modern interpretations of corporatism and neocorporatism cf. Pryor (1988).

matters of pacts among social partners and collective wage setting and bargaining arrangements. Thus, speaking of corporatism implies the conceptual apparatus of a mediated exchange between state and civil society as the framework for the overall definition and implementation of public policies (cf. Cawson, 1985).

Corporatism is a distinct conceptualization of the relationship between the modern state and society. Corporatism is a specific socio-political process in which organizations representing monopolistic functional interests engage in political exchange with state agencies over public policy outputs which involves those organizations in a role that combines interest representation and policy implementation through delegated self-enforcement (Cawson, 1985, p. 8).

The matter is especially relevant if looked through the perspective of traditional actors participating in social concertation – government, trade unions and business associations – in search of wage setting agreements, the making of labor laws, and of establishing incentive policies directed towards specific sectors of economic activity (cf. Goldthorpe, 1984).

As far as partnership practices and social collaboration are concerned, corporatism in democratic regimes corresponds to voluntary and informal coordinating procedures of conflicting objectives through the enactment of succeeding and continual bargaining instruments in which an ensemble of interest groups, political parties, state representatives and regulatory agencies, to sum up, a variety of agents and institutions, comes to grant flexibility to the processes of decision-making hence helping to create a stable political climate.⁴

The matter of whether this political toolbox is economically efficient is certainly relevant, thus begging to point out the successful cases where economic growth met a favorable political environment (see Malloy, 1974; Katzenstein, 1987) fostered by the diffusion of corporatism as an ideology with an ethical content that advocates the harmony of interests and greater equity in social distribution of resources.

Overall, discussing the potential of corporatism as an effective system of interest organization and rent distribution unavoidably joins with the question of determining the type of political regime most favorable to economic growth. Accordingly, stemming from the assumption that institutional variability among advanced capitalist economies is a relevant explanatory feature, research conceived to account for the levels of economic performance based on the nature of systems of interest articulation and intermediation has gained renewed consideration. By acknowledging the significance of the social regulation dimension as an intervening

⁴ On the topic of organized interests and their relevance in contemporary political systems' design cf. Streeck (2006).

factor upon supply of goods and services this institutionalist approach is particularly important as regards the sphere of production. In this light, the artificial opposition between market rational behavior, allegedly sensitive to economic stimulus alone, and the role of social institutions seeking the optimal allocation of the resources mobilized through market forces (Streeck, 1992) lost much of its analytical purchase. Thelen's (1994) review of the study of corporatism stresses this very same point: the interests of both employers and workers came to be portrayed in a much more intricate complexion once the analytical emphasis accompanied the real policy shift from demand side to supply side management. The Keynesian perspective of the worker as a consumer met an equal attention to the role of the labor unions as the "organized representatives of workers as producers" (Thelen, 1994, p. 118). Concomitantly, the stylized depiction of the employers, as agents moved by a desire for greater flexibility of the labor market, developed into an account that highlighted their support for extra-market institutional arrangements to provide for collective goods that prove valuable for competing in the international marketplace.

It is still in this context that we may frame the vast literature on the varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001) and types of democracy (Schmitter and Todor, 2009), or on the diversity of economic systems in a globalized world (Amable, 2005). It goes without saying that these approaches have launched or pursued different paths of research. Nevertheless, though clearly differentiated from pure corporatist literature in their assumptions and objectives, these new lines of research offer fresh statements about decision making processes, the implementation of public policies, the embedding of functional relations between economic and political spheres, the regulation procedures and governance strategies, be them at the micro-corporate or macro-state tiers. They also provide relevant comparisons that are not limited to cross-national cases and are rather extensive to the particularities of economic sectors taken at an international comparative scale (Hollingsworth, Schmitter and Streeck, 1994).

All these approaches converge and coincide in the relevance attributed to proceeding through an analysis of comparative institutional advantage. This *modus operandi* is usually followed through with the elaboration of empirical studies on the degrees of corporatism (degree of unionization; strike frequency; representativeness of business associations; degree of centralization in wage bargaining and setting; actual participation in political decision making; extension of state economic sectors; degree of welfarism, etc.) able to produce measures of *corporatization* similar to

those built for the purpose of analyzing phenomena such as corruption and quality of democracy (cf. Pryor, 1988 and Siaroff, 1999).

Another concern within this kind of studies is the evaluation and comparison of incentive systems and administrative obstacles and hindrances interfering both in collective decision-making and individual choice, and in fostering behaviors ranging from cooperation to rivalry with clear implications for the unraveling of collective action.

The discussion around the presence of corporatist elements in contemporary economic organization is acknowledged by the authors that resort to typologies of differentiation between modalities of capitalist economies, whether in the more simplified version dichotomized between pure liberal capitalism of an American type and the German type of corporatism (Phelps, 2009), the distinction of liberal market economies and coordinated market economies (Hall and Soskice, 2001) or the more sophisticated version that enlightens this distinction through geographical specificities that result from cultural and institutional complementarities differentiating the European continental model, the Mediterranean model, and the Asian model (Amable, 2005).

A basic set of common attributes pervades these different approaches to modern corporatism, namely: the detailed study of the institutions directly related with the functioning of markets; the definition of rules of fair competition and the awareness of the consequences of their non obedience; the analysis of wage relations and the functioning of the labor market; the mode of organization of the sectors of financial intermediation and the prevailing models of management and corporate governance; the setting up of welfare and educational systems; and the depiction of the political regimes and party systems. In other words, this is all about acknowledging the relevance of the impact that an ample set of institutional features bears on the attainment of specific levels of economic performance and growth. It is also about acknowledging how the sustainability of economic growth depends upon the interconnection, cooperation and networking among partners, and does therefore benefit from conflicting tensions between social groups. Summing up, it is herein perceived a certain rehabilitation of the same guiding principles professed by inter-war corporatist ideologues, hence demonstrating the validity and helpfulness of the concept of corporatism for the understanding of socio-economic dynamics across political regimes of a quite distinct nature.

The diverse but interweaving themes synthetically presented above are approached and/or analyzed in the series of articles sampled for this study.

