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*In Better Fettle:*

Improvement, Work and Rhetoric in the  
Transition to Environmental Farming in the  
North York Moors

Steven B. Emery

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
anthropology and geography

Durham University  
2010

## Abstract

Through ethnographic research amongst farmers in the North York Moors, and through broader historical and political analysis, I examine the importance and role of values in *hard work* and *beneficent change* in negotiated interactions between policy-makers, farmers and conservationists. Within the context of a shift in agricultural support away from production to environmental protection, and within the context of a local conservation initiative to protect a population of freshwater pearl mussels in the River Esk, I show the importance of these values for the construction of farmers' personhoods and their symbolic relations and means of expression through the landscape. I show how those values are persistent and pervasive, yet at the same time mutable and open to interpretation. In particular, I examine alternative conceptions of *beneficent change* through recourse to the words *fettle* and *improvement*. *Fettling* places value in long-term, steady and incremental change, whereas *improvement* places value in changes more closely associated with productivist ideals such as expansion and profit. I suggest that it is the mutability of farming values that gives rise to their persistence as they come to be *used* and reinterpreted according to the changing contexts of their application and the differing interests of a range of groups and individuals. By showing that farmers are able to uphold and express their values differently I argue that it is not so straightforward to predict farmers' responses to changing political exigencies or local conservation initiatives on the basis of homogenous values or the categorisation of farmers into defined "types". Through a *rhetoric-culture* approach I argue that changes in farming values through time do not merely reflect changing political interests and farmers' subsequent accommodation of them. Rather, it reflects the continued negotiation of those values between farmers and others in the play of *agents* and *patients* in the construction of personhood and the formulation of arguments. I argue that the persistence of *fettling* interpretations of a value in *beneficent change* reflects the agentive actions of farmers as it remains a useful argumentative strategy with which they can make indictments against new policy impositions and, moreover, it remains functional in guiding their practices in ways suitable to the environment in which they farm.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BOD	Biological Oxygen Demand
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CLA	Country Land and business Association
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DG	Directorate General
EA	Environment Agency
EEC	European Economic Community
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship scheme
EPMSRP	Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery Project
ES	Environmental Stewardship
EU	European Union
FEP	Farm Environment Plan
GAEC	Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HFA	Hill Farm Allowance
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship scheme
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LU	Livestock Unit
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
NFU	National Farmers Union
NPFS	National Park Farm Scheme
NYMNP	North York Moors National Park Authority
OELS	Organic Entry Level Stewardship scheme
OS	Ordnance Survey
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
REAC	River Esk Action Committee
RERP	River Esk Regeneration Programme
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SDA	Severely Disadvantaged Area
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPS	Single Payment Scheme

SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWES	Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## **Statement of Copyright**

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## Acknowledgements

There are many people that I wish to thank for their support and encouragement through the duration of my PhD. There is an even broader group of people including family, friends and peers that have – perhaps unwittingly – given me inspiration and strength by virtue of their very presence in my life regardless of physical proximity.

I thank Mark Gaterell and Megan French for encouraging me to take up the PhD opportunity in the first place. Despite how right the move from consultancy back to academia seemed to me, it was reassuring to have some backup in what turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life. I am also indebted to fellow PhD students in the department of anthropology at Durham University that have provided emotional and professional support. In particular, I wish to thank Mwenza Blell, Teresa Platz and Beki Langford for their reviews of draft chapters and their ability to induce enthusiasm, whilst at times permitting a certain degree of mutual sorrow-drowning. I also owe a huge thank you to Stephen Livingstone for his assistance with Geographical Information Systems output and other diagrams. I should also thank him for his patience in dealing with my unerring technological ineptitude.

Thanks to Tom Henfrey, whose culinary skills sustained me during a period of intensive writing (and perhaps longer). Not only did he remind me of the need to eat, the food was of such high nutritional value that I'm sure it allowed me to put those extra late hours in. When not eating, or working on the PhD, I took great pleasure, exercise and stress-relief in the form of five-a-side football. To that end, I thank all members of Misfits FC (past and present) for providing an outlet for my tensions as well as lasting and supportive friendship. In particular I wish to mention James Bridges and Jeronimo Montero. James' philosophy on playing football easily transferred to everyday life and I thank him for his many varied and wonderful words of wisdom and for showing me what can be achieved with a bit of perseverance. Although Jeronimo's South American play-acting and continuous emulations of the 'hand of God' moment left a lot to be desired on the pitch, off the pitch I gained a brother. I thank him for the many shared moments, discussions and, most of all, the laughter. He is sorely missed since his return to Argentina.

I thank my parents, Jenny and Colin, not only for their continued support but also for the enthusiasm with which they took to helping me gather "data" in the form of newspaper clippings and magazine articles. I also wish to thank my grandparents Ralph and Bill for

inspiring me through their very longevity. Having kept their wits about them well into their nineties I felt reassured that I could make it through the toughest moments of the PhD.

I wish to thank my supervisors, Michael Carrithers and Louise Bracken. Firstly, I thank them for giving me the opportunity to undertake this PhD. Secondly, and more importantly, I thank them for their ability to adapt their support to the changing requirements and stages of the research. I was fortunate to have supervisors that were prepared to stand back and let me follow my own interests, even if they departed from the original PhD proposal, or incited lively debate amongst us. Equally, however, they let me know when my ideas had perhaps gotten a little too fanciful and imposed necessary deadlines when the motivation was required. I drew on their knowledge and experience, and thank them for the personal as well as academic support that they provided.

For providing love and academic support in equal measure I make special thanks to Amilla Maria Anthi Kastrinou Theodoropoulou. Despite being engaged in her own ethnographic endeavours in Syria she provided the most fundamental pillar of support during my writing-up period. I will always be grateful to her for showing me the real meaning of intersubjectivity and for dropping into my life at the most untimely, yet timely moment.

Finally, I wish to thank the farmers and community of the Esk Valley in North Yorkshire. In particular I am indebted to the three families that let me intrude on their lives and, at times I'm sure, be a hindrance rather than a help to them. I felt privileged and humbled to spend time talking and working with people that I continue to feel a great deal of respect for. Most importantly of all, I am eternally grateful to C, E, J and S who showed me unrivalled hospitality and generosity in letting me live with them for such a long period of time. Without their help the PhD would not have been possible, or would have taken an altogether different shape. I am grateful for their continued love and friendship and am honoured that they consider me an extended (if sometimes annoying) member of the family.

## Chorus from *The Rock*

*The eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
The hunter with his dog pursues his circuit.  
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!*

*The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the word.*

*All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death;  
But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
Where is the life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Brings us farther from God and nearer to the dust.*

*T.S. Eliot*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Defining the Research

I understand that one of the most daunting prospects for a geologist is to be challenged to identify a pebble picked at random from a shingle beach. At the beginning of my fieldwork when faced with the similarly daunting task of explaining my research to inquisitive peers, friends, and informants I gravitated towards vagueness and brevity in my endeavour to find the most satisfactory means of placation. By describing the subject of my research as the changing role of farmers in the North York Moors I could satisfy the curiosities of those around me and buy myself some more time to figure out just what my research was actually about. As it turned out, this general description of my research remained with me throughout the period of study and as such remains a useful place from which to begin this thesis. However, whilst that description is still purposeful, it does more to describe the context of the research than it does to elucidate what the research is *about*.

For it was not the purpose of my research to provide a descriptive account of a change, of *what* has changed or of *how* things have changed. The focus emerged, rather, to be on the *process* of change and how changes were negotiated through the interactions of policy-makers, farmers and environmental implementers. It soon became apparent that, when addressing the role that farming values play in determining the uptake of agri-environment schemes, different types of value could not readily be attributed to different types of farmer. This then raised important questions about the processes of change that I had read about and the influence of such changes on farming values and their subsequent bearing on the uptake of agri-environment schemes. Soon into my fieldwork the importance of the farming values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* became apparent to me. I noticed, however, that those values were upheld and expressed in complex ways and were utilised in the argumentative strategies of farmers, policy-makers and implementers alike. I became aware, in particular, of the use and expression of two different conceptions of *beneficent change* that I refer to through recourse to the words *improvement* and *fettle*. These concepts however, were not necessarily upheld differently by different people, or different groups, but seemed to be used interchangeably according to the changing contexts of their application.

The principal objective of my research became, therefore, to examine the nature of this complexity and to consider its significance in terms of broader processes of change, the workings of power and interpretations of culture. In this chapter I further outline the context and scope of my research, the methodological and theoretical approach to its undertaking and the main lines along which I have developed my argument.

## **1.2 Rationale and Scope(lessness)**

When asked to elaborate on the rather rudimentary explanations of my fieldwork I would proffer that I was looking at the increasingly environmental role that farmers were being expected to play vis-à-vis their role as producers of food. And this was true — the assumption being that policy and legislation affecting farmers has increasingly required that they perform environmental duties in addition to, or in some cases instead of, their role as producers of food. Be it through the stick of legislation — restricting or mandating particular action — or the carrot of financial payments, there is a general perception that the remit of the farmer is expanding, or at least changing. At the European level this has been demonstrated in the ‘decoupling’ of agricultural subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) away from payments that support production and towards payments for the environmental services that farmers provide. The introduction of the Single Payment Scheme in 2005 saw the payment of subsidies to farmers per unit of production replaced with a single area-based payment contingent upon the farmer’s compliance with a range of existing criteria (cross-compliance). In addition, an increasing proportion of farmers’ supported income, particularly in protected areas such as the National Park in which my fieldwork was based, has been derived from agri-environment schemes such as the EU’s Environmental Stewardship scheme.

As a consequence of my conceptual approach I have been reluctant to narrowly delineate the scope of my research. But of course, over what time frame and over what geographical area did my research apply were common retorts to my vague initial offerings. Geographically, and in keeping with the geomorphological work with which my PhD is affiliated, the location of my ethnographic fieldwork was defined by the upper half of the catchment of the River Esk in North Yorkshire. And broadly speaking the time frame over which I was analysing this perceived ‘change’ stretches from the present back to the end of the Second World War. The post-war period is associated with production-oriented policy and legislation, both domestically and through the establishment of the CAP in 1962. Whilst legislation to protect the environment from

farming activities has been around much longer, the nexus of change is typically identified as 1987 when the first payment schemes for environmental outputs by farmers were introduced by the EU.

The approach taken in this thesis, however, necessitates an extension of our bounded unit of study, beyond the boundaries of the field site, and beyond the immediately apparent time frame over which the perceived change has occurred. The watershed might serve as a useful separator for the flow of water but it does nothing to represent the spatial extent from which farming in the catchment is influenced, nor the spatial dimensions of the means of persuasion employed by those people living in the catchment. Equally, the time frame over which people forge their arguments extends beyond a defined period of twenty, fifty or one hundred years. It goes as far back as they choose to let the past be their artillery, and as far forward as they seek to convince themselves and others where it is they want to go. The research, thus, is not bounded, but *situated*. The scope of my research is defined by the particular situation in which it was undertaken. It is the economic climate; it is the policy; it is the incomes; it is technological developments; it is the climate and the weather; it is the fact that a water supply is shared with the next door neighbour; it is the fact that Dad died three months ago; it is the fact that Prince Charles has taken an interest; it is the legacy of foot and mouth disease and the pending fear of blue tongue; it is this place, this year, the season and the time of day. It is all of these things, and much, much more. In short, the situations reflect the particular moments of the research encounters that I found myself in and were defined by the particular issues of relevance to the people that I encountered.

### **1.3 Approach to Research**

The principal element of my research was ethnographic fieldwork with hill farmers in the Esk Valley of the North York Moors National Park, England. This involved staying and working on three different farms as well as conducting semi-structured interviews, attending local meetings and events and wider community involvement. The research is affiliated with a broader interdisciplinary research project entitled Angling in the Rural Environment and is closely associated, in particular, with geomorphological analysis of fine sediment loading in the River Esk. At the catchment level this issue has found recent salience among conservation and regulation bodies due to the perceived negative impact of suspended fine sediment on populations of salmonids and pearl mussels in the river. It provides a very local example of how environmental interests and discourses

are challenging the roles of farmers under the auspices of *beneficent change*; a change which, to varying degrees, may be challenged by the farmers whose processes of identification, of understanding themselves, are closely tied to their relationship with the land. As the roles of farmers are negotiated and influenced beyond the confines of the catchment, the research also involved policy analysis and wider interviewing with policy makers, implementers and representative organisations from the local to the European level.

In much recent rural research the challenge of environmentalism to the roles that farmers perform has often been couched in terms of a challenge to their knowledge. Indeed, at inception, this PhD research was envisaged as such — the basic premise being that farmers' practical knowledge, and their means of articulating and *using* that knowledge is giving way, or being undermined at the hands of political decision-making that is increasingly relying on knowledge based on a conservation discourse, on evidence and on scientifically verifiable data (Whitman, 2005). Whilst not denying that this may be the case, my research took me away from this original idea. I argue that knowledge, in itself, does not pose the greatest challenge to the upland farmers' personhood. Rather it is their relationship with the land, and in particular their *ongoing work with the land*, through which they construct their personhoods and through which they outwardly portray themselves to others. Whilst knowledge is fundamentally bound up in this relationship, and whilst there are clear distinctions between farmers' knowledge and conservationists/planners knowledge (cf. Setten, 2004) I suggest that this is used less as an instrument of argumentation by farmers than their work and their legacy on the landscape. For written in the land is the story of their life, the story of the work and lives of previous farmers, of previous struggles: it is a story of *beneficent change*. Yet it is just *a* story, one amongst many. And those stories can be re-written, not representing the hard-won efforts of generations of farmers to eke a living out of an inhospitable environment, but instead as stories of the destruction of a pristine and natural environment, the demise of wildlife and the pollution of watercourses. Conservation discourses and new environmental management practices, then, do not just challenge farmers' knowledge but the very values with which they construct their personhoods. Furthermore, knowledges may be contested, conceded and shared but upland farmers' *work ethic* — tied up with conceptions of *beneficent change* — is central to their personhood and is pervasively and rhetorically embedded in the image they have of themselves, and the image others have of them. This is the prevailing sentiment in Canon Atkinson's late 19<sup>th</sup> Century account of the Esk Valley during his 40 year tenure as vicar of Danby. Despite technological advances, he maintains, it is the suitability of

the Dales farmer to the land that they farm and the way in which they apply themselves to their farming practices that determines their enduring success:

We may have — I suppose with our small farms and somewhat capricious seasons we can have — no scientific farmers among us; but we have what the scientific farmer cannot do without, the steady, persistent industry and energy which lies at the root of all real success in the multitudinous ways in which men's heads and hands are occupied. And so our farmers, our master-men, are as much workers now, and with and among their men, as they have ever been. (Atkinson, 1891: 13-14).

#### 1.4 Theoretical Approach

The theoretical basis for the undertaking of this research is informed in large part by a rhetoric-culture approach (Carrithers 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009). A rhetorical approach recognises culture as dynamic and as a thing of possibility. That dynamism is a manifestation of a view of society as a web of individuals interacting with one another through processes of incessant negotiation. Carrithers describes these interactions as *agency-cum-patency* (2005a) which represents the constant *doing-and-being-done-to* (Carrithers, n.d.) as different interests are pursued or defended according to the changeability of the situations in which interactions occur. Rhetoric, then, can be understood as adaptive to the particular situation in which it is applied. Rhetoric can make use of culture, or specific cultural ingredients in order to tailor responses, or to persuade, in ways wholly appropriate to the specific context. However, since rhetoric is not to be understood in every instance as neatly honed oratory, it can also be seen as creative in that it is applied improvisationally to deal with unforeseen circumstances. Improvisations, furthermore, that emerge from negotiated interaction are just as likely to modify or give rise to new cultural forms as they are to use existing cultural forms. It is from this perspective that I have analysed the use, complexity and alternative interpretations of the farming values of *hard work* and *beneficent change*.

My research also builds on a body of ethnographic rural research that demonstrates the importance of the land, livestock and farming practices in farmers' processes of identification. That body of work tends to recognise a view of the landscape from a farmers' perspective as worked and dynamic. This contrasts with a view of planners or the public who may instead value a more unwavering and fossilised image of the landscape (Setten, 2004). For farmers, the landscape is not only a means through which they express their values, it is also seen as means of storing and transmitting those

values into the future. And those values cannot be separated from the relationship that farmers have with their farms. Their values come to life through embodied practice, through engagement with the land and through the invocation of social memory (Gray, 1998; Ravetz, 2001; Setten, 2004). As a significant store of symbolic capital, and as closely associated with the farming values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* the landscape is addressed in this thesis as a site of rhetorical play, in which the landscape gets used to construct arguments and defend positions by virtue of the important values with which it is intricately linked. Important farming values, then, by virtue of their pervasiveness and mutability, are presented as the medium through which positions are negotiated and attempts are made to encourage certain performances or changes in behaviour.

### **1.5 Four Propositions**

This approach to culture and interaction provided the basis for my interpretation of the complexity and persistence of a diverse range of interpretations of farming values. It led me to re-appraise alternative interpretations of processes of historical change, relations of power and reflections of the contemporary implementation of agri-environment schemes. When trying to frame my own argument and interpretation of what the complexity and persistence of diverse value interpretations represented, I found the best way that I could clarify my observations and understandings was to assess them in relation to four propositions. These propositions arise out of previous political commentaries, current views on the implementation of policy, and inferences that are apparent within the new policy instruments themselves. I outline these below.

*Proposition One: An older interpretation of values has been replaced by a newer set of values that has been propagated ideologically and through government policy.*

This proposition suggests that alternative interpretations of values may be understood as a manifestation of historical change. Moreover, it suggests that that change has been imposed ideologically and that an older interpretation of values has been wholly replaced by a new set (cf Polanyi, 1945).

*Proposition Two: Productivist values are so embedded within farming communities that it is these values which serve to restrict the uptake of agri-environment schemes amongst farmers.*

---

Like *proposition one*, this proposition recognises that productivist values were propagated through government policy. It also suggests that productivist values are so embedded and homogenous within farming communities that it is these values which dictate the responses of farmers to agri-environment schemes and limits their uptake of such schemes because the values underlying agri-environment schemes are seen to be antagonistic to productivist values (e.g. Burton, 2004).

*Proposition Three: The emergence of agri-environmental policy represents the ascendance of a new 'environmental morality' which is oppositional to farmers 'traditional' values.*

This proposition suggests that alternative interpretations of values represent competing moralities which are oppositional to one another. Furthermore, like *proposition one*, it suggests the eventual eclipse of one set of values by another (cf Lowe et al., 1997).

*Proposition Four: Farmers upholding 'traditional' fettling-type values are more likely to be conducive to agri-environment schemes than farmers upholding productivist values*

Like *proposition two* this proposition presupposes that agri-environment schemes are particularly oppositional to productivist interpretations of farming values. Unlike the other propositions, however, it recognises greater diversity in the interpretation of values amongst farmers and suggests that farmers upholding 'traditional' values are more likely to engage with agri-environment schemes because there is a greater degree of conformity in the values underlying them.

I argue that taking a rhetorical approach allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the contemporary moment, as well as of the processes of historical change, and relations of power which underlie such propositions. In particular, my findings suggest that it is not so straightforward to predict behavioural responses on the assumption of homogenous farming values, and it suggests that alternative value sets are not necessarily in direct opposition, or in a process of replacement, but their mutual existence represents their continued negotiation.

## **1.6 Lines of Argument**

Throughout the thesis I demonstrate the pervasiveness, yet diversity of expression, of farming values in *hard work* and *beneficent change*. I argue that the persistence and

interpretability of these values are refractions of one another. The interpretability of these values gives rise to their usability. And by that I mean their usability in rhetorical strategies in the negotiated interactions of *agency-cum-patency* as conditioned by the changeability of the situations encountered and the interests pursued. Their interpretability gives rise to their persistence in the construction of farming personhoods. In turn, the persistent and pervasive importance of those values renders farmers susceptible to rhetorical play with the selfsame values. As a thing of possibility I argue that culture can operate at the ideological level and that policy-makers attempt to bring about changes in behaviour amongst farmers by making new forms of behaviour *appear* conformant with their extant values. However, following the rhetoric-culture approach, and Stephen Lukes' (2005) view of power, I argue that whilst those values can be played with ideologically in order to bring about changes, such attempts are to be understood as neither wholesale nor complete. I suggest that the continued need for more coercive (legislative) means of bringing about behaviour change amongst farmers may represent that there are limits to the extent to which the discursive play with language can alter behaviour. In relations between farmers and their land that are so intimate that they may be understood as "inexpressible", or beyond words, I suggest that this presents a relative realm of inaccessibility to discursive attempts to engender change. Moreover, I argue that not just policy-makers but farmers too are able to use values that have wider societal appeal to pursue their own rhetorical strategies. Furthermore, I suggest that they are equally capable of making use of values which might be presented as alien, or oppositional to their own values. The ascendance of an environmental morality, for instance, may not simply pose a threat to farmers but provides an opportunity for them to use that morality in making their own arguments. It is not my intention to suggest that change is illusory. Instead, I suggest that change should be understood as more negotiated, that farmers play a role in that process, and that — in spite of ebbs and flows — it is an omnipresent feature of social life, rather than something that arises only during fleeting moments of socio-economic tumult. Rhetoric is presented as something which not only seeks to direct change, or as something used to respond to change, but as something that gives rise to changes that may be unanticipated or unexpected. Rhetoric may thus be *creative* in that it can make imaginative *use* of extant cultural forms. It can also be *creative*, however, in the sense that it has the *ability* to create and through interaction can *give rise to* new cultural forms.

I reflect, in particular, on the significance of the persistence of *fetling* conceptions of *beneficent change*. In analysing farmers' responses to both past productivist and contemporary agri-environmental policies I found that indictments were made against

the policy impositions on the same grounds: their short-sightedness. *Fettling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* place value in steady, long-term and incremental changes and I show how farmers collectively challenge policy impositions, regardless of their substance, if they are seen to oppose that value. Finally, I conclude that as well as being rhetorically useful, the persistence of *fettling* values also represents their practical utility in guiding farmers' behaviour in ways that are enduringly suitable to the environment in which they farm.

## 1.7 Thesis Organisation

In Chapter 2 I outline the theoretical approach to the undertaking of this research. Furthermore, I review previous research on farming communities and, in particular, that which contributes to debates on the contemporary shift in farming responsibilities from the production of food to the protection of the environment. In Chapter 3 I situate the research in terms of its environmental, social and economic context. I also outline the methodological approach to my fieldwork and reflect on my own motivations and the impact of my presence in the field site. Chapter 4 provides further contextual background to the field work in historical and political terms. However, in introducing that contextual material I also examine how farming values function rhetorically in narrative historical accounts, and the role they play in forming political opinion and the direction of policy-making. In Chapters 5-7 I elaborate the principal ethnographic components of my research. Chapter 5 demonstrates the pervasiveness and implicitness of values in *hard work* and *beneficent change* through detailed and numerous examples. In Chapter 6, I consider how those values are interpreted and used by farmers according to a range of different situations. In particular I examine how they are used in the formulation of farmers' responses to agri-environment schemes and local conservation initiatives. In Chapter 7 I demonstrate how the importance of farming values to personhood renders them particularly suitable for rhetorical play. I show how performances may be encouraged through narratives of progress and decline and through play with familiarity, scale and attachment to place. Moreover, I reflect on the different interpretations and means of expressing values between farmers and environmental implementers and consider the effectiveness of environmental initiatives aimed at farmer engagement. In Chapter 8 I draw conclusions by reflecting on processes of change and the contemporary implementation of agri-environment schemes in light of the diversity and complexity of farming values that I identified. This is achieved through a re-examination and commentary on relations of power and the four propositions outlined in Section 1.5.

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## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Approach

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two principal parts. In the following section I outline a *rhetoric-culture* approach to social interaction and draw on wider anthropological theory in order to demonstrate the positioning of such an approach within the context of a broader literature as well as to demonstrate its appropriateness for social analysis. In Section 2.3 I draw from the literature pertaining specifically to farming and rural communities. In particular, I examine previous ethnographic research and elaborate on the role of land, farming practices and livestock in farmers' processes of identification. I also situate the research within the context of the transition that lies at the centre of my research, namely, the shift in political and wider public support from agriculture and production towards agriculture and environmental protection. Moreover, I indicate the contribution that my research can make to this body of research and provide the footings for the challenges to this literature which emerge out of my own ethnographic research. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 represent the grounding of my research prior to undertaking fieldwork, whilst Section 2.4 introduces the concept of *improvement* which emerged as an important analytical and ethnographic issue through the course of fieldwork and which will be elucidated further throughout the thesis.

#### 2.2 Approaching Culture

Put simply, the view of culture that underlies the theoretical approach to this thesis is a *dynamic* one. Such a view is by no means novel, but its emphasis at the outset of this section is instructive nonetheless. It lays the foundation for the following discussion on the *making*, the *use*, the *possibilities* and incessant *negotiation* of culture. Moreover, it accords with a *rhetoric-culture* approach (Carrithers 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009; Strecker & Tyler, 2009) to anthropological inquiry that allows the study of *creative* human interactions pursuant to changing historical, political, environmental and social contexts. It provides a means of analysing human responses to changing *situations* that are both constitutive of, and constituted by, the emergence of differing interests at different moments in time. It is hoped that an elaboration of such an approach here will provide an insightful and purposeful frame of reference for the subsequent review of farming literature as well as a grounding for the undertaking and presentation of my own research. To begin, I take Richard Fox's (1985) notion of *culture-in-the-making* as an appropriate place from which to chart a course through the above ideas.

### 2.2.1 Making and Using Culture

In *Lions of the Punjab*, Fox (1985) proposed *culture-in-the-making* as a means of overcoming the regnant opposition between anthropological perspectives that he referred to as *culturology* and *cultural materialism*. These held, respectively, that human social action could be explained as “an unaltering precipitate of the belief system” or as “an involuntary reflex of the impersonal forces of ecology and technology” (Fox, 1985: 196). Both approaches would have failed, he argues, to solve the “Punjab Puzzle”, which provides the ethnographic context for his analysis:

Why [in the context of late nineteenth-century Punjab] did a reformist Sikhism, the Singh Sabha movement, and the new version of Singh identity it promulgated, develop into an anticolonial peasant uprising; whereas the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement and the new, embracing Hindu identity it put forward, was generally unsuccessful among cultivators? (Fox, 1985: 10).

To answer the “puzzle”, Fox argues that it was the British colonial government's nurturing of an orthodox, separatist and martial Singh identity (the “Punjab Lions”) for their own military purposes that enabled the Singh Sabha to motivate anticolonial political behaviour. The British, therefore, “made” and nurtured a cultural identity that served their military purposes at the time, but one that also invoked a propensity for uprising against them. Neither *culturology* nor *cultural materialism*, he maintained, would have been able to solve the “puzzle” in such a way, since they both upheld an essentialising or organismic concept of culture which presumed that “culture exists in advance of human history and action” (Fox, 1985: 196). Culture, in his view, exists only “in a specific time and place and as a result of a field of differing interests, oppositions and contradictions. There is no weight of tradition, only a current of action” (1985: 197). Society, to Fox, can not be taken to *be* a unitary cultural system although it may *appear* as such. Instead, the appearance of such a system arises out of the construction of social oppositions, at a particular moment, as individuals and groups pursue their particular interests (1985: 137). Fox sees society as an arena of constant “struggle” between alternate beliefs or as a “workplace” in which “individuals and groups labor to create social relations and cultural meanings favourable to their beliefs” (1985: 135).

Fox's approach is insightful in promoting the benefits of diachronic, as opposed to synchronic, social analysis (see also Bailey, 1960); for promoting greater spatial and temporal contextualisation of the ethnographic “site” and; for advocating a view of

culture as changing constantly through a complex array of social relations and interactions. However, the key insight to be gained from Fox in the present analysis is not that culture is just straightforwardly "made", "created" or "invented" (cf Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) but that it gets recycled, or *remade*. Culture is not only made, but *used* too; that is, *used* to suit the particular interests of a particular individual or group according to a particular contextual setting. He shows, for instance, how the martial Singh identity *made* by the British in support of their military intentions was then re-interpreted and *used* by the group themselves to resist against their colonial "makers". It is in this vein that he argues that:

Men and women ... do not construct their contemporary social relations and cultural meanings within the narrow confines of a sturdy and stable preexisting [sic] culture. Rather, they construct their social and cultural accommodations *anew* from the selected cultural debris of the past. Even when they simply renew the previous cultural foundations, it is a "happening" of the present, a social act that must be studied to be understood, not assumed to be natural or a historical given. (Fox, 1985: 138, emphasis added).

It is from this perspective that Fox promotes the value of an historical approach to anthropology.<sup>1</sup> It recognises that the creative *use* of culture, of the artefacts of the past, can only be appreciated by placing a contemporary analysis in its historical context. I explore further the benefits and difficulties of an historical approach, as well as providing the historical contextualisation for my own research, in Chapter 4.

