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A B S T R A C T

This paper is a combination of political economy and critical discourse analysis of public texts about the common agricultural policy (CAP) by concerned agents and the EU’s agricultural Commissioner in the period of November, 2004 until October, 2007. The analysis reveals how concerned agents articulated three competing discourses (neomercantilism, multifunctionality, and neoliberalism). It also shows that elements of the discourse of neoliberalism in the Commissioner’s speeches, despite her use of different discourses for different audiences, are becoming more and more important in order to facilitate further reforms and liberalisation of the CAP.

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Introduction

The common agricultural policy (CAP) represents the biggest segment of the EU’s budget pie and is a disputed issue as a result. The EU integration processes and development have been constantly changing since the 1980s. The reforms of 2003 and 2004 attempted to implement the ‘European agricultural model’ of multifunctional economic activity by introducing decoupling payments and increasing the role of a rural development policy (Fischler, 2003; Garzon, 2006). However, these reforms did not satisfy the critics and/or so-called “concerned agents” (Lynggaard, 2007), who want to influence the CAP with their discourse (see more in Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Potter, 2006).

A member of the European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development (the Commissioner), as the guardian of the CAP, determines objectives and ideological structures of the CAP and balances different competing discourses from a broad front for the CAP concerned agents (Moyer and Josling, 2002; Garzon, 2006); therefore, officially compromised CAP discourse can be identified by analysing the Commissioner’s discourse on the CAP. However, how should competing discourses within the Commissioner’s CAP discourse be identified? A Commissioner most often presents his/her view of the CAP in his/her public speeches, whereas concerned agents do it with press releases, reports, and speeches (Lynggaard, 2007). Hence we analyse discourses of concerned agents’ texts and compare them with discourses integrated within the Commissioner’s speeches.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is useful for identifying competing discourses about the CAP. Indeed, ‘the textually orientated CDA is particularly helpful in uncovering different discourses integrated into a text and in identifying language elements of social changes’ (Fairclough, 1995, p. 134). But every discourse always functions within specific structural constraints and material interests (Morris and Evans, 2004). Therefore, concerned agents are defined and discussed in the framework of a political economy approach (Moyer and Josling, 2002; Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Potter, 2006; Garzon, 2006; Lynggaard, 2007).

CDA of concerned agents’ and Mariann Fischer Boel’s (2004, 2005, 2006a–d, 2007) texts about the CAP focuses on key information and keywords to identify which discourses compete. It is applied in the period after the reform 2003/04 and before the “health check” of the CAP in 2008 and the EU’s budgetary reform...
in 2009, when the future of the CAP, its funding level and argumentation will be one of the key issues. This study attempts to reveal that the reform process is not being stopped even during a period between separate CAP reforms (the analysed period in our case – November, 2004 until October, 2007 – i.e. between Fischer’s reform of 2003 and “health check” and the budgetary reform process from 2008 onwards). Rather it is continued, seeking new consensus among concerned agents and affecting changes of the political and economic environment.

The continued reform process can be identified in the Commissioner’s discourse about the CAP. In spite of the Commissioner having used different discourses for different audiences, the elements of the discourse of neoliberalism are, we presuppose, growing in importance to facilitate further reforms and liberalisation of the CAP.

First, we discuss the CDA method. This is followed by an examination of three competing discourses, as identified by CDA, of concerned agent’s texts and the Commissioner’s speeches about the CAP: neomercantilism, multifunctionality, and neoliberalism. In the end, we assess political economy influences on the changes in discourses, and the impact of these changes on future CAP perspectives.

Critical discourse analysis

Despite the fact that the political economy analysis is a well-established method for analysing an agricultural policy (Moyer and Josling, 2002; Pasour and Rucker, 2005; Garzon, 2006), its applicability for analysing textually orientated CDA has not yet been tested. Some authors (e.g. Clock, 1996; Liepins and Brandshaw, 1999; Potter, 2006; Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Daugbjerg and Swinbank, 2007; Lynggaard, 2007) employ discourse analysis when examining an agriculture policy. However, it was neither carried out nor proven at a linguistic level. CDA is a method that enables clear identification of different discourses/ideologies at a specific linguistic level (Fairclough, 1995).

The central term of CDA is ‘discourse’ – understood as a social practice (Fairclough, 1995), that is primarily (but not exclusively) realised through language. The shaping and distribution of ideologies, defined as some kind of “systems of ideas” that occupy a particular place in the symbolic field of thought and belief (van Dijk, 1998, p. 22), take place through the ‘social use of language’, i.e. discourse (Fairclough, 1995). This does not mean that there is a complete consensus on the articulation of ideas embedded in given discourse, rather agents need to express themselves for, against and through a set of ideas in order to produce relevant and meaningful statements (Lynggaard, 2007).