Throughout the four decades under scrutiny it is possible to discern evolutionary tendencies in the theoretical and empirical treatment of these matters, to explain the relevance they assume in particular conjunctures, or to elucidate the emergence and development of certain topics in terms of their political opportunity.

While the semantic flux contained in the term *corporatism*, because constitutive and constituted by the reality of the political and social worlds, plays a crucial role in the recurring interest and analyses of the concept, for the present purposes it had to be somehow domesticated and neatly arranged.

The attempt to devise an organizing principle for the seemingly unlimited possibility of species belonging to the corporatist genus steered us, with hindsight in a rather logical way, to the modern formulation of the concept before the burgeoning specification of sub-types was ignited. Manoilescu's take on the concept is especially useful because it builds on, albeit in an interweaving fashion, the two general shapes in which it may be conceived: an intellectual product of ideology and doctrine; and an actualized principle of socio-political organization that is possible regardless of any prior or simultaneous theorization.⁵ Perhaps the fittest recent example of this independence between doctrine and practice are the post-Mao Chinese regulatory experiments for market liberalization. While the rhetoric contained in the doctrine of corporatism is simply incommensurable with the preceding monist character of the Chinese state, ultimately in charge of its own reform, the processes of economic renovation have been grounded on what are described as local state corporatism (Oi, 1992; Maria, 2004) and socialist corporatism (Pearson, 1994) systems of interest interaction. Noteworthy is too how this example, by suggesting how corporatism may constitute a passing way from monolithic communism towards economic liberalism as much as a way out of the latter like the early theorizing of the 20th century longed for, discourages an explanation of it as a third way solution between capitalism and communism.

This distinction between ideology and doctrine is in Manoilescu far from clear due to its utopian aspirations which in turn furthers the delicacy and fluidity of the inherent balance of public and private articulation contained within the concept. With this in mind we may wonder if the classical definition put forth by Schmitter would have sufficed. It probably would have, but with different results. Schmitter's definition only gestured at corporatism's core. When all that is accessory is peeled off and its essential contradictory nature bulges we are left with: *the institutionalization*

⁵ And even then did Manoilescu conceive two sub-types: the *corporatisme pur* and the *corporatism subordonné*.

of the normative distinction between private and public interest and the subsequent functional articulation of both. The remaining features present in the classical definition provided by Schmitter offered the relevant dimensions for a *par genus et differentiae* empirical analysis of actually existing corporatism. What our lean and broad definition of corporatism lent us was the ability to acknowledge the existence of corporatist patterns in any field of functional representation with participation in, and at any stage of, state intervention, and also the very corporatist-specific modality of self-regulated procedural regulation, i.e. a social order guided by the principle of subsidiarity.⁶ So, after the sample of articles had been collected what was to be determined for each of the articles was the matter of whether they effectively dealt with the issues pertaining to the performance, by private associations, of classically conceived public duties, tasks and activities and “delegated self-enforcement” (Cawson, 1985, p. 8).

Data and Methods

Given the goal of making sense of the wide literature on the concept and phenomena signaled by the term corporatism one would need a ductile, overarching definition to start with, even if minimal, and then proceed by an always arbitrary reduction of the universe taken under scrutiny. The problem of starting with *a priori* definitions of what is to be observed is the irrevocable bias thereof. This bias was avoided in the first sampling phase by adopting criteria exterior to the controversy — if the article mentioned the terms “corporatism”, “tripartite arrangements”, “social pacts”, and “wage bargaining”, and was relevant to anyone who wished to learn more about corporatism, it was taken as a positive sample and ready to be labeled. In the second stage however an analysis more attuned to the concrete understanding of corporatism as presented above was enacted.

The data is thence consisting of two separate sets. Data Set 1 labels 630 articles referring to corporatism in the text from nine journals: *American Journal of Sociology* (43 articles); *British Journal of Political Science* (55 articles); *Comparative Political Studies* (109 articles); *Comparative Politics* (115 articles); *International Organization* (64 articles); *Political Studies* (115 articles); *Politics and Society* (48 articles); *Social Forces* (21 articles); *Studies in Comparative International Development* (60 articles). These journals were selected according to

⁶ The concept of private interest government (see Streek and Schmitter, 1985, pp. 1-29), arguably to a great extent a development of this catholic principle social organization, best fits the role of an ideotypical formulation of this kind of regulation.

straightforward criteria of highest number of relevant articles gathered on random sampling. Each journal was then browsed for the period from 1970 to June 2011⁷ through their respective search engine for the term “corporatism”. All types of articles such as research notes, rejoinders and debates, articles on methodology, and introductions to special issues were included except for book and literature reviews. With the exception of the sociologically leaning journals (*Social Forces* and *American Journal of Sociology*) the number of articles referring to corporatism represents approximately a little less than 10% of the total amount of published articles in the remaining seven journals and there is no significant fluctuation in the number of published articles within these journals throughout the four decades.

Based on the results of the preceding, for Data Set 2 we took 315 articles coded for 23 variables from the three journals that displayed the largest amount of articles thus promising a representative assortment.⁸ The journals are: *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *Political Studies*. These 315 represent approximately 10% of the total amount of published articles in these three journals.

The design of the coding fields for stage two relied largely on Munck and Snyder’s (2007) enterprise for analyzing the nature of research on comparative politics, with some adaptations made for two reasons. The first and more relevant was the need to render the data amenable for engagement with, and assessment of, some claims on the evolution of scholarly attention to political economy issues. Of particular note here is Schmidt’s (2008) depiction of the changing analytical focus between labour, the state, and business⁹, and Kenworthy’s (2000) account of a shift from an interest in corporatism *per se* to corporatism’s effects and his claim that, after some disinterest, corporatism came “back in the limelight” in the early 1990’s because of a resurgence in political practice of corporatist pacts.

Secondly, in reading Munck and Snyder’s analysis of leading journals, all fields appear to serve a clear purpose and to be unproblematic, especially because presented with already treated information where everything seems tidied up and put to its proper place. However when trying to replicate the coding fields some issues of reliability appeared insurmountable like, for instance, the matter of whether the

⁷ Both the fact that the *British Journal of Political Science* is only available from 1971 onward, and the fact that the survey only covers half of 2011 have some weight on the results.

