

Title: Biopower and Institutions: the Struggles on the Regulatory Process of Biotechnology

Author: Victor Pelaez¹, Iara Vigo de Lima Onate² & Fabiano Dalto³, Federal University of Parana, Brazil

Abstract

The biopower analysis proposed by Michel Foucault consisted in the studies of rationalization governmental practices of biological control of populations: health, hygiene, natality, longevity. This control was exercised through techniques of discipline imposed to the individuals which were fundamentally based on the imprisonment of bodies in schools, hospitals, factories and prisons. Nevertheless, the crisis of the disciplinary society manifest itself by the appearance of new practices of power, new technologies and new social actors. The development of genetic engineering has allowed the emergence of a new technological paradigm attached to a new cycle of capital reproduction. In that case, the biopower is no longer a matter of rationalization of government practices but a rationalization of capital expansion through the control of genetic recombinations.

This new form of power is joined to a more general power of production and commercialization regulation of technology which is based on the norm. The normative apparatus of society legitimates its power through an apparent scientific neutrality capable to arbitrate the disputes of different actors interests involved in the new technological paradigm.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the regulation practices of Genetically Modified Organisms in USA and EU as a process of dispute between different actors. This dispute is expressed by the regulatory expert knowledge as a source of the normative power. We pretend thus to understand the evolution of institutions (laws, norms, principles, rules) as an outcome of force relations which represent the diversity of actors (biotechnology firms, NGOs, governmental agencies) and the interests involved.

¹ Department of Economics at Federal University of Parana – Brazil Email: victor@sociais.ufpr.br

² Department of Economics at Federal University of Parana – Brazil Email: iaravl@sociais.ufpr.br

³ Department of Economics at Federal University of Parana – Brazil Email: fabiano@sociais.ufpr.br