CDA is based on the Gramscian idea of hegemony. For the purposes of this paper it is defined as a discursive representation that equates the interests of society in general with sectional interests of the dominant class (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, the political battle between competing agricultural interests can be seen as waged through discourse.

In an effort to usher in and stabilize a new regime of social regulation, the Commissioner attempts to balance these competing discourses of concerned agents (Moyer and Josling, 2002; Garzon, 2006). However, she has inevitably favoured those with the greatest socio-political power, i.e. those best able to achieve a hegemonic influence for the ideas which defend and extend their position and influence. In the analysis of discourses embedded in official and publicly accessible texts, they are defined as the Commissioner’s and the concerned agents’ formal discourses, which articulate their official position on the CAP (Lynggaard, 2007). This can be differently linked with real life policy making, for example, preparing the public for the implementation of acts and other measures, or advocating and rationalising the existing ones (Fairclough, 2003).

Our research design includes 43 random speeches of Mariann Fischer Boel’s (2004, 2005, 2006a–d, 2007) from a 3-year period – from the beginning of her mandate in November, 2004 to the end of October, 2007, i.e. after the reforms of 2003/04 and before the “health check” of CAP in 2007/2008 as well as before the EU budgetary reform scheduled for 2009 onwards. We choselvery third of 129 speeches, which are more or less evenly distributed by years and which are published on the Commissioner’s web page. These speeches were chosen because the European Commission is fully responsible for the CAP decision making (Peterson and Bomberg, 1999). This means that the Commission puts forward all legal solutions and policy reform proposals. Its power regarding the reform process is actually growing (Moyer and Josling, 2002). Owing to opposing interests of member states, autonomous decisions, such as defining and justifying CAP objectives and measures in conjunction with ideological discourses, can be implemented without obstacles. Decisions can also be understood as balances of competing economic and political interests of agricultural policy of concerned agents in the EU and round the world. However, as it is typical of all discourses of power, this is a case of a reciprocal and hard-to-identify influence (Fairclough 2003): the Commissioner impacts competing discourses of concerned agents and they, reciprocally, influence her discourse.

Different scholars (for example, Swinbank, 1997; Moyer and Josling, 2002; Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Potter, 2006; Lynggaard, 2007) and the European Parliament itself (Parliament waters down CAP reform, 2003) generally identified the following concerned agents, which more or less influence the EU’s agricultural policy: multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) with their main players the USA, Australia, Brazil, and India; farming interests organisations (COPA, COGECA, CPE), the agro-food industry (CIAA, ERT), a trade organisation (COCERAL) and other nongovernmental organisations (environmental (WWF, BirdLife), anti-poverty (Oxfam), consumer (BEUC), health (The European Public Health Alliance)), and EU member states, such as France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Finland. Historically, France and Germany are the countries with the biggest impact on the decision making process regarding the CAP; they are also its biggest advocates (Fennel, 1987; Tracy, 1997). The United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands are net payers into the EU budget and are key representatives of the CAP reform club. They call for further thorough CAP reforms towards liberalisation, and the reduction of the agricultural budget. Finland was chosen due to its position as a presiding country during the analysed period (the second half of 2006) and because it opened a discussion on the goals and ends of the CAP. Five of each

Table 1
Overview of the empirical material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Total no. of texts</th>
<th>No. of texts per type of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>N = 43</td>
<td>Communication speeches n = 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>N = 20</td>
<td>Press releases and speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO’s</td>
<td>N = 50</td>
<td>India n = 5, Brazil n = 5, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
<td>Press releases and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WWF n = 5, BirdLife n = 5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxfam n = 5, BEUC n = 5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The European public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>alliance n = 5, COPA/COGECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPE n = 5, CIAA n = 5, COCERAL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ERT n = 5,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speeches and reports UK n = 5,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F = 5, D = n5, NL = 5, G n = 5, FI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N = 143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the WTO and NGOs and member states’ official texts (press releases, reports and speeches) about the CAP were randomly chosen from the same period as the Commissioner’s speeches (see Table 1).

A linguistic analysis of the Commissioners’ speeches is performed on two ‘levels’: an analysis of the macro-propositions and a choice of keywords. According to van Dijk (1980, 1988), macro-propositions are the most important or relevant pieces of information in a text that are derived from local meanings of words by macro-rules, such as deletion, generalisation and construction. Such rules have omitted irrelevant details, connecting the essence at a higher level into abstract meanings or constructing different meaning constituents in higher level events or social concepts. The paper analyses the main meanings of the concerned agents’ texts and Commissioner’s speeches about the CAP. We also analyse the choice of keywords in these texts and compare them with typical keywords of specific discourse, because an analysis of keywords is a typical analysis used for identification of ideologies and discourses (Fairclough, 2003).

First, we define identified concerned agents’ competing discourses. Second, we show how their discourses are integrated into a use of language of the Commissioner for different publics. Here we stress the Commissioner’s main meanings and key words and compare them with competing meanings and key words.