⁸ See appendix 2 for a list of fields and variables covered.

⁹ Schmidt depicts five shifts in scholarly attention from the 1970’s to present: 1) an early focus on labour, the structure and power of unions in macroeconomic policies in the 1970’s; 2) a turn to an emphasis on the state in the 1980’s (recognized under the umbrella term of “bringing the state back in”); 3) a subsequent denial of state centrality by the early 1990’s; 4) the rising of firm-centered analysis thrust by the “varieties of capitalism school”; 5) and a slow rise of redirected attention towards labour and corporatist types of policies.

article offers descriptions or causal accounts. No matter how precise the question, the answer offered in the article is unlikely to be so. Additionally, some variables were left out because of lack of import for the present purposes¹⁰.

Among other specificities the variables chosen aim to gauge: the substantive scope and the spatial and temporal range of analysis; the types of corporatism dealt with; data generation; and methods of theory construction and empirical analysis. The most problematic field of coding was unsurprisingly whether the main theme of the article was corporatism or not.

Some issues of reliability are naturally present in the kind of coding conducted. Even an apparently readily applicable broad definition of corporatism seems at odds with precise objective reasoning, and the exposure to manifold notions of corporatism tends to shape the succeeding readings of the initial definition. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that if the sample was re-coded there would be any significant changes in the general patterns that have emerged, which are ultimately the main point of interest of this type of handling with large bulks of subjective information.

Results

Data Set 1

The main purpose of the first stage of analysis is to provide a broad account of the evolving scholarly interest on the subject of corporatism throughout time and the ways it was dealt with and approached. From the nine journals selected,¹¹ the sampled articles were labeled once according to one of the five categories:¹² Regimes and Institutions (RI); Indicators, Measures and Models (IMM); Economic Performance (EP); Theory, Foundations and Currents of Thought (TFC); and Historical Examples (HE). As mentioned above this sample is composed of a majority of scientific articles but notes, replies, rejoinders, and debates were also gathered; the total number of documents is 630.

The distribution per category displays the predominance of RI, followed by

¹⁰ These were: gender of authors; type of institutions with which author is affiliated; author's rank; funding for the research; presence of formal data sets in data analysis; and existence of non-English sources.

¹¹ Journals were selected according to straightforward criteria of highest number of articles gathered on random sampling: *American Journal of Sociology*; *British Journal of Political Science*; *Comparative Political Studies*; *Comparative Politics*; *International Organization*; *Political Studies*; *Politics and Society*; *Social Forces*; *Studies in Comparative International Development*.

¹² Naturally these categories while analytically distinct overlap to some degree, the criteria for determining labels can be consulted in appendix 1.

IMM, TFC, EP, and HE respectively [see fig. 1]. This layout represents both the labeling criteria and the actual focus of research. The predominance of the RI category is largely attributable to the generic characteristics of the concept of corporatism embodying the relationship of a certain type of institutions within a political regime, so we may view this category as the default label, i.e. it contains the articles which did not rightfully belong to any other category.

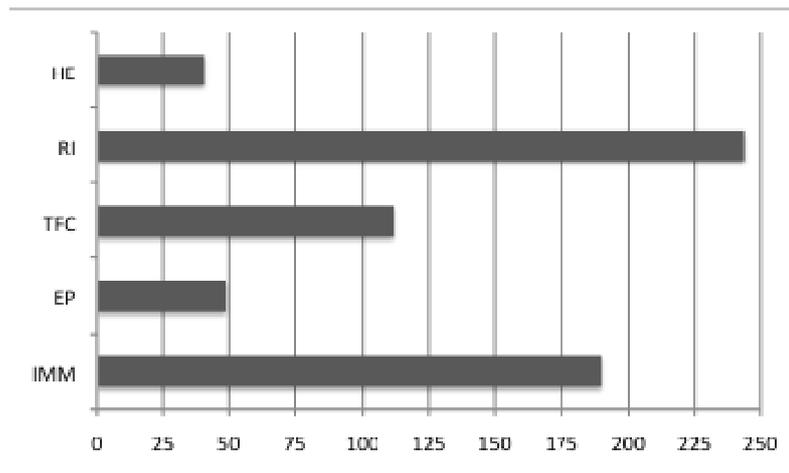


Figure 1. Number of articles per category (n=630). Rationale for labeling process can be found in appendix 1.

The total number of sampled articles rises steadily until the early 1990's and starts afterwards to decrease monotonically, reaching, in the final period (2006-2011), approximately two thirds of the amount at its apex (1991-1995) [see fig. 2]. While the rise in the number of articles mentioning corporatist themes follows the general increase of published research in social science, its decrease is more likely due to a real shift in overall perceived relevance of the subject and its explanatory power. Indeed, it is worth noting that the weight decrease initiated in the early 1990's corresponds to both the occurrence of a period of stable economic performance and the development of new social and political coordination mechanisms, especially within the framework of European institutional settings, and, ultimately mitigating the demand for more typically corporatist solutions of bargaining and representation.

Perhaps the pattern that best illustrates scholarly attention on the subject of corporatism is the evolution of the number of articles labeled IMM. Starting with comparatively low numbers when juxtaposed with TFC, from the early 1990's onward the IMM category surpasses largely TFC numbers and does not decrease with the same pace as the other categories [see fig. 3].