In giving primacy to the role of the individual, however, by arguing that a culture “arose and endured only as men and women struggled to make it” (Fox, 1985: 196-197), Fox went from transcending the ‘fervid polemic’ between *culturology* and *cultural materialism* to involve himself in another prevalent dualism in social theory: that between agency and structure.<sup>2</sup> With a marked shift away from the “classic ethnographies” that made social life appear “to be regulated by clear-cut, uniformly shared programmes for behaviour” (Rosaldo, 1989: 92) the debate, which transcended but did not overcome the extant idealist/materialist dualism, became more about the *extent* to which culture could be explained by a uniformly shared programme for behaviour on the one hand, and by the combined agency of individuals acting in self-

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<sup>1</sup> Although, as Ballantyne (2002) has pointed out, Fox's analysis suffers from its own historical limitations.

<sup>2</sup> Identified by Giddens (1979), for instance, as one of the central problems of modern social theory.

interest at a particular moment in time and space on the other (Ortner, 1984). Moreover, the ability to *use* culture in the pursuit of interests raises important questions of power.

For instance, in *Envisioning Power*, Eric Wolf (1999) showed (like Fox) how culture gets remade out of the artefacts of the past. Furthermore, and again like Fox, he showed how culture gets *used* to further particular interests. In contrast to Fox, however, Wolf shows how culture is *used* at the ideological level by elite groups to exert power over subordinate groups. Culture, in this sense, is seen less as a phenomenon emerging out of the struggles of "men and women", but as a phenomenon of the ideological control by elites. Wolf explores three societies "in crisis": Kwakiutl, Tenochca (Aztecs) and National Socialist Germany. Wolf shows how the response to such crises, in all three cases, entailed the development of ideologies that were "fashioned out of pre-existing cultural material" by the elites in society (1999: 274) in order to differentiate, mobilise and deploy social labour. Customs and beliefs, argues Wolf, serve political purposes and are liable to be manipulated to promote the economic interests of the powerful. In particular, Wolf believes, claimants to power justify their aspirations by extending and elaborating aspects of cosmology which are seen to represent the order of things and to define and anchor the distinctions that segment a population (1999: 290). He refers to this type of power as "structural power". That is, power that is "manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organises and orchestrates the settings themselves" (Wolf, 1999: 5).

What I wish to draw out from Wolf's analysis is his particular emphasis on specific "beliefs" and "customs", and, more particularly, their *use*. Through Chapters 4 to 8 I examine the specific values of *hard work* and *beneficent change*, and the rhetorical *use* of those values by, and upon, farmers in the North Yorkshire Moors. It is not my intention, nor would it be purposeful here, to get embroiled in deep anthropological debates regarding power relations. It is pertinent, however, to demonstrate the breadth of opinion on issues of power arising out of the *use* of what we might call cultural "ingredients" (schema, codes, values, beliefs, customs, moral norms etc.). I will then elaborate, in the following section, how a rhetorical approach accounts for relations between individuals and groups with a view of culture that is seen as dynamic, incessantly *negotiated*, and full of possibility.

In contrast to Wolf, James Scott in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), refutes the significance of orchestrating structural power, or, more specifically the Gramscian concept of *hegemony* and Marxian conceptions of *false consciousness* and *mystification*. Scott

argues that the ability of subordinate classes to *use* cultural material, to symbolically mobilise certain customary values (1985: 235), is one of many forms of "everyday resistance"<sup>3</sup> which he takes as evidence of the ability of subordinate classes to penetrate and demystify prevailing ideology (1985: 317). Their ability to *use* cultural material in this way is contingent upon the fact that "the powerful" work within "the same moral confines" (1985: 185) and the poor are able to undercut the moral authority of the rich through the allocation of "reputation and social prestige" (1985: 235-236). The poor, he argues, are able to "emphasize and manipulate those values that will serve their material and symbolic interests as a class" (1985: 304). As well as those concepts of hegemony and false consciousness that Scott refutes, Scott's view that powerful groups may control the bodies but not the minds of subordinate groups also stands in opposition to Foucault's concept of *normalizing power* (1976: 144) and Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence* (1977: 191), in terms of the way in which cultural norms or values function as instruments of power.<sup>4</sup>

A Normalising society, argues Foucault, is the product of the development of bio-power, or the rise of the power over life as opposed to the power over death (1976).<sup>5</sup> That power over life works not by bringing death "into play in the field of sovereignty" but by "distributing the living in the domain of value and utility" (1976: 144). In this sense, the law comes to operate through (or as) the *norm*. Where cultural norms direct consciousness and behaviour, the operation of the law through the norm, argues Foucault, functions as individuals inscribe the power relation in themselves and become "the principle of [their] own subjection" (Foucault, 1977: 202-203, cited in Mitchell, 1990: 558). The power succeeds, then, by becoming so "distributed", or pervasive "that it masks a substantial part of itself" and the individual, through the norm, becomes involved in the continuous (but unbeknown) monitoring of his own actions (Foucault, 1976: 86; Mitchell, 1990: 558). Similarly, Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence* is contingent upon strategies of subordination being "misrecognised" or "euphemized" as moral relations (Bourdieu, 1977: 191). Unlike Scott, who claims that domination only works through physical coercion, Bourdieu maintains that domination cannot work so explicitly but "*can only* take place" in the guise of voluntary acceptance (1977: 179, emphasis in original). Symbolic violence is "the gentle, invisible form of violence which ... is not so much undergone as chosen, the violence of credit, confidence,

<sup>3</sup> Others include foot-dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson and sabotage (Scott, 1985: 185).

<sup>4</sup> For a further critique of Scott's argument see Mitchell (1990) and Lukes (2005).

<sup>5</sup> A development, Foucault argues, that took place during the Victorian period (1976: 3).

obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, gratitude, piety" (1977: 192). The effect of symbolic violence is to shape *habitus*, "the embodied dispositions which yield 'practical sense' and organize actors' visions of the world below the level of consciousness in a way that is resistant to articulation, critical reflection and conscious manipulation" (Lukes, 2005: 139-40).

The above discussion shows how the *use* of cultural ingredients may be interpreted as at the whim of individual agents, making "rational" choices and acting out of their own free will, or, that such freedom is in itself an illusion of a mode of power that disguises itself within and through those cultural ingredients that individuals, or the subordinated, use to organise their practices and views. In the following section I introduce a rhetorical approach to cultural analysis and reconsider how human relations, through the *use* of culture, may be understood in terms of what Carrithers (2005a) calls *moral-agency-cum-patiency*. Moreover, by taking a rhetorical approach, I hope to show how a range of interpretations become conceivable when culture is viewed as a thing of great *possibility*. Before moving on to look at the importance of rhetoric to anthropological inquiry, however, I want to draw out one final point on the *use* of particular cultural ingredients.

Scott makes the point that the same cultural material can be *used* to pursue and express markedly divergent interests. This is because, he argues, they are framed using the same "community of discourse" and their *use*, or we might say *usability*, arises out of the very fact that they are "fashioned from the same cultural material available to all" and therefore "speak to" or "appeal to" one another (1985: 40). Throughout this thesis, I consider how certain values, symbols and practices (and combinations thereof) that are important for people's *identification* processes, in their formulation of *personhoods*, may engender a certain *vulnerability* to the rhetorical *use* of those values by others upon them. Furthermore, it will be a principal endeavour of mine to examine how the *usability* of particular cultural ingredients in both individuals' own identification processes as well as within social interactions gives rise to their perseverance. With regard to "common forms" in language, for instance, Rapport makes the important point that "their inertia or conservativeness, their usefulness and prevalence, are an issue of their plasticity" (Rapport, 1993: 169-170). In this sense, therefore, particular constituents of culture may seem to persist not just because they are there, lying in a tool-box (to borrow one analogy), but because they are mutable, or we might say adaptable, and capable of being *used* in different ways. In order to conceptualise these

ideas further, and in order to re-evaluate the *use* of cultural forms on ourselves, and in relations with others, it is possible to go no further without making a rhetorical turn.

### 2.2.2 Rhetoric and Anthropology

In recent years Michael Carrithers has elaborated upon the ideas of James Fernandez to stress culture's "rhetorical edge" (Carrithers, 2005a: 442). He makes the case for the study of rhetoric in anthropology along three main lines. Firstly, because rhetoric can be perceived as a force which conveys cultural material and provides a sense of the moving force of interaction. Rhetoric thus allows the discovery of a "*dynamism* in social life that an earlier anthropology tended to ignore" (2005b: 578, emphasis added).

Second, the study of rhetoric allows an appreciation of the distinctly human character of that moving force. Rhetorical persuasion is, he argues, a constituent of all cultural arrangements (2005a: 433) that places the will to make something happen or change at "the very foundation of our ideas about ourselves" (Carrithers, 2009: ix). *Persuasion*, in this sense, is seen not just as something we attempt to do to others, or that others attempt to do to us, but also as something that we do to ourselves. Certainly, persuasion may be thought of as strategic, in the pursuit or defence of particular interests through engagement with others, but if we view culture in broad terms as "the forms through which people make sense of their lives" (Rosaldo, 1989: 26) then a considerable deal of persuasion may be understood as being done on ourselves, in response to the disorder and ambiguity encountered in the "vicissitudes of life" (Carrithers, 2009). Fernandez (1986) would refer to this as making a movement away from the *inchoate* as individuals construct their *personhoods* through processes of *identification* (terms that I will later elucidate). Movement, in this sense, refers to a figurative movement intended to bring some greater sense of order, some greater understanding of ourselves or our circumstances: a movement that energises "the search for identity through predications" (Fernandez, 1986: xi-x). The *inchoate*, that sense of disorder, argues Fernandez, is a constant feature of human life and as such requires constant rhetorical adjustment of our understandings of ourselves and others (Carrithers, 2009).

Thirdly, argues Carrithers, rhetoric facilitates an understanding of the creation of new cultural forms in social life. This is because a view of 'rhetoric-culture' (Carrithers, 2009; Strecker & Tyler 2009) interprets cultural ingredients (or tools, schemas, values etc.) as mere potentials that come to life in their rhetorical application in the flow of social life (Carrithers, n.d.). Until people have experienced something, wrote Renato

Rosaldo (1989: 92) they don't know how they'll react; they live with ambiguity and improvisation and therefore "fixed cultural expectations and social norms do not suffice as guides to behaviour". Shotter (1993) refers to the product of this human tendency (or necessity in fact) for spontaneity as 'joint action'. It represents neither human actions that can be given rational explanation nor wholly natural events that lie outside an individual's capacity to control. He argues that the need for such a concept arises when:

...human action is viewed not as the deliberate execution of a well-defined sequence of component actions – as in the monologic following a script or plan – but when we act spontaneously, say, on the basis of what we 'vaguely felt' was 'required by the situation' we were in at the time. Although we do not find it easy in such cases to give a well-articulated account of why we acted as we did, we would still claim to be acting sensibly, in a way appropriate to our circumstances (Shotter, 1993: 4).

Like Shotter, Carrithers argues that such a view of rhetoric regards it as an everyday and necessary part of social life (Carrithers, 2005b). Its creative side is brought to life through the everyday improvisations that are required to deal with unforeseen circumstances. Indeed, "[i]mprovisation matters", writes Tilly (1999: 350), "because it always takes place within limits set by existing social relations and locally shared understandings" but also because it "then modifies existing social relations and locally shared understandings". Or, as Carrithers says, its creative dimension can be understood since the rhetoric used to deal with one situation, can itself lead to another situation (Carrithers, 2008: 162). In Section 2.2.4 I examine further the importance of the *situation* for rhetorical persuasion and its effectiveness, as well as the relationship between rhetoric, *personhood* and *identification*. Before that, I examine how human interactions, and power relations, may be understood through Carrithers' notion of *moral-agency-cum-patency*, and how, in this sense, culture comes to be seen as a thing of possibility.

### 2.2.3 Agency-cum-Patency and Possibility

As a constituent of all cultural arrangements and social interactions Carrithers conceptualises rhetorical persuasion as an omnipresent feature of what people *do* to one another. Using the terminology of Lienhardt (1961), he refers to the dual propensity for individuals to both act on, and be acted upon (persuade, or be persuaded) as "*moral-agency-cum-patency*":

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The notion of moral agency ... allows that people exercise insight (or foolishness) and good (or bad) reason. It entails an awareness of people as both acting and reacting, as both agents and patients (in Godfrey Lienhardt's [1961] terms) in their social world. And because it allows both agency and patiency we can gain a picture of society as a web of persons both acting upon each other and acted upon and therefore in a state of flux and, to a degree, uncertainty (Carrithers, 2005a: 440)

The first point to draw from Carrithers' interpretation, which is supportive of the discussion in the previous section, is the necessarily improvisational nature of rhetoric. Whilst rhetoric may well manifest itself as splendid and neatly honed oratory, this interpretation allows that that is not always so (or is, indeed, rarely so). The fact that, in the everyday flow of social interactions, a degree of improvisation will be relied upon ensures that "foolishness" or "bad reason" are just as likely to be exercised. Yet it remains creative. With particular reference to speech acts, Tyler (1978: 137-8) points out that whilst we may think before we speak, there remain slips of the tongue and our speaking often fails to convey what we had in mind. Nevertheless, he later argues, "our writing and speaking are not simply translations from one medium (thoughts) to another (words), but are constitutive, *creating* our thoughts at the same time as they are given form in words and sentences" (1978: 251, emphasis added). To uncover the *creative* potential of rhetoric it is necessary to consider two meanings of that term. According to the Collins Dictionary (1995: 207) creative is an adjective that can mean "imaginative or inventive". In this sense, we may interpret the creative side of rhetoric-culture arising out of the carefully considered, and skilfully applied *use* of cultural material in order to persuade others and make something happen. However, *creative* is also defined more generally in the dictionary as "having the ability to create" (*ibid.*: 207). Rhetoric, in this sense, may be creative without intent, without premeditation or expectation. It might result from an unsophisticated or slapdash *use* of cultural ingredients, necessitated by the unforeseen emergence of a new situation. And whilst we might assume a considered, and skilfully applied rhetoric more likely to bear fruit (so to speak), it remains the case that both the imaginative and the slapdash have the potential to succeed and fail (expectantly or inadvertently) in achieving their desired outcome. Moreover, the significance of rhetorical persuasion as an omnipresent feature of social interaction is not contingent upon it being successful. Its significance lies not so much in its success and failure rate, as in the *possibilities* that it allows.

The second point, and the one more apparent in the notion itself, is that each person has the ability to act and be acted upon rhetorically. And this allows for more *possibilities*.

It allows for the expression of power both "top down and bottom up" and for power to be understood as "incessantly negotiated" (Tilly, 1999: 344), whilst giving rise to interpretations of culture that may be seen as "constructed dialectically from above and below, and in constant flux (Grillo, 2003: 160)". This sense of "negotiation" is reminiscent of Fox's interpretation of society as a "workplace" (1985: 135) arising out of the struggles of different individuals and groups, all making *use* of culture in pursuit of their own particular interests. It also fits with Scott's interpretation of the *use* of cultural values by the peasant classes in order to undercut the moral authority of the rich and pursue their own interests (1985: 235-6). However, as a thing of possibility, a rhetorical approach can also help to understand the workings of the type of power advocated by Wolf (as "structural power") and refuted by Scott.

Aristotle argued that the art of rhetoric was the ability to discover "in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 1932: 7, cited in Bruner, 2005: 313). I would suggest that when considering power, this view needs to be taken further. Firstly, having discovered the means of persuasion, power can be understood as the extent to which those 'means of persuasion' can be used effectively. Simply knowing the means of persuasion will not result in a desired outcome unless those means are successfully applied. Secondly, a much more pervasive kind of power lies not in the ability to discover or even use the means of persuasion, but to determine what those means of persuasion are in the first place. Cruz (2000) speaks of this ability in terms of the setting of "dominant rhetorical frames". That is:

a discursive structure that articulates in accessible ways the fundamental notions a group holds intersubjectively about itself in the world and that allows or disallows specific strategies of persuasion on the basis of their presumptive realism and normative sway (Cruz, 2000: 277).

...

Because actors situate their struggles within a dominant rhetorical frame, political contests between them engender a collective field of *imaginable possibilities*, which I define as a restricted array of plausible scenarios of how the world can or cannot be changed and how the future ought to look (*ibid.*: 277, emphasis in original).

This suggests that we can interpret rhetorical force not just in terms of its role in everyday interaction but in the functioning of the type of "structural power" referred to by Wolf. As a reminder, Wolf understands such power as that which "not only operates within settings and domains but also organises and orchestrates the settings themselves"

(1999: 5). Cruz accounts for this by attesting that those 'in power' are literally able "to redefine the limits of the possible" (2000: 278), whilst Bruner, another rhetorician, argues that limits are placed on language by "hegemonic narratives maintained by codes of the unspeakable" (2005: 314).

Those who wield such power can determine or influence a rhetorical frame in such a way as to legitimise the means of persuasion available to them and to limit the legitimacy of their audiences' imaginable possibilities. To understand this it is useful to think of Bourdieu's concept of "linguistic capital": "the capacity to produce expressions *a propos*, for a particular market" (Bourdieu, 1991: 18-19). The greater the linguistic capital that a speaker possesses, argues Bourdieu, "the more they are able to exploit the system of differences to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction" (1991: 19). We can understand linguistic capital, in one sense, as the ability to effectively *use* the available means of persuasion through, for instance, a full knowledge of the available means of persuasion or linguistic dexterity. In another sense, a greater stock of linguistic capital could be endowed on a rhetor because they themselves are legitimised in the construction of the rhetorical frame. In a very simple, but acutely powerful sense, this could manifest itself in the creation of an official or state language which is legitimised at the expense of local and vernacular languages.<sup>6</sup>

Cruz recognises, however, that those dominant rhetorical frames are not wholly fixed and can both influence, and be influenced by individual or group action:

But since a collective field of imaginable possibilities is both a system of meanings (attached to vocality, past experiences, reality and the future) *and* an arena for the play of rhetorical practices, it is also internally vulnerable to endogenous shifts. Indeed, actors' rhetorical struggles can introduce disorientation into the field and, by extension, challenge the dominance of a particular rhetorical frame (Cruz, 2000: 277, emphasis in original).

This interpretation is corroborative of the view of culture put forward so far, as comprised of webs of individuals as both agents and patients, doing and being-done-to, whilst nevertheless allowing for inequalities in the power that different individuals or groups are able to exert. Lukes (2005: 75) refers to this differential as the "contextual

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<sup>6</sup> For an excellent example see Scott (1998: 72).

range of power" and distinguishes between "context-bound" and "context-transcending" ability. The former concerns the power that an agent has to operate within the given conditions in a specific place and time, whilst the latter allows that appropriate outcomes can be achieved in a range of possible circumstances. In opposition to Scott (1985), Lukes' "*Radical*" view of power maintains that power *can* operate at the ideological level by shaping the preferences and perceptions of people so as to prevent them having grievances (Lukes, 2005: 11). Lukes' interpretation also, however, allows individuals a greater propensity to make their own choices and to challenge the limits imposed upon them than do the views of Foucault or Bourdieu (2005: 68-9). With its broad fit to the rhetorical approach — through *agency-cum-patiency* — outlined in the previous discussion, it is to Lukes' view of power that I generally subscribe. Lukes' view allows social life to be understood as a "web of possibilities" and for the expression of both top-down and bottom-up power (Lukes, 2005: 68; Tilly, 1999). It allows that all people have the potential to *use* culture: sometimes within set constraints; sometimes in setting those constraints, and; sometimes transcendent of those constraints. It acknowledges possibility but also inequality. It recognises that the likelihood of achieving particular outcomes through the *use* of cultural ingredients differs amongst individuals and groups. What is important, however, is that in all that *use* of culture — whether successful in achieving its desired outcomes or not — rhetorical persuasion figures prominently.

#### **2.2.4 Personhood, Performance and Situations**

As opposed to terms for single human beings such as "self", "individual" or "person" that tend to view society as made up of single (or limited) types of person Carrithers proposes, instead, a view of *personhood* that fits with the view of rhetoric-culture outlined in the previous section. He argues that *personhoods* are interactively achieved through constantly changing relations of agency-cum-patiency. Moreover, such a view permits that *personhood* should not be regarded as a single form but as "assembled complexes" achieved rhetorically across a range of different settings (Carrithers, n.d.: 4). Shotter argues that for a person to exist and participate within a particular society they must actively contribute to its (re)-production, and "being someone in this sense ... is a rhetorical achievement" (1993: 192-93). A rhetorical achievement indeed, and due acknowledgement to the creative-rhetorical capacity of the members of "a society". However, a rhetoric-culture view would more likely interpret such a notion instead as a constant *becoming* (or *becomings*), rather than *being* someone and would view a "particular" society as equally dynamic and negotiated. For, as Fox said, even an apparently simple renewal of existing cultural foundations is to be understood as a

"happening of the present" (1985: 138). Furthermore, if we take William James' definition of consciousness then such a happening may only ever be understood as "an awareness of the fleeting present created and sustained by a memory of the past and anticipation of the future" (in Tyler, 1978: 138).

The formations of personhood, therefore, are only ever momentary, rhetorical attempts in the play of agents and patients and contingent upon their setting or *situation*. Bitzer (1968) proposed, similar to Aristotle, that whatever the case may be, rhetoric will be most effective and persuasive if it is tailored to its particular "rhetorical situation". He elaborated that the situation may include any combination of persons, events, objects and relations and be determined further by the particular motive or exigency as well as constraining factors. This idea of the *situation* proved useful in the organisation of this thesis and the interpretation of my field data. Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to provide the local, historical and political contextual background to my field site from such a perspective. However, they do not attempt to suggest the existence of a single *situation* but to outline aspects of the local, historical and political situations that are pertinent for the rhetorical strategies and the construction of arguments amongst farmers and others in the course of my fieldwork. For the situation is never fixed, and the arguments made, and strategies of persuasion used depend on what I refer to as *situationality*. That term recognises that there is not just *a* situation in which practices and social relations are undertaken. Rather, there are *situations*; amorphous situations, multiple contemporaneous situations, changing situations, ebbing, flowing, emergent and fading situations. As a simple example, pre-emptive of my ethnographic material that is to follow, imagine how a situation changes — and the requisite responses — when in conversation with a farmer about a particular neighbour, that neighbour suddenly appears in earshot. The idea of *situationality* is akin to what Carrithers calls historicity: "the incessant interacting changeability which pervades human affairs and requires of us the ability to respond, to move ourselves and others, to delineate, and then perform" (2008: 164).<sup>7</sup> *Performance* is another term that Carrithers takes from Fernandez to refer to actions resulting from persuasion. In other words, performance is to be understood, in this sense, as motivated action. The interest of rhetoric, therefore, is in the understanding of the means used to bring particular actions about, or, in a less pre-determined understanding, how particular actions (performances) can be understood as manifestations of the play of agency and patiency in a particular place at a particular time.

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<sup>7</sup> Situationality can also be likened in some ways to Fernandez's (1986) concept of the "inchoate" as an incessant accompaniment to social life requiring constant rhetorical ordering.

### 2.2.5 Identification and Community

Fernandez (1986: ix-x) argues that to be human is "to have, to one degree or another, a problem of identity for it is to have, sooner or later, a gnawing sense of uncertainty". He sees the search for "identities", therefore, as a central goal of rhetorical attempts at making movements away from the inchoate. Fernandez takes his lead from Kenneth Burke who views identification as a necessary component of being human and of communicating. That "need" to identify, argues Burke, provides a rich resource for rhetorical persuasion (Burke, 1969). Both Burke and Fernandez recognise that that process may be one of self-persuasion, as individuals seek to identify themselves with others, as well as the persuasion of others. The rhetorical dimension of identification is borne out of a desire to persuade in the pursuit or defence of a particular interest. In an example particularly pertinent to this thesis, Burke illustrates the persuasive nature of identification through recourse to the politician, who, when addressing farmers, says "I was a farm boy myself" (1969: xiv). Burke refers to such acts of persuasion as "stylistic identifications" which endeavour to find ways in which interests, attitudes, values, experiences, perceptions and material properties are shared with others (1969: 46).

If, as Burke maintains, naming is a principal component of identification then identification may be interpreted as categorisation or as association. Categorisation may be thought of as abstracting or generalising in order to make sense out of complex experiences, whereas association may be thought of as a means of "identifying with", as in the case of the stylistic identification outlined above. What is important to remember, however, is that with a rhetorical approach (seeing interactions as the unfolding play of agency and patiency, and as incessantly negotiated) both of these processes should not be understood as fundamental and isolated, but viewed in partnership with their apparent contraries: particularisation and differentiation. Billig (1996), for instance, rightly points out that categorisation — as a cognitive function — cannot be viewed in isolation from particularisation. It would be wrong, for instance, to understand "*all* thinking [as] an act of simplification" (Bailey, 1983: 18, emphasis added). Billig argues that different "parties" are able to both generalise and particularise pursuant to a particular rhetorical situation in order to "apply the label which suits their purposes best" (1996: 172). Moreover, the two processes are seen as inter-related, for in order to *use* categories it is necessary to particularise and vice versa (1996: 164). Each statement, or *use*, of particularisation, for instance, "does not end with a statement of particularities but leads to further categorizations" (1996: 174). So, pursuant to the view of rhetoric-culture

outlined thus far, and in light of the above, it might be more appropriate to say that identification (as categorisation) is not a case of reducing things to the simplest level possible, but to reducing them to the level most rhetorically effective in a particular situation. Furthermore, the ability to move oneself and others between levels of abstraction can be seen as a rhetorical achievement.

Similarly, identification cannot be understood purely in terms of association. It must also be understood in terms of differentiation. Processes of identification are facilitated as much by association with a particular group or "identity" as differentiation from another group or "identity"; as much by my saying "I am like these people" as by my saying "I am not like these people". Furthermore, those acts of association and differentiation are to be understood as dynamic, negotiated, contingent upon situationality and interrelated with categorisation and particularisation. So in one situation, for instance, it may suit a particular interest to say "we English are a proud people", whereas in another situation it may suit another interest to say "we Northerners are a proud people". The former makes an association with everyone that is "English" and implicitly differentiates from anyone that is not. The latter makes an association with everyone that is northern English, and implicitly differentiates from "Southerners" by constructing a different category through a greater degree of particularisation. Identification, then, as an incessant play of association and differentiation, of generalisation and particularisation, is outlined as a principal means of rhetorical persuasion (Burke, 1969).

The notions of 'symbolically constructed' or 'imagined' communities put forward by Anthony Cohen (1985) and Benedict Anderson (1983) shed light on the rhetorical dimension of identification through the process of group-making. Cohen argued that the construction of social groups or communities relies on mobilisation around a set of symbols out of which people 'make meanings'. These symbols, however, are usually imprecise or ambiguous so as to allow an outward expression of homogeneity and an internal expression of difference. In other words, Cohen's view allows that individuals are able to associate and differentiate across a spectrum of particularities pursuant to the requirements of changing *situations*. Anderson, meanwhile, argued that all communities are "imagined" and are inscribed in discourse and represent a system of imaginary relations of individuals to the real relations in which they live.

The work of Anderson and Cohen illuminates two aspects of the process of identification. Anderson shows how identities can be imposed on an individual or group

ideologically, as individuals are obscured from their actual material condition through discourse. This is akin to the production of essentialised "identities", through processes of "identification" which remain implicit in essentialist rhetoric so as to make those "identities" appear more fixed than they really are (Baumann, 1999: 92). Cohen, on the other hand, shows how an outward expression of community can be used as a strategic mechanism for the pursuit of collective interests against a common perceived 'other'. Thus an 'imagined' community may represent the 'top-down' imposition of ("structural") power and a 'symbolically constructed community' may represent a 'bottom-up' expression of power (Wolf, 1999; Tilly, 1999).

### 2.2.6 Summary

The above discussion will prove fruitful in the review of farming literature, and the analysis of my own ethnographic material that is to follow. It provides an insight into the role of identification in the construction of personhoods. It provides a means of understanding why identification processes are important; of the role and *use* of cultural 'ingredients' in that process; and of how the ability to associate and differentiate, and to particularise and generalise across a spectrum of possibilities pursuant to changing situations may be understood as a rhetorical achievement (or, at least, an attempt). In this thesis I will seek to uncover the significance of designations such as good and bad farmer, local and incomer, farmer and environmentalist in terms of their differential use according to different interests in different situations. I will examine how such designations are made, remade, unmade and used through recourse to the particular values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* that appear as a constant feature of argumentative strategies, whilst at the same demonstrating a certain mutability and openness to interpretation.