Results

Concerned agents’ CAP discourses

Critical discourse analysis of the concerned agents’ texts reveals three main discourses, namely, discourses of neomercantilism, multifunctionality, and neoliberalism. Texts of the concerned agents do not consist of only one homogenous discourse. Therefore, we decided to discuss one as their main representative discourse, the one which is put forward by the concerned agents or which predominates in their texts.

Remaining protectionism—a mercantilistic approach

The first identified discourse is in the literature treated as “dependent” (e.g. Moyer and Josling, 2002), “neophysicocratic” (e.g. Eltis, 1996), “state assisted paradigm” (e.g. Colleman, 1998), or “agricultural exceptionalism” (e.g. Skogstad, 1998). Concerned agents start from an essentially productivist conception of the farmer’s vocation, regarding the function of the state to safeguard and underwrite productive capacity and export potential, thus, we use Potter and Tilzey’s (2005: 591) name for this discourse – “neo-mercantilism”. This discourse also represents farmers and their production as public goods; the essence of the CAP is in market mercantilism”. This discourse also represents farmers and their production as public goods; the essence of the CAP is in market mercantilism”. This discourse represents farmers and their production as public goods; the essence of the CAP is in market mercantilism”.

Despite the stress on multifunctionality of the EU’s agriculture it remains vital’, 23 March 2007). The neomercantilist discourse is most radically represented, and underwrite productive capacity and export potential, thus, we use Potter and Tilzey’s (2005: 591) name for this discourse – “neo-mercantilism”. This discourse is about the CAP, published on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, where its productivist conception was again in the forefront: the CAP “enables production”, “ensures the stability of markets”, strengthens “the European economy”, and “secures and creates jobs”. They urged the European Union to ensure that “price and market support must remain an essential element of the CAP”:

We must maintain a truly Common agricultural policy which enables our production and ensures the stability of market, plays an important role in strengthening the European economy, and secures and creates jobs in the EU. . . . Once again, price and market support must remain an essential element of the CAP. (COPA/ COGECA, ‘50 years after the Treaty of Rome: a strong and common agricultural policy remains vital’, 23 March 2007)

Additionally, COPA/COGECA explicitly opposed the WTO’s demands for “liberalisation”. This concept has in their press releases quite a negative connotation. Moreover, farmer organisations criticised the Commission that it “keeps the WTO’s requirements for liberalisation and consequently with the “erosion of the CAP”. The reduction of subsidies for the EU farmers “will have a very severe impact on the income of farmers” and will threaten the “livelihood of millions of European farmers”:

The EU Commission has gone too far. It exceeded negotiating mandate. The livelihood of millions of European farmers is at stake. The constant and ongoing liberalisation and erosion of the CAP must come to an end. . . . A 75% cut in subsidies to EU farmers, a cut in tariffs of over 50% as well as the complete elimination of export subsidies will have a very severe impact on the income of farmers throughout the EU (COPA/COGECA: ‘Falconer’s paper is unacceptable for EU farmers’, 3 May 2007).

France stands out with its prevailing neomercantilist discourse. Despite the stress on multifunctionality of the EU’s agriculture it emphasises a productivist conception of the CAP and asks for “protection of agricultural revenues”. Resolving the agricultural revenue issue is a basic political economic question of modern agricultural policy and a reflection of its obvious protectionist orientation, which France has always stressed (Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Tracy, 1997; Fenelon, 1987). This has not changed in the post-Fischler reform period. For example:

Decoupling of payments means that farmers receive support that is stable. However, the weakening of market management measures and the convergence of Community prices with world prices mean that farmers are exposed to greater price volatility, instability in their annual revenue and therefore growing uncertainty as to their income. It is for this reason, in what is a new regulatory and economic context, that it is necessary to put in place new tools compatible with multilateral trade disciplines in order to provide better protection for agricultural incomes over the long term. (French delegation in Council of the EU, ‘Memorandum on the implementation and the future of the reformed CAP, 16 March 2006)

A new French president, Nicolas Sarkozy (2007) who follows a former minister of agriculture who was a loud protector of agricultural subsidies, is also posing questions regarding the CAP changes, however, he is putting forward the productivist conception of the CAP and especially protectionism, for example, protecting the EU agriculture against a variety of “dumping” actions:
I want a new CAP, because our farmers should be able to make living from the prices they are paid for their produce, their production and their work by means of real EU market stabilisation policy. ... France must produce more. ... I believe in the free-market economy. But competition should be the same for everyone. We will take a Community initiative to step up controls at European Union borders to ensure that imported agricultural and food products are up to those produced in Europe. We cannot keep inflicting environmental dumping, social dumping, fiscal dumping and now currency dumping on our agricultural businesses (Nicolas Sarkozy, 2007).