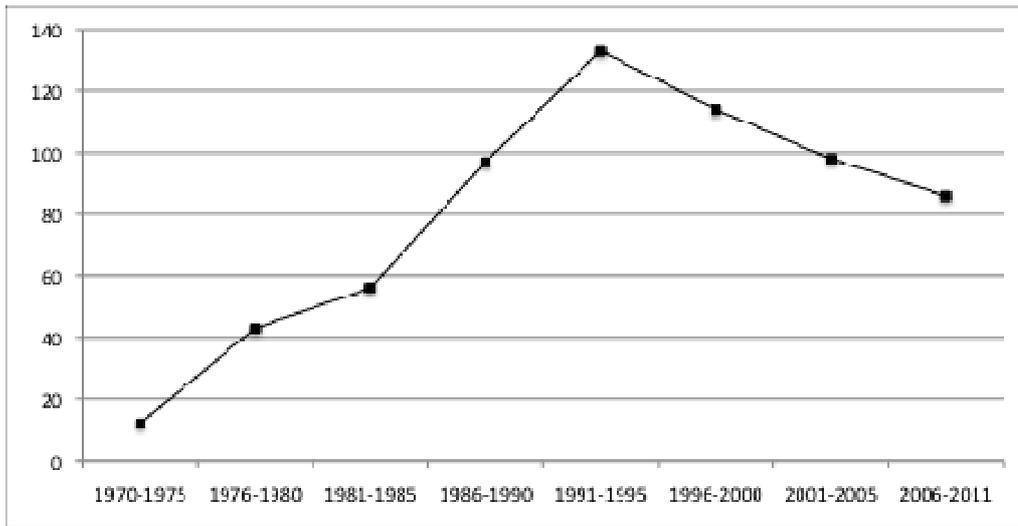


Figure 2. Number of articles per 5-year periods (n=630). The line serves purely illustrative purposes.

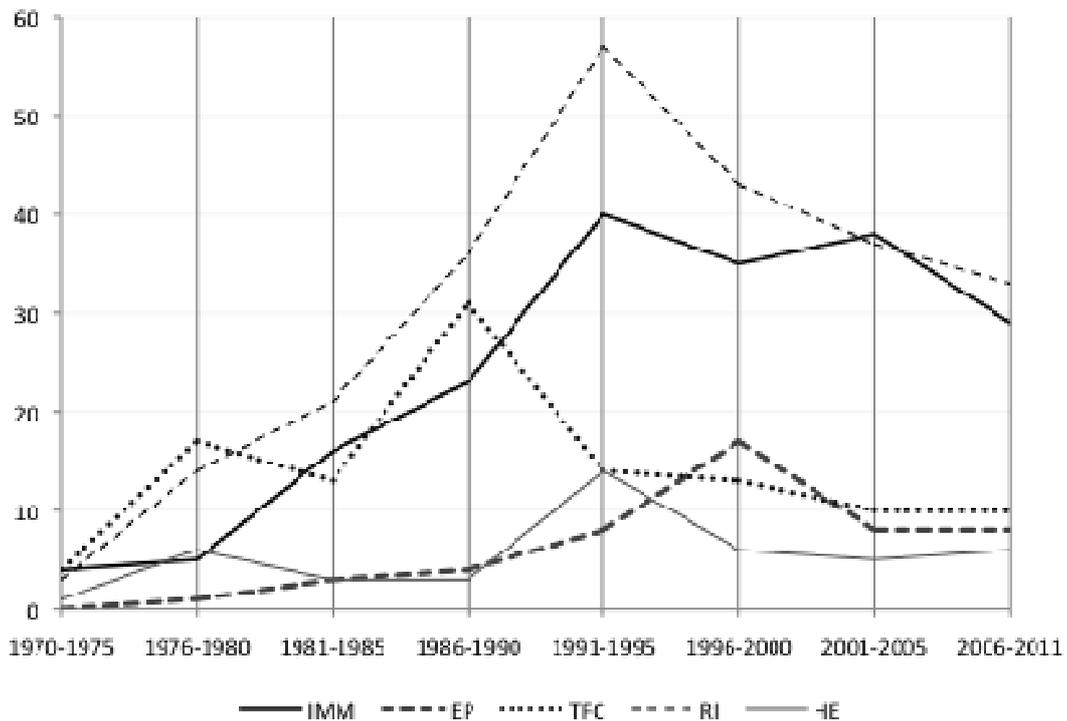


Figure 3. Number of articles per category and per 5-year period (n=360). The line serves purely illustrative purposes

Data Set 2

For Data Set 2 the first task was to determine whether the article actually focused on corporatism or dealt with corporatist themes. On account of the intrinsic ambiguities of the question we opted for a trichotomized answer where: a) the article dealt mainly and exclusively with corporatism and corporatist themes; b) the article dealt with corporatism and corporatist themes but shared its focus with other themes; c) the article dealt mainly with other issues and corporatism held a fairly secondary role in the analysis.

Table 1
Main Subject Matter is Corporatism?

Period	Yes (a)	No, but one of the main (b)	No (c)	Total
1971 - 1975	1,8%	2,2%	1,6%	1,9%
1976 - 1980	14,0%	3,0%	10,5%	7,9%
1981 - 1985	10,5%	3,7%	8,1%	6,7%
1986 - 1990	22,8%	14,9%	13,7%	15,9%
1991 - 1995	15,8%	23,9%	22,6%	21,9%
1996 - 2000	17,5%	15,7%	21,8%	18,4%
2001 - 2005	8,8%	17,9%	8,1%	12,4%
2006 - 2010	8,8%	18,7%	13,7%	14,9%
Total	18,1%	42,5%	39,4%	100,0%

Note: N = 315. Data are drawn from the variable Main_focus of the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2.

The articles classified as c) were only coded for the fields pertaining to basic information (year, author, and journal) and not the remainder. The number of articles dealing mainly and exclusively with corporatism (a) suffers a significantly

smaller variation than the whole sample, albeit usually following the generic trends. It is only in the quinquenniums between 1976 and 1990 that number of articles of b) where corporatism is sidelined by other themes is smaller than a) the number of articles yielding specific and full attention to corporatism.

Other Subject Matter

The main subject matter covered is, as one would expect, economic policy followed by interest groups and political system/political regime. Taken as an ensemble these three themes perform a fair job in describing what corporatism came to be in its tripartite shape or version: a political system actively including recognized interest groups, selected upon the imperative of stable and economic growth to optimize the design and implementation of economic policy.

Table 2
Subject Matters Covered Beside Corporatism

Overarching Subject Matter	% Articles	Subject Matter	% Articles
Regimes and Institutions	79,6	Political system/regime	24.6
		Quality of democracy	16.2
		Public policy	14.1
		Political transitions	11.5
		Bureaucracy and legal issues	8.4
		State restructuring	4.7
Economic Features	56,5	Economic policy	32.5
		Economic performance	14.1
		Economic development	6.8
		Redistributive justice	3.1
Social Phenomena and Agency	38,7	Interest groups	27.8
		Globalization	5.2
		Political attitudes	4.7
		Social movements	1.1
Conceptual Treatment	27,2	Pluralism	14.1
		Social justice	7.3
		State theory	5.8

Note: N= 190. Data are drawn from the variable *Other_subject_matters* of the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2. The total percentage for the % Articles column exceeds 100% because articles frequently address more than one subject.