The above discussion has also implied a certain reliance on cultural ingredients through processes of identification. Clifford Geertz famously said "Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men" (1973: 49). Geertz maintained that as a species humans are innately uncertain about who they are and that culture is the essential mechanism for dealing with it. However, Geertz's synchronic and organismic view of culture suggested that the vagaries of being human can be solved using a ready-made, catch-all, fixed cultural code. But experience tells us that this is not so. The approach outlined in the above section has referred to what James Fernandez calls the *inchoate* which requires what Carrithers (n.d.) has called constant "rhetorical ordering". And that ordering takes place through the incessant play

of agents and patients doing-and-being-done-to in culturally transient situations. Culture in this sense, is not just something to which people may be thought of as reliant upon for providing a movement away from the inchoate, for providing a degree of comprehension, they are also *susceptible* to culture. They are susceptible to the *use* by others of cultural ingredients upon them. In this sense culture may be understood as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing': as both 'our' doing and 'our' undoing.

The following section examines the importance of place, work and livestock in processes of identification and the construction of personhood, as well as the specific values that have been shown to be important to farming communities in the literature. It will hope to show how particular places, farming practices and values are symbolic and, therefore, rife grounds for rhetorical symbolic play (Carrithers, 2005a).

### 2.3 The Farming Literature

There is a significant volume of rural research that has examined the factors affecting the uptake of environmental payment schemes and initiatives amongst farmers. These include studies that focus on behaviour (e.g. Wilson, 1997; Beedell & Rehman, 1999; Wilson & Hart, 2001); attitudes and motives (e.g. Newby et al., 1977; Espie, 1991; Morris & Potter, 1995; Wilson & Hart, 2000; Knierim et al., 2003); values (e.g. Gasson, 1973; Ward & Lowe, 1994; Gravsholt Busck, 2002; Silvasti, 2003); and contested knowledge (e.g. Curry & Winter, 2000; Burgess et al., 2000; Carolan & Bell 2003; Carolan, 2006). The purpose of this section is to lay the foundations for the presentation of my ethnographic material by demonstrating the importance of places (the landscape), practices (work) and livestock in the construction of farming personhoods. Moreover, the focus on processes of identification, and the rhetorical play with particular values imbued in those processes, provides the framework for interpreting the implementation of — and responsiveness of farmers to — agri-environmental policy initiatives. To that end, the literature drawn on in this section is comprised largely of ethnographic rural research which provides a deeper level of insight into the means through which farmers construct their personhoods.

The section begins by examining why places and work are so important in processes of identification, and why, given their intimate working relation with the land, this may be particularly true for farmers. It is shown, through a review of the literature, how places and practices are not just drawn upon retrospectively in identification processes but are also integral to the prospective transmission of particular values. I focus, in particular, on the importance of *work ethic* in farmers' identification processes and demonstrate the

symbolic nature of farming values and their means of expression through the land, practices and livestock. Finally, I consider how the new environmental agenda has been received by farmers, in terms of a challenge to their own values and reflect on the rhetorical significance of environmental and rural morality in policy implementation and means of argumentation.

### 2.3.1 Places, Practices and Personhood

The process of identification, argue Wallwork & Dixon (2004), requires not just an appreciation of the temporal dimension of ‘identity’ constructions but also their spatial or place-orientated dimensions. Places, they contend, are not just fixed backdrops to human relations and identities, but also play an active role in their reproduction. The significance of place, and particularly the landscape, for identification processes has been shown to be borne out of its historical association. Inglis (1978: 489), for instance, has referred to the landscape as "the most tangible form in which history can declare itself", whilst Ingold (1993: 154) has remarked that "through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it". The landscape, then, may be understood as a store of what Bourdieu (1984) would call ‘symbolic capital’ and provides a resource for the symbolic construction of community (Cohen, 1985). Not only providing the grounds of belonging but also acting as a “rhetorical warrant” through which social practices and relations may be legitimised (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000: 33). The role of history in processes of identification, its rhetorical implications and its associations with the land will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

In the anthropological literature, certain studies have shown work too, to play an important role in processes of identification. In an edited volume Wallman (1979: 7) defines work as “the production, management or conversion of the resources necessary to livelihood”. This relatively broad definition of the concept recognises that work may be as much about the production of moral values as economic ones: “the task of meeting obligations, securing identity, status and structure, are as fundamental to livelihood as bread and shelter” (*ibid.*: 7). Two effects follow from the fixing of both identity and livelihood through the right to work at a particular task. The first is that a person associated with a particular job or task cannot lose it or change it without an associated loss of social and psychic esteem. The second is a sense of obligation to continue carrying out a particular task if it is perceived that no one else can do it (Wallman, 1979: 13). In this sense, the construction of personhoods through work identification can be seen to be contingent upon changeable situations. Wallman points out that values

ascribed to work are liable to change in accordance with changes in the historical and social context as well as personal circumstances (1979: 8). In particular, technological, developmental or economic changes may bring about consequent changes to the identity investment in work. However, there may be a lag in this change as people find the new forms threatening and so continue to identify with work that has lost economic significance (1979: 16-17). This process is illustrated in the same volume by Cohen (1979) who shows how *crofting* on the island of Whalsay — having lost its primarily economic rationale — retains symbolic value as it functions to maintain a valued sense of collective identity. Cohen demonstrates this by virtue of the fact that crofting continues despite no longer providing the economic means of livelihood for the islanders. Furthermore, he shows how the word “work” itself does not figure prominently in the description of crofting activities. “Work”, with its economic connotations, he argues, fails to discriminate among a “plurality of activities and the richness of their diversity which are such important values in Whalsay ideology” (Cohen, 1979: 264).

A similar view is taken by Long (1984) who looks at the continuation of “peasant forms” of agriculture in developing contexts. In such circumstances, where household income is increasingly being sourced through off-farm labour, Long argues that the value of such off-farm work is purely economic, whilst the farm remains the principal component through which “the life experiences and social commitments of the members of the household are ... formed” (1984: 5). This point is especially important, argues Long, because it can explain why state-initiated development schemes are resisted if they attempt to alter the primarily symbolic functioning of farm work. This insight is particularly relevant for the development of this thesis because, although Long’s insight applies to developing contexts, farmers in the UK, and particularly in marginal areas, are increasingly having to supplement farm incomes with additional work off the farm (see Chapter 3). So the combined insights from the above discussion might help us to understand why farming continues in marginal areas, despite decreasing economic returns. More importantly — and of political significance — it might help us understand why that common misconception of farmers’ “following the money” might not always ring true when faced with policy-driven financial incentives for adopting different methods of farming.

Since “work” may in itself be a loaded term with ideological — and therefore rhetorical — connotations it may be better, therefore, to think of what farmers do as “practices”. Or, if we consider that those practices may be rhetorically mediated, they could also be

understood as "performances". In Section 2.3.2 I look at how the concept of *hard work* or being *hardworking* can function in precisely this way.

In much of the ethnographic literature on farming communities, identification processes are shown to be tied strongly to both the land and farming practices. Whilst places might be important sources for the construction of 'identities' at all levels (e.g. at the national level: Penrose, 1993: Rose, 1995), it can be imagined how this is particularly the case for farmers who have a close, intimate association with the land in their daily practices and experience. For where work is tied to a specific place, where that place becomes the means of its performance (Wallman, 1979: 12), a particularly strong means of symbolic identification is created through the connectedness to values stored in the land, a sense of historical continuity and embodied practice through actively participating in the construction of place. This is commonly portrayed in the literature through recourse to personal or family biographies that are written in the landscape.

It is important to remember, however, that those biographies are never written *indelibly* but brought to life through practices, for, as Ingold remarked, a farm is not a static thing but:

...an evolving testimony to the life's work of those who have left their mark on its buildings, fields, and forests. Hence the past and future of the farm are inseparable from the intertwined biographies of its personnel, and the developmental history of the domestic group which they compose (Ingold, 1984: 116).

In his study of hill farms in the Scottish Borders Gray (1999) showed how shepherds draw meaning from the land not by naming or seeing it, but by using it. Places are shown to become meaningful through "praxis" and the shepherd's process of identification is imbued in the movement of sheep around the hills, their personal experiences of events that occurred at particular sites and their ability to see all the sheep (Gray, 1999: 449). Similarly, Ravetz (2001), in her study in the English Pennines argued that the distinctive identity of a farm as a place is produced, in part, by the practical and tacit nature of farm tasks. Moreover, she argues, places gain "a particular temporal identity through kinship so that there is an emphasis on the continuity of cycles via the skill of kin" who have farmed in the same location previously (2001: 179). She gives the example of "John", who when thinking or speaking of his grandfather whilst rebuilding a stone wall brings the memory of his grandfather into being not as a separate mental activity but through the sociality of technique (2001: 178; cf also Küchler's [1993: 85-86] concept of *memory-work*) which mediates meaningful relations between

persons and their environments. Ravetz refers to discourse on such occasions as emerging out of "the mutuality of person and place" and a reflection of the extension of personhood to the landscape (2001: 179).

In an earlier paper from his work in the Borders Gray (1998) referred to this mutuality of person and place; this tying of the land with personal biographies as a "consubstantial" relationship between "family" and "farm" in which the two terms become refractions of one another, interchangeable and metonymic:

In using this term [consustantial] I am arguing that what is essential to hill sheep farming people is a spatial relation between family and farm, between beings and a place, such that the distinct existence and form of both partake of or become united in a common substance. This relation is not known through farmers' self-reflexive contemplation or theoretical discourse about their farms. Instead, it is the outcome of their everyday farm work, family relations and discussions about goings-on in the Valley (Gray, 1998: 345).

Through this consubstantial relationship the farm land becomes a symbolic expression of family and a reflection of family history. Burton (2004) has extended this idea of a consubstantial relationship between "family" and "farm" to arable farmers in Marston Vale. Instead of practices with livestock, however, Burton proposes that the relationship is upheld by an "entwining of family identities through the expression of self in the land" (2004: 207), exemplified by the common practice of naming fields after family members. Moreover, in representing the symbolic actions of generations of farmers, "the farm provides a store of symbolic capital that any new entry to farming coming from that farm environment can draw on to support his/her identity as a farmer" (*ibid.*: 207). This means of identification, Burton continues, "results from a merger of a sense of history and a sense of place with the physical characteristics of the land itself" (2004: 209).

Implicit in the above discussion is the function of the landscape and farming practices to not just underlie processes of identification amongst farmers, but to transmit those means of identification too. This idea of transmission amongst upland livestock farmers has been referred to by Gray (1998) through recourse to the "genetic metaphor". Gray shows how farmers use the metaphor to explain how family members acquire their personalities, behavioural patterns and temperaments through family succession in association with the land. The metaphor is often expressed as "farming bred into" a person and derives its particular meaning and significance from the hill sheep farmers'

knowledge of how sheep "acquire, embody and transmit genetically a range of attributes" including their adaptations to the particular areas of land (*hirsels*) where they graze (Gray, 1998: 354). Similarly, Ravetz showed how the term *stock* was used by farmers in the Pennines to imply an analogy between farmers and the favoured breed of hill sheep (Gritstone). The Gritstones, like the local farmers were considered to be specifically adapted to their territory and shared qualities of "hardiness, independence and a particular kind of parenting" (Ravetz, 2001: 186). The Gritstones' knowledge of their territory and the transmission of grazing patterns to their offspring was likened to that of the hill farmers' transmitting of knowledge to their children (see also Burton et al., 2005).<sup>8</sup>

In Chapters 4-8 I show how not just knowledge and personal attributes are transmitted through practices and the landscape but the specific values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* too. In the following section I examine the significance of the *work ethic* as a central value in farmers' personhoods, whilst in Section 2.3.4 I go on to look at the differences in interpretation of the farmed environment between farmers, planners, environmentalists and policy-makers. For now, what is important to draw out from the above discussion is the point that although particular 'cultural ingredients' may be transmitted through the landscape, that does not mean that those ingredients are fixed. Rather, those ingredients are *used* and brought to life through practice. In keeping with the rhetoric-culture approach outlined in the first half of this chapter, this view appreciates a dynamic view of culture which sees cultural ingredients applied in response to the changing situations in which farmers find themselves, and in turn contributing to the creation of new situations, new practices and the constant working and re-working of the landscape.

### 2.3.2 Farmers Work Ethic

The importance of work to farming communities exudes itself, either explicitly or implicitly, in both academic and popular publications (e.g. Cobbett, 1830; Littlejohn, 1963; Williams, 1973; Newby, 1977; Wallman, 1979; Cohen, 1979; Long, 1984; Ingold, 1984; Abrahams, 1984 & 1991; Gray, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Fielding 2000; Rough Fell Sheep Breeders Association, 2005; Benson, 2005; NFU, 2008). I am particularly interested in the value attached by farmers to *hard work* and being seen to be

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<sup>8</sup> It has also been shown by Rapport (1993: 91) how the metaphor can be used derisively to undermine the legitimacy of incomers to sheep farming communities by referring to them as being from a "poor breeding stock".

*hardworking*. The association between farming and *hard work*, it seems, is so ubiquitous that we barely notice it. In later Chapters I will explore further how the virtue attached to *hard work*, and this virtual synonymy between farming and *hard work* serves a rhetorical and ideological function. First, though, from where can such virtues be traced? Schwimmer (1979) shows how virtue has been attached to farm work since at least the Classical Greek period. He showed how, in Ancient Greek society the concept of work as “sweat of the brow” was seen as a way to virtue: a term not only expressing moral quality but also welfare, success and repute (Schwimmer, 1979: 291). Agriculture, he argues, remained within a system of religious representation and was considered not “as transformation of nature to human ends, but as participation in a supra-human order which is natural and divine at the same time” (1979: 292). The religious virtues of *hard work* and farming activity find association in Britain as far back as around 1,000 AD, in the writings of Aelfric’s Colloquy (Fowler, 2002: 239):

Oxherd:

*Oh, I work hard, my lord. When the ploughmen unyokes the oxen, I lead them to pasture, and I stand over them all night watching for thieves; and then in the early morning I hand them over to the ploughmen well fed and watered.*

Shepherd:

*In the early morning I drive my sheep to their pasture, and in the heat and in cold, stand over them with dogs, lest wolves devour them; and I lead them back to their folds and milk them twice a day, and move their folds; and in addition I make cheese and butter; and I am loyal to my lord*

Such an association, it appears, has stood the test of time and is also prevalent in modern poetry and hymns:

*God bless all ploughmen everywhere  
Preparing fertile soil,  
Who seek no fortune, but a fair  
Reward for all their toil.*

(Hymn for Plough Sunday, Tony Ingleby 2001<sup>9</sup>)

In ethnographic studies, too, the importance of *hard work* to farming communities has been linked to religious tradition. Ingold, for instance, shows how the pervasive *work ethic* in Finnish rural society is founded on strong evangelical Lutheranism, which

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.farmingmatters.org.uk/seasons/hymn.html>

insists that “the only road to a good life is through unremitting physical and mental toil” (Ingold, 1984: 132). The link between Protestantism, the *work ethic* and the development of capitalism has been most famously espoused by Max Weber (1930). In simple terms, Weber argued that modern capitalist societies can be interpreted as having emerged out of puritanical protestant beliefs in *hard work* and the accumulation of wealth. According to Thompson (1995), Weber did not view the protestant *work ethic* in any particularly unique association with agriculture but that that association more likely arose “from the more general economic milieu of early capitalism” (1995: 53). Thompson, however, maintains that “there was something special about agriculture” that made farmers particularly well-suited to the *work ethic* and to a belief in its religious foundation (*ibid.*: 53). Farmers, unlike wage labourers, he argues, were genuinely rewarded in terms of wealth and social status by working harder. Moreover, whereas wage labourers were alienated from the product of their labour and, therefore, from a sense of achievement or pride in the results of their labour, industriousness to farmers was a very public virtue. They retained ownership of the product of their labour and were able to display this with pride and accomplishment at harvest time (1995: 53-54).

In contrast to Thompson, Abrahams questioned the closeness of association between puritanical Protestantism and the *work ethic* amongst Finnish farmers. He showed, for instance, how many of the Orthodox Karelian farmers in his field site also subscribed to values in *hard work*, as well as younger villagers who were nominally Lutheran but had little interest in religion (Abrahams, 1991: 18). Abrahams does not dismiss, outright, the contribution that Lutheranism has made to the strong *work ethic* but demonstrates that the *work ethic* is wrapped up in a fierce individualism amongst Finnish farmers which requires of them the capacity for long, *hard work* in the taming and transformation of nature out of a tough backwoods environment and an inhospitable climate (1991: 143-144).<sup>10</sup>

The inference from Thompson's interpretation is that farming, and farming values, were particularly important in the development of capitalism. He refers, for instance, to farmers as “willing conspirators” in the rise of productivist modes of agriculture (1995: 51). Following the presentation of my own ethnographic material in Chapters 4-7, I critically evaluate this assertion in Chapter 8. Like Abrahams I ask what, for instance, is the significance of the *work ethic* to individuals who do not relate their practices to strong religious beliefs. Moreover, I also ask how and why farmers continue to uphold

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<sup>10</sup> Abrahams shows that these qualities are captured in the Finnish term *sisu* meaning literally a persons insides, or guts, his/her inner strength.

and *use* the *work ethic* as a virtue when it is not necessarily rewarded with the economic and symbolic productive output as described by Thompson. This is examined, in particular, to the situation in the Esk Valley whereby, as a consequence of external economic pressures and emergent environmental policy initiatives, harder work does not necessarily result in more production, and nor is production held in as high regard.

Silvasti, following the approach of Thompson, refers to this environmental policy pressure as invoking a "contradiction between the cultural script and what is rewarded" (2003: 145). She provides one example of a farmer who distinguishes between "real" physical work and "pretend" work which is required by the new agri-environmental policies:

*I have lost my interest to exact the last kilograms of yield ... In future, I will calculate very carefully the boundary between "farming" and "pretended farming". It is enough just to use minimum inputs and it is not desirable to try to do too much. I have also lost my interest in developing further* (Finnish farmer: Silvasti, 2003: 145).

Whilst this extract suggests a certain amount of regret about the new policy it also maintains a link between productivity and *work ethic*. It suggests that the farmer loses interest in doing too much work and that, in a sense, his response is precisely what the new policy wanted to achieve. However, Silvasti recognises that the *work ethic* is not just expressed and maintained through production but also — in gaining broader community recognition — through the tangible appearance of the farm (*ibid.*). Through a rhetoric-culture approach, that recognises the usability of cultural values, I consider further in this thesis: how farmers may not simply forgo their *work ethic* in the face of new policy initiatives; how they may continue to uphold their *work ethic* despite the changing political and economic situations, and moreover; how farmers may *use* the *work ethic* to pursue their own interests, to reject change, and to cast indictments on new policy initiatives. The impact of new environmental policies on farmers and the ability of farmers to draw on values which may have broader societal appeal beyond the farming community is examined in Section 2.3.4. Prior to that I examine the moral and symbolic value of the *work ethic* amongst the farming community and the significance for a rhetorical approach of the symbolic nature of farming values and their means of expression (Section 2.3.3).

The importance of *hard work* for gaining moral respect within farming communities has been demonstrated by Rapport (1993) and Cohen (1979). Rapport shows how *hard*

*work* is central to farming “world-views” and is symbolised by an effective farm. The harder the farmer is seen to be working, the greater the respect achieved within the community. Amongst other professions, furthermore, farming is portrayed as the hardest work: requiring the greatest stamina, more years of learning and the greatest sense of responsibility (Rapport, 1993: 84–85). Cohen, too, makes the link between being *hardworking* and community reputation. Cohen, however, suggests that *hard work* is not something that is quantitatively measured with moral worth ascribed in equal measure. Instead, it is an evaluation of a person’s character that “expresses the proximity to a symbolic ideal rather than an actual record of effort” (Cohen, 1979: 250). This allows, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, for crofting practices to be understood as an identity investment rather than an economic investment and maintains the link between practices and identification. It emphasises, furthermore, the need to “recognise as *work* the processes through which cultural and ideological values are achieved and maintained” (1979: 264, emphasis in original).

Cohen's view of farming values as symbolic is important for understanding how such values may be *used* rhetorically. Cohen's analysis, however, does not account for change. He considers the community as a “holism” and his interpretation suggests that crofting activities will always remain an important means of identification rather than contextualising his analysis in terms of its particular *situation*. For instance, does that situation simply represent what Wallman (1979) referred to as a “lag” between identity investment and economic investment as a result of changing social and economic conditions? In the following section I examine further how the symbolic nature of farming values can facilitate a rhetorical interpretation, in terms of how values may be played with to suit changing situations, and how the play with those values may give rise to changing situations themselves. In other words, in terms of how rhetoric can be understood as both a response to, and creator of historicity.

### 2.3.3 Symbolism and the “Good Farmer”

The symbolic nature of the land, practices and specific farming values, including their role in processes of identification, has been alluded to in the above discussion. The previous section, for instance, showed how the *work ethic* may be interpreted as a symbolic moral ideal, rather than a direct measure of effort. Similarly, not just the particular values but the means of *expressing* those values may also be symbolic. This often manifests itself in the literature through recourse to the more general virtuous moral notion of the “good farmer”.

It was shown in the previous section how the *work ethic* may be upheld and expressed through the tangible appearance of the farm (Silvasti, 2003). Burton et al. (2005: 64) have detailed numerous studies from around the world that have demonstrated the importance to conceptions of good farming practice of "having a tidy farm" (McEachern, 1992; Nassauer, 1997; Burgess et al., 2000; Oreszczyn & Lane, 2000; Egoz et al., 2001; Retter et al., 2002). In addition to the physical appearance of the farm land, farm buildings and boundaries several studies in the English uplands have also shown how meaning is derived, and virtues expressed, through the aesthetic appearance and quality of stock. It has been shown that farmers and shepherds believe the stock to be a reflection of themselves, their farming knowledge and is associated with communal perceptions of what it is to be a good farmer (Gray, 1999; Whitman, 2005; Burton et al., 2005).<sup>11</sup> The embodiment of the farmers' knowledge and skill in his/her stock finds public expression at the auction mart. Whitman argued that marts provide spectacles where farmers achieve legitimacy as they are judged by their peers on the appearance of the stock and also the price achieved (Whitman, 2005: 203). Furthermore, Gray (1999: 446) showed that this public expression of knowledge is most resonant at store market auctions which involve the sale of lambs for further fattening. Compared to 'fat market auctions', in which the lambs are sold for slaughter, the sale ring at store market auctions is much larger, there are more spectators, farmers wear dressier clothes and are more likely to reject the prices offered if they do not feel that they reflect the lamb's qualities as both commodities and embodiments of their own skill. Furthermore, Littlejohn (1963) demonstrates that it is not always financial returns in themselves that demonstrate quality since it is not always the biggest/most profitable farms that are held in highest esteem.

Notions of being a 'good farmer' have been extended to arable farming by Burton (2004) who argued that perceptions of being a good farmer were strongly related to 'productivist' modes of thinking and operating. Burton shows how the act of 'farming' gives farmers their 'identity' and they associate 'farming' with production-oriented roles (promoted through past policies) that allows them to claim a high social position as 'caretakers' of the nation's food supply (2004: 195). Any move away from productivism may be viewed by farmers as entailing a loss of identity or social/cultural rewards and it may be 'literally unthinkable' to them (Shucksmith, 1993; Wilson, 2001). Burton argues that farmers attach significant symbolic meanings to apparently utilitarian farm tasks

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<sup>11</sup> And it has already been shown how the metaphor of stock and breeding is used by farmers to uphold their own personal qualities and knowledge and to act as a means of transmission between farming generations.

(such as hedgerow removal) and this has implications for how policies which challenge the carrying out of such tasks are implemented. Because post-productivism may be interpreted by farmers as losing their reputation as good farmers, built up by previous generations of their families, Burton argues that government needs to show greater sensitivity and acknowledge the fact that the changing role of the farmer is not simply a structural change but also a change in the basic social fabric of the community (Burton, 2004: 211). Burton follows Thompson's line that "good farming is associated with the production of more and larger" and that "the linking of work and reward characterizes a *work ethic* that converts production into a sign of the farmers moral worth" (Thompson, 1995: 68). In this thesis I challenge this assumed synonymy between farming values and productivism and, by virtue of this, also challenge Thompson's suggestion that it was farming values that led to the development of productivist practices. I examine, in particular, how taking a rhetorical approach that views particular cultural 'ingredients' as capable of being interpreted and differentially *used*, allows a different understanding on the basis of my own theoretical approach and ethnographic findings.

Rapport (1993), for instance, found no standard definition of the terms 'good local' and 'good farmer' in his study of an English village in Cumbria. Instead, he showed how such 'common forms' were connected to and expressed through a particular relationship and constructed by individuals pursuant to the "conditions and contexts of their own lives" (1993: 168). In other words, those common forms are *used* and mediated by a plurality of individual interests. Rapport refers to this phenomenon through recourse to Devereaux's notion of *ego-syntonism*. That notion holds that "a culture offers behavioural forms which members of different motivations can at the same time perceive as suitable for the expression and gratification of subjective meanings and emotions" (Rapport, 1993: 169, citing Devereaux 1978: 126). This interpretation fits much more closely with a rhetorical approach that allows farming values and their expression to be seen as things of possibility: capable of being interpreted and *used* in many different ways pursuant to changing *situations*. That degree of possibility is heightened by the fact that both values, and their means of expression can be understood as symbolic. For instance *hard work* may be considered a farming value and to be a symbol of what it means to be a good farmer. In turn, *hard work* may be symbolised by the tidiness of the farm or the quality of the livestock. And because by their very nature symbols are interpretable, this gives scope for considerable "rhetorical play" with such values and their expression (Carrithers, 2005a). This relationship could be expressed simply as:

*tidy farm = hardworking farmer = good farmer*

In this view, what is tidy, what is *hardworking* and by implication what is good are all open to interpretation and may function prominently, therefore, in rhetorical persuasion. Rhetorical, that is, in terms of both self-persuasion and the persuasion of others. Or, as Burke might say, humans are both symbol-using and symbol-abusing and may use purposeful cultural ingredients "to form attitudes or induce actions" in others (1969: 41): to (self)persuade and encourage performances (Fernandez, 1986).

It was shown in Section 2.3.1 that not just the aesthetic appearance of farm land or livestock are used symbolically to uphold moral values, but farm practices too (Wallman, 1979; Cohen, 1979; Long, 1984; Ingold, 1984; Gray, 1999; Ravetz, 2001). Setten (2001, 2004) has expanded these ideas to distinguish between the symbolic relevance of the landscape to farmers, and its symbolic relevance to planners or the general public. Following research amongst Norwegian farmers Setten argued that farmers make meanings and take memories from the land in ways different to landscape planners or the public. That difference, he contends, is borne out of the differences in the way they *know* the land. Whereas planners uphold an aesthetic symbolism in the landscape through "knowing by seeing", he suggests that farmers derive their meanings from the landscape through their embodied practices: "by knowing from within" or "knowing by being" (Setten, 2004: 406-7, following Shotter, 1993). The past, for the farmer, is brought to life not through specific objects in a landscape (e.g. a stone wall), but through "social memory", through practices that may be "symbols of the past" (Setten, 2004: 408-409; cf Ravetz, 2001). This gives farmers a *dynamic* and worked view of the landscape as opposed to the landscape planners who tend to prefer the fossilisation of features in the landscape as a means of aesthetically objectifying the past. Furthermore, that different view is not just a matter of perspective but encapsulates farming values in itself. Silvasti, for instance, wrote that amongst Finnish farmers "a constantly changing environment, such as a farm, serves as a sign of industriousness, of hard work, of virtue" (2003: 147).

This view of the landscape as dynamic and worked fits closely with the view of culture outlined in the first half of this chapter. Indeed, Setten refers to the "landscape" as "produced" by local customary practices and as "always in the making" (Setten, 2004: 392, cf. Fox, 1985).<sup>12</sup> As a cultural component, this idea of the landscape as dynamic

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<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Ingold (2000: 199) referred to the landscape as "never complete" and as "always in the nature of work in progress".

and worked maintains the view of culture as providing a resource for rhetorical strategies (through, for instance, processes of identification) but also being a constantly changing product of human interaction. As the landscape, stock, practices and farming values in themselves can be understood as symbolic and interpretable we can begin to get an idea of farmers' personhoods as being constructed and negotiated by "symbolic play" as mediated through acts of agency and patiency. We will remember, also, however, how rhetorical play is dependent upon the particular context or situation in which it is operating. The work of Setten has introduced the idea of alternative conceptions of landscape between farmers and planners and since a significant situational aspect of my own ethnographic research involved the implementation of agri-environment schemes, the following section turns to look at how farming landscapes, practices and values are situated beyond the confines of the farming community and, in particular, in the context of an emergent "environmental morality" (Lowe et al., 1997).