Multi-functionalist role of agriculture

The discourse of multifunctionality, emerging in the contexts of agricultural trade liberalisation and reform of the CAP, is being, according to many scholars (e.g. Buller, 2001; Potter and Burney, 2002; Swinbank, 2002; Potter and Tilzey, 2005; Potter, 2006), promoted as a way to address social, cultural and ecological concerns like cultural heritage, farm abandonment and biodiversity loss through domestic agricultural policies that conform to the GATT/WTO. A central assumption of this discourse is that agriculture is multifunctional, that it not only produces food but also sustains rural landscapes, protects biodiversity, generates employment and contributes to the viability of rural areas (Potter and Burney, 2002).

Multifunctionality is at the heart of the European Model of Agriculture. At the September, 2006 Informal Agricultural Council, the Finnish EU Presidency revived the objectives of the European Model of Agriculture. The EU ministers of agriculture consolidated the concept of the multifunctionality of agriculture and the associated role of the CAP. The presiding country thus attempted to consolidate discourse of multifunctionality ahead of further reforms by employing the syntax that was typical of the 1990s when the discourse was developed, especially that of the Commission and some national ministries (Potter and Tilzey, 2005). This discourse was personified by the Commissioner of Agriculture Franz Fischer. Its context was the defence of the CAP and its mechanisms during the WTO negotiations (Potter and Tilzey, 2005). The European model of agriculture has its roots in social welfare justification of state interventionism and the growing importance of environmentalism in the public debate of agricultural policy:

Food, fibre and energy production farming should deliver other services for society as a whole. These services should include safeguarding viable rural societies and infrastructures, balanced regional development and rural employment, maintenance of traditional rural landscapes, biodiversity, protection of the environment, and high standards of animal welfare and food safety. These services reflect the concerns of consumers and taxpayers. As European farmers provide these multifunctional services for the benefit of society as a whole, which often incur additional costs without compensating a market return, it is necessary and justified to reward them through public funds. (Finland’s EU Presidency, ‘The European Model of Agriculture’, September 2006)

The main protagonist of multifunctional discourse is a broad alliance of farmer (CPE) and environmental groupings (the environmentalists, food safety activists, animal liberationists, bird watchers, rural preservationist, and public heath community). Agro-environmentalists have been criticising the CAP and its role as a driver of countryside change, and emphasising a concern to redirect public funds into payments for environmental public goods. For example, the RSPB (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and BirdLife International accuse the CAP of encouraging farming to become more intensive and profitable and thus farmland wildlife has declined as well as the quality of life in countryside. Therefore, they call for CAP reform with more focus on an environmental element:

Over the last few decades, the CAP and its subsidy system have encouraged farming to become more intensive and profitable. As a consequence, farmland wildlife has declined dramatically, as has the quality of life in rural areas. The CAP will need a far greater environmental element to retain its current budget. That means scrapping subsidies and instead, rewarding farmers for measures to help tackle climate change, reverse wildlife declines and improve water quality. (BirdLife/RSPB, ‘Without reform the Cap will be scrapped’, 3 October 2007)

Environmental organisations also claim that the CAP cares mostly for the interests of agro-businesses and wholesalers, and they want the CAP to regulate the application of environmental standards, as it is clear from the following excerpt of global environmental conservation organisation WWF’s press releases on the CAP:

Increasingly, it is agri-businesses and supermarkets that are shaping what and how farmers choose to produce. Standards and certification schemes are proliferating; but environmental delivery is not improving. The public purse cannot continue to pay the levels of income support and compensation that the EU’s agricultural sector has become used to. WWF believes that the role of the CAP must become to regulate the baseline and effective application of environmental standards and to pay for the delivery of environmental services that fall through the net of the market. (WWF, ‘CAP REFORM and Environment: The Way Forward’, 21 December 2004)

The public health community has also started to work on the CAP in order to ensure that health issues are taken into account. There is concern that “the CAP is linked to a growing number of major diseases and disorders that are food related” (The European public health alliance, ‘A Cap on Health’, January 2007).

Even consumer organisations, such as BEUC (the European Consumer’s Organisation), whose real influence on the CAP decision making process is relatively modest (Edgell and Thomson, 1999), demand a change of the CAP from a “price support system” into “more sustainable agricultural practices, improved environment, rural development, animal welfare and better quality, safety and choice of food for consumers”. For example:

We stress the need for radical change of the CAP in relation to the price support system based on such device as intervention, quotas, production controls, import levies and export subsidies. Minor changes are not enough. We want money to be spent on better and more sustainable agricultural practices, improved environment rural development, animal welfare and better quality, safety and choice of food for consumers. (BEUC, ‘Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy’, October 2006)