It is also interesting to note how among the themes ascribed to the overarching subject matter of conceptual treatment it is pluralism the one getting most of

attention. This is most likely due to the conditions under which corporatism re-entered the vocabulary and conceptual palette of academic discourse than to the material reality to which corporatism actually refers. Given the highly complex ideas of organicism and the originally catholic principle of subsidiarity¹³ that concur to the conceptualization of corporatism, there was plenty terrain for the construction and development of the underlying state theory in corporatism, or even for reflections sensitive to the normative grounds upon which corporate systems could promote particular visions of social justice and how well they were able to enact such desiderata. Instead, because corporatist authors were trespassing empirical terrains previously claimed by theorists of pluralism, a dispute arose as to which contender could offer greater explanatory leverage.

Types of Corporatism Dealt With

The most studied type of corporatism is societal corporatism followed by state corporatism and curiously enough, by types or expressions of corporatism unspecified (“other”) in our *a priori* categorization of which we thought to be quite comprehensive.

Table 3
Types of Corporatism

Type of Corporatism	% Articles
Societal Corporatism	73.8
State Corporatism	18.8
Other	14.1
Sectoral or meso corporatism	5.2
Micro-corporatism	3.7
Professional Corporatism	3.1
Transnational Corporatism	1.6
Local Corporatism	1.0

Note: N = 190. The total percentage for % Articles column exceeds 100% because some articles address more than one type of corporatism. Data are drawn from the variable Type_corporatism of the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2.

These “other” types of corporatism essentially highlight specific possibilities already contained in the main concept or characterize with adjectives. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to classify them as any of the available specified types, especially when

¹³ Regarded as the neologism of Pope Pius XI, essentially stating “that the lowest unit that can perform a particular function adequately, efficiently and with benefit to the whole should do so before a high level becomes involved” (Schrems, 2007: 1140).

they have been deliberately baptized and or theorized as a distinct breed or analytical category of corporatism. To mention a few, these exceptional types can be: a sort of rural corporatism in French-occupied Vietnamese villages (Gourevitch, 1977); an embedded agricultural corporatism (Meadwell, 1991); a latent countryside inherited corporatism (Eisenstadt, 2009); a kind of colonial coporatism (Heilbrunn, 1997); an ethnic corporatism or quasi-consociationalism (Kopstein & Wittenberg, 2010); and, to give an example of a corporatism taken as an analytical category we have the inclusionary/exclusionary corporatism to describe the incorporation of labor in corporatist institutional settings.

Goals of Research

The numbers of theory generation crest in the same period as the ones labeled TFC in Data Set 1, and then suffer a 93% slump. After this huge decrease the number of articles aiming at theory generation rises steadily and slowly. This result seemingly concurs with our speculation regarding Data Set 1, that after discussion and elaboration upon the concept of corporatism and the search and discussion for effective and accurate ways to measure it the interest in the concept itself petered out and corporatism came to play more of a explanatory role for other sorts of social phenomena.

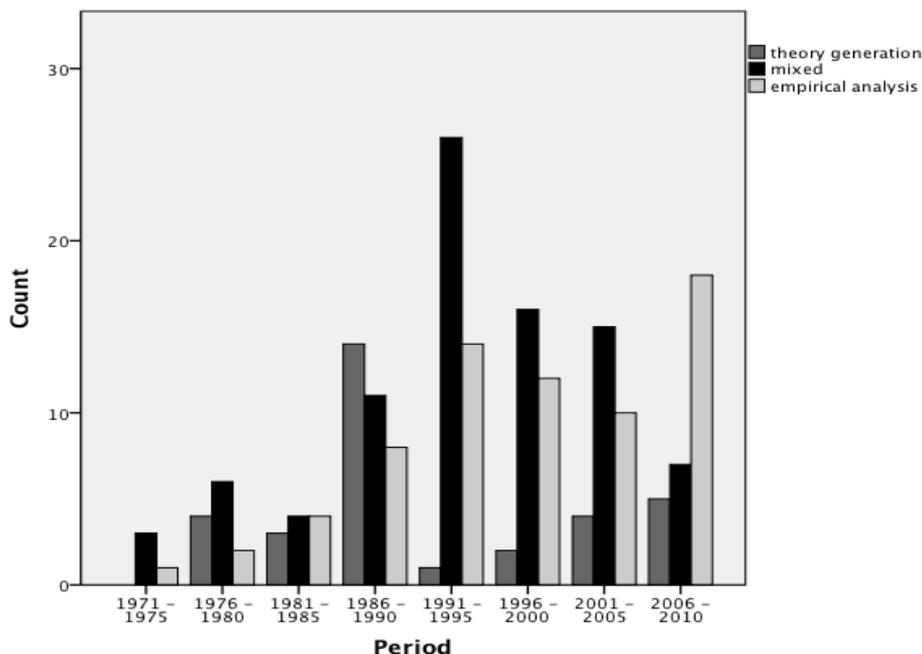


Figure 4. Goals of Research 1971-2010

Focus on Associations

With this question we were mainly interested in finding out whether the expected predominance of research on tripartite corporatism would show any kind of bias in

the focus on traditional constituent parts. Furthermore, we wished to enable the sample's responsiveness to shifts in attention to the different parts of a tripartite structure. We hence surveyed for the presence of significant quantitative or qualitative data, or data, about structure, features and other aspects of business or labor associations presented. Despite the necessarily vague structure of the question it provided a useful, albeit blunt, probe for the issue of any empirical bias.

Among the articles with an empirical analysis attention towards associations concentrates heavier on labor associations with 22,9%. The results are hence consistent with Vivien Schmidt's account of scholarly attention in the area of political economy; business associations do receive more attention in the late 1990's than in any other period. There is a surprisingly large amount of articles bearing no particular attention to the inner structure or action of either type of associations in the period of 1991 to 1995.

