

## Toward a new regime of civic interest representation

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(Rich, Jessica A. J. *Ativismo patrocinado pelo Estado: burocratas e movimentos sociais no Brasil democrático*. SciELO-Editora Fiocruz, 2021)

Among the themes frequently studied by Brazilian social movement's scholars is the relationship between movements and the state. The Lula administrations (2003-2010) were marked by intense state-society interactions, which allowed for important theoretical and analytical advances (ABERS and BULOW, 2011; ABERS, SERAFIM and TATAGIBA, 2014; BLIKSTAD, 2012; DOWBOR, 2012; DOWBOR et al. 2018; GUTIERRES, 2018; GURZA LAVALLE et al., 2018; NASCIMENTO, 2012; SILVA and SCHMITT, 2012; SILVA and OLIVEIRA, 2011; TATAGIBA and TEIXEIRA, 2021; TEIXEIRA, 2013). The 'mutual constitution', the 'repertoire of interaction' via institutions, the 'blurred boundaries' between movements, and the 'role of movements in public policy' are examples of these advances. The book "State-sponsored Activism," by the American researcher Jessica Rich, a product of her doctoral dissertation, contributes to this debate by presenting the case of the AIDS movement in Brazil, with a focus on the movement's participation in the creation and implementation of the STD/AIDS Program between 1980 and 2010. Starting from a dynamic description of the trajectories of the movement and of the STD/AIDS Program, and drawing upon extensive empirical research, the author poses an original question: how and why does a social movement expand after its demands have been met by the state? To answer this question, Rich (2021) crafts an innovative argument about state-society relations: Brazil has a new regime of representation of civic interests, which she terms 'civic corporatisme'. This regime, the author argues, is made possible by a confluence between neoliberal precepts and participatory institutions, and is produced by progressive bureaucrats at the federal level in alliance with the AIDS movement.

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This interpretation expresses the mutual constitution between the state, civil society organizations and social movements, showing how social movements can be expanded, fostered and kept mobilized by the reformist bureaucracy, and how movements contribute to the successful implementation of public policies. Rich argues that this regime is present in several sectors of public policy in Brazil, and that her theoretical proposal could be used in other Latin American countries.

The first chapter is theoretical, and presents the insufficiency of corporatist, pluralist and social movement theories in explaining the expansion of movements. This chapter also introduces the author's proposed approach to civil society. In chapter 02, entitled 'Complaints, resources and opportunities: the initial success of the AIDS movement in Brazil', Rich (2021) calls attention to the different forms of action of the AIDS movement in the 1980s, which were innovative due to the use of both institutionalized and non-institutionalized channels. In the third chapter, titled 'Transformations in the State', the author describes the STD/AIDS Program as a team insulated from any ministry, endowed with World Bank resources and managed via UNESCO. Here the reader will find an interesting account of the confluence between the neoliberal precept of outsourcing public services to NGOs and the creation of a robust structure of participatory institutions in the STD/AIDS Program. Chapter 04, titled 'The expansion of the movement by bureaucrats', focuses on the national expansion of the Program through decentralization. The first phase of this expansion was unsuccessful, which led the team to change strategy: they began to engage with NGOs, to which they directed resources both for service delivery and — a thought-provoking finding — for their politicization. In chapter 05, 'The expansion of the movement to grassroots organizations', the author explains in detail how the process of formation of civil society organizations for political advocacy took place. Here the author highlights the role of the movement's old organizations, which, by means of state resources, contributed to the mobilization of new ones and to the formation of a 'federative coalition' capable of engaging with the state and with its participatory institutions. In chapter 06, titled 'The emergence of hybrid social movements', the author resumes her discussion of the use of institutional and extra-institutional repertoires by the movement, now in the 2000s and 2010s, calling it hybrid. Finally, in chapter 07, titled 'Reexamining state-society relations in the 21st century' Rich

(2021) returns to the examination of state-society relations from the standpoint of civic corporatism, and presents three micro-case studies in which this regime would also be operating: selective waste collection, urban housing, and environmental protection for traditional communities.