Liberalisation of agricultural policy

The last identified discourse, in the literature also treated as a competing one (e.g. Moyer and Josling, 2002), is the discourse of neoliberalism. According to a number of authors (see, for example, Cox, 1987; Gill, 1990; van der Pijl, 1998; Pritchard, 2005), neoliberalisation is a political project designed to restore the capitalist class hegemony by freeing the market from the shackles of the state and disemboding the market. Most research on the discourse of neoliberalism (e.g. Fairclough, 2003; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004) agrees that this discourse includes a narrative of progress: the
globalised world offers unprecedented opportunities for growth through intensified competition, privatisation, financial and labour market deregulation, trade liberalisation, but requiring unfettered free trade and the dismantling of state bureaucracy, and so forth. The following words have an especially positive connotation, the words that are represented as elements of discourse of neoliberalism (Fairclough, 2003; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004): “marked orientation”, “liberalisation”, “simplification” and “flexibility”.

The WTO and its negotiations are the main multinational concerned agent which has significantly contributed to the expansion of discourse of neoliberalism. The WTO Rounds establish a clear agenda for the progressive liberalisation of agricultural markets via improved market access, the elimination of export subsidies and the decoupling of domestic support. In the post-Uruguay period and the unfinished Doha negotiation round, a strong group of member countries has been formed. They urge the liberalisation of world trade and especially call for the EU and the USA to change their agricultural politics. In addition, Australia and New Zealand, which are traditional advocates of free trade and agro-food products, as well as undeveloped countries, food-exporting ones led by Brazil and net-food-importing ones represented by India, also exert incredible pressure (Barton et al., 2006). The continued process of CAP reform gives the EU the scope to accept abolishment of the export subsidies, tighter controls on domestic subsidies and relax the often high levels of border protection (Josling, 2007). The process of trade talks and forces has introduced new discourse into the agricultural policy debate, which emphasises international competitiveness, and it has improved the overseas market access. For example, the Australian minister for Foreign Affairs in his speech during Mariann Fischer Boel’s (2004, 2005, 2006a–d, 2007) visit to Australia called for a “liberalised” and “market-orientated” CAP:

We believe that reforms of the CAP do not address what Australia sees as the fundamental problems of the CAP – it does not adequately expose EU agricultural market forces. Consequently, we would encourage substantial trade liberalisation and market orientation of the CAP. … Reforms that end the current production and distorting effect of the CAP will work to ensure the long term competitiveness of EU agriculture. (Alexander Downer, ‘Australia, EU and the CAP’, 3 March 2006)

In 2007, developing countries had a clear impact on negotiations for the very first time. Their main representative is India. For example, the Indian commerce minister urged the EU, in his speech welcoming Mariann Fischer Boel’s (2004, 2005, 2006a–d, 2007) in India, to abolish the subsidies in the name of “equality, justice and human compassion”:

The subsidy entitlement of the class of producers in Europe affects another farmer’s exchange entitlement in the developing countries thereby exposing the later to hunger and starvation. Surging food imports have hit farm incomes and had severe employment effects in many developing countries like India. Unable to compete with cheap food imports, and in the absence of any adequate protection measures, income and livelihood losses have hurt women and poor farmers the most. … True reform in agriculture could be put into the practice when the developed countries and developing countries refrain from a battle of food supremacy to reorient effort to bring equality, justice and human compassion in addressing the mankind’s biggest scourge–chronic hunger and acute malnutrition. (Kamal Nath, ‘International trade policy’, 9 March 2007)

The neoliberal case for the CAP reform came to be most strongly associated with and articulated by the interests of agro-food fractions of capital. According to Potter and Tilzey (2005, p. 589), the interests, represented through groupings, such as the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) and the Confederation of Food and Drink Federation Industries of the EU (CIAA), oppose state support as an interference in the world market and, in the common parlance of neoliberalism, seek freedom to compete globally, to gain access to new markets for export and open new regions from which to source inputs. These two organisations demand the liberalisation of the CAP by lobbying fiercely in EU institutions. For instance, when the CIAA in its annual report writes about the CAP, it supports simplification of the CAP, seeks further liberalisation and stresses its role in monitoring realisation of CAP’s distortion of competition:

Indeed, it is paramount for Industry to closely monitor possible distortion of competition that may arise between EU producers. … We support simplification of the CAP but do not agree with a single common market organisation that has the potential to worsen, not lessen European bureaucracy in agricultural products. … we seek further liberalisation in support of cheaper raw material and new food market. (CIAA, ‘CIAA Annual report for 2006’, March 2007)

COCARAL (national trade organisation of most of the EU 27 member states) from CAP also seeks liberalisation: “free trade with fee limitation and state intervention” (COCERAL, ‘Challengers and opportunities in a globalising market’, 11 May 2006).