Table 4
Focus on Business and/or Labor Associations

Type of Associations	% Articles
Labour	22.9
Business	11.5
Both	10.2
None	55.4
Total	100.0

Note: N=157. Data are drawn from the variables Business_labor from the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2.

Methods of Empirical Analysis

The large share of empirical analysis employs qualitative methods — representing almost half with 47.4% of the total — while articles using mainly quantitative methods constitute a surprisingly small share of the sample. Given the wide variety of corporatism indicators one might have expected a more frequent use of them in a quantitative fashion. The reason why this is not the case in the sample may be due to the exclusion of many articles that did use indicators for the degree of corporatism as one of the many explanatory variables but granted an unequivocally secondary role to corporatism *qua* corporatism.

Table 5
Methods of Empirical Analysis

Type of Method	% Articles	Aggregate
Qualitative	47.4	} Mainly Qualitative 75.6%
Mixed method, dominantly qualitative	28.2	
Mixed Method, dominantly quantitative	11.5	} Mainly Quantitative 24.3%
Quantitative	12.8	
Total	100.0	

Note: N=157. Data are drawn from the variables Method_analysis of the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2.

Geographical Coverage of Empirical Research

There is an acute, and perhaps expected, imbalance in the geographical coverage of corporatism in favor of the Western Europe area. In fact the data shows that analysis of the Western European sites is more frequent than the rest of the world combined throughout all periods until 1996-2000. Albeit firstly used to describe political configurations of the Scandinavian societies the growth in interest led the concept to, as Jessop (1990, p. 111) put it, acquire “ever more connotations” in a way that “almost all modern societies have, at some point or another, been described as corporatist”.

Table 6
Geographical Coverage of Empirical Research

Area	% Articles
Western Europe	68.6
North America	16.7
Latin American	15.4
East Asia	10.3
Oceania	9.0
Middle East and North Africa	5.8
Eastern Europe	4.5
USSR or post-Soviet Republics	2.6
Global	2.6
South East Asia	1.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.3
Other	0.6

Note: N = 157. Data are drawn from the variable Geographical_coverage of the Corporatism Articles Data Set 2.

The fact that North America occupies the second position in attention granted can hardly be interpreted as a sign of presence of corporatist patterns but rather as manifestation of the comparative fever for determining the best socio-political system.

Discussion

If we were to take a snapshot at the archetypical article on corporatism, based on Data Set 2 results it would look rather indistinct and in a way suiting the hybrid nature of most of late actually existing corporatism; a strain of regulatory experiments among others. This “model article” would pay significant attention to the subject matters of economic policy and, accordingly, it would deal with the societal corporatist type. There would be no specific focus in neither business nor labor associations which is considerably surprising given its apparent predilection for tripartism where the associational structure and functioning would be natural points of interest. Data analysis would be mainly qualitative in spite of the reported impressive spree of available measures for the concept and its scientific goals would be a compromise between theory and empirical description. Its preferred geographic locations for inquiry would be in the Western Europe, at least until the mid 1990’s a time when this Eurocentric bias is somehow mitigated.

Overall Data Set 1 is rather useful for a characterization of the general trends in scholarly attention. As seen in figure 3, the IMM category has a significant different behavior from the remaining. A simple narrative could account for such fact: after much debate on the concept of corporatism, how to ascribe it to concrete phenomena, and what kind of relationships did these phenomena appeared to bear with other meaningful political and economical facts the theme was rendered apt for empirical testing; benefiting from increasing sophistication of quantitative methods applied to social science, the emphasis shifted from digging and excavating both the concept and discrete manifestations to efforts for unveiling general laws governing the phenomena. As the concept grew operative through more available data and an impressive spree of different indicators of corporatism (for an overview of 42 indicators of corporatism see Kenworthy, 2000) it was integrated in the array of macro-explanatory and control variables for all sorts of explicandum. Hence, the IMM’s comparatively lagging high numbers are more suited to be interpreted along Kenworthy’s (2000) line that interest in corporatist *per se* waned in favor of a focus

in the effects of corporatism empirical dimensions — with measures on the organization of interest groups (Schmitter, 1981), their participation in policy making (Lehmbruch, 1984), and, later on, wage setting and wage bargaining arrangements (Cameron, 1984; Calmfors and Drifill, 1988) — than the claim that academic attention to corporatism did persist albeit in a more quantitative fashion.

To actually determine whether interest in corporatism *per se* faded and subsequently resurged accompanying shifting material realities Data Set 2 offers a much better vantage point. Whereas the sample still managed to capture a significant variety of corporatist themes, as can be seen in Table 2, the bias towards societal corporatism (the umbrella term for democratic corporatism, neocorporatism, tripartite corporatism and others) is undeniable. Despite the presumable propensity of the very type, on account of its conceptual amplitude, to gather a larger share of attention than the rest of the types, a proto-narrative of the whole concept of corporatism in the discipline of political science may be unraveled through this quantitative glance at the concept.

Instead of knowing many things like the “fox” (Berlin, 1953), a fair share of the corporatism literature attempted, like the “hedgehog”, to know one big thing: to understand and explain the overall economic performance of nation states as a function of the structure and the strategy of labor. Kenworthy’s (2000) survey of existing indicators of corporatism tends to confirm this predilection of corporatist literature towards labor but as shown in table 3 most of articles sampled present significant care of either side of the associational backcloth of tripartite corporatism.

The slump shown in figure 4 of articles aiming for theory generation coincides with the peak of articles focusing exclusively in corporatism (table 1) and also, in Data Set 1, with the crest of articles labeled “Theory, Foundations and Currents of Thought” (TFC, fig. 3). The concurrence of these three facts does not by itself represent any setback in an ongoing understanding of corporatism neither does it necessarily signal the swan song of this particular subject of inquiry. It does bespeak, however, something about the nature of academic research and hints towards some possibly troublesome questions that cannot be aptly answered here.

As it seems to stand out of these facts, when seen together with the evolution in the overall presence of corporatism in political studies (fig. 2), the discipline of political science could be charged of a sort of a collective whimsical behavior towards the concept. Especially if read in the light of Goodin’s (2009) take on the “big-thingism” in political science, passionately plunging in and out of trends that do not matter “as much as some hope and others fear” (p. 31).