#### **2.3.4 Agri-Environmental Policy, Environmental Morality and the Broader Appeal of Farming Values**

In the previous section differences in landscape perceptions between farmers and planners were outlined through recourse to the work of Setten (2004). These differences were outlined, however, within the context of farmed landscapes being 'contested' in light of changing policy exigencies and public opinion on the role and function of rural areas. In particular, and like much recent rural research, that area of contestation is presented as between farmed landscapes as producing food on the one hand, and as sites of environmental conservation on the other. It was shown how, in contrast to farmers' dynamic and worked view of the landscape, agricultural and environmental planning authorities exercised rules that could be understood as fixing the landscape "in order to make it visually stable" and aimed at "producing regularities in people's practices" (Setten, 2004: 393). Furthermore, as opposed to farmers' tacit knowledge of the landscape gained through their embodied practices, "bureaucratic knowledge is perceived and presented as objectified, technical, neutral and distanced". The planners' interaction with, and conceptions of, nature is mediated and conditioned through "maps and plans as abstract representations of nature" (2004: 403). Setten follows James Scott's view of state bureaucracy in *Seeing Like a State*. Scott showed how in order to gain control over complex environments and complex societies State bureaucracy established legibility through standardisation and simplification. Moreover, such simplifications did not depict the reality of the environments and societies they portrayed but created an alternative reality that was recognisable, legible and

controllable (Scott, 1998).<sup>13</sup> In the same way that I alluded to a dynamic and worked view of the landscape being akin to the dynamic and 'always-in-the-making' view of culture that I subscribe to, so too can maps and abstracted views of the landscape be likened to essentialised views of culture. Both mapping and essentialised cultures construct the reality they are meant to represent as much as depicting it (cf Baumann, 1999). Moreover, both give an *impression* of fixity and can be used to support a particular set of interests. In other words, both are rhetorical.

As a means of control, such abstractions and differentially imposed means of knowing and understanding the landscape have been presented as destabilising customary farming practices and as delegitimising farmers' knowledge. Setten, for instance, argued that "by regarding the landscape as merely a scene or backdrop for social action ... the landscape is banalized, and the people in the landscape [are] disarmed" (2004: 405). So when a new environmental scheme is introduced, farmers' means of knowing the landscape is questioned and challenged on the basis of alternative moral judgements (2004: 399-400). Amongst farmers in the Cheviots of Northumberland Whitman (2005) extended this challenge to farmers' knowledge from the abstracting power of planners to the scientific legitimacy afforded conservation scientists vis-à-vis the knowledge of farmers. He argued that upland areas have increasingly come to be framed through a conservation discourse which legitimises the interests of ecologists and conservationists whilst excluding the knowledge of farmers. This has the effect of disempowering farmers through the very processes by which 'problems' in the uplands are defined. By the mid 1980s, he argued, overgrazing had been constructed by conservationists as the "dominant 'problem' in the uplands" and "this allowed conservationists to take 'responsibility' for the problem" through science, "whilst farmers were reconfigured as being 'responsible' for the problem" (Whitman: 2005: 17-18). In the terms of Cruz and Bourdieu, outlined in Section 2.2.3, this might be understood as the conservation scientists possessing a greater stock of "linguistic capital" because it is their knowledge that is legitimised in the construction of the "dominant rhetorical frame" (the conservation discourse and the framing of the uplands' "problem") which, at the same time, serves to restrict the legitimacy of farmers' knowledge and their means of expressing it (Cruz, 2000: 277; Bourdieu, 1991: 19).

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<sup>13</sup> In chapters 6-8 I examine this difference between farmers and environmental implementers in terms of their different conceptions of beneficent change and how this should be monitored, measured and represented. From the perspective of farmers in terms of their farming practices, and from the perspective of the environmental implementers in terms of habitat improvement for the River Esk Pearl Mussel.

It was shown in the previous section, also, how Burton represented the imposition of agri-environmental schemes as a threat to arable farmers' moral notions of the 'good farmer' since it challenges the symbolic significance they attach to the carrying out of production-oriented roles (Burton, 2004). This view recognises that farm work is not just a means of earning a living, but a means of identification and, as Wallman said, a person who fixes their identity through a particular type of work cannot lose it or change it without an associated loss of psychic esteem (1979: 13). It suggests a reason as to why changes in practice might be resisted by farmers if those changes are imposed from outside the farming community and attempt to alter the symbolic functioning of farm work (cf. Long, 1984). I will later argue, however, that viewing farmers' means of identification only in terms of productivism and the performance of productivist roles might be too simplistic, or, at least, too simple an interpretation for the farmers of the Esk Valley. In a thorough analysis of the increasing regulation of farm pollution Lowe et al. framed their research broadly as "the eclipse of farming as a source of natural values by the new environmental morality" (1997: 8). They showed how the increasing regulation of farming in the late 1980s represented "more deep-seated social and cultural developments" and the reassessment of "the social function of the countryside and the role of farming within it" (1997: 7). Through the 1970s, under the Control of Pollution Act, pollution from farming went unregulated so long as it was seen to confer with the concept of "good agricultural practice". That concept framed farming as "an heroic activity committed to the vital and laudable aim of providing ever more of the nation's food needs". By the late Eighties, however, with over-production leading to surpluses and with growing public concern for environmental protection "this once hallowed priority ... seemed tarnished and redundant" (1997: 85). Lowe et al.'s study, like Thompson (1995) and Burton (2004), identifies farmers' association between productivism and "good farming" (1997: 201) and examines the interface between farmers and pollution inspectors as a kind of negotiation or "pitched battle" between the ascendant environmental morality and an older rural morality "rooted in the *virtuous industry* of the farming community" (Lowe et al., 1997: 192, emphasis added). Following the preceding discussion this demonstrates the role of the *work ethic* and its associated virtue in the construction of farmers' personhoods but also as used in their argumentative strategies. Furthermore, it shows how those personhoods are negotiated through interaction with implementers, policy-makers and broader public opinion with regard to their practices and perceptions of good farming (cf Setten, 2004: 400).

Through a rhetorical approach I wish to expand on this notion of farming personhoods and roles being constantly negotiated. This expansion, which will emerge throughout

the thesis, can be developed along two principal lines. The first line examines, through a broader situational context, whether the current ascendance of an environmental morality and associated policy mechanisms can be wholly considered to have "eclipsed" an older rural morality. This is examined, in particular, through a broadening of the scale of analysis to audiences amongst which an older rural morality may still be salient as well as through the persistence of arguments couched in such terms. The second line examines the extent to which the situation can be understood as a "pitched battle" between the opposing moral discourses. This links to the first line and examines how both discourses persist and are not necessarily used by one side against the other, but that both moralities are used by *both* sides rhetorically in their negotiated interactions with one another.

Rural morality and values have been shown to be important beyond the farming community and to be oft-expressed through the symbolism of the *family farm* (Abrahams, 1984). Not only has it been shown to be an important symbol for people moving into rural communities (Rapport, 1993: 24) but can also be used as a powerful "psychological instrument" in the portrayal of values important to society more broadly (Motheral, 1951: 514). And whilst the symbolic importance of the family farm and rural values may appear rooted in the past, it is precisely that historical association that lends itself to their persistence. Setten, for instance, showed how agriculture has historically been portrayed as an "exercise of innocence" that has been contrasted to the deprivations of urban industrialisation. That portrayal, however, "continues to structure how we are able to conceive the role of farming, farmers and their environmental practices" (2004: 395). The persistence of such values, it could be argued, lends itself to their continued *use* in the construction of arguments and negotiated interactions. And whilst an environmental morality or discourse may have risen to prominence in the UK I suggest in Chapter 4 that at the level of policy-making of the European Union rural symbolism continues to influence policy and the EU's own quest for legitimacy amongst its citizens (Bowler, 1985; Hoggart et al., 1995; Clark et al., 1997; Gray, 2000a; Veerman, 2006). This suggests that strategies of argumentation based on an "older rural morality" needn't necessarily be understood as giving way to an emergent environmental morality, but as dependent upon their situation and the motivations and interests of different audiences.

Similarly, and following the second line outlined above, the persistence of this "older rural morality" alongside the emergent environmental morality may be representative of both moralities' continued *usability*. And those moralities needn't necessarily find

continued use in opposition to one another. In a simple example Hinrichs (1996), for instance, shows how the marketing rhetoric of products manufactured in Vermont benefits from the espousal of a value in *hard work* in combination with a clean and pristine environment. In Chapters 5-8 I examine further how an environmental morality and a rural morality are not just used in opposition to one another by environmental implementers and policy-makers on the one hand and farmers on the other. Instead, both are seen as able to utilise both moralities in the construction of their arguments and attempts at persuasion. This might simply represent what Edwards & Potter (1992, cited in Wallwork & Dixon, 2004: 31) have referred to as "rhetorical inoculation", whereby one group incorporates and reconfigures the argument of another group as a kind of pre-emptive counter argument. This could emerge, for instance, as environmental policy-makers maintain that the good, *hardworking* farmer should engage in agri-environment schemes, or when the farmer challenges the legitimacy of 'so-called agri-environment schemes' because of their practically negative environmental consequences. Examples such as these demonstrate the usability of particular arguments pursuant to the particular audience being addressed and will be elaborated and considered further in Chapters 5-8.

Another interpretation is that, through negotiation, different moralities can be encompassed and combined in the construction of personhoods. For instance, whilst "the environment" has been termed a "quintessentially global narrative" that derives its power from its ability to transcend cultural boundaries (Harper, 2001: 101; Milton, 1995), Tsing (1997) has shown how the narrative of "the environment" can be reconfigured in local situations and circumstances and to augment existing means of identification. In a view supportive of the rhetoric-culture approach, and of the ability of negotiations to transcend discursive limits, Tsing argued that global environmental issues are always translated by actors at the local level according to the exigencies of their symbolic and political worlds. Such translations, however, are always strategic and the translation process is able to reconfigure the global environmental narrative itself. This interpretation complements a view of culture, and cultural values, as complex and dynamic. Through my ethnographic material I hope to demonstrate this complexity through recourse to values that may not necessarily be seen to fit paradigmatically within a particular discourse but that are open to interpretation and capable of being modified to suit particular means of persuasion and different interests. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate that the *use* of those values can be *creative* in both senses of that word: In terms of the skilful application with the intention of encouraging a performance, and in terms of modifying cultural forms, or giving rise to new cultural forms through processes of interaction and improvisation.

## 2.4 A Preliminary Note on Improvement and Beneficent Change

In the previous section it was shown that farmers often uphold a view of the landscape as dynamic and worked. Moreover, it was also shown that this view is not purely objective but represents the expression of farming values: serving as a sign of industriousness and *hard work* (Silvasti, 2003). We can infer from this relationship that not only work, but change, as the product of that work, is virtuous too. But of course for change to be held in high regard it must be the right sort of change, it must be positive or *beneficent change*. Several studies have shown how farmers' interaction with the land, through their embodied practices and the invocation of social memory, is viewed as a narrative of progress, often told as a family's struggle to overcome harsh conditions and to continually alter and modify the environment to make it a better place to farm.<sup>14</sup> When considering this value in *beneficent change* amongst farmers in terms of the implementation of agri-environmental policy, however, it is often examined in terms of agri-environment scheme's perceived opposition to productivist conceptions of progress, or the ideological doctrine of *Agricultural Improvement* (Gasson, 1973; Burton, 2004). The productivist doctrine measures progress purely in terms of output whilst *Improvement* interprets *beneficent changes* as those that rapidly enable an increase in production and an extraction of greater profit from the land.<sup>15</sup> In Chapter 8 I examine further the etymological and ideological underpinnings of the word *improvement* and how the broadening of the meaning of the term, away from a strictly economic interpretation and toward a more general *beneficent change*, served to make the two meanings appear synonymous (Womack, 1989). The association between farmers' value in progress and productivism also serves to maintain this synonymy and leads to a tendency to couch farmers' opposition to environmental schemes in terms of a challenge to their ability to progress and *improve* the farm in a purely productivist sense. Throughout this thesis I examine alternative concepts of *beneficent change* and recognise the interpretability, and therefore usability, of just what a *beneficent change* may be constituted to be. Through recourse to the word *fettle* I suggest the existence of an alternative conception of (and value in) *beneficent change* that is associated with steady, incremental changes or as mending or repairing. Moreover, I suggest that that conception may be equally capable of motivating behaviour as a productivist value in *beneficent change*.

<sup>14</sup> In Chapter 4 I examine in more detail the rhetorical narrative function of progressive stories in both general historical texts and local historical accounts of the Esk Valley.

<sup>15</sup> Such changes are often on a relatively large scale encompassing significantly different practices, technologies and the possibility of social reorganisation.

During the agricultural revolution in England, and commenting specifically on Acts of Parliamentary Enclosure in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Polanyi observed that:

Fired by an emotional faith in spontaneity, the common-sense attitude toward change was discarded in favour of a mystical readiness to accept the social consequences of economic improvement, whatever they might be (Polanyi, 1945: 41).

Perhaps nowhere were the social consequences of a doctrine of *Improvement* more pronounced than in the Highland Clearances of Scotland (Prebble, 1963). There, the forced removal of thousands of people from the highlands of Scotland to allow the expansion of ranch-style sheep rearing, was passed-off not just as an agricultural and economic *improvement* but as an *improvement* of the habits and customs of the people themselves (Prebble, 1963: 104-105). What I want to suggest, however, is that just like it might not be possible to interpret an environmental morality as wholly "eclipsing" an older rural morality, so too may it not be possible to suggest that an alternative "common-sense" attitude to change was wholly discarded as a consequence of a philosophy of *Improvement*. Certainly *Improvement* and "the environment" might have achieved a certain orthodoxy, and come to function as "dominant rhetorical frames" but that is not to say that they remain uncontested. The important dimension of the interpretation of change that I describe through recourse to the word *fettle* is that the value rests not so much in the material substance of the change in question but in the temporal nature of that change. I will show in Chapters 5-8, for instance, how much opposition to agri-environmental schemes amongst farmers in the Esk Valley was couched not so much in terms of a critique against the changes proposed, but as against the time-rate of change. By presenting an alternative conception of *beneficent change* I do not wish to simply propose an oppositional morality to that of *Improvement*, or to suggest that different "types" of farmer or other groups ascribe to one particular interpretation. Instead, I wish to maintain that its persistence represents its ongoing *use* in processes of interaction, as a means of argumentation in different situations, and as a functional guide to farming practices.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined a view of culture that is dynamic and constantly created and re-created during incessantly negotiated human interactions as conditioned by the changeability, or situationality, of everyday life. It has presented culture as something

that gets *used* in pursuit of particular interests but by also recognising culture as a thing of possibility it has maintained that all people are capable of using culture creatively in order to respond to changing situations or to pursue or defend their own interests.

Section 2.3 has extended this view of culture as dynamic to the landscape and farmers' interactions with it. Moreover it has emphasised how farmers' processes of identification are tied to the landscape, to farm work and to livestock and demonstrated the importance, yet symbolic nature, of farming values and their means of expression. By re-examining the farming literature in light of the view of rhetoric-culture outlined here, and by developing the role of a value in *beneficent change*, it is hoped that this thesis can make a significant contribution to the literature in terms of the way in which structural and cultural changes are interpreted, as well as how the responses of farmers to new policy measures are understood.

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## Chapter 3

### Local Situationality

#### 3.1 Introduction

The following two chapters outline the situational context for the research in terms of the locale in which the fieldwork was carried out (this chapter) and the spatially and temporally extended aspects of the situation that come to bear on the local and present (Chapter 4). Whilst this chapter's emphasis is on the local and the contemporary it is not possible to present an entirely synchronic and bounded assessment of a "local situation". Firstly, because it would be entirely arbitrary to use a catchment to define a rhetorical setting and secondly because situations are not viewed as static, but as amorphous and malleable; always being reconfigured pursuant to the particular demands of the means of persuasion being employed or developed. Such a synchronic view would negate the importance of both history and historicity and would overlook people's ability to improvise and be creative; to both respond to emergent situations and be creative agents in their emergence. This chapter, therefore, presents the field site cautiously – artificially severing its extra-local and extra-temporal connectedness for the benefit of presentation whilst reminding the reader of its necessary arbitrariness and providing explicit acknowledgement of that fact in the following chapter.

The chapter is divided into two principal parts. In the first part of the chapter I outline the situational aspects of the local field site that provide particularly pertinent contextual insight for the purposes of the research. In the second part of the chapter I reflect on my own influence on local situationality and outline the methodological approach to my fieldwork. As will be later elaborated it has been necessary to approach anonymity with particular discretion. In order to meaningfully and consistently present the findings from the geomorphological research with which my PhD is affiliated it is necessary to use actual place names in the first part of the chapter. However, in order to maintain anonymity, the second half of this chapter, and Chapters 5-8 use pseudonyms for both particular people and places. It is hoped that this discretion can be maintained without compromising my ability to compare ethnographic and geomorphological data.

#### 3.2 Aspects of the Local

##### 3.2.1. Geographical and Environmental

Notwithstanding the above, the field site in which the majority of my research took place *could*, for the current purpose, be defined by the upper half of the catchment of the River

Esk in North Yorkshire, England. Between the headwaters in the West and the village of Grosmont in the East the field site covers an area of approximately 200 km<sup>2</sup> (Environment Agency, 2005) and is situated within the North York Moors National Park. The location of the study area in the UK is shown in Figure 3-1. The character of the field site is dominated by moorland plateau (up to 433m above sea level); the east-west trending Esk valley; and a series of dales (valleys) containing tributaries of the Esk that trend south-north to the south of the main river valley. The plateau and hilltops support extensive heather moorland whilst the valleys and hillsides are characterised by enclosed pasture, small villages and dispersed farmsteads. This pattern of land use is interspersed with pockets of deciduous woodland and coniferous plantation (Figure 3-2). Across the Esk catchment as a whole, upland heath accounts for 48% of land cover, 32% is grassland, 10% is woodland, 8% is arable and 2% is built-up (Environment Agency, 2005; Mills, 2006).

The underlying geology of the Esk catchment is dominated by the Mid-Jurassic Ravenscar group comprising alternating layers of sandstone, shale and oolitic limestone, which gives rise to the characteristic moorland scenery in the catchment (Environment Agency, 2005). Away from the hill slopes and the main Esk valley, glacial removal has exposed the Upper and Middle Lias shales of the early Jurassic during the formation of the catchment's southern dales. Alluvium deposits are found in a narrow corridor along the main Esk channel and in some of the smaller tributaries but their extent is limited by the steep valley sides. More extensive, and undulating, glacial deposits (diamicton) are found across the valley bottoms, whilst peat formations predominate on the moorland plateaus. The underlying geology gives rise to a range of soil types across the catchment. Brown earths and stagnogleys dominate in the valleys whilst the uplands are characterised by peat, podsols, stagnopodsols and stagnohumic gley soils (Carroll and Bendelow, 1981).



Figure 3-1: Location of study area showing the River Esk flowing east to west to enter the North Sea at Whitby, and the catchment's location in the United Kingdom. Source: [www.commons.wikimedia.org](http://www.commons.wikimedia.org).



Figure 3-2: View across the Esk valley looking North from Lealholm towards Oakley Walls. Showing enclosed pasture in the fore and middle-ground, High Park Farm to the left, Park Wood to the right and the moor line on the horizon. Picture courtesy of E. Padmore.

The climate in the catchment is cool and wet with a marked contrast between valley bottoms and higher ground. A summary of the climatic character of the catchment, and the differences between high and low level ground, is provided in Table 3-1. The variability and unpredictability of the weather are an everyday concern for farmers in the catchment. Most rainfall is delivered through frontal storms which can occur at any time of the year with more intensive, convective, rainfall occurring in the summer (Mills, 2006: 10) and — as evidenced by Table 3-1 — contributing higher summer rainfall on higher ground relative to the valley bottoms. Anecdotal evidence supports the broader scientific consensus on climate change that recent years, in particular, have been milder through winter with significantly reduced snowfall and that there has been a greater incidence of intensive rainfall events during the summer. Changes to the climate pose a threat (or opportunity) to farmers not just in terms of the material impact of different patterns of weather, but also in terms of their secondary consequences, such as their impacts on plant growth and the prevalence of animal disease.

**Table 3-1: Climatic characteristics of the upper Esk catchment.**

<b>Climatic Variable</b>	<b>Moor Top</b>	<b>Valley Bottom</b>
Annual Mean Temperature (°C)	6.5 – 7.5	7.5 – 8.5
Annual Rainfall (mm)	900 – 1,200	700 – 900
Days of Rain > 1mm	150 – 170	110 – 130
Days of Ground Frost	120 – 140	120 – 140
Days of Sleet/Snow Fall	45 – 60	30 – 40
Days of Snow Lying	25 – 35	15 – 25
Winter Mean Temperature (°C)	-1 – 2	2.5 – 3.5
Winter Minimum Temperature (°C)	-2.5 – -0.5	0 - 1
Winter Rainfall (mm)	250 – 350	250 – 350
Summer Mean Temperature (°C)	12 – 13	14 – 15
Summer Maximum Temperature (°C)	16 – 17.5	18.5 – 19.5
Summer Rainfall (°C)	240 – 280	180 – 200

Notes: All figures are averaged for the period 1971 – 2000 and derived from Met Office statistics (2009, online).

For each farmer the vagaries of the climate affect them to a different extent as conditioned by a range of factors specific to their particular farm. Aspect, elevation, slope angle, soil type, underlying rock type, and farming activities and management all interact with the climate, and one another to create a unique set of circumstances on each

farm. Each farm will have a different problem, or hindrance and these were made apparent to me during the course of my fieldwork. The paucity of sunlight on the eastern slopes of the dale relative to the west; “the heavy clay soil round here”; the fact that its “a jacket colder up here” were typical retorts made by farmers to express the particular difficulties with which they were faced relative to some of their neighbours and, as I will show in Chapter 5, is one reason why a “good farmer” cannot be judged solely on the basis of their output but must be judged in terms of the conditions under which they farm. Similarly, a set of weather conditions might favour one farmer one year, whilst a different set of conditions will favour a different farmer the next.

The spring of 2007, leading up to the start of my fieldwork, was notably warm and dry. The month of April in particular saw temperatures 3.2°C above average for the North of England whilst receiving just 31% of the normal rainfall (Met Office, 2009). Whilst some in the catchment were optimistic that these were the early signs of a good summer what was to follow was one of the wettest on record. Both July and August were cooler than average whilst June saw the North of England receive 271% of average rainfall. Harlow Hill Reservoir in North Yorkshire saw its wettest June on record (88 year series) with 289.9 mm of rain representing 497% of the average. Two particularly intense events 12 – 15<sup>th</sup> and 24 – 25<sup>th</sup> June brought flooding to many parts of Yorkshire. On the 14<sup>th</sup> June Harlow Hill Reservoir recorded a rainfall event of 97.7mm with a return period in excess of 150 years (Met Office, 2009). The winter of 2007/2008 was mild with temperatures for the North of England 2.3°C and 1.4°C warmer than average in January and February 2008 respectively. And although the summer of 2008 did not bring the quantities of rainfall seen in 2007 the summer was persistently wet. The months June – October in 2008 all saw above average rainfall with the North of England receiving 195% of normal rainfall in July (Met Office, 2009). The persistence and timing of the rainfall severely affected the harvest of 2008.

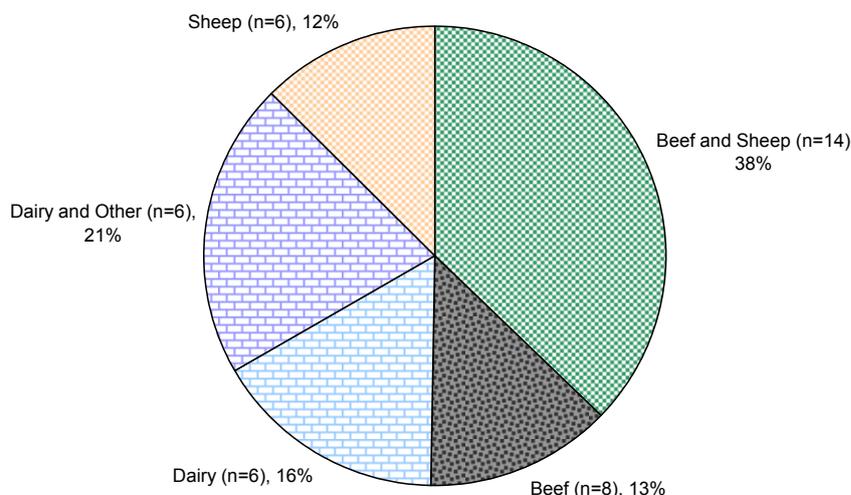
Besides being located within a National Park (refer to Section 3.2.3) the catchment also forms part of the North York Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA). Administered by Natural England the SSSI/SPA contains the largest continuous tract of heather moorland in England and is of national importance for its mire and heather moorland plant communities and of international importance for its populations of breeding birds. The dry heath is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* which are managed by the estates to the exclusion of most other species to provide favourable red grouse habitat (an economically important game bird). The site supports populations of merlin and

golden plover which are of international importance as well as snipe, curlew, redshank, hen harrier and peregrine which are of national importance (Natural England, 2009 [1998]). The consequences for farmers of these conservation designations are considered further in Section 3.2.3.

Within the River Esk much conservation work has been directed at the protection and enhancement of the salmonid population and, more recently, that of the freshwater pearl mussel. In particular, controlling the perceived impacts of fine sediment on the habitats of both of these species is providing a substantial focus for current conservation efforts. The interaction of this management effort with the farming community in the Esk catchment is of particular significance for the research context of this thesis. Following a description of farming and other catchment users, therefore, this issue is examined in more detail in Section 3.2.4 in terms of how it has arisen and emerged as a management initiative.

### **3.2.2 Farming in the Catchment**

Information was collected on 46 out of a potential 113 farms identified within the study area (refer to Section 3.3). This covers an area of 31.4 km<sup>2</sup> which represents approximately 16% of the catchment area and almost 40% of the enclosed farm land. The majority of the farmed land (58%) is under mixed livestock production, with the remainder under specialised livestock production. The types of farming covered, and their proportions are shown in Figure 3-3. Figure 3-3 shows that the majority of the farmed land (and the number of farms) is under combined beef and sheep production with dairy farming (either alone or in combination with beef or sheep production) the second most widespread amongst those surveyed.

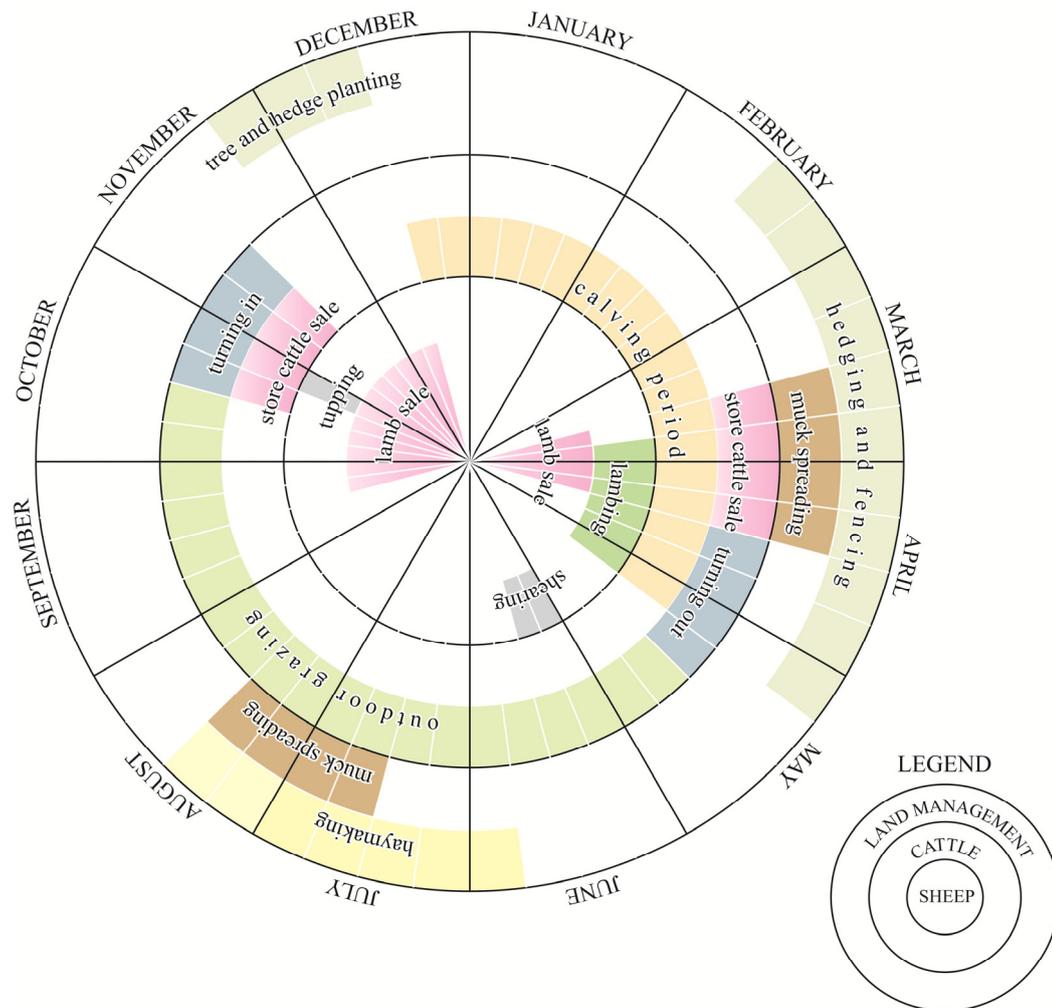


**Figure 3-3: Farming activity in the study area by land area**

The majority of the beef herd in the catchment comprises of beef suckler units. Suckler herds produce offspring specifically for the beef market with no connection to milk production. The suckler herds comprise of pure-bred beef cattle such as native Hereford, Aberdeen Angus, Devon, Shorthorn and increasingly of continental breeds such as Charolais, Limousine, Simmental and Belgian Blue. The progeny of the suckler herd will either be sold as store cattle (at around 9 – 14 months) for further fattening on better quality land, fattened on the farm directly for slaughter (at around 18 – 30 months), or be retained as replacements (heifers). Sheep grazed on the moor typically comprise Swaledale or Scottish Blackface breeds. The progeny include pure-bred moor lambs to replace old stock (females/gimmers) and cross-bred lambs from crossing with breeds such as Blue-Faced Leicester to produce less hardy Mules with higher lambing rates for sale to lowland farmers as replacement breeding stock (gimmers) or for fattening for slaughter (wethers/males and gimmers). Pure-bred moorland wether lambs find little market in the UK and are usually exported to Southern Europe where there is greater demand for “light” lamb. Many of the farmers in the study area, however, no longer keep sheep on the moor (see section 3.2.3) and so stock less hardy but faster growing breeds or cross-breeds with higher lambing rates. These include Mules, Charrolais, Masham, Romney, Suffolk and Texel and produce replacement stock and lamb for the British market (either fattened on the farm, or sold as store lamb for fattening elsewhere). Fleeces are also sold annually, usually directly to the British Wool Marketing Board, but this is increasingly providing only a nominal income. Dairy farms

in the catchment tend to specialise purely in milk production with breeds such as Friesian and Holstein. Some units combine beef and dairy production, or have separate suckler herds or flocks of sheep.