Charity organisations stand for liberalisation, too. British Oxfam stands out. It reproaches the CAP that subsidies are destroying small farmers in the EU and in the poorest countries. Lately the Oxfam has become one of the key public critics of the CAP, whose criticism has been hitting the influential international headlines. For example:

There is a common misconception that the CAP is about helping small struggling farmers and looking after the European rural environment. But in reality the bulk of these funds end up in the pockets of the wealthiest farmers and processors while also doing enormous harm to developing countries as a result of encouraging dumping. … What is actually needed is to end export subsidies and dumping. (Oxfam, ‘CAP is failing small farmers in Europe and in poorest countries’, December 2005).

Moreover, this neoliberal discourse has a strong support in member states like the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands. For example, the UK government, in particular, declared its commitment to a market-oriented, competitive, forward-looking, modernised industry and has followed this through in terms of its promotion of a reduced financing framework for the CAP and a more decoupled approach in direct payments. The UK government has a fundamental reform position on the CAP and as a result systematically poses questions about the abolition of CAP 1 Pillar measures (HM Treasury and Defra, 2005). This position stems from a net payer position in relation to the EU budget and defence of the British views of British Rabat, partial compensation of payments into the EU budget, which the UK receives because of disagreement, and a significant net payer position of the UK on the EU budget. UK Secretary for Agriculture Margaret Beckett, in her speech to the Royal Show, claimed that

We need a market-orientated CAP. … Less money should be spent on the CAP and the money that is spent to be better targeted on driving economy growth and competitiveness. (Margaret Beckett, the Royal Show, July 2005).

Commissioner’s CAP discourse

CDA of Fischer Boel’s speeches shows that the Commissioner has been integrating various competing discourses to different audiences. She emphasised the discourse of neomercantilism when
Discourse of neomercantilism in outline

The Commissioner qualitatively and also quantitatively integrated the discourse of neomercantilism least often in her speeches. Fischer Boel integrated neomercantilist discourse into her speech only once, when she spoke to the French audience at the beginning of her mandate (June, 2005); as is shown in the preceding chapter, it is the dominantly articulated discourse of neomercantilism. This speech also stressed the EU agricultural “productive capacity”, “trade”, and “production”.

Discourse of multifunctionality

The Commissioner integrated the discourse of multifunctionality into her speeches when the environmentalists, food safety activists, animal liberationists, bird watchers, rural preservationists, EU’s farmer’s organisations and respective parliaments (Latvian, Irish, Portuguese, Italian, Cypriot, Portuguese) were addressed. This discourse was also used as a bargaining tool in international contexts.

She represented multifunctionality as the defining element of the ‘European Model of Agriculture’. When she spoke to an international audience, for example in Australian and India, the Commissioner defined the CAP and the European Model of Agriculture in a simplified and mystical manner as specific because of a “historical relationship” between “people, food production and the countryside”. She has been using these words as a defensive argument against WTO’s pressures toward total liberalisation of the CAP. For example:

If we want to understand our agricultural policy, we have to understand the historical relationship between people, food production and the countryside. … A very important consequence flows from this: our agricultural policy has been about much more than agriculture. It has been about social stability and the health of our environment. This is the key to understand that EU’s Common Agricultural Policy can not be totally liberalised. (Fischer Boel, ‘Full speed ahead’, Bush Capital Club, Canberra, Australia, 1 March 2006)

She represented the European Model of Agriculture as distinct and unique and used words such as European countryside/rural areas is/are “our culture” and “our soul” (Mariann Fischer Boel, 2004) or the European rural development has a “unique tradition” and “hundreds of years of heritage” (Fischer Boel, ‘Full speed ahead’, Bush Capital Club, Canberra, Australia, 1 March 2006). She also poetically romanticised the European countryside. For example:

We will fight to make sure that Europe’s green fields, so beloved of our poets, will always be there. There will also remain many goats, many olives, many mountain farmers. check. (Mariann Fischer Boel, Ökologischer landbau in Europa, Kogress zum ökologischen Landbau, Berlin, 7-8 December, 2004).

In her speeches, she integrated the discourse of multifunctionality, offering explicit recognition of both the multiple roles that farming plays in the countryside and multiple ‘goods’, both private and public, that derive from farming. These include: performing a market function, providing consumers and the processing industry with healthy, high-quality food and renewable raw materials, carrying out environmental functions, ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, safeguarding the wide variety of ecosystems and protecting the diversity of Europe’s farmlands, providing a wide range of services, performing new functions for which there is an increasing public demand, such as tourism or in the social sector, and playing a major role in providing employment in rural areas. She used typical words of the discourse of multifunctionality differentiating four “axes/areas/priorities/goals”: “competitiveness”, “environment”, “diversification”, and “quality of life in rural areas”. For example:

The rules leave between different sorts of goals – related to competitiveness, the environment, diversification and the quality of life in rural areas. (Fischer Boel, ‘The direction of travel of the EU’s policies on agriculture and rural development’, Speech to the Latvian Parliament, Riga, 8 June 2006)

She integrated the discourse of multifunctionality into her speeches by representing farmers as actors of many and varied roles, particularly they “protect the environment” and “guarantee healthy and quality food” (Fischler Boel, ‘The direction of travel of the EU’s policies on agriculture and rural development’, Speech to the Latvian Parliament, Riga, 8 June 2006). Even though Fischer Boel talked about different EU agricultural functions, she almost always put forward the “competitiveness”, which indicated the primary role of the discourse of neoliberalism.