The conceptual proposal of civic corporatism draws attention, and we can identify three stages in its empirical construction. In the first, we follow a new and progressive bureaucracy involved in the National STD/AIDS Program during its decentralized implementation phase. Lacking state capacities at the sub-national levels, and faced with the World Bank's directive to outsource the provision of public services, the team directs resources to civil society organizations that act as service providers for the STD/AIDS Program. In the second, we see that the funding goes further. Aware of the opposition that the Program had encountered in the states and municipalities, the bureaucrats at the federal level seek to strategically transform those organizations into political agents that defend the policy and invest resources in political training activities. The bureaucrats themselves engage in this training, articulating with the traditional NGOs working on the AIDS issue. Using state resources, they structure the movement in a 'federative coalition' through state and municipal forums. More than a set of public service providers, the movement becomes very capillary and comes to include several entities. Thus, in the third step, we observe how this organizational structuring helps to fill the AIDS network — which includes advisory bodies, commissions, committees and working groups instituted to engage with parts of the state that are averse to the STD/AIDS Program — with politicized representatives.

This structure of resources, organizational forms, and interactions constitutes a new type of corporatism, called 'civic corporatism'. Civic corporatism is, in the author's words, "a pattern of state-society relations in which actors in central government actively support civic mobilization and organization as a means of obtaining political resources and influence over other actors" (RICH, 2021, p. 244). It is a structure that was born on the foundations of the old corporatism, but one which — unlike its predecessor — does not suppress civil society and goes beyond capital and labor issues, involving "a set of specific bargains" (RICH, 2021, p. 246) and offering a diversity of actors privileged access to the state.

One aspect of Rich's argument (2021) about civic corporatism is eminently thought-provoking. Without taking a normative position, the author shows how the neoliberal precept of engaging civil society (instead of public servants) in the provision of public services allowed for the distribution of resources to the poorest regions of Brazil via NGOs. In this way, Rich (2021) shows a form of state capacity building was created through NGOs trained for political action. For these NGOs, receiving public resources did not entail co-optation; rather, it led to a form of politicization, which could even translate into confrontation with other parts of the Brazilian state, especially at the state and municipal levels. Rich (2021) thus clearly demonstrates how heterogeneous the state is and avoids making hasty diagnoses about the cooptation of movements or the depoliticized hiring of civil society actors for the implementation of social policies.

The author's description of the politicization of civil society, which at first acts as a simple provider of public services, is an important contribution of the book because it elucidates one of the important factors for the effective implementation of public policies and demonstrates how policy advocacy groups that can react to the retraction of social policies are created (PIERSON, 1996). The political advocacy work of NGOs was carried out with resources that reached up to 37% of the budget aimed at civil society for the STD/AIDS Program (RICH, 2021, p. 168). The entities were trained to monitor the actions of local politicians, record human rights violations, and collect and register complaints. They then participated in legal education courses to file lawsuits against other state agencies. Legislative lobbying was supported and encouraged, and opportunities were provided for participation in participatory institutions (PIs) and judicial arenas.

However, another aspect of the author's conceptual proposal — which refers to the actors responsible for the construction of civic corporatism — seems less persuasive. Is the Brazilian state in fact fomenting activism? After all, the argument is based on the action of 'progressive bureaucrats' or of 'reformist mentality', or even, in the author's words, on actions of the 'new bureaucracy', that is, new generations of professionals who, concerned with current public policies, enter state structures to promote different policies. This reasoning raises a question: where were these professionals trained so that their actions could constitute a common professional ethos to be put into practice in the Brazilian state structure?

The author does not discuss this topic. According to the STD/AIDS Program's diagnosis, more than half of the professionals in the team of 200 people had worked in NGOs dedicated to the AIDS issue or in schools of public health and health secretariats.