Typically corporatism has come to make cameos in the more recent strains of political economy literature as some previous evolutionary stage of knowledge (see Thelen, 2002). As with any generalization of the sort the shortcomings of the literature and the putative imperfections of the concept frequently come together in a bulk that obscures the concept's *raison d'être* and analytical advantage and richness. Besides representing the corporatist literature as a school of thought that never was they blank out the variety of approaches to corporatism undertaken outside the perspective of industrial relations. It is even unclear whether these emaciated appearances of corporatist literature are a *de facto* reference to it or a sheer benchmark for the past predominance of labor studies within the political economy of business and labor.

Objectively what Schmidt depicts as a periodical sway of scholarly attention to the state, labor and business takes place within the conceptual framework lay down by Schmitter's neocorporatism and, contrary to what the expression of "bringing capital back in" (Swenson, 1991) may suggest neither did corporatist literature kept capital away (see Streeck & Schmitter, 1985) nor does the new literature "bring" necessarily "capital in". It does recall attention to the relational aspect of the dynamics occurring within and between both the regulatory framework and the social and technical division of labor that sustain the capitalist mode of production, with a special emphasis on the role of the firm (Hall & Soskice, 2001) or on cross-class coalitions (for a brief review see Thelen, 2002). What these two strains of political economy may bring "back in" to the analytical limelight are capitalists or employers in the sense that Schmidt more felicitously phrased as putting the "firm to the fore".

With hindsight of this constant fluctuation, it would not be cynical to forecast an upcoming streak of labor studies or predicting a cry for greater attention to labor's explanatory role. These shifts seem to unwittingly capitalize on past oversights with fresh disregards, performing von Beyme's (1983, p. 191) dictum a propos of neo-corporatism when stating: "every change of paradigm begins with a new exaggeration". But corporatism may still contain the right elements to avoid this pendular analytic movement between different organizational interests if such interests continue to be theoretically articulated, as it was under the conceptualization of the processes of political exchange (Marin, 1990), indeed the very process that is arguably central to understand corporatism as politics (see Bull, 1992, p. 256).

Though corporatism never entirely acquired the status of a "big thing", — neither does it fit the "job requirements" (Goodin, 2009, p. 22-4) nor does it pose any clear and unique epistemological claim — it did at some time purchased the status of

an “approach” and an “intellectual framework” (Wiarda, 1997, p. 23). Because a static, more structurally leaning, depiction of corporatism triumphed, the concept grew inoperative apparently constrained by its theoretical imperfections, and as a result it could not quite analytically cope with the institutional and industrial restructuring that underwent post-Fordism (Molina & Rhodes, 2002). Perhaps it is this analytical shortsightedness that is the most solid motive for a waning attention to the concept (Thelen, 1994).

Nevertheless, if used with dexterity corporatism may still be a rather useful approach to the political economy and system under any kind of technological, industrial, economic, and social paradigms [see Siaroff's (1999) four-dimensional ideal-type]. As long as collective actors and state officials persist as features of the political landscape, most likely will political exchange take place and most likely will this exchange be conceptualized in terms of public and private interests. In this light it is possible to deem plenty of the literature on political economy to be corporatism literature without saying it and some without knowing it.

Concluding remarks

In this article we presented a series of statistical features showing the evolution of the corporatism literature(s) over the last forty years. Overall they confirm the general accounts typically held regarding the sway of scholarly attention. Apart from the diminishing attention that corporatism has received in some of the most relevant journals in the field of political science it is worth noting the changing nature of the subject under study.

Though political science strives to account for changes in the political realm it is not clear how much it changes itself because of the things it wishes to explain. To be sure, our aim was not to present a critical essay on the conditions under which knowledge is produced. However, it is nevertheless possible to underline that the assessment offered in this article provides new data and analysis that may prove rather valuable to such critical undertakings.

It seems likely that the place of corporatism within the literature of political economy and comparative politics will remain stable and will keep on providing interesting pretexts and relevant case studies to further strengthening academic research. And this is certainly due to the very relevance and keen interest of the topics that corporatism is supposed to address.

We are currently experiencing difficult times marked by a deep economic and financial crisis that threatens the stability of conventional social and political systems. In these moments filled with burgeoning appeals to social dialogue and new political arrangements, it makes perfect sense to recall the accumulated contributions that the literature on corporatism may offer for the explanation of sets of motivations determining the functioning of interest groups and the economic advantages springing from steadfast social compromises. Besides macroeconomic policy palliatives, raising waves of increasing skepticism and discomfort, other possibilities arise for solutions regarding the maintenance of social and economic equilibrium in the western democratic world. The issues raised by the early corporatist literature are certainly outdated, but they still resonate beyond the twentieth century, bequeathing us the task of further comprehension. It was precisely with that aim in mind that the present assessment has been produced.

The prolonged character of the current crisis is a safe guarantee of the opportunity to discuss the subjects related with the corporative problematic of interest representation and the order of collective action. No speculation on the possible quantitative vigor or qualitative innovation will amount to any significant interest if one crucial point of understanding is delayed or unremarked: the fact that a movement that threatened to materialize in an alternative paradigm of social, political and economical organization was rather gradually transformed in a stream of empirical and theoretical reflection that still holds an outstanding position in the research agenda of political science and political economy.

Appendix 1: Labeling Criteria

Note: Only the articles that present the term “corporatism” in the full text of the selected reviews were sampled.

Articles were labeled once.

For articles covering subjects related to more than one label, the dominant one is to be determined according to the description and criteria that follows.

Perhaps a “Globalization and Corporatism” label would be of interest but then again it would be somewhat redundant for most of the articles that would fall into such category come from the *Studies in Comparative Development Review*.

Indicators, Measures and Models (IMM):

The article pays significant attention to quantitative reasoning. The soundness of data and models are of central importance.

Articles providing new measures or indicators of corporatism are labeled with IMM regardless of their scope.

Articles covering subjects related with RI but with panel data, pooled cross-section or time series analyses will be labeled with IMM.

If the article contains indicators typical of research on corporatism but fails to explicitly address them as indicators of corporatism the article will nevertheless be included in the IMM category.