A typical element of Fischer Boel’s discourse of multifunctionality is a simultaneous emphasis of “market” and “high quality”. For example, she believes that the EU farmers are competitive against the world’s low-cost producers market because of “high quality”:

The low-cost producers of the world market have some advantages, but they don’t hold all cards. In an environment where more consumers are looking for high quality, this card has a high value. (Fischer Boel, ‘The Future of agriculture in Ireland’, Meeting with the Irish Parliament, Dublin, 10 May 2006)

But elements of the discourse of multifunctionality are not equally represented, because she believes that different elements of multifunctional agriculture have to be subjected to the market. For example, she claimed that “farmers must be subjected to the market” (Fischer Boel, ‘The Future of agriculture in Ireland’, Meeting with the Irish Parliament, Dublin, 10 May 2006) or they “must continuously pick out exactly what customers want” (Fischer Boel, ‘European agriculture: Future challenges and opportunities’, Congress of European Farmers, Strasbourg, 18 October 2005).

This emergence of the discourse of neoliberalism within this discourse is also reflected in the subordination of the integrated and organic production to the market. For example, she claimed that quality products too, such as organic cultivation, must first prove their commercial viability (Fischer Boel, ‘Agriculture and rural development in the EU25 – looking forward’, Opening of the International Green Week, Berlin, 20 January 2005).

Growing neoliberalism

The Commissioner integrated the discourse of neoliberalism when she addressed the international audience (WTO, Australia, India, the USA, Norway) and food industry and trade’s organisation,
EU member states, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and the European Parliament.

The discourse of neoliberalism is embedded in the Commissioner's speeches to the extent that it emphasises a "market orientation of the CAP". For example, Fischer Boel in her first speech as a Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development addressed to European Parliament Agriculture Committee (19 January, 2005) emphasised "a market-oriented CAP" and "a growth-oriented Rural Development policy" as central elements in the Commission's main political priority for the next five years which are key elements of discourse of neoliberalism. In her many speeches to international audiences she really tried to emphasise the market orientation of the CAP. For example:

I want to tell you today, contrary to what some believe, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a large dose of market principles in its make-up. (Fischer Boel, 'Prosperity and other objectives in European agriculture', Speech at World Agricultural Forum, the USA, 9 May 2007)

In this discourse, the Commissioner represented a farmer as an entrepreneur. She did not say this explicitly; however, farmers are represented as those who "produce what the global market wants" (Mariani Fischer Boel, 2004).

The Commissioner integrated the discourse of neoliberalism into her speeches also to the extent that she emphasised that the EU's agriculture should be "competitive on global market" as one of the primary goals of the CAP. For example:

The momentum towards further globalisation in agricultural market is strong. European agriculture will have to liberalise trade and open the markets if we want to be competitive on global market. (Fischer Boel, 'Agricultural Reform in a Global Context', Schuman Lecture at Oslo University, 13 May 2005)

Fischer Boel emphasised "liberalisation" in the CAP objectives, and in particular in relation to the WTO negotiations and the EU's Mediterranean partners. For example, at the 6th Meeting of the International Centre for advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies in Cairo (2 December, 2006) she called for "greater efforts in trade liberalisation" between Mediterranean partners and the EU, that should end by 2010. Her speech during the visit to India (6 March, 2007) also stressed "competitiveness and decoupled approach in the direct support", "liberalisation" and "a huge cut of trade-distorting subsidy" and "out our export refunds":

This means that the emphasis of the CAP is shifting clearly away from productivity and toward competitiveness and decoupled approach in the direct support. Our reforms of liberalisation have put us in an excellent position to lead from the front in the Doha Round agricultural talks. In respect of domestic support, we have proposed a huge cut of 70 percent to our ceiling on trade-distorting subsidy. With regard to export competition, we have offered to phase out our export refunds by 2013. (Fischer Boel, 'EU-India trade and Doha Round of WTO', Conference organised by FICC, New Delhi, 6 March 2007)

Thus, in her speeches one can detect repeated words, such as "market orientation", "competitiveness" and "liberalisation", which are typical of the discourse of neoliberalism. Also words like "simplicity" and "flexibility" are regularly added to these slogans (for example, Mariann Fischer Boel, 2006b). The slogans are supported with regular use of neoliberal vocabulary, such as "more freedom", "free market", "giving farmers freedom to compete globally" (for example, Mariann Fischer Boel, 2006b, 2007). The use of slogans as well as the use of an extensive and recurrent neoliberal vocabulary, especially in 2006 and 2007, proves that neoliberal discourse is growing in importance in Fischer Boel's addresses.