Throughout the summer livestock are fed outdoors on pasture whilst some fields will remain ungrazed to grow the grass that will be made into silage or hay for winter fodder. In the winter when the grass no longer grows, and the ground is often saturated, cattle are, in most cases, kept indoors and fed a combination of silage/hay and processed cattle feed, depending upon the specific operation in place and the stage in their production (e.g. additional feed may be given to fattening beasts and to cows that have just calved). Sheep are kept outdoors throughout the year, apart from during lambing in the Spring when they are usually brought indoors so that they can be monitored frequently throughout both day and night. Supplemental nourishment is also likely to be provided in the form of hay, processed feed and mineral supplements. The timing of different events through the annual farm cycle will vary, to some extent, from one farm to the next and from one year to the next. Figure 3-4, however, provides an illustration of the typical timing of key events during the year on the farm on which I spent the longest time. Hay is the principal feedstock grown on the farm. More commonly, farms cut silage on a two-cut (June and August) or three-cut strategy (May, July, and September). Some activities, such as lambing, are relatively fixed and will be controlled by the farmer to occur at a particular time. Other activities, such as haymaking and turning the cattle out from the buildings, will take place at a similar time each year but their precise timing is contingent upon weather conditions. Hay is best made during late June and early July, but — as was the case in 2008 — weather conditions necessitated an August harvest.



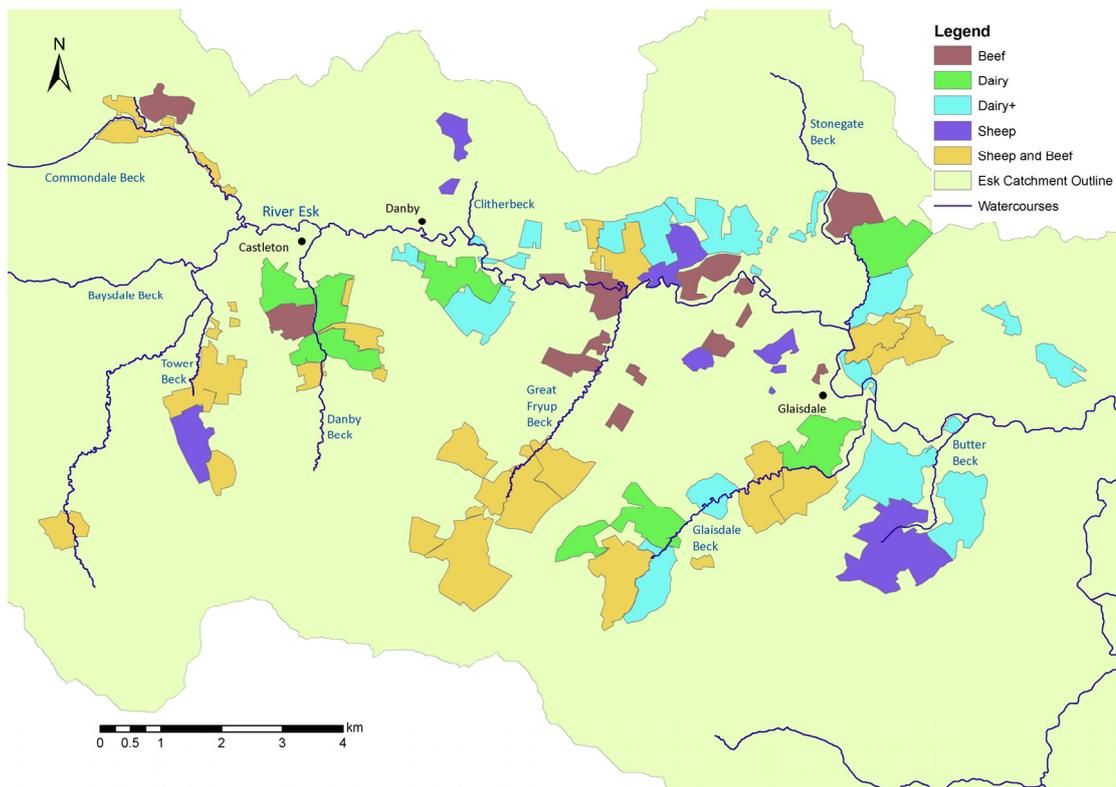
**Figure 3-4: Illustrative farm management cycle.**

Notes:

'Turning in' and 'turning out' of cattle refers to the bringing in and letting out of the animals from the buildings where they are kept over winter.

'Tupping' is the point at which the tups (rams) are let in with the ewes to get them 'in lamb' (pregnant).

The distribution of farming activities across the study site is shown in Figure 3-5. The map suggests that there is a greater prevalence of dairy farming within the main Esk valley, in Danby Dale, Glaisdale and Butter Beck. A tentative correlation could be made between this pattern and the sediment flux data that I later present in Figures 3-12 and 3-13 and discuss further in Section 3.2.4. In Section 3.2.4 I introduce a perceived relationship between suspended sediment load, the quality of pearl mussel habitat and farming activities. It is pertinent here, therefore, to consider any relations between land-use data and sediment loading, and to examine the anecdotal evidence that may support it. Numerous people from the catchment suggested to me that dairy farms are likely to contribute more in the way of fine sediment pollution because they are typically more intensively stocked and because the bringing in of cattle twice a day for milking results in more focussed erosion around specific points (such as gateways).

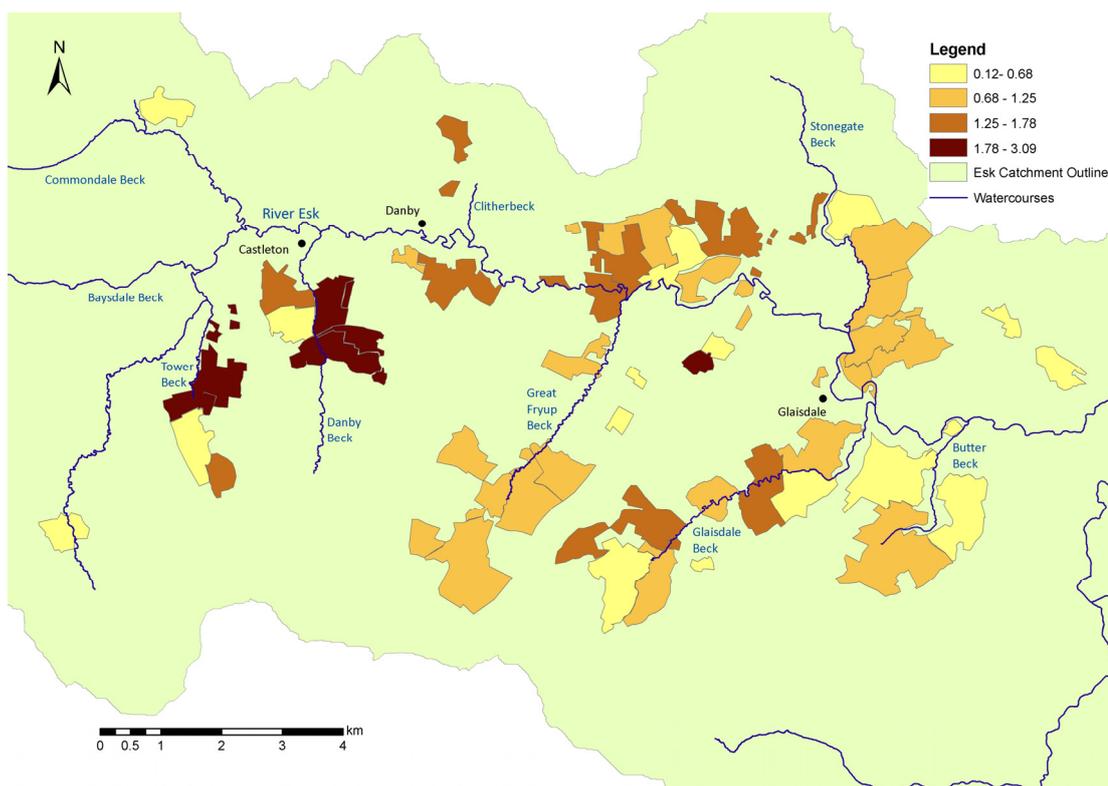


**Figure 3-5: The distribution of farming activities in the upper Esk catchment**

Note:

Dairy+ refers to farms which are principally dairy but also carry out other farming activities.

On average, specialised dairy farms are the most densely stocked in the catchment with 1.54 Livestock Units per hectare (LU/ha). In decreasing order the average stocking densities for the remaining farm activities are beef and sheep farms (1.25 LU/ha), specialised sheep farms (1.17 LU/ha), dairy mixed farms (1.13 LU/ha) and specialised beef farms (0.71 LU/ha). It should be noted that these figures take no account of the quality of the land on each farm and do not account for the grazing of sheep on the moor. To examine the relationship between sediment and farming intensity Figure 3-6 presents the stocking density of farms within the catchment.



**Figure 3-6: Stocking density of farms in the upper Esk catchment (Livestock Units/ha).**

**Notes:**

An adult cow represents 1 Livestock Unit and a breeding Ewe represents 0.15 Livestock Units, in accordance with the method employed by Defra.

Young stock has been excluded in all cases.

Sheep farms that graze the moor will show elevated stocking density levels because the moor supports significantly more sheep than their enclosed pasture.

The farm showing a high stocking density in Westerdale (Tower Beck) winters cattle out of the catchment, meaning the same land is able to support a greater number of livestock.

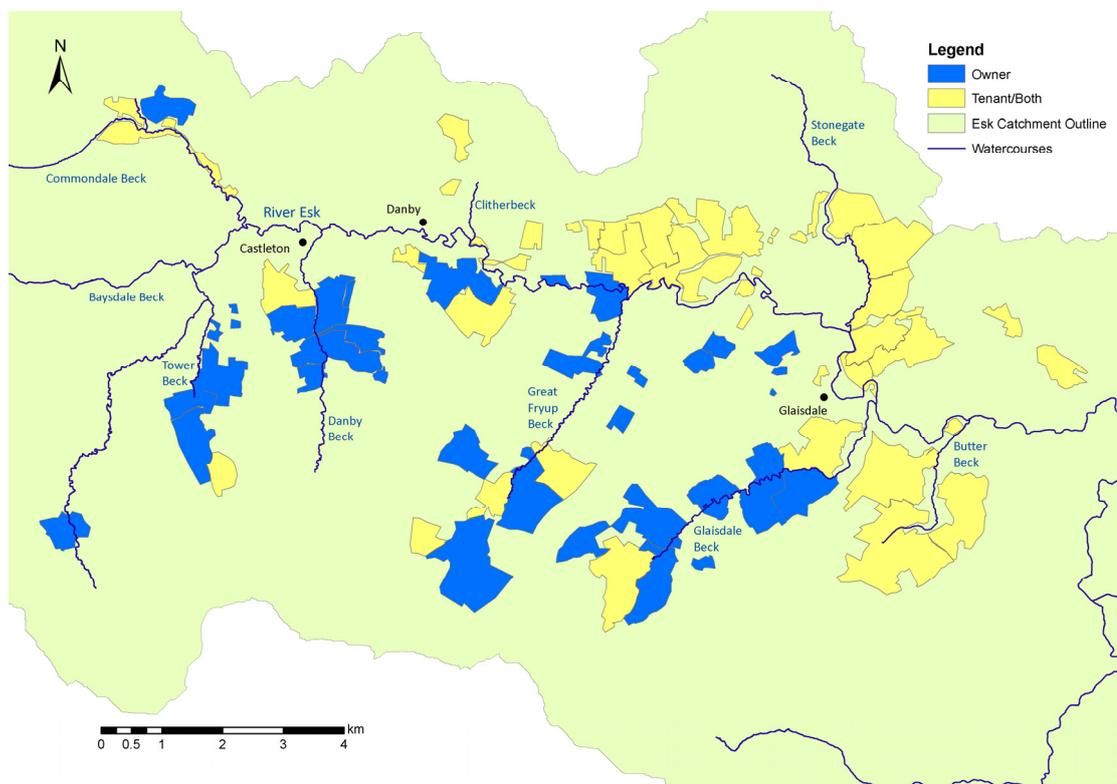
The diagram allows some means of comparison but takes no account of the carrying capacity of the land on each farm.

With an incomplete data set it is difficult to make inferences on a relationship between stocking density and sediment load, particularly when there are so many other variables involved. The discrepancy between stocking density and sediment load on Danby Beck does, however, tentatively support the hypothesis (Bracken, 2007) that in-channel sediment sources predominate upstream of Danby.<sup>16</sup> Figure 3-6 also suggests that Glaisdale — a key contributor to downstream sediment loading in the Esk — is relatively intensively farmed and this is supported by anecdotal evidence from farmers within the catchment who contrast Glaisdale with its now less intensively farmed neighbour of Fryup Dale. The emergence of the sediment issue is detailed in Section

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted, however, that the head of Danby Dale is farmed extensively by the Botton Trust, so a relationship might be better inferred by the proportion of land within each sub-catchment that is intensively farmed.

3.2.4, whilst further views on the potential relationship between farming and sedimentation are provided in Chapter 6.

Full-time farming is carried out on 56% of the farms in the study area but accounts for 76% of the land area. Part-time or retired farmers make up the remaining 44% of the farms on just 24% of the farmed land. Farm ownership is split evenly (both in area and number of farms) between owner-occupiers and tenant farmers (including those owning some land) but tenant farms tend to predominate within the main Esk Valley and to the East of the catchment (Figure 3-7).



**Figure 3-7: Ownership status of farms in the upper Esk catchment.**

The average size of farm in the catchment is 73 ha (compared to England average of 116 ha [Defra, 2009a]). The vast majority of farms (81%) are under 100 ha in size, whilst those exceeding 100 ha account for just 19% of the number of farms, but cover 42% of the catchment area. Table 3-2 shows the average farm size and employment characteristics across a range of farm types. Figure 3-8 illustrates the variance in farm size of different farm types relative to the average.

**Table 3-2: Average size and employment character of different farm types.**

Farm Type	Average Size (ha)	% Farming Full Time	% With Farming as Sole Income <sup>1</sup>
Average Farm	73	57	41
Sheep and Beef Farm	83	67	47
Dairy Farm	84	100	50
Dairy/Mix Farm	110	100	86
Beef Farm	52	13	12
Sheep Farm	64	17	17
Owned Farm	69	46	33
Tenant Farm	78	68	50
Part-Time Farm	40	-/-	-/-
Full-Time Farm	99	-/-	-/-
Farm as Sole Income Source <sup>1</sup>	117	-/-	-/-

Note: 1. Excludes spouse/cohabiter off-farm income.

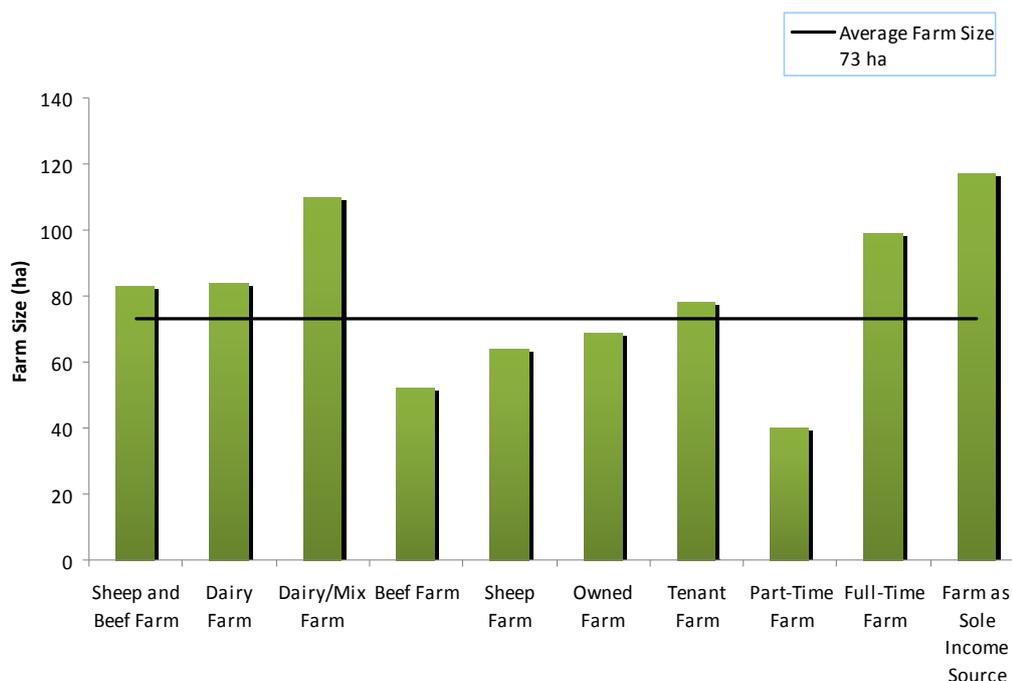
**Figure 3-8: Average size per farm type (ha) compared to the overall average.**

Table 3-2 and Figure 3-8 show that dairy farms (especially in combination with additional farming activity) are the largest in the catchment, require full-time employment and are the least likely to have diversified or off-farm income. Combined sheep and beef farms are also above average size but are more likely to allow part-time farming and diversification. Specialised beef or sheep farms, on the other hand, are much smaller in size and unlikely to support full time farming or provide a sole source of income. It is likely that such farms are occupied by “hobby” farmers moving into the

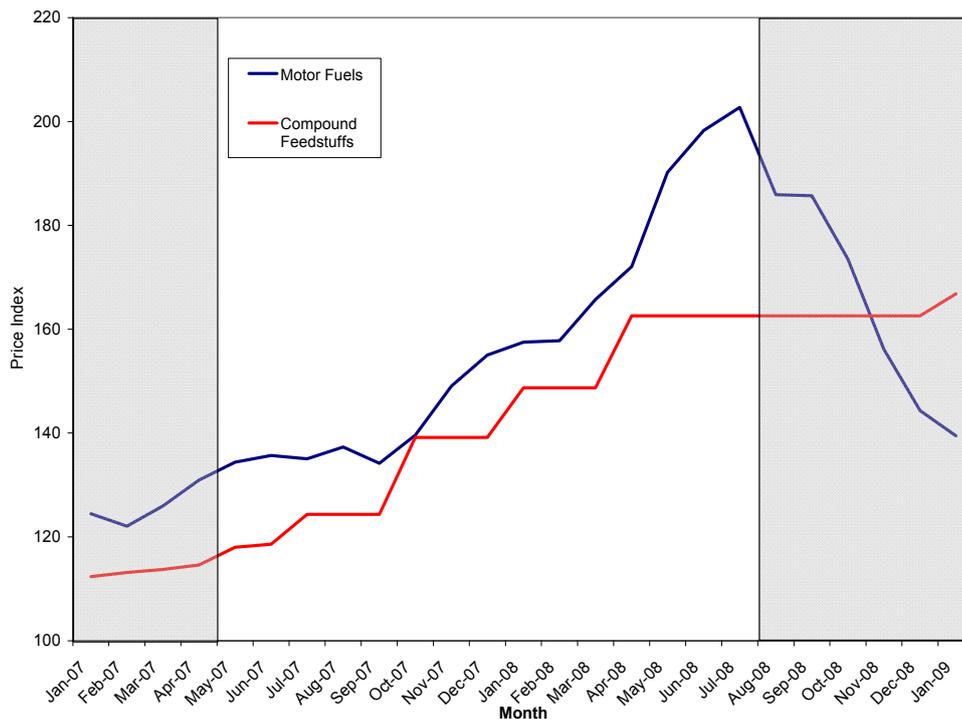
area, with no requirement to earn a living from farming, and farmers who have “scaled-down” operations in order to free up time in order to earn money through diversification or off farm income. Tenant farms are larger than owner occupied farms and are more likely to be farmed full time and to provide the sole income on the farm. This might suggest that tenancy provides fewer opportunities for diversification and places greater demands on the tenant farmer to expand and intensify. The fact that nearly 60% of farms derive additional income through diversification or off-farm income and that only farms that average 117 ha provide a sole farming income shows the economic difficulty with which farmers in the catchment operate and that diversification or expansion provide the main strategies for dealing with it. The main forms of diversification or off-farm income are listed below in order of prevalence:

- Accommodation (Bed & Breakfast, holiday cottage, camping)
- Agricultural contracting
- Fire service
- Skilled trade (e.g. stone mason)
- Property development
- Farm product (non-meat) sales
- Technical trade
- Driving
- Mining

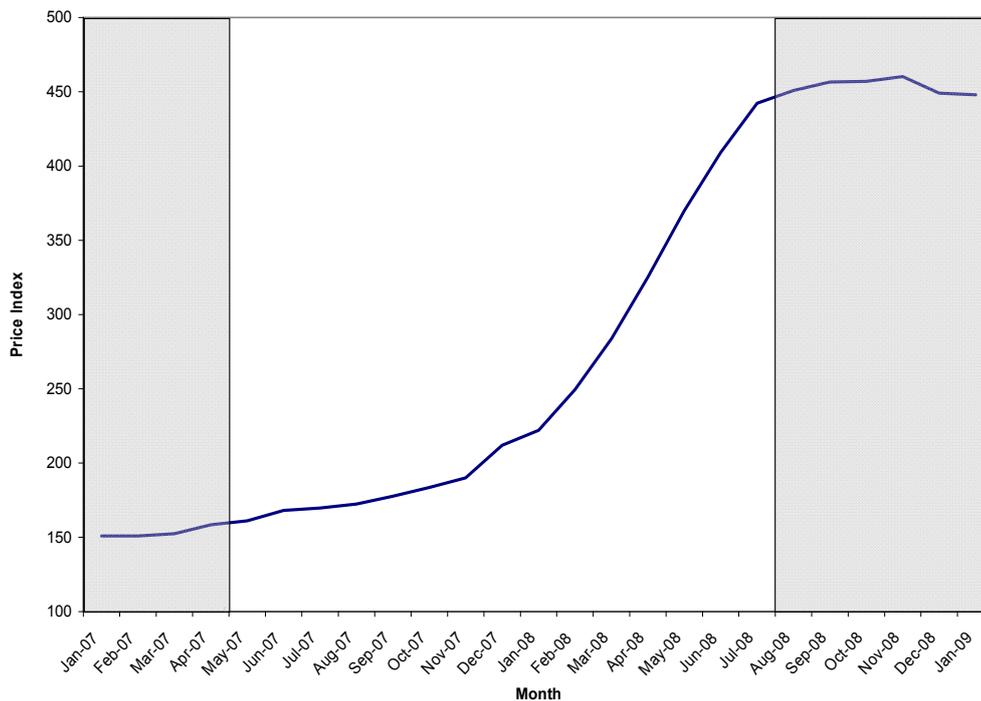
Farmers in the catchment are accustomed to fluctuations in both production costs and sale prices. Mixed farming traditionally acted as a means of insurance against such fluctuations (as well as the vagaries of the weather) but during my fieldwork a combination of high production costs, low market value for some livestock, climatic conditions and restrictions imposed because of animal disease caused particular economic difficulties. An indication of the price trends for a range of production costs and sale values immediately before, after, and during the fieldwork period is provided in Figures 3-9 to 3-11. Figures 3-9 and 3-10 show how principal production costs rose steeply during the fieldwork period with feed prices increasing by a third, fuel prices increasing by 50% before falling away after the study period and fertiliser costs increasing by 200%. The rising costs during this period were linked to rising global oil prices and the fertiliser price was further affected by a shortage of supply from China.<sup>17</sup>

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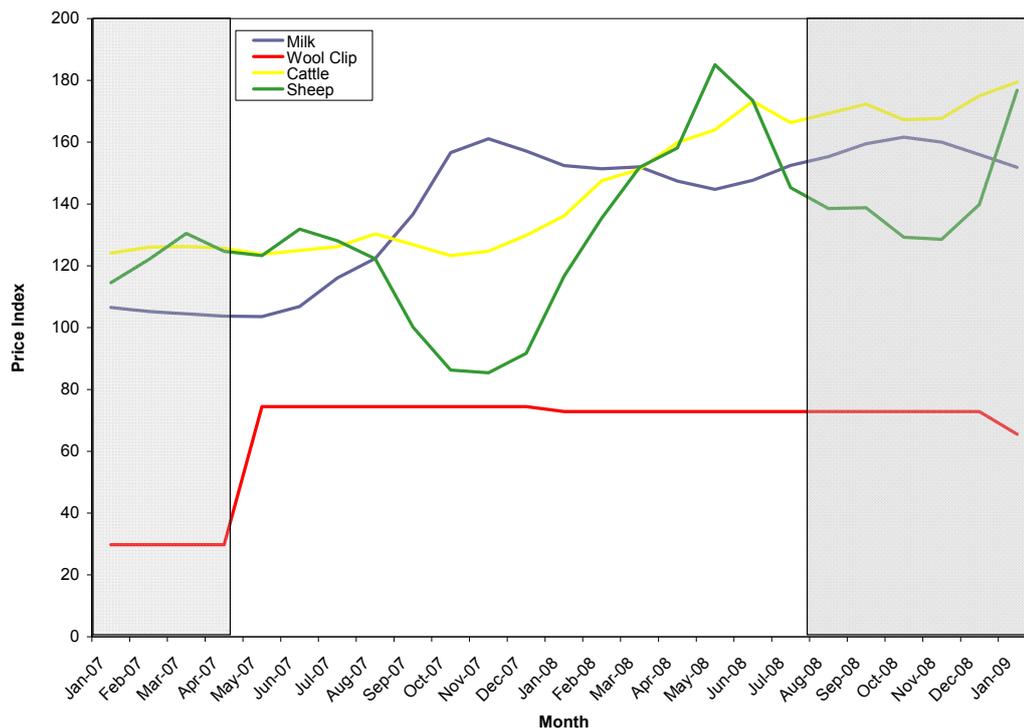
<sup>17</sup> The effect of the fuel price was confounded by the recent closure of a local abattoir, meaning that many farmers were having to transport livestock greater distances for slaughter.