If the article is mainly theoretical but sustains or presents reasoning in algebraic or ideographic language it is to be labeled IMM.

Economic Performance (EP):

Main purpose of the article is to evaluate the role and weight of corporatist institutions in the behavior of variables pertaining to economic performance (wage inequality is not to be considered as one).

Articles relating environmental performance with corporatism will be are labeled with EP in lack of better fitting.

Articles referring to corporatism or corporatist institutions in a much too secondary role will not be considered.

Theory, Foundations, Current of Thought (TFC):

The article presents theoretical reasoning, thought-experiments, normative reflection, or historical reconstruction of the concept of interest. Articles discussing the compatibility of democracy and corporatism; addressing the conceptual roots of corporatism; discussing its legitimacy; praising its merits or demerits; or efforts in bridging disciplinary boundaries are will be labeled with TFC.

Articles on state theory granting attention to corporatism institutional settings are will also be included.

Subjects related to other labels may be discussed in the article but attention is primarily given to theoretical framing and empirical evidence takes a supporting and reduced role.

Regimes and Institutions (RI):

The article presents case studies on the interaction between political regime and corporatist institutions or case studies of corporatist institutions which include bargaining arrangements or wage-setting agreements.

The units of interest may be individual firms, associations or industries.

If the article covers a large set of national units in the analysis in an econometric fashion it will not be considered in this label but with IMM.

This label may be further refined with tagged geographical information.

Historical Examples (HE):

The article refers to a national unit of analysis in Historical time where corporatism was a main feature of the political regime covered.

Appendix 2: Coding Instructions (adapted from Munck & Snyder, 2007)

1. Article Identification

- a) *Year*. Year of publication.
- b) *Journal*
 - (1) Political Studies
 - (2) Comparative Political Studies
 - (3) Comparative Politics
- c) *Title*. The first four letters from title of article.
- d) *Label*. Label given in Data Set 1.

2. Authors

- a) *Surname*. Surname of first author.
- b) *Initial*. Initial of the first author.
- c) *N_authors*. The number of authors contributing to the publication.
- d) *Discipline*. The discipline of the first author.
 - (1) Political Science
 - (2) Economics
 - (3) Sociology
 - (4) International relations
 - (5) Undeclared
 - (6) Other
- e) *Local_affiliation*. Location of author's affiliation.
 - (1) EUA, Canada, Australia, e New Zealand
 - (2) Western Europe
 - (3) Latin America and the Caribbean
 - (4) Asia
 - (5) Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Republics
 - (6) Middle East
 - (7) Africa

3. Corporatism: Scope and Objectives

- a) *Main_focus*. The main focus of the article is the concept, manifestations, or indicators and measures of corporatism?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No, but one of the main (corporatism shares the central concerns of the article with other subject matters)
 - (3) No (corporatism takes a clearly secondary in the structure and scope of the article)If (3) skip all remaining fields.
- b) *Type_corporatism*. What type of corporatism is addressed in the article? (if necessary select multiple values)
 - (1) Societal corporatism
 - (2) State corporatism
 - (3) Socialist corporatism
 - (4) Local corporatism
 - (5) Transnational corporatism
 - (6) Sectoral corporatism
 - (7) Other
- c) *Other_subject_matters*. Besides corporatism the article addresses the topic(s) of (if necessary select multiple values, up to three):
 - (1) Quality of democracy
 - (2) Political Transitions
 - (3) Political Regime/ Political System
 - (4) Bureaucracy and legal issues
 - (5) Public Policy
 - (6) Economic performance
 - (7) Economic development
 - (8) Economic policy

- (9) State restructuring
- (10) Globalization
- (11) Social Movements
- (12) Interest Groups
- (13) Political attitudes
- (14) Pluralism
- (15) State
- (16) Social Justice

d) *Scientific_goal.* Is the goal of the article theory generation and/or empirical analysis?

- (1) Theory generation
- (2) Both theory generation and empirical analysis
- (3) Empirical Analysis

e) *Comparative_method.* Does the article proceed by comparative analysis?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

4. Empirical Analysis

a) *New_data.* Does the article present new data?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

b) *Business_labor.* Is data on business and/or labor associations presented as significant part of the general structure of the article?

- (1) = Business Associations
- (2) = Labor Associations
- (3) = Both
- (4) = None

c) *Method_data.* What method is used to generate the data?

- (1) = Analysis of secondary sources
- (2) = Analysis of newspapers and sources
- (3) = Analysis of government sources and official documents
- (4) = Interviews
- (5) = Focus Group
- (6) = Surveys and questionnaires
- (7) = Experiment
- (8) = Other

d) *N_country.* How many countries does the article present in the study?

1,2,3 ... N

e) *Geographical_coverage.* From what region of the world are the countries included in the study? (If necessary select multiple values)

- (1) Western Europe
- (2) Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia)
- (3) USSR or post-Soviet Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan)
- (4) East Asia (China, Hong-Kong, Japan, Koreas, Taiwan, Tibet)
- (5) South Asia (Bali, Brunei, Burma, Cambodja, East Timor, Indonesia, Malasia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)
- (6) Oceania (Australia, New Zealand)
- (7) Middle Eastern and North Africa
- (8) Sub-Saharan Africa
- (9) Latin America
- (10) North America
- (11) Other
- (12) Global

f) Time. How many years are covered by the study

- (1) less than a year
- (2) from 1 to 5 years
- (3) from 5 to 20 years
- (4) from 20 to 50 years
- (5) more than 50 years

g) Units_observation. If observations are made on a unit other than the country, what is the unit of observation? (If necessary select multiple values and offer corresponding N in the following variable)

- (1) Country-time period
- (2) Subnational jurisdiction (state government, regional, village)
- (3) Subnational jurisdiction-time period
- (4) Group or organization (political party, business, trade union)
- (5) Group or organization-time period
- (99) Other

(If none of the above skip next field.)

h) N_observations (when the unit observed is not a country)
1,2,3 ... N

i) Method_analysis. What methods are used to analyze the data?

- (1) Qualitative
- (2) Mixed, mainly qualitative
- (3) Mixed, mainly quantitative
- (4) Quantitative

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