Discussion and conclusion

A combination of political economy and CDA revealed not only the presence of different discourses in the addresses of the concerned agents and members of the European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development in the period of November, 2004 until October, 2007, but also that Fischer Boel employs different discourses for different audiences. Generally speaking, she provides concerned agents with discourse they already articulate. This conclusion, though, does not apply to the discourse of neomercantilism; a comparison of the discourses of concerned agents and the Commissioner indicates that the discourse of neomercantilism in her speeches is disappearing despite a relatively strong articulation by the concerned agents (France, COPA/COGEC). She used it only once at the beginning of her mandate; later she addressed the audience with discourse of multifunctionality. Thus, her speeches contain elements of all discourses, although a determinant of mercantilism 'downward rigidity of income levels' is losing its direct power; as non-modern it hid itself in the discourse of multifunctionality.

The role of the key impeding mechanism for future reforms is being taken over by pressures to bring closure to policy. The Commissioner is trying to find a new explanation for why we still need the CAP at such a level of funding. The most neutral and relatively less ideological way is to determine the CAP through multifunctionality.

The discourse of multifunctionality is at first sight present as often as the discourse of neoliberalism in her speeches; a more detailed analysis, however, reveals that elements of the discourse of neoliberalism have been used within and in front of the discourse of multifunctionality. That elements of the discourse of neoliberalism stand out (e.g. "competitiveness" is always mentioned before "environment", "diversification" and "quality of life in rural areas") and the cultural and ecological functions of agriculture are subjected to a market function. An analysis of word and idea inclusion, without quantitative analysis, shows that elements of the discourse of neoliberalism are growing in importance chronologically too; in 2006, and even more in 2007, they were more integrated into Fischer Boels's speeches than in preceding years (the end of 2004 and 2005).

Reform accelerating determinants are reflected more strongly in the CAP discourses than may be read from the Commissioner's speeches. Budgetary pressures do not occur as an example of argumentation about a changed CAP, although they are one of the biggest influences on changes. On the other hand, outside pressures by WTO negotiations occur mainly as a part of threats and challenges posed by the international and global markets. In Fischer Boel's addresses they have been gaining a more positive connotation and becoming a chief agent of neoliberal discourse. Economic wording in neoliberal discourse pushes the CAP away from its foundations, and it outgrew the discourse of multifunctionality. She has been using this discourse also in international contexts as defensive argumentation against WTO's pressures toward total liberalisation of the CAP.

Growing neoliberalism in her speeches can be explained with preparations for the "Health-Check" CAP discussion, opened with the Commission communication from 20th November, 2007 (Commission, 2007). In this paper, the Commission advises continuing the already-started reforms of 2003 and 2004, including the simplification of a direct payments scheme, further liberalisation in the field of market interventions, and the expansion of rural development policy with new challenges like climate change, bio energy and water management. These suggestions were previously announced in speeches and indirectly indicate a long-term vision of the CAP.
Discourse analysis in conjunction with a political economy approach can perhaps help forecast the nature of future changes of the CAP in 2009 when a general budgetary debate with a special connotation to the mechanism and future of the CAP will be opened. The strengthening and not deepening, perhaps even drying away, of multifunctionality is already making sure that huge changes in the CAP will take place in the next decade. Less complex measures, market deregulation and a bigger role of rural development politics, will enable the preservation of the CAP as a common policy. But this also means a change of its role and especially of the size of its resources.

Neoliberalism is a non-reflexive ideology. How strongly this discourse will influence the future CAP depends primarily on reform impeding economic and political determinants of the CAP. The CAP will probably not be abolished, as imagined by neoliberalists, because of pressures by agrarian lobbies and bureaucracy to maintain resources as well as because of coercion that stems from the common decision making process in the EU’s bodies. However, how strong the CAP will be in the future depends on the capacity of decision makers to argue about the objectives, visions and mechanisms of the future CAP.

Hence, the CAP “friends” among the decision makers will have to improve their CAP argumentation, especially with a fresher emphasis on multifunctionality or maybe on new topics like the merging of agriculture and environmental policy, where the CAP will be substituted in the name and instruments with European food and environmental security (Buckwell, 2007). The discussion about what European public goods are, regarding agro-food production, could also improve the argumentation in the line of multifunctionality.

The current Commissioner’s calls for ‘high quality’ are already part of this process. We would like to speculate that future changes in the CAP argumentation will be more about ‘food security’, ‘climate changes’, ‘agriculture as energy provider’, perhaps even about ‘poverty’ in relation to agriculture of new Member States.

References