**Figure 3-9: Price Index rise for motor fuels and compound livestock feed before, during and after the fieldwork period. Source: Defra Agricultural Price Index (2009b). A Price Index of 100 = 2000 prices.**



**Figure 3-10: Price Index rise for fertiliser before, during and after the fieldwork period. Source: Defra Agricultural Price Index (2009b), a Price Index of 100 = 2000 prices.**



**Figure 3-11: Price Index sale values for milk, wool, cattle and sheep (for slaughter or export) before, during and after the fieldwork period. Source: Defra Agricultural Price Index (2009b), a Price Index of 100 = 2000 prices.**

Figure 3-11 shows a moderate rise in produce sale value over the study period, but this is interrupted by considerable fluctuations and, it was argued, was insufficient to offset the huge increase in production costs. The most striking feature on Figure 3-11 is the sudden drop in sheep value (accompanied by a moderate fall in cattle prices) in the final third of 2007. It is normal for a degree of fluctuation because lamb is a seasonal product and prices reflect supply at different times of the year. However, the decline in price in 2007 was caused by transport and export restrictions resulting from the foot and mouth and blue tongue outbreaks of that year occurring simultaneously with the peak period of lamb supply. This led to an oversupply of lamb of approximately 30% around the country with a consequent fall in price (Berry, 2007). This trend was reflected at the local livestock Market in Ruswarp near Whitby where the top price for a medium (39.1 – 45.5kg) fat lamb fell almost 47% from 122.6 p/kg in June 2007 to just 65.2 p/kg in October 2007, before recovering to 185 p/kg by March 2008 (Smith, 2008 pers. comm.). The foot and mouth and blue tongue outbreaks at the end of 2007 imposed temporary restrictions on animal movements between farms and a ban on livestock movements to abattoirs as well as exports during most of August. This caused the oversupply in the following months and was a particularly bitter pill for many farmers to

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swallow since the foot and mouth outbreak was attributed to an escape of the virus from the government's Institute of Animal Health in Pirbright, Surrey.

The economic cushioning of mixed farming, and the capricious — “swings and roundabouts” — nature of the industry, is aptly demonstrated by taking the example of a combined dairy and sheep farm. In July 2007 the farmer would be approaching a four month period where he or she would see lamb prices fall by 33% but milk prices rise by 38%. Those specialised dairy or sheep units, on the other hand, would have felt the effects of the price change (be they positive or negative) much more acutely and this gives rise to a range of specific situations across the farms in the catchment. Being aware of these price changes, and how they affected each farmer, was important during my fieldwork since many discussions — and the construction of arguments — revolved around the economics of farming and asking how things had changed since I had last spoken to a particular farmer was a leading question of mine. Whilst volatility in farm economics was recognised as a staple of the industry, farmers in the catchment expressed an increasing lack of control over, or ability to adapt to, that volatility due to the influence of large buyers and supermarkets that are able to control and dictate the prices that farmers receive irrespective of changes to their production costs. This is confounded for British farmers by the availability, and government encouragement, of cheap food from overseas. It is a longstanding argument of the UK farmer that they are not operating on a level playing field with overseas competitors because the standards of production (e.g. animal welfare, environmental protection, health and safety), and subsequently the costs of production, are much higher in this country than they are abroad.

On the back of a long period of growth in the UK housing market house prices continued to rise in North Yorkshire throughout 2007. At the start of the study period in May 2007 the average house price was £193,929 and this rose to £200,584 by January 2008 (representing growth since January 2000 of 170%). Thereafter, the average house price fell to £192,993 at the end of the study period in July 2008 and has continued to do so as the UK entered a recession at the end of 2008 (Land Registry, 2009). It should be noted that these prices are just indicative and that farmhouses in the Esk catchment were fetching in excess of £1 million during my fieldwork. The long period of sustained growth in the housing market, and the value of farmhouses in the catchment encouraged many owner-occupiers to consider transferring their investment from their more unpredictable farm business into their seemingly more stable property (e.g. through renovation or expansion). The option, clearly, was not available to tenant farmers and is

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another possible explanation for the difference in farm size and occupational characteristics between tenanted and owned farms.

It should be noted that the above discussion has not considered the role and effect of agricultural subsidies on farm economics and the interplay this has with other economic factors. Details of a specific environmental payment scheme administered by the National Park are outlined in the following section whilst a fuller consideration of recent and ongoing changes to the agricultural subsidy system, and the implications of such changes, is reserved for the following chapter.

### **3.2.3 Other Catchment Users, Groups and Issues**

The most contested land uses in the catchment are the common moors. The three principal parties with an interest in the management of the moors are the estates, farmers and conservation organisations. Other users of the moor, with no management rights, include local residents, shooting parties (although linked to the estates), tourists, hikers and a range of other recreational activities. The commons are owned by the estates and managed in the interest of maintaining the most favourable habitat for red grouse (heather monoculture) since the estates earn a large part of their income from organised shooting parties in the autumn. Most of the work is carried out by gamekeepers who are responsible for the rotational burning of the heather to allow regeneration and re-growth and pest control. Traditional common rights tied to farm properties include the rights to graze livestock on the moor (in terms of number of animals or area [stray]), to cut peat for fuel and to take stone for walling and building. Farmers without common rights may also exercise grazing rights under tenancy from the estates. The rights on Danby Common are administered by Danby Court Leet, a 14<sup>th</sup> century manorial court with the legal right to administer and enforce specific rights. The Court Leet has attracted a certain degree of controversy in the secrecy with which it conducts its business, the selection process for members and the prohibition of female membership.

The conservation organisations with the principal management responsibilities for the moors are Natural England and the National Park. Natural England has responsibility for the protection of the moorland as SSSI and SPA and has powers under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to control the management activities of land owners and tenants. Both the estates and graziers on the moor must obtain consent from Natural England for any activity which could be detrimental to the quality of the SSSI/SPA. For the estates this includes burning practices and for farmers includes controlling stocking

levels and supplemental feeding practices which may cause localised over-grazing. The National Park Authority, functions as a local authority, with a special remit to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park. In terms of the management of the moors it also has specific responsibilities for maintaining and enforcing rights of way and open access areas. Both Natural England and the National Park value the conservation, wildlife and recreational aspects of the moorland and, as such, tend to favour a more diverse habitat management approach than the estates.

All three of the principal users of the moor with management rights recognise the value of maintaining sheep-grazing on the moor. Unlike other areas of moorland in the UK (such as in the Lake District National Park) the moorland habitat in the North York Moors is considered to be threatened by undergrazing rather than overgrazing. It is recognised that sheep need to be grazed on the moor at an “optimum” level to maintain the height of the heather in favourable conditions for grouse, to prevent the spread of bracken, trees and other “undesirable” species without causing habitat damage through overgrazing of the heather, the reduction of vegetation cover and the increased exposure of the underlying soil to erosion. It is also argued that sheep are valued on the moors by the estates as “tick mops” since they provide hosts for parasitic ticks that are the principal vectors of louping ill: a tick-borne encephalitis affecting both sheep and red grouse (Newborn, 2001). Due to the increasing economic difficulty of keeping sheep on the moor, however, the number of “hefted” flocks of sheep grazed on the moorland commons in the North York Moors has fallen from 125 in 1998 to 101 in 2005 (Pickering, 2007). This is of particular concern because “hefted” flocks graze specific territories (hirsels or strays) on the moor through the transmission of learned practices from one generation to the next. The reintroduction of sheep onto the moor, therefore, requires significant management effort to reheft a flock to a particular stray. For this reason many of the flocks lost to the culls of the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak were not reinstated on the moors. Furthermore, the removal of one hefted flock tends to create management problems for the remaining flocks since they are inclined to increase their grazing range away from their own stray (Gray 1998, 1999; Burton et al., 2005; Pickering, 2007).

To try and prevent this decline Natural England (and previously English Nature) introduced the Sheep Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (SWES) in 2003 which paid farmers per breeding ewe to practice sustainable grazing on SSSI moorland. This is currently being phased out and replaced with similar payments through the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS). Unlike the SWES agreements, however, the HLS

agreements in the catchment are currently being negotiated on a common basis, between the estates and all moorland graziers. This requires the drawing up of separate agreements for each common and the participation by all those exercising their rights on that particular common (further details of HLS are provided in Chapter 4 and moorland management issues considered in Chapter 6). During the course of my fieldwork a co-operative, supported by Prince Charles, was initiated between sheep farmers in the Esk Valley to market premium lamb to supermarkets. The idea was to market the lamb in terms of both its quality and its role in protecting the moorland environment in the National Park (Benson, 2008; Hickling, 2008a). Shortly after my fieldwork ended an agreement was reached with Asda and Northern Foods to supply lamb at a fixed price directly to the supermarket without having to deal through an abattoir or agent (Casci, 2008).

Powe et al. (2000) report that agriculture accounts for 32.5% of employment within the National Park and in Danby Parish the most significant alternative occupations were public administration, distribution, hotels, restaurants and construction. Many of those employed in such occupations may retain links to agriculture through their families or an historical involvement. These figures, however, do not account for people earning their living beyond the parish. The desirability of living in the picturesque surrounding of the National Park has led to the in-migration of (usually wealthy) incomers or “townies”. Such people may work locally, or be self-employed but many will also work beyond the parish, particularly in the Teesside conurbation. The wealthiest of such incomers might buy a farmhouse as a second holiday home, spending just several weeks there a year, or some may also buy some land to fulfil their romantic aspirations to keep a few animals and live the rural idyll. The in-migration of people from outside the farming community raises typical issues in rural areas such as the inflation of house prices rendering them too expensive for local people to buy; taking farm houses and buildings out of agricultural production; spending money outside the local community rather than using local services, and so on. However, as will be illustrated in Chapter 5, opinions on incomers vary considerably and the introduction of a different set of values — particularly in relation to work and leisure — is accommodated and challenged differently in a range of different situations.

The North York Moors was designated a National Park in 1952 and brings a range of advantages and disadvantages for those living and working in the Park. The principal disadvantage, made apparent to me during my fieldwork, is the additional constraints placed on certain activities and developments as a result of the Park Authority’s remit to

conserve the natural environment and built heritage of the park. Planning restrictions, in particular, are seen to impose the greatest hindrance to those looking to make changes to their homes or to modify and develop their businesses through changes to their land or new development. The main bone of contention, however, is the perceived inconsistencies inherent in the planning system. Many farmers genuinely believed that people moving into the area and renovating buildings were given preferential treatment to those from the farming community wishing to do likewise (cf also Rapport, 1993: 7). The National Park, potentially, also provides both indirect and direct financial benefits to farmers. The promotion of tourism by the National Park provides farmers with an opportunity to diversify their farm activities through a range of tourist services. The most notable of these is accommodation, but catering, direct farm sales and the provision of specialised activities may also contribute to farm income. Directly, the National Park Farm Scheme (NPFS) has been providing an additional income to some farmers in the catchment since 1990. The scheme is an agri-environmental payment available to farmers in the central dales of the park (within the Esk catchment only those dales south of the River Esk) with the objective of encouraging wildlife and landscape conservation whilst maintaining farm viability. Agreements are usually agreed on a five year basis and include payments for specific capital works (such as maintaining dry stone walls, maintaining hedgerows and stockproofing woodland) and area payments for maintaining different types of land/habitat in a desirable condition. The scheme has been scaled down since the introduction of Environmental Stewardship in 2005 (Chapter 4) but is being retained by the Park to “top-up” certain farms with additional payments over and above those received in the Entry Level Stewardship scheme.

#### **3.2.4 Salmon, Sediment, and the Esk Pearl Mussel**

The selection of the Esk catchment for this research was made, in large part, to complement previous and ongoing research by Durham University into spatial variations in fine sediment flux throughout the catchment (Bracken & Warburton, 2005; Mills, 2006; Bracken, 2007). Farming practices have been identified as a potentially significant source of fine sediment to the watercourses in the catchment and efforts at reducing fine sediment supply have subsequently been targeted at farmers. This research, therefore, contributes a social science perspective on a current management initiative that has largely been informed by the natural sciences. It complements the existing work by looking at the sediment issue from a broader catchment and land management point of view, garnering the views and perspectives of the farmers and examining their responsiveness to the incentives offered to them to get involved in the

current conservation initiative. This particular issue contributes to my wider research interests by providing a specific, local example of how environmental interests and discourses challenge the farmers' perceived understanding of what it means to be a farmer and what the implications of this are for policy-makers in bringing about desired changes.

Until recently conservation initiatives in the River Esk have been driven predominantly by fisheries and associated economic interests. The River Esk Action Committee (REAC) was established in 1990 by a group of riparian land owners and fishing interests to protect and *improve* the river for its fishery and other wildlife. The key economic species are Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) and the fishery is believed to have been in decline since the mid 1960's as a result of drier summers, declining water quality and habitat loss (NYMNP, 2001). In 1997 REAC established a partnership with the Environment Agency and the National Park called the River Esk Regeneration Programme (RERP). The programme was funded by MAFF through the EU's objective 5b fund (for rural development in economically deprived areas) with the stated objective to "protect, conserve, and enhance the River Esk habitats for fish and other wildlife so as to *increase the economic value* of the river to the local community" (*ibid.*: 6, emphasis added). The programme ran until 2001 and provided funding for capital river management works, Esk salmon fry stocking, monitoring of fish and otter populations, training and awareness raising activities.

Although not an explicit element of RERP's remit, increasing awareness of the plight of the population of Esk pearl mussels also emerged during this period. In 1995 Natural England surveyed seven English rivers for freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) including the Esk (Oliver & Killeen, 1996). Following the Environment Agency's appointment as species leader for pearl mussels under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) they commissioned Ian Killeen to undertake a more detailed survey of the Esk population in 1999. This survey found 114 adult individuals, showing a reduction since the 1995 survey, and concluded that the population was too small to sustain itself and was in terminal decline (Killeen, 1999).<sup>18</sup>

Pearl mussels live buried, or partly buried, in coarse sand and fine gravel in unpolluted and fast-flowing rivers and streams. They are one of the longest-lived invertebrates known and can live for over 100 years (Skinner et al., 2003). The lifecycle of the pearl

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<sup>18</sup> An additional 209 individuals were identified in a subsequent survey by the Environment Agency in 2007.

mussel is complex and unusual and is dependent upon the co-existence of a salmonid population. Mussel larvae (glochidia) are released during the summer and attach themselves to the gills of juvenile salmonids where they encyst and grow before dropping off the following spring (*ibid.*). If the young mussels drop successfully into clean gravels they will mature over a period of about 15 years, during which time they remain buried and are very sensitive to pollution and sedimentation (Hirst, 2008). Pearl mussels were formerly widespread and abundant in England but recent surveys have revealed most former populations to be virtually extinct with little active recruitment (Chesney & Oliver, 1998; Skinner et al., 2003). The River Esk, furthermore, is believed to support the last population in Yorkshire and the mussels have not produced viable offspring for over 30 years. It is thought likely that the population will become extinct within 25 years unless intervention is made (Hirst, 2008). The pearl mussel has been shown to be very sensitive to a range of environmental factors including pH, eutrophication, BOD, calcium and phosphate levels, nitrate, water depth and flow velocity, channel structure and management and host fish stocks (Skinner et al., 2003; Killeen, 2006). In the Esk, however, it is fine sediment pollution that has been identified as the most significant cause for the decline of the pearl mussel and has been prioritised for management attention.

Fine sediment pollution is of concern for salmonids and pearl mussels because of its impact on river bed substrate, which provides spawning ground for salmonids and habitat for juvenile and adult pearl mussels. Both salmonid eggs and pearl mussels (particularly in the juvenile stage when they are completely subterranean) require a flow of oxygenated water through the river gravels in which they are buried. High levels of fine sediment, carried in suspension in the river, can clog gravel interstices and reduce the supply of oxygen, leading to suffocation and decreased survival rates for both species. Despite a lack of historic data on pearl mussel populations and on fine sediment within the watercourses of the catchment a link between mussel survival and sediment was made on the basis of anecdotal evidence of increased turbidity and the River's perceived cleanliness in terms of other pollutants. Work by Durham University has been undertaken to better understand the spatial sediment flux within the catchment (Bracken & Warburton, 2005; Mills, 2006; Bracken, 2007) and to relate this to salmon breeding success and pearl mussel habitat.

Since 2004 a network of mass flux sediment samplers have been deployed across the catchment, in combination with two automatic river gauging stations, to examine spatial differences in sediment supply and transport through the catchment, and to understand

the relationship between sediment supply and flood discharge (Bracken & Warburton, 2005). Figures 3-12 and 3-13 show the results of this analysis between 2004 and 2007. Figure 3-12 shows the total sediment load across the catchment, whilst Figure 3-13 normalises this data in terms of the catchment area.

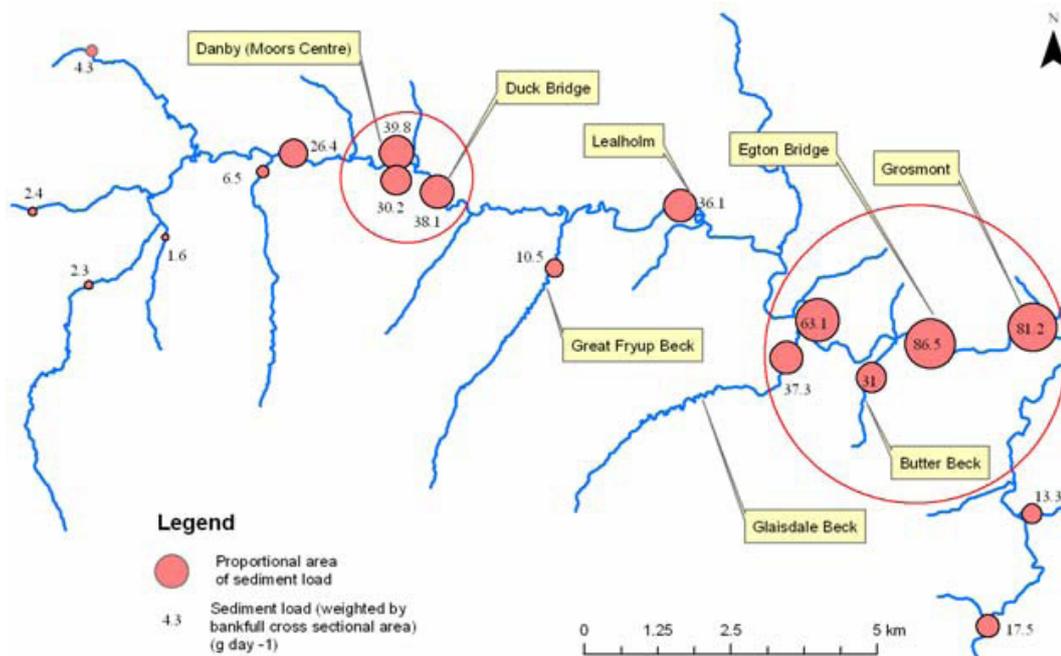


Figure 3-12: Spatial variation in relative load of sediment transported in the River Esk ( $\text{g d}^{-1}$ ). From Bracken (2007).

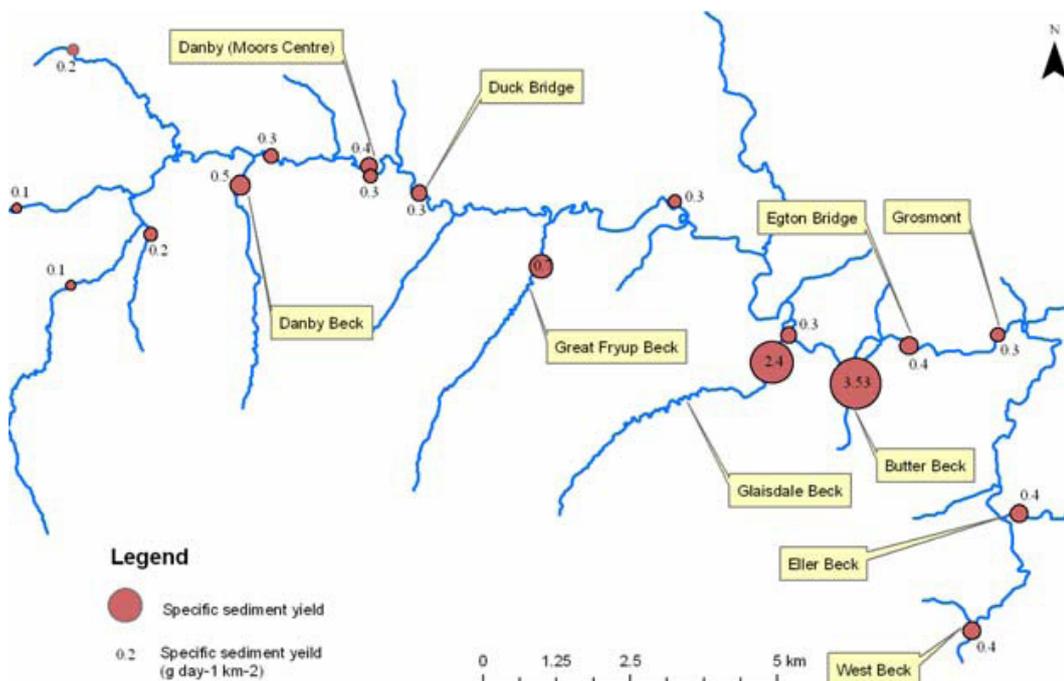


Figure 3-13: Spatial variation in relative yield in the River Esk ( $\text{g d}^{-1} \text{km}^2$ ). From Bracken (2007).

Figures 3-12 and 3-13 show two hotspots of increased sediment supply around Danby and between Glaisdale and Grosmont (circled on Figure 3-13) (Bracken, 2007). Based on this data Bracken hypothesises that most sediment is being supplied from channel bank sources on the main river whilst catchment sources predominate in the lower catchment. Figure 3-13, in particular, shows that Butter Beck and Glaisdale Beck are proportionately significant sources of fine sediment to the downstream reaches of the Esk. Between the two hotspots of supply lie the main spawning grounds for salmonids and populations of pearl mussel. Current research hypothesises that channel geomorphology between these two sites is leading to fine sediment deposition upstream of Lealholm in the section of river upstream of a gorge called Crunkly Gill. This suggests a relationship between fine sediment load and the suitability of river habitat for salmonid spawning and pearl mussel survival, yet there remains uncertainty on the movement of fines through this section and how the dynamics may affect river habitat (Bracken, pers. comm. 2008). The research proposes that agricultural causes of increased sediment supply include livestock poaching of banks, increased stocking density and the prevalence of field drains which provide preferential pathways for the movement of sediment and increase the flashiness (and erosive potential) of the river (Bracken & Warburton 2005; Mills, 2006). The research also suggests that fisheries management, through the clearing of woody debris from Butter Beck, could have released trapped sediment and exacerbated the problem (Mills, 2006). An additional survey of sediment impacts on river gravels was carried out in 2006 and concluded that due to depleted oxygen levels in river gravels (as a result of sediment blocking) the Esk is totally unsuitable for mussel recruitment. However, it also suggested that not only sediment but nitrate, phosphate and BOD levels were also higher than required by the pearl mussel for successful recruitment (Killeen, 2006; see also Evans et al., 2005 on acidification).

Most of this research was funded by the Environment Agency and contributed to the establishment of the Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery Project (EPMSRP) in November 2006. Unlike previous initiatives on the Esk the ongoing project is funded entirely for its conservation benefits by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Regional Development Agency, Yorventure (with additional input from partners). The project involves a partnership between the Environment Agency, the North York Moors National Park Authority, Natural England and Durham University and aims to *improve* the river habitat, restore the pearl mussel population, increase populations of salmon and trout and promote good land management within the catchment (Hirst, 2008). Thus far the project has conducted extensive surveying in the catchment, established a

demonstration farm, set up a captive breeding programme, provided funding to land managers and farmers, and overseen a channel realignment project in Glaisdale.

The demonstration farm was established to demonstrate good environmental practice, to provide a test-bed for various management options aimed at reducing sediment pollution, and to encourage other farmers to get involved in the project. Measures introduced include the installation of bank-side fencing to prevent erosion by livestock, establishment of vegetation buffer strips to minimise run-off and the provision of dedicated in-channel and non-channel stock watering facilities. In addition to the demonstration farm the project offers funding to farmers and land owners to implement similar measures on their own land (Hirst, 2008). The project partners were also involved in a channel realignment project on Glaisdale Beck to divert the course of the Beck away from a rapidly eroding meander that was believed to be contributing significant quantities of fine sediment to the river.<sup>19</sup> As well as addressing the perceived causes of sediment pollution, the project is also funding a captive breeding programme for the mussels at the Freshwater Biological Association in Windermere. The programme will raise juvenile mussels for 5-7 years by which time it is hoped they may be reintroduced to the Esk. The principal challenge for the EPMSRP is to provide, through sediment and other pollutant management, a suitable habitat within the Esk for a successful and sustainable reintroduction (Killeen, 2006).

### 3.3 An Intrusion

A persistent (albeit unsurprising) feature of the various situations in which I found myself during the course of my fieldwork was my own presence. I was an intruder, an interloper, but try as I might to be invisible or to move in the shadows I was also always a part of the situation itself. This Section outlines the approach that I took to my fieldwork in keeping with the theoretical approach described in the previous chapter. It is useful to begin, therefore, with the admission that I am human and am not immune to the descriptions, ideas and theories of being human that I have already written about. In fact, since the ideas I have presented follow *my* ideas (inspired of course by those cited), it may be true that I am an exemplary case of those ideas. For our own experiences, as much as our reading, learning and observations give shape to the thoughts which — through fingers, keyboards and printers — find their way onto the paper. And just like situations, experiences too are inescapable and I hope that the experience of my fieldwork has coloured the ideas that provide the theoretical basis for this thesis.

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<sup>19</sup> The impact of the realignment on sediment in the Beck is being monitored by Durham University geography department.

### 3.3.1 Romanticism and Auto-Identification

I want to describe here a little of my personal background that influenced my undertaking of this research: my romantic associations with farming and the uplands and my strong interest in environmental issues. From where did these romantic yearnings arise? How did they influence my fieldwork? Did I seek simply to learn more about myself, or to dispel all the myths and romanticism? Would the process move me away from the inchoate (provide understanding), push me back towards it (shatter the illusion), or a combination of both? Thus envisaged, my fieldwork endeavour could be viewed not only as my best efforts at finding myself *in situations* for the benefit of my research, but perhaps also as *finding myself* in those situations.

Kneafsey (2000) and Rapport (1993) provide honest accounts of some of their personal motives for undertaking rural ethnography. Kneafsey confesses to a romantic interest in the ‘archaic and traditional’ and confesses to possessing of her particular field site in Ireland “an idyllic version of the place as a rural haven, which refuses to evaporate despite my research into how this has been constructed and represented by the tourist industry” (2000: 54). In contrast, Rapport saw rural areas as unfamiliar but still confessed to a longing towards them in order to “complete his education” as a Briton. For Rapport, of Jewish descent, his fieldwork was both an act of identification and differentiation (cf Baumann, 1999):

After three generations and a hundred years on British soil, a representative of the Jewish Rapport family would definitely have arrived. It was true I was going to Cumbria to gather information on them but my feelings were of friendship, modesty, respect, even longing ... They were going to show me that my Anglophonic leanings and yearnings, and my dislike of ethnic (Jewish) isolationism were justified. In Wanet I was going to learn that English people of the soil were different from their continental counterparts, as from their counterparts in the ethnographies of more distant tribes and peasants (Rapport, 1993: 70).

Rapport’s motives support the idea of rural areas providing stores of symbolic capital for the construction of national identity. Such associations between the rural and national identity are made apparent by the dual meaning of the word ‘country’ as representing both nation and rural areas (Vandergeest, 1996: 279). It is the sort of longing used (and indeed created) by the persuasive posters produced during the Second World War

featuring rural scenes under the heading “What We Are Fighting For” (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004: 24). Kneafsey, on the other hand, started from a position in which she had a strong sense of self in her field site; referring to it as a “second home” and her endeavour became much more about understanding her sense of attachment to place, how this attachment was constructed, and yet how that sense of attachment persisted.

I see my own position as somewhere between the two of these. My field site was not somewhere that was personally familiar to me before my fieldwork but I did (and still do) feel very attached to upland environments through a combination of wholesome imagery and the “Lure of the Moors” (Shoard, 1982). I did, however, have romantic yearnings and a strong sense of self in farming. My own attachment to farming, “the countryside” and “the environment” are in large part shaped by the issues discussed in the previous and the following chapters. Namely: the farming heritage in my own family; early protestant influences on my life; the emergent global environmental narrative that has been a feature for a large part of my life (the Rio Earth Summit taking place in 1992 when I was 11 years old and influencing my school and university curriculum); frequent recreational visits to the National Park’s of England; a strong sense of an association between landscape and history; the fact that farming “virtues” have been appropriated beyond farming communities (including by policy-makers); and something else, an inexpressible, emotional and nostalgic attachment to the land.

From a very young age I have been made aware of my farming heritage. My grandparents on my mother’s side were farmers and my grandfather on my father’s side was a carpenter whose craft was often employed in support of agriculture. On my second or third birthday my grandfather (the skilled carpenter) gave me a toy farm that he had made. It came complete with hand-painted fences, pens, farm buildings, plastic animals (including a giraffe) and a tractor and trailer. Several years later, around the age of eight, I would receive a large sit-on plastic tractor with a (hand-crafted) wooden trailer with my initials painted down the side. Were these the attempts of my family to instil in me a sense of my farming heritage, or were they simply toys for a child? I clearly wasn’t aware at the time, for the toy farm met a cruel fate at the hands of the tool set I received around the age of five and the plastic tractor became a test-bed for my inclinations to be a stunt man. In 2008 the trend continued as I received as a Christmas present a model Land Rover and cattle trailer from the family with which I spent the longest period during my fieldwork. Was this just an amusing gesture or something else? The family often told me I should become a farmer and perhaps this was their way

of reminding me? Either way, the most recent gift will be treated with a great deal more respect.

Through my family the virtues of farming were continually instilled in me: My father's gusto in singing '*The Farmer's Boy*', the recollections of times on the farm, and perhaps most pervasively of all the value attached to *hard work*. Such value was reinforced by my compulsory attendance at Methodist Sunday School until the age of around ten when I was reprieved by youth football. And this value has remained with me. I first became aware of it after I left home and realised that in virtually every instance that I spoke to my mother on the phone I would tell her how hard I had been working, regardless of the actual quantity of "work" that I had done since I last spoke to her. I was upholding a symbolic moral value in *hard work* that would endorse my credentials as belonging to that heritage in which I had been raised (cf Cohen, 1979 – see Chapter 2).

So in one regard my fieldwork did represent my efforts at seeing through the romantic image I held of farming and rural areas. Although I was already aware of the constructed nature of my values in farming (and rural areas) certain incidents during my fieldwork were particularly poignant in reminding me of this. An advertisement by the supermarket *Waitrose* was brought to my attention in a *Weekend* supplement of *The Guardian* in October 2007. The advertisement featured a picture of a farmer from the edge of my field site who rears Aberdeen Angus beef for Waitrose. The picture, in sepia, portrays the image of everything that you would expect a farmer to be: leaning against a rough-looking wooden barn; stick in hand; a weathered, proud-looking face; hands like shovels and clothes that look like they were made to last. In a word: rustic. The image and the accompanying words about the length of time the family has been farming, the old-fashioned, traditional approach, and the picturesque location of the farm combined for particularly persuasive rhetorical effect. Several months later at a hill sheep farmers meeting in my field site I would see the farmer from the picture. The weathered face was the same but his childish name-calling and giggling were detracting from the presentation that was going on and I couldn't help feeling a little disappointed. But like Kneafsey, the experience that my fieldwork provided did as much to endorse as detract from the values I held in farming. Ultimately, I hope that my own background informs, more than it clouds, the development of my research. And not only did my fieldwork to an extent represent my efforts at understanding where I had come from but also my efforts at understanding where I am going. Would the experience allow me to categorise myself as an 'anthropologist' or an 'academic' or would I simply become, as one farm worker I spoke to preferred to categorise it, a "bull-shitter"? Perhaps such

introspection seems futile if we accept, as Nietzsche said, that each man remains furthest from himself (1887).

### 3.3.2 Getting Oneself Into Situations

In normal life we may spend a great deal of effort trying to avoid getting ourselves into “situations”. However, as alluded to above this was the principal methodological approach of my fieldwork. And it wasn’t difficult, because if we extend the definition of the “situation” beyond that of a “difficult situation” then we are always in one situation or another. Purposely or not, a lot of my endeavour involved putting myself in different situations: catching farmers’ unaware by turning up in their yard, conducting “formal” interviews, spending so much time with people that they barely noticed I was there, creating alternate situations in which I was and was not the primary audience, and so on. And it is only by finding oneself in *different* situations that the importance of situationality to rhetorical persuasion becomes apparent. You notice how the specific situation in which you are in dictates the specific means of persuasion employed. Moreover, you notice how the means of persuasion are modified as the situations change or new situations are encountered. It is in such changing encounters that you get exposure to the (selective) *use* of culture, the use of extant cultural symbols and the (re)creation of new cultural forms.

As the stage changes so too does the nature of the performance.<sup>20</sup> We become aware of the significance of the “on-stage” and the “off-stage” (cf Scott, 1985), of the ‘said and the unsaid’ (cf Tyler, 1978) and of the performed and the unperformed (though even an “unperformance” is still a performance). We further become aware that a performer may occupy more than one stage simultaneously, may be performing a ‘basket of selves’ (Cohen, 1994) to different audiences and will have to modify the performance (if it is to be effective) accordingly. Furthermore, our presence in different situations may give us an insight into self-persuasion, as it sheds light on the means used by individuals in their constant search for themselves in the continual emergence of new — possibly inchoate — situations. In short, we become aware of the selective, creative and persuasive nature of performance.

The idea that roles are performed during fieldwork encounters is not a novel one. It is something that is recognised, to varying degrees, within the methodology literature.

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<sup>20</sup> Note that here performance is considered in the theatrical sense as the ‘playing of a role’ with the potential to be persuasive, rather than as a motivated action following persuasion (See Chapter 2, Fernandez, 1986; cf. States, 1996).

Fielding (2000), for instance, recognised his own performance as a methodological strategy for attaining ‘closeness’, whilst Bennett (2000) recognised that interviewing involved the performance of identities by both parties. Bennett’s suggestion is that during the interview the participants are not being themselves, but “doing their selves” (Bennett, 2000: 123). However, this suggests the performance of a single role at a time rather than identifying the potential for multiple performances. Collins (1998), for instance, points out that during an interview we cannot be certain which “self” is responding and that the interviewee “might be addressing audiences other than the one immediately present”. I would further add, based on the approach taken in this thesis, that there is always more than one audience present in an interview situation anyway because if we consider that identification involves self-persuasion, then we must also be performing to ourselves too. And just as performances may be modified to address different audiences beyond the interview, so too may they be modified to reaffirm an individual’s own sense of self as the research encounter continually changes. Another key insight is that it is not only within interview situations that roles are performed; they are performed in all encounters. Holstein & Gubrium (1995: 17) point out that whilst “naturally occurring talk” might seem more spontaneous and “less “staged” than an interview, this is true only in the sense that such interaction is staged by persons other than an interviewer.”

### **3.3.3 Research Methods**

I will now outline the principal elements of my research. The majority of my fieldwork involved ‘participant observation’ on farms — and more broadly within the community — in the Esk Valley. This took place contemporaneously with more “formal” interviewing of farmers as well as involvement in local events and meetings. My initial forays into the field began in May 2007 and the principal element of my staying in the catchment ended in May 2008. In June and July of 2008 I conducted further interviews with a range of people from outside the direct farming community. This ranged from the local to the European level but was always carried out within the context of the local situation. I also conducted policy and historical reviews, which were largely completed before May 2007 but were complemented with fresh insights and new research interests that developed during the course of the fieldwork. The rationale for extending the research beyond the confines of the catchment has already been alluded to and I will save further discussion on the approach to this element of the research for the following chapter.

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For convenience, I have broken down the outline of my fieldwork into discrete elements. In practice however, there is significant overlap between the different elements in terms of their relevance to one another and in terms of the issues that arose in carrying them out. The particular issues discussed in each of the following sections, therefore, should not be taken as specific to that particular issue but as reflections on the overall fieldwork encounter. To avoid repetition I have attempted to write about particular issues where I felt they were most pertinent. And whilst I entered the field with a research plan, my approach was adaptive, or as Strauss (1987) would say “grounded”, in order to account for the unexpected and to improvise according to the situations as they arose.

### 3.3.3.1 *Approaching The Field*

My first link to the farming community came through a contact at the National Park who was responsible for overseeing the National Park’s Farm Scheme. He took me on a tour of the area and shared his knowledge of the place and information on the various farmers, who might be good to talk to, which might be receptive to the idea of me working with them and so on. I remember he expressed some doubts as to whether I would find anyone willing to put me up for an extended period but I was unperturbed. He provided me with contact details for approximately 50 farmers in the catchment that were involved (or had previously been involved) in the Farm Scheme. The Farm Scheme was not available to all farmers in the catchment, however, (it was limited to the dales South of the River Esk) and not all farms that were eligible for involvement had taken up the scheme. But it was a great start and I was determined to meet as many of the farmers in the catchment as possible.

I had attended a farming and water management conference earlier in the year and remember one farm advisor saying that the best way to speak to a farmer was to turn up unannounced on their farm on the off chance that you might catch them. And this seemed an exciting way for me to begin my fieldwork. Although, I did decide to write a letter to all the farmers who I had contact details for, to tell them a bit about my research, that I was going to be in the area and that I might drop by to meet them. I also let them know that I would be hoping to stay and work on some farms in the area and consciously marketed myself as a willing, *hardworking* pair of hands.

I prepared a simple sheet on which to collect basic information about each farm. This included information such as contact information, farm ownership status, farmer occupational status, farming activities and farm size, farmer age, number of generations

that the farm has been in the family, and whether the farm is currently involved in specific environmental or farm payment schemes. I also prepared a list of “farms” that I had identified from maps but was uncertain as to their status as “farms”. The intention was to get as comprehensive a list of all the farms in the catchment as possible. Armed with these resources as well as 1:25,000 OS maps and spare copies of my original letter I targeted specific areas and went to try the “just turn up” approach for a couple of days at a time (staying in Bed and Breakfasts or camping barns). As well as asking farmers to provide the basic information I would also ask them to mark on the boundary of their farms on the OS maps and, if they had time, to help me identify those other farms for which I had no prior contact details. The purpose of this approach was twofold. First it allowed the collection of useful information about the characteristics of farming in the area (much of which informed the material in the first part of this chapter). Second, and perhaps more importantly, it provided a relatively straightforward introduction to the farmers, required as little or as much time as the farmers were willing/able to give, and gave me that initial face-to-face contact that I would find so useful in developing further relations.

And in large part the approach was a successful one. I found that where farmers had the time the majority were very helpful and seemed to enjoy telling me about their farms as well as the challenge of trying to identify their fields on the OS map. It allowed them to talk to me as much or as little as they liked and in many cases turned into more of an impromptu interview. The key obstacle in turning up unannounced was in convincing them that I was not an official or inspector from Defra, the Rural Payments Agency, the Environment Agency or the National Park planning department. Strangers with clipboards are usually viewed with some suspicion but I had a secret weapon: a battered old Vauxhall Astra with rusting sills and a wailing fan belt. One farmer told me that he could tell I wasn't an official 'with a car like that' and I relayed this story to other farmers to assure them that I posed no threat.

From this process I collected decent information on 46 farms in the catchment. The most useful, yet unintended, output from the process came in my efforts to elicit information on the farms that I had not been provided with initial contact details for. My intention was purely to aim for maximum coverage and to use it as a kind of “snowballing” approach to sampling (cf Bernard, 2005: 185). Instead, I found myself at the outset of my fieldwork asking what would become central questions for my research: what is a farm, and what is a farmer? All of a sudden I was inciting judgements, challenging identification processes, encouraging differentiation and, in some cases,

condemnation. Abound with terms such as “proper farmer”, “real farmer”, “hobby farmer”, “incomer” and “part-timer” I was faced with a morass of terminology and categorisations that were both a constituent of, and contribution to, the particular situation I was in. I tended to discount the judgements offered and so long as I had contact details, and so long as some sort of farming activity was taking place the new farms were added to my list of those to try and meet. This is an example of how the designation of respondents is a “tentative, provisional and sometimes even spontaneous” process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005: 74). The insight gained from the process actually encouraged me to seek out those whom I might have been told not to bother with as the horizons of meaning taken from my initial encounters served to shape and direct the rest of my research.

### *3.3.3.2 Interviewing Farmers*

I am reluctant at the outset to determine the degree to which the interviews I carried out were “structured” and to delineate exactly when I was and was not “interviewing”. As mentioned above, I often found myself in an interview type situation during my initial approach to farmers and similarly during ‘participant observation’ too. However, in this section I limit my discussion to the “formal” (pre-arranged and recorded) interviews that I carried out.

Although my approach has things in common with both “unstructured” and “semi-structured” interviewing I prefer Holstein and Gubrium’s (1995) notion of the “active interview” since it allows for a greater degree of flexibility and adaptability to the changing circumstances of both each individual encounter and the wider research agenda. Bernard (2005) suggests that the difference between unstructured and structured interviewing is that in unstructured interviewing the interviewer keeps the conversation focussed on a topic, whilst giving the respondent room to define the content of the discussion, whereas in semi-structured interviewing an interview guide is used with a written list of questions/topics that need to be covered in a particular order. There are two reasons why my approach did not fit within these definitions. First, I would suggest that an interview guide can be used for any type of interview, but that the extent to which it is used depends entirely on the unfolding of the interview situation. Secondly, I would question the requirement for an interviewer to keep the conversation focussed on a particular topic because, again, this does not allow for the emergence of new topics of interest through the natural progression of a conversation. Imagine, for instance, the interviewer feels that the interviewee has started talking about something

irrelevant to the research and so they try and gently nudge them back towards the topic of interest. Firstly, what is and is not relevant to the research may not be immediately apparent at the time of the interview and secondly the course of the interview could move from that “irrelevant” topic onto something much more interesting which may never have happened otherwise. In other words: the interview needs to be recognised as “active”.

Maintaining the idea of interviews as performance Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 17) refer to the active interview as a “kind of improvisational performance” because the production is spontaneous yet “structure-focussed within loose parameters provided by the interviewer”. Rather than seeking “truth”, “reliability” and “validity” the active interview is a more “dynamic, meaning-making occasion” which centres on “how meaning is constructed, the circumstances of construction, and the meaningful linkages that are assembled for the occasion” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 9). There is still room for an interview guide within the active interview but its use is less strictly defined:

“An interview guide can provide the interviewer with a set of predetermined questions that might be used as appropriate to engage the respondent and designate the narrative terrain. In contrast to the standardised questionnaire, which dictates the questions to be asked, the active interview guide is advisory, more of a conversational agenda than a procedural directive. The use of the guide may vary from one interview to the next, becoming the crux of the interview conversation on some occasions and virtually abandoned on others as the respondent (with the interviewer) stakes out and develops narrative territory” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 76).

A further benefit of the active interview for the approach adopted here is that it allows for multi-vocality, for the interviewer to gently encourage (where interactively warranted) the respondent to shift narrative positions and perform different roles (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 77).

I conducted 16 “formal” interviews with farmers around the catchment. These were pre-arranged and recorded using a digital voice recorder. The interviews usually took place within the farmer’s home but a couple were done outdoors with the voice recorder resting on an oil barrel or gatepost. They typically lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviewees were not selected on the basis of any strategic sampling methodology but on the basis of my own judgements from initial meetings, practical issues of availability and a desire to represent a variety of different types of farm. The farms

ranged in size from 21ha to 200ha and the farmers interviewed ranged in age from 28 to 81. There was an even split in owner-occupied and tenanted farms and a fairly representative mix of farming activities. There were 7 combined beef and sheep units, 5 dairy (or dairy plus other) units, 2 beef units, 1 sheep unit and 1 agricultural contractor. Ten of the farmers were farming full-time, 5 part-time, and one was retired. Twelve of the 16 were in receipt of some sort of environmental payment for management carried out on their farms.

I prepared an interview guide to lead my line of questioning but as alluded to above this was followed to varying degrees in different interviews. In the earlier interviews I perhaps followed it more routinely, but later as I became more adept at interviewing (and aware of my research interests) I allowed the interviews to flow as conversations and brought up the topics of interest to me if and when the opportunities arose and I deemed it appropriate. I did modify the guides slightly for each interview based on my prior knowledge of the particular farmer or newly emergent research interests. Equally, however, the questions I asked could have been altered as necessitated by the particular situation: the weather that day, a discussion I might have had a few hours earlier, a picture hanging on the wall and — perhaps most importantly — the intersubjective interface between myself and the interviewee.

In interviews with farmers in the Cheviots Whitman (2005) highlighted that he used his ignorance of farming to put interviewees at ease and made them aware that he was there to learn from them. Bernard (2005: 208) suggests that you should tell everyone that you interview that you are trying to learn from them. And I would further suggest that you should not only tell them this, but believe it yourself too. I relished playing the role of researcher and the opportunity it provided me to ask so many questions that might seem invasive or impolite in other social situations. Like Whitman, I found that the more experience I gained through my involvement in farming the greater acceptance I achieved through the sharing of mutual knowledge. And not just knowledge of the work, but shared acquaintances too made the interactions all the more familiar. Prior to building up that level of knowledge and to extending my social network I relied on my farming background to get acceptance and I think, though I'm not entirely sure, my northern accent became a little more northern at times.

#### *3.3.3.3 Participant What?*

The title of this sub-section represents the ambiguity inherent in the term “participant observation” as a methodological approach. Ellen (1984: 29, 221) distinguishes between

the roles of “participant observer” and “observing participant” and argues that participation in itself cannot be regarded as method. Participant observation stresses observation as the key method for data collection, whereas for the observing participant active participation in the social life studied is virtually the only data gathering method. I would agree with Ellen’s claim for experience as method arising out of participation. If we also agree that it is unlikely for the social scientist to ever be a detached observer (cf Rosaldo, 1989) then experience through degrees of closeness and distance becomes our principal method (cf Carrithers' 1992 concept of 'experienced learning'). The richest ethnographic insights, for me at least, always arose out of shared experiences requiring involvement more than pure observation. Indeed, observation was rendered obsolete at times as I often found myself alone for long periods during my fieldwork. Yet that experience was still insightful; I experienced the loneliness of solitary work — a prevalent characteristic of farm work for many of the farmers in the area — and I got a sense of that incredible responsibility farmers talk of when I was left in charge of the welfare of the livestock. And in turn, that experiential ability to relate would inform subsequent discussions, add depth and meaning to observations and heighten the intersubjective experience.

For varying degrees of time I stayed and worked on three different farms within the catchment. Table 3-3 provides a summary of each farm. For the majority of my time I stayed at Burrowbank Farm in Briardale. I stayed there for an initial six month period between September 2007 and February 2008 and have returned for shorter duration stays since then (totalling approximately seven months). I then spent a six week period between February and April (plus another week during lambing time at the end of April) on High Moor Farm, followed by a single week stay on Sinderwell Farm in May.

My initial intention was to try and spend an equal amount of time on three farms but unsurprisingly, and as I was prepared for, it didn’t turn out like that. The fact that I spent the most time at Burrowbank reflects the fact that the relationship was the most mutually beneficial: the Lockwood’s benefited from my labour as much as I benefited from their hospitality and kindness. And whilst I was useful at High Moor Farm I stayed in the holiday cottage that adjoins the farmhouse so my stays had to be fitted in around paying guests. At Sinderwell, on the other hand, because of the short duration of the stay, and because David had regular help on the farm I was of less direct benefit to the operation of the farm.

**Table 3-3: Details of Farms Stayed/Worked On (Correct at June 2007).\***

	<b>Burrowbank Farm</b>	<b>High Moor Farm</b>	<b>Sinderwell Farm</b>
<b>Dale</b>	Briardale	Skeldbeck	Hawleydale
<b>Farmer</b>	Mike Lockwood	Guy Bowman	David Stroud
<b>Family Members (resident)</b>	Ellen (wife) Tom (son) Patrick (son)	Carly (wife) Kirsty (daughter)	Gillian (wife) Darren (son)
<b>Ownership Status</b>	Owner-occupier	Tenant	Owner-occupier
<b>Employment Status (farming)</b>	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time
<b>Farming Activities</b>	Beef Sucklers Sheep Pigs	Moor Sheep	Beef Sucklers Sheep
<b>Other Activities (ex. spouse income)</b>	Direct sale of organic meat from farm and at farmers markets;  charcoal production and direct sales	Electrician  On-farm holiday cottage	
<b>Farm size (ha)</b>	57	24 plus moor stray	74
<b>Livestock</b>	25 suckler cows; 70 breeding ewes; 2 breeding sows;	250 breeding ewes	45 suckler cows; 150 breeding ewes
<b>Farmer Age</b>	47	45	57
<b>Length of time on farm</b>	16 years	all life	all life
<b>Number of generations farm in same family</b>	1	2	8 or 9
<b>Heirs to the farm</b>	sons unlikely to continue farming	daughter unlikely to continue farming	son may possibly continue farming
<b>Payment schemes involved in</b>	Single Payment Scheme; Organic Entry Level Stewardship Scheme; Hill Farm Allowance; National Park Farm Scheme	Single Payment Scheme; Hill Farm Allowance; Wildlife Enhancement Scheme	Single Payment Scheme; Entry Level Scheme; Hill Farm Allowance; National Park Farm Scheme

\*Farm, Dale and personal names are pseudonyms.

Mike, at Burrowbank, had provided me with the most positive response to the letters that I had sent out at the beginning of my fieldwork and I was invited for lunch on one of my initial forays into the catchment. And although I played it cool I was bowled over by the place, the people and the organic sausages I was served. They were keen to have me stay with them and I felt very fortunate. I lived with the family in the farmhouse during the week and returned to Durham most weekends. Since Mike had only periodic help from Ellen, Tom and Patrick between their work and school the extra pair of hands for what was often labour-intensive work was really appreciated. But as well as that I think

Mike appreciated the company, we got on very well together, shared a lot of interests and remain firm friends. Arranging stays on the other two farms took a little more persuasion as I had only picked up hints from my initial meeting with the farmers that they might be amenable to having me stay with them. And whilst I may not have developed the intimate relationships on the second and third farms I still developed good relationships with the families and the experiences were very valuable for my research.

For the large part during my stays on the farms I tried to remain an observing participant and tried to direct the flow of conversations as little as possible. However, I took advantage of opportunities that I had to make certain situations a little more formal, and to be able to make explicit notes during conversations. On long drives to collect animal feed, or to take beasts to slaughter, for instance, I would openly sit with a pen and paper in front of me making it clear that I was collecting “data”. Clearly the farmer would respond to this and I had to be aware of how the situation had changed. Spending a lot of time with one other person during the day I also tried to maximise opportunities to be in the company of more than one person. This allowed me, if I wanted, to detach myself from the conversation (although never the situation) and to see how performances were modified according to the changing audience. And whilst the thesis takes a rhetorical approach, and puts a lot of emphasis on language, I recognised also the rhetorical significance of performed actions. I considered them insightful and tried to consider their rhetorical significance in themselves, as potential manifestations of the inexpressible, and in combination with what might have been said at another time, or what would be said in the future when the situation might be different.

#### *3.3.3.4 Non-Farmer Interviewing*

The purpose of conducting interviews outside of the direct farming community in the Esk catchment was to examine the same issues of interest to my research but within different rhetorical situations, from different perspectives and from different interest groups. From the local to the European scale it would be possible to see how the means of argumentation (either in support of or challenging farming interests) were tailored to suit differing audiences at different levels of spatial extraction. There were many people that I would like to have interviewed as I felt that addressing similar issues from as many different positions as possible could only provide additional insight to my research. However, due to resource constraints on the research I was able to interview 10 individuals as follows:

- 
- Representative of local angling club
  - Chairman of Parish Council
  - Auctioneer from local cattle mart
  - National Park agri-environment co-ordinator
  - National Park ecologist
  - Environment Agency regional biodiversity officer
  - Senior member of regional Country Land and Business Association
  - Senior member of National Farmers Union, Westminster
  - Senior member of British Agricultural Bureau (Brussels)
  - Senior member of Directorate General for Agriculture (Environment Division) within the European Commission

The most notable absence from the above list is at the level of national policy-making. I tried to arrange an interview with somebody from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs but they were unable to provide anyone for interview and directed me to their website for information. This is unfortunate since, as I outline in the following chapter, I am particularly interested in the differences in policy-making values at different spatial scales and how argumentative strategies from various positions are constructed and used both top-down and bottom-up in the policy-making and implementation process.

I tried to employ the same “active” approach to interviewing those from outside the direct farming community as those within it. The interview guides I used, however, were more tailored to each interviewee but this didn’t inhibit the improvisational and flexible nature of the interview situation. Several of the interviewees even seemed a little bewildered/impressed afterwards that I hadn’t made recourse to a list of questions and seemed concerned that I might not have “got everything that I wanted”. The only exception to this was in the interview with the European Commission where I was met quite squarely with the “official line” (insightful in itself), with little expression of personal opinion nor willingness to lead the conversation away from the original initiating questions. The approach allowed the interviewee to discuss issues that they felt were particularly important but by including lines of questioning that I had also put to the farmers during interview I could get an appreciation for how extraction and differing interests affected the views expressed and the rhetoric employed.

### 3.3.3.5 *Approach to Anonymity*

Combining ethnographic material as well as a review of specific geomorphological data from my field site causes a slight problem in addressing issues of anonymity. A detailed contextual account of the local area — including recent research — requires that the field site and specific areas within the field site be known. It would not be possible for me, as some British ethnographies have done, to make up a village name and provide only a general indicator of the whereabouts of the village. The link to the sediment monitoring work necessitates that my field site be known as the upper half of the River Esk catchment in North Yorkshire and in the first part of this chapter I have referred to specific places by their real names. However, to maintain anonymity for my ethnographic material I have renamed places that could be used to identify specific people (notably dale names and farm names). Each individual has also been provided with a pseudonym. The difficulty arises when I want to make connections between the geomorphological work and my ethnographic work. How, for instance, should I provide insights on the geomorphological data provided by an informant in a particular place? My first priority is to maintain anonymity. However, where I feel that I am providing information that is relevant to other research that has not been made anonymous then it would be fruitless to do so using fictitious place names. I attempt to overcome this by not referring to particular individuals (even with a pseudonym) when talking about genuine place-specific issues.

Where appropriate each individual involved in the research was provided with a research information sheet and asked to sign a consent form permitting the information that they provided to be used for the purposes of the research. I say “where appropriate” because the introduction of a consent form and reading material at certain times would have been impractical or counter-productive. Each individual that was formally interviewed was provided with a consent form but there were of course many instances where I spent time with people for only very short periods in everyday interactions that I could not chase with a pen and paper as they departed never to be seen again. I was equally reluctant to produce a consent form for the farms on which I stayed. With people that I was hoping to build up a deep and personal relationship with, it seemed too impersonal to bureaucratise our initial encounters. I did however, provide information about the nature of my research in the course of my stays and let them know verbally the rights of involvement that were included on the consent form.

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## Chapter 4

### The Historical and Political Situation

#### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the research and the field site in terms of its historical and political setting. In doing so, however, the chapter also provides a more detailed look at the narrative and rhetorical function of historical accounts as well as the broader values that underlie the policies that come to bear on the field site. Historians, local writers and policy-makers at the EU level are shown to espouse moral values such as *hard work*, *beneficent change* and freedom through the symbolic play of local landscapes or rural areas more generally. Depending on the particular interests underlying the story that is being told, or the policy direction being pursued, the landscape — and the story of human interaction with it — may serve a specific rhetorical function by virtue of the values inscribed and the propensity for people to seek to understand themselves through recourse to place.

#### 4.2 History

The following section is broken down into three principal parts. In the first section I present what is a necessarily brief historical chronology of human-land interaction in the Esk valley from prehistory through to the present. In the subsequent sections I examine the rhetorical functioning of narrative and hope to show how any historical account is ultimately *a* story, and that many stories can be told, for a variety of reasons, through the selective and rhetorical *use* of history. In particular, I will examine how environmental histories are often presented with either a progressive or a declensionist plot (Cronon, 1992) and how the values of *beneficent change* and *hard work* serve a narrative function in the telling of a progressive history of farming in my field site; and how a rather unemotive register of chronological events may be illuminated for a particular end. And since it is “a” story, that story can be told differently. Out of the same artefacts of the past, but depending on their strategic selection or omission, on where a particular story begins and ends, and the rhetorical threads that bind those artefacts together, a different story of farming can be told: one not of progress and survival, but of exploitation, destruction and environmental degradation.

#### 4.2.1 A Brief History of Human-Land Interaction in the Esk Valley, or, A Chronology of Apparent Occurrences

##### *Prehistory*

After the retreat of the ice (circa 10,000 BC) the first evidence of human activity in the vicinity of the Esk valley comes from Kildale with evidence of burning, in association with animal bones dated to around 8,500 BC (Blaise Vyner & Land Use Consultants, 2000: 3.34). Following the glacial retreat oak woodland covered the majority of the uplands and removal of this cover for construction, fuel and grazing by prehistoric people is believed to have begun around 8,000 BC (Atherden & Simmons, 1989: 20; Muir, 1997: 27). Pollen evidence showing episodic woodland burning in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC has been found within the study area in Glaisdale and Danby Low Moor. It is thought that tree removal would have been practised to encourage the re-growth of desirable species or to attract specific animal populations which could be hunted (BV & LUC, 2000). It is likely that the moors supported extensive hunting grounds throughout the Mesolithic and Neolithic, with communities supported in the more sheltered valleys. Pollen analysis suggests that during this period the vegetation would have been characterised by a shifting mosaic of cleared and regenerating areas of woodland, with little evidence for early agricultural activity (*ibid*).

Despite being traditionally recognised as supporting a pastoral farming system the earliest evidence for agricultural activity in the Esk valley is of arable production in the Bronze Age. The cairnfields (such as an extensive example on Danby Rigg) are found on higher ground (> 200m AOD) and comprise heaps of stones with occasional rough walling running between them. It has been proposed that since the cairns are rarely associated with burials they are likely to be clearance heaps and, as supported by pollen analysis, represent a general clearance of upland wood and scrub for arable farming in the second half of the second millennium BC (Fowler, 1981: 176; Spratt, 1989: 36; Muir, 1997: 12). A trend towards a cooler and wetter climate starting around 1500 BC and not stabilising until the earlier first millennium led to the abandonment of farmland on higher ground, the spread of heather and peat and, it has been suggested, the first real distinction in upland and lowland land practices (Muir, 1997: 53; Fowler, 1981: 247). The proliferation of pits in the archaeological evidence from the Iron Age suggest an increase in crop yield, population growth and greater concern for the security of the autumn harvest (Fowler, 1981: 225). The Iron Age is also believed to represent the period where the last significant stands of woodland were removed from the moors and cleared the way for the expansion of heather (Muir, 1997: 60).

*043 – 1000 AD*

Across the uplands of the UK the general level of Romanisation was low and there is no evidence of towns or Romanised farms in the North York Moors (Hartley, 1989: 45). According to Spratt (1989: 44) the Romans would have encountered a native population with a mixed farming system with ancillary skills in wood and metal working. The landscape would have comprised open moorland on high ground with some settlement in Eskdale and the presence of droveways from the period suggests the rearing of livestock in the area (Hartley, 1989: 54; Abblebaum, 1972). A degree of settlement on higher ground is evidenced in the third and fourth centuries but these probably supported summer migrants of farmers practicing transhumance rather than permanent communities (Fowler, 2002: 61). In general, farming practices through the Roman period are believed to have remained similar to those of the Bronze and Iron Age with intensification rather than innovation the prevailing consequence of Roman influence (Hartley, 1989). Cattle are thought to have increased in number relative to sheep during the first centuries of the first Millennium AD due to an increased demand for beef, for traction and horn (Fowler, 2002).

There is very little evidence of Anglo-Saxon or Viking farming in the area, although place names do provide glimpses of agricultural activity associated with the Dark Ages (Lang, 1989). According to Muir (1997) there was a significant population decline after the Roman occupation leading to the regeneration of woodland on land that had been farmed through the Bronze and Iron Age. Throughout the first Millennium Fowler suggests that the land would have been organised into territorial, often proprietorial, units and that given the nature of the environment farming would have been largely pastoral giving rise to a short-grassed and mostly treeless landscape (2002: 68, 225).

*1000 – 1200 AD*

Settled upland farming communities listed in the Domesday Book are restricted to land below 240m and confined to upper Ryedale, the coastal fringe of the North York Moors and the Esk valley between Egton and Danby (Harrison & Roberts, 1989; Rackham, 1994). Danby is the most sizeable settlement recorded in Domesday which was assessed at 6 carucates. By 1272 it had grown to 11.5 carucates with 56 bovates of land held by serfs and at least another 33 bovates by Freeman (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 97).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> A carucate is the area a plough team of eight oxen could till in an annual season. A bovat is one eighth of a carucate.

According to Harrison and Roberts Danby had an area of townfield (communal arable land) at the northern end of the dale but the settlement also consisted of smaller isolated farms, such as Low Bramble Carr (recorded in a later deed of 1397). Later 18<sup>th</sup> Century maps suggest these earlier settlements were loose scatters of farmsteads representing what Harrison and Roberts refer to as an “unusual type of settlement”, somewhere between a truly nucleated village and the dispersed farmstead (1989: 98).

Within a century of the Norman conquest approximately one third of the area of the North York Moors had been brought under monastic control, with a flood of grants circa 1140 – 1160 giving vast tracts of land over to the priories. Whilst this would have included the wasting of existing farms, Guisborough Priory’s vast network of granges in the upper Esk Valley (around Commondale) was carved out of an area with no record of previous settlement (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 110; Muir, 1997).

#### *1200 – 1600 AD*

Although the vegetated landscape had taken shape by the Roman period, the constructed landscape of settlements and field boundaries was given its main outline in the Middle Ages, albeit affected by earlier patterns (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 72). By the mid 13<sup>th</sup> Century religious expansion had come to an end, direct farming had become unprofitable (particularly following the epidemics of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century) and many of the outlying granges were leased out or split into many smaller units (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 110). A similar process of enclosure had occurred in Danby Parish by 1300, despite no previous monastic influence (McDonnell, 1989) and large populations were supported in the valleys around this time (Harrison & Roberts, 1989).

Medieval farmhouses were normally linked with a peasant holding of between 6 and 12ha and had associated rights to take hay, to graze on the commons, to cut fuel, timber or turves and to take building material and quarry stone (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 83-84). By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century these smallholdings would be found alongside great deer parks managed by the Lords of the Manor. The Mauleys of Mulgrave Castle, for instance, owned a huge estate including Egton Grange, south of the river Esk. Farms present today in this area are sparse and carry reminders of their origins with names like Lodge Hill and Grange Head (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 104-105). The Tudor clearances of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that made way for a massive expansion in sheep farming and saw the conversion of half a million acres of arable land to pasture across England had less of an impact in the Dales, although Muir suggests that whole tracts of countryside could have

been denuded of villages in the North York Moors during this process (Bonham-Carter, 1971: 31; Muir, 1997: 157).

#### *1600 – 1800 AD*

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Parliamentary Enclosure that divided up the vast common fields of much of lowland England had a more subtle effect in the Esk valley. As described previously, individual holdings had been created in the valley since at least the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and many areas included very little communal arable land throughout the Middle Ages (McDonnell, 1989), whilst the upland moors remained as commons throughout (Muir, 1997). A look at a modern map, however, clearly shows the areas — such as Fryup Dale — with large square fields that would have been enclosed through acts of parliament (Atherden & Simmons, 1989).

Despite an expansion in population and the reclamation of “wastes”, settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century remained dispersed through the Esk valley (McDonnell, 1989). In the large parish of Danby, for instance, the majority of the population was spread over more than 150 holdings and there were no villages that exceeded more than a handful of dwellings (McDonnell, 1989: 134). And whilst the isolated yeoman farmers prospered (many able, for instance, to purchase their farms on the Danby Estate when Sir John Danvers got into financial difficulties and put the estate up for sale) the villagers and hamlets experienced increased economic fragility, with regular migration in search of new means of livelihood (*ibid.*).

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and the reorganising of the economy in the middle of that century, brought with it the commercialisation of agriculture and for the first time, the production of crops and livestock pursuant to the needs of the market (Newby, 1987). It was a century which saw the construction of the characteristic stone farmhouses of the North York Moors, the intensification of coal mining and an increase in the management of the upland commons as grouse moors (Spratt & Harrison, 1989; BV & LUC, 2000; McDonnell, 1989). Farming during this century was affected by larger-scale pioneering projects undertaken by the lord of the manor, and this included the breeding of superior stock, more intensive exploitation of marginal land (leading to the spread of “intake fields” higher and higher up the sides of the dales) and more sophisticated soil management practices (McDonnell, 1989). The dominance of sheep farming gave way to a mixed system of cattle/sheep husbandry, with cattle bred in the Dales sold to lowland farmers for further fattening (*ibid.*).

*1800 – 1900 AD*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a continuation of the expansion and intensification efforts of the previous century. Many farm complexes were renewed, stone and tile field drains were extended and this century also saw the expansion of extractive industry and the establishment of moorland heather monoculture (through rotational burning practices) for further grouse exploitation (BV & LUC, 2000; Atherden & Simmons, 1989).

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century cereal production increased within the Esk valley and in the latter part of the century dairy farming began to figure more prominently as better infrastructure and communication between local market and growing population centres enabled the transport of cheese, butter and eventually milk (McDonnell, 1989: 133, 139). Nationally and locally the implications of the industrial revolution and the expansion of international trade were becoming clear by the 1860s – 1870s (Newby, 1987). Around this time, increased coal extraction and new ironstone mining activities led to the development of the settlement clusters of Danby, Glaisdale and Grosmont as well as the coming of the Esk Valley railway in 1865 (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 98). In Glaisdale in the 1860s all the farms offered for sale were advertised as being situated on one of the ironstone seams and the price was inflated accordingly while the population of the village increased by over 800 with many of the newly employed having to find accommodation in Lealholm (Davison, n.d.: 57). Most large-scale mining operations, however, had ceased before the end of the century.

*1900 -*

Through the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century moorland vegetation cover decreased from 49% of the area of the North York Moors in 1853 to 40% in 1963 and 35% by 1986 (Statham, 1989: 201). This change was brought about not only by agricultural expansion but also afforestation following the establishment of the Forestry Commission in the second decade of the century. The two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century had significant impacts on agricultural production, with the First World War seeing the abandonment of Laissez Faire economics and the introduction of government intervention in farming, and the Second World War increasing the degree of protectionism further (Bonham-Carter, 1971).

With government encouragement and financial support new technologies, fertilisers and land management practices were introduced to increase the output and efficiency of the

farm land in the valley. The introduction of machinery in the 1940s and 1950s reduced the requirement for farm labour. A 180 acre farm in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century would have provided employment for ‘t’maister’, a foreman, a horseman and a lad but by the latter part of the century a similar sized farm would likely only support a single farmer and, more recently, may not provide sufficient income to support a single individual (Hartley & Ingleby, 1972: 38).

The amount of land put to the plough for arable production increased during the war period and a mixed system of farming continued into the 1960s (BV & LUC, 2000). Thereafter, farm economics demanded greater efficiency through specialisation with virtually all land today put to pasture for livestock farming (see Chapter 3).

#### **4.2.2 Environmental narratives and rhetoric: Story-telling**

The above account, albeit brief, shows that human-land interactions in the Esk valley have undergone periodic cycles of abandonment and expansion: they have *changed*. In presenting “the” history in this way it has been difficult to present an entirely impartial, unsubjective account of the historical record. What I have chosen to include and omit in *my* account represent my best efforts to unpick the “facts”, to avoid subjective assertions on the nature of the changes recorded and to be concise. Yet, undoubtedly, the account has not entirely escaped the frame of reference from which I write. The local books, and even the academic texts on which the chronology has been based, relay history through narrative: they make stories out of change. And that change may be emphasised, downplayed, ignored or portrayed in either a positive or a negative light in order to tell a particular story, to function rhetorically, and to persuade.

In Chapter 2 I showed how landscapes provide a particularly rich store of symbolic historical capital. It was shown how farmers’ personhoods, through their intimate relations and work with the land, are underwritten by personal biographies and historical narrative. In this section, and in keeping with the theoretical approach to culture and rhetoric outlined in Chapter 2, I examine the importance of both history (especially environmental history) and historicity in processes of identification and the rhetorical construction of personhood.

Fox (1985) argued that consciousness is always in the making under particular conditions of time and place. Furthermore, a view of culture with a rhetorical edge recognises the transience and dynamism of cultural forms. Carrithers talks of historicity, or the eventfulness of life, which is moved by the “rhetorical will” of those who in any

one moment “hold the floor” (2005b: 578). To understand change and rhetorical or cultural constructions which, to a certain degree at least, are made from an existing ‘stock’ or ‘pool’ of material, necessarily requires an understanding of the past, of that which went before. Friedman argues that “self-definition does not occur in a vacuum, but in a world already defined” and that “making history is a way of producing identity insofar as it produces a relation between that which *supposedly* occurred in the past and the present state of affairs” (Friedman, 1992: 837, emphasis added).

The rhetorical functioning of narrative, we should remember, relies not just on the story that is told but on how it is told, and as much by the information that is omitted from the story as that which is included as every act of saying is an “intersection of the “said” and the “unsaid”” (Tyler, 1978: 459). In other words, what remains untold may be equally rhetorical as what is told. Moreover, the said and the unsaid combine for particular rhetorical effect. Whilst the focus of this chapter is on the telling of histories, Carrithers (2007: 6) points out that narrative functions more broadly in everyday situations as a form of understanding that gives “narrative accountability” to people’s actions and motives. This suggests that narrative not only functions on the past and present, but keeps one eye on the future. In this sense previous social activity can be thought of as creating an “order of possibilities” from which to decide upon our next actions if they are to be appropriate to their circumstances (Shotter, 1993: 6). I will later argue (Chapter 7) that not only is history used as a warrant for current action, beliefs or motives but that narrative also functions rhetorically by projecting into the future what might or could happen relative to that which has gone before. Depending on perspective and circumstance this often casts narratives of progression/continuity against those of decline and vice versa. The idea of progressive and declensionist narratives in environmental histories has been put forward by Cronon (1992).

Taking the example of American Great Plains history Cronon (1992) showed how environmental histories tend to take on either a ‘progressive’ or a ‘declensionist’ plotline. Progressive plots, associated with enlightenment thinking, tell of the human struggle to overcome the harsh and desolate environment that migrants faced on the American frontier. Declensionist plots, on the other hand, were associated with romantic and post-modern thinking and told a story of the exploitation and destruction of the unique Great Plains environment culminating in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Cronon shows that “where one chooses to begin and end a story profoundly alters its shape and meaning” and offers evidence of the power of narrative to “reframe the past so as to include certain events and people, exclude others, and redefine the meaning of

landscape accordingly” (Cronon, 1992: 1364). Cronon argues that such stories are influenced by hidden agendas that are so powerful that not even the authors are fully aware of them. Narratives about the non-human world, argues Cronon, remain focused on human thoughts, acts and values. Moreover, it is “[h]uman interests and conflicts [that] create *values* in nature that in turn provide the moral center for our stories” (Cronon, 1992: 1369, italics in original). This suggests that values are the product of interests and may be propagated through rhetoric and serve to both direct and constrain the stories that are told.

The values attached to the English landscape, and the means through which people achieve personhood through historical recourse to the landscape are often underlain by the powerful force of nostalgia (Newby, 1987). Stewart (1988: 227) refers to nostalgia as "an essential, narrative, function of language that orders events temporally and dramatizes them". Such narratives of personhood present a “sentimental and idyllic evocation of a rural past which never existed” and frequently obscure as much as clarify our perceptions of rural social change (Newby, 1987: 2-3). Such histories may be what Nietzsche (1983 [1874]) refers to as ‘monumental’, seeking to create a past worthy of imitating and also, thus, can be persuasive — imbuing moral import and value to those elements of the past deemed desirable in the present. A striking feature of environmental history, and an extension of monumentalism, is what Thompson calls ‘eternalization’ (Thompson, 1990; cited in Wallwork & Dixon, 2004: 33). Rhetorical eternalization roots those elements deemed desirable in the present to an unchanging and immemorial past. Here History ‘with a capital H’ can actually serve to “conceal historicity” and establishes an imperative for continuity (*ibid.*: 33).

Whilst narrative can be viewed subtly as an everyday rhetorical means through which people seek to persuade themselves and others, the means through which they do that will be influenced by celebrated and monumentalised accounts. Furthermore, personal narratives may be constrained not only by the pool of historical “facts” available, but also by the language available to relay that history. In the following section I look at how a progressive plot, in combination with *hard work*, is embedded in narrative accounts of the field site. I will later argue (Chapter 8) that the concept of *improvement*, its pervasiveness in historical and everyday discourse, and its dual role as both moral value and descriptor of change functions ideologically through its play with the notions of change and continuity that farmers grapple with in their processes of identification. Rather than elaborating on this idea further here I’d prefer to finish this section by

highlighting the striking resemblance of historical narrative described above to a definition of ideology provided by Belsey (1980: 57-58, in Bruner, 2005):

Ideology obscures the real conditions of existence by presenting partial truths. It is a set of omissions, gaps rather than lies, smoothing over contradictions, appearing to provide answers to questions which in reality it evades, and masquerading as coherence in the interests of the social relations generated by and necessary to the reproduction of the existing mode of production.

Through language, both history and ideology play with change. They attach values to change, or to continuity, they selectively omit and include artefacts of the past and under the guise of progression or declension they imbue a moral imperative for some future action; they serve to persuade.

#### *4.2.2.1 Stories of Work and Progress in the Esk Valley*

Both the literature (Chapter 2) and my own ethnographic findings (Chapters 5-6) show the value attached by farming communities to *hard work*. Local historical accounts of the field site, particularly from a farming perspective, often tell a progressive story of the farmer overcoming difficulties (notably environmental) through *hard work*. In this way *hard work* is imbued with incredible moral value as it is seen as the means through which one better one's circumstances. Furthermore, as a rich store of historical capital, the landscape comes to symbolise the value in *hard work*, as a testament to the efforts of previous generations and as a reminder of the importance of maintaining that value if the progressive story is to be continued into the future. It is from this perspective, that we can begin to understand why external threats to the landscape are also seen as threats to farming personhoods as they enshrine the history and values with which farmers seek to understand themselves through everyday embodied practice (cf Setten, 2004).

#### *4.2.2.2 Local Accounts*

These ideas may be exemplified by John Ford's (1953) reminiscences of Danby Parish. A hollow between Danby and Little Fryup Dales bears the name "Wolf Pit Slack" and, he attests, serves as a reminder that wolves were once trapped there. It is clear from his account, however, that it also serves as a reminder of much more:

Personally, when I pass this place I have no other thought or feeling but that I am standing on the site where our forefathers dug their pits to trap wolves passing between the two dales of Fryup and Danby, and I visualise how vastly different

was the lot of our Dales-folk then, having, through the sheer necessity of self-preservation, to trap wolves, clear and cultivate the rough land and enclose it within the stone walls we see. You can imagine his crude implements of agriculture and the hundred-and-one hindrances and seemingly insurmountable difficulties he would encounter in the battle for existence, yet in spite of all the odds, he held his ground. How different is the farmer's position to-day, with the land all reclaimed from its natural wild state, the swamps drained and green fields in their place, and the farmhouses all standing snug and strong. He has modern implements, the fruit of invention, to do the hard hand labour, and the last wolf has long since been captured at Wolf Pit Slack (Ford, 1953: 13-14).

This feature of the landscape — to Ford at least — tells a whole story, it tells a progressive story of adversity worsted through *hard work*. And having successfully played its part in the demise of the wolf population the function of that hollow shifted. Instead of trapping *Canus lupis* in advance of a swift execution, that hollow now traps and stores the symbolic values that have seemingly persisted where the wolf has not. That such values should and must govern future action is demonstrated by the determination with which such features are defended in the face of undesirable change. The saving of an old farmhouse from demolition, for instance, proves particularly satisfying for Ford since it ensures that it will remain as a “shrine” for the efforts and progress of past generations:

We are oft called upon to witness or do the things we least want to do, and the pulling down of these four old dwellings was to me among those things in life that matter, so the reader may be able to understand the thankful feelings I entertain towards Dr. Mickelthwaite for leaving us this first-type specimen. It stands alone, a silent witness proclaiming the kind of crude habitation our ancestors lived in, in those far-off days when they struggled under the weight of appalling difficulties, engaging in pitched battles with the Wolf, the Witch and the Swamp [sic]. Lest we forget, we should look upon the last of these old dwellings as a cenotaph or shrine, dedicated to the struggles of our forefathers, whose humble but heroic blood still stirs the pulse and courses through our own veins. We should never forget how they were perpetually engaged in fighting all but hopeless battles against tremendous odds (Ford, 1953: 59).

This interpretation is similar to that drawn by Thomas (1993) in relation to archaeological monuments. The editor of the volume in which Thomas writes suggests that Thomas' work shows how historical monuments "become the vehicle for an active reconstruction of remembrance which permits the projection of social relations into the

future" (Bender, 1993: 10). This corroborates the view outlined in Chapter 2, in which it was shown how not just the landscape itself, but farm work, livestock and interactions thereof also serve as powerful means of expressing farming values and of transmitting those values into the future (e.g. Gray, 1998).

The values in *hard work*, and their tying with progress and the land, are upheld even more resoundingly in a vivid anecdote relayed by Canon Atkinson in his popular 19<sup>th</sup> century account of the local area *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*:

We have no rich men in our midst, nor any who live the life of idleness, save only those whose work is done, or the few lazy ones who have not sufficient self-respect to be ashamed of sponging upon others. I think, indeed, that if a rule could be laid down in such matters, it would rather be that the farmer, or other "master-man", works harder, and at things wanting more nicety or care or skill, than any one else merely in his employ; and his sons are hardly exceptions to the rule as long as they remain at home with their father. I remember, nearer forty years ago than thirty, when just beginning a long pastoral walk into some one of the many far parts of my parish, seeing three lads of from thirteen up to sixteen or seventeen working away at a bit of toilsome clearing which had been made necessary for "mensefulness", and indeed for the plough, by the recent erection of a new dry stone wall. Their father I knew was ill, unable to leave the house, and hard-handed son of toil as he had always been, always laborious and "endeavouring", would never leave his house again save once. When I came back, five or six hours later, they were still there, still at work, and with goodly piles of material moved to be a record that they, boys as they were, and with no one to set them their task and see that they did it, had "worked with a will" while I had been gone. Those same three are all still living and are all that their father was before them, steadily and enduringly industrious, and bringing up their families to tread in the same steps they have trodden in before them. The eldest too, poor fellow, has been sorely stricken by disabling attacks twice, and he who was the strongest man in the parish, or nearly so, is now but a crippled wreck; and still he is never idle, never negligent, the condition of his farm being such as to show that he must farm well and work hard who would fain be George's "master" in farming and all that belongs to it (Atkinson, 1891: 13).

The rich and emotive language aside, what is also important to consider in this account is the possibility that what is represented is a story of a story that has, in turn, become History. Despite not uttering a single word we could conceive the actions of the three sons as having some narrative and persuasive function. Perhaps their actions were

played out to an audience, perhaps themselves, perhaps each other, perhaps to their sick father, or perhaps to the local vicar who was walking by. Conceivably, their “story” was the same as that told by Atkinson, but what actually happened in those six hours that escaped the vicar’s gaze remains untold and perhaps adds, rather than detracts from the narrative function of his anecdote. And that anecdote, once written down in his book, becomes a source of local history to be read and *used* by subsequent generations.

Like the landscape, books such as these become a part of the cultural artillery out of which local people seek to construct their personhoods. As records of a human relationship with the land the books serve as extensions of the symbolic value held in the landscape and may, if they outlive the features of the landscape which store the stories, serve to ensure the moral imperative for continuity or progress through *hard work*. In the above example it is not possible to know whether Atkinson’s anecdote represents a fair account or not, nor to understand the degree to which it is merely rhetorical, since no alternative story is available. In other cases, however, it is possible to envisage how the strategic omission of alternative stories, or “historical facts” could be employed rhetorically. Atkinson (1891: 8) for instance suggests that

...it is absolutely true that Danby is a district of small holdings; and if the greater landlords are wise, it will always remain so. The holdings are suited to the Dales farmers, and the Dales farmers are suited to their holdings, and alike by their means, their experience, their hardihood, industry, and energy, and by the simplicity of their habits and manner of life.

It would detract from Atkinson’s story, we can envisage, if he were to mention that Danby and Fryup Dales were farmed as a “great ranch” with “some 200 cows” in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Harrison & Roberts, 1989: 105). In this example moral value is attached to *hard work* in association with a pattern of farming based on the smallholding. Interestingly, there may have been little place either for Harrison & Roberts’ evidence in the EU’s 1990’s portrayal of a European “model” of farming. Like Atkinson, the EU’s story, with an international political audience, also relied on a narrative of farming continuity borne out of values expressed through *hard work* and the family-sized farming unit (Clark et. al., 1997, see Chapter 2 Section 2.3.4 and Section 4.3.2, this chapter).

#### 4.2.2.3 Textbook Accounts

Not only in the local collections, but in the “textbook” histories too, we find stories of progress or continuity borne out of *hard work*. Muir (1997: 68) for instance, suggests continuity from the Iron Age countrysides of Yorkshire that were “kept hard at work and fiercely defended” through recourse to the presence today of winding lanes “that probably date from these times”. And in the first Millennium AD Peter Fowler, a landscape archaeologist, suggests that:

Respect for the workers on the land in the first millennium AD is balanced by respect across ten centuries for the agrarian achievement during a thousand years of unremitting and largely anonymous endeavour. AD 1000 may actually be just when, after much travail and years of relatively slow development, farming as we know it was really founded and about to move into long-term expansive mode (2002: 194-195).

Here Fowler plays subtly with ‘change’ in the telling of his story of the first Millennium. He suggests that a positive change occurred during this period (respect for the agrarian achievement) but this occurred at a steady pace (years of relatively slow development) and was only achieved through persistent work (unremitting endeavour/much travail). He suggests that these 1,000 years provided the foundation for a period of more rapid (expansive) change which, through his choice of words, he doesn’t appear to associate the same degree of respect, value and achievement. It is intriguing how many of the authors cited in the above chronology play with change and continuity in this way to make stories out of the particular period of history about which they write. Statham, writing about farming in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, writes that:

The landscape of the Moors early in the twentieth century was different in detail and degree rather than in form from the landscape of the early nineteenth century ... There had been some enclosures and improvements but the basic farming systems had not changed. The pattern of moorland, dale agriculture, daleside woodland, compact villages and scattered farmsteads also seemed immutable. The ensuing decades have witnessed changes on an unprecedented scale (Statham, 1989: 199).

For Statham, rapid changes in farming began at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which is 900 years after Fowler suggested the start of a more rapid period of expansion. By suggesting relative continuity in the period preceding that about which he writes

Statham makes the case for *his* story. Set against thousands of years of continuity the rapid changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which he wishes to tell us about appear altogether more drastic and, potentially, more moving. Whilst a period of rapid change marks the end of Fowler's period and the beginning of Statham's they both seem to ascribe value to either continuity or a more steady interpretation of "progress". The value Statham attaches to the continuity preceding his period is demonstrated with a more starkly declensionist story of change during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He laments the reduced variety of plant and animal species brought about by the increased use of chemicals on the land and regrets the use of modern, "alien", building materials that "frequently strike a discordant note" (Statham, 1989: 203-204). In the most wonderfully emotive tale of decline that I came across Bonham-Carter (1972: 13) marries environment with society and features of the landscape with features of country life in expressing his despair at the impact of modern farming:

I am not writing for experts but for people who, like myself, want to know what the experts say. There are many of us, and we are anxious. We are bewildered and disturbed by the radical changes that seem rapidly to be destroying the countryside: not only the rate at which towns and factories and motorways are eating up the land, but the way in which farmers are forcing husbandry into an industrial straitjacket. Economics and environment seem to be fighting each other to death. We are sorry too about the collapse of rural society. We regret the loss of hedges and hayricks, the rape of villages, and all their familiar features of country life we read about or used to know (Bonham-Carter, 1972: 13).

Declensionist plots such as these often tell a story that serves to push the reader toward the inchoate, as the land and the environments out of which they derive their personhoods are portrayed as threatened. However, they also provide a degree of understanding, a movement back from the inchoate, as they allow the reader to lay blame for the negative changes at the door of towns, factories, motorways, economics and farmers. The use of progressive and declensionist plots in the negotiated interactions of farmers and environmental implementers in the Esk Valley is considered further in Chapter 7.

#### *4.2.2.4 The Narrative and Ideology of Improvement*

Despite being a pervasive term in historical accounts of farming I have thus far avoided recourse to the word *improvement*. The historical texts use this word in two ways. Firstly as a noun, or a principle, relating to the political philosophy of *Agricultural*

*Improvement*, often written with a capital “I” or in inverted commas. In this sense, the word has relatively narrow connotations associated with increasing agricultural output and efficiency from around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is also used in its broader sense, as a verb, with a lower case “i” to denote a more general *beneficent change*, and to illuminate a bland chronology by implying directional — progressive — change. I will later argue that this dual meaning serves a capitalist ideological function as the two meanings come to be viewed as synonymous (Womack, 1989) (see Chapter 8). For the time being, however, I wish to make three final points on ideology, language and history.

The first is that although the two meanings of *improvement* are sometimes distinguished by historians, sometimes they are not. Moreover, even when they are distinguished their interchangeable use serves the function of blurring the distinction. This links on to the second point, namely, that the limits of language itself make synonymy more likely. It is virtually impossible, for instance, to talk of a beneficial change (from whatever perspective) without using the word *improvement*. Archaic and vernacular words that relate to a *beneficent change* independently of a more narrowly interpreted concept of *agricultural improvement*, for instance, have fallen out of popular usage. The word “mensefulness” used by Atkinson (1891: 13) in his anecdote of the three brothers is a case in point. He describes the act of clearing stone as being “necessary for mensefulness”, meaning becoming neat/orderly or comely and graceful (of a person) (Morris, 1892; Ray, 1817), a more similar meaning to the word *fettle* that I will elaborate in the following chapters. Following on from this, the third point is that whilst *Agricultural Improvement* — with its economic connotations — is pervasive in historical accounts there