Perhaps what explains the promotion of civic activism is the movements infiltrated in the state (FALETTI, 2009). What I question, for lack of deeper analysis of the bureaucracy in the book, is if we can really speak of a new strategy of the Brazilian state to use civil society to monitor government agencies and policy sectors. That is, a strategy for social control or a form of institutional activism (ABERS, 2021) which includes both the actions of the bureaucracy and of militant movements acting inside the state. Alternatively, we could be, in my view, facing activism sponsored not by the state but via the state.

It does not seem that civic corporatism has the level of institutionalization necessary to guarantee its stability over time, as did the old corporatism. One could interpret the pattern of state-society relations described by the author through the lens of the concept of 'domain of agency', which consists of the sphere in which the actions, demands, claims for representation, values, and access to institutional resources of certain sets of actors becomes legitimate for the state (GURZA LAVALLE et al., 2018). This concept allows us to see the sophisticated configuration of embeddings that facilitate access to the state by civil society actors dispensing with the requirement of high institutionalization implied by corporatism. The institutionalized relations between the STD/AIDS Program and the AIDS movement — which are expertly analyzed by the author — therefore seem to be more an institutional innovation than an interpretation capable of accounting for the functioning of the state in relation to civil society in Brazil. And the fact that this pattern is found in other sectors, as indicated by Rich, may be due to the diffusion of public policy instruments (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Another debatable point regards the innovative character of the AIDS Movement. As already pointed out, we find in the first chapter the outlining of various theories – corporatist, pluralist and social movement – which do not account for the trend found by Rich (2021) in Brazil, namely, the expansion and endurance of a social movement after the state implements its proposals. The Brazilian reader notices the author's lack of engagement with the national literature when Rich

(2021) claims that social movement approaches have explained increasing mobilization in the context of an absent state, that is, one that refrains from structuring and subsidizing civic mobilization. In stating this, Rich (2021) does not take into consideration the findings of numerous Brazilian studies that have observed movements acting within the state, creating programs and policies aligned with their political proposals, and expanding participatory institutions. Without considering the national literature, the author posits that the AIDS movement was innovative in its hybrid repertoire combining institutionalized and non-institutionalized actions. As Rossi (2021) alerts in another book review, however, it seems relevant to ask if the repertoire described by Rich (2021) may have been inspired by the ‘Sanitarista Movement’s’ activities since the 1970s (DOWBOR, 2012).

The questions posed here, in part as a way of instigating future debate with the author, do not diminish the importance of her book and of the question that it brings forth: what could be the role of the state in fostering civic actions, and with what implications? Government action matters and we have seen recently that actors favoring participatory institutions, especially from the progressive and human rights advocacy field, have suffered several setbacks during the Bolsonaro administration (BEZERRA et al., 2022). The heterogeneity of responses to the pandemic in terms of state-society relations also illustrates how ‘civic corporatism’ does not yet operate in a stable manner because it can be deconstructed by the decisions of the Executive Branch. However, the case examined by Rich (2021) demonstrates that the state’s role can be virtuous. A social movement can remain confrontational towards some parts of the state and at the same time collaborate with others, and it is possible to think of movements whose politicization is funded by state agencies without ceasing to be movements. This shrewd reading by the author, which she developed by examining the case of the STD/AIDS movement and Program, helps to advance the debate about autonomy and co-optation. It also shows how public policy operators can form advocacy groups, and how, for these groups to become effective, there needs to be a wide range of ways of acting, including participatory institutions. Finally, civic corporatism could be suggested not as a new regime of representation that actually exists in Brazil, but as a political proposal to institutionalize state-society relations.

For its contribution to the debate on the role of civil society organizations and social movements in the elaboration and implementation of social policies, as well as for the quality of Jessica Rich's research on the AIDS Movement and its interactions with the state, the book should become a mandatory reference for researchers studying social movements, political participation and public policies, among other topics. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the book has a clear and fluid writing style, is very well organized, shows the reader the contents to come, and synthesizes the findings in each chapter, thus constituting an excellent material for use in undergraduate and graduate courses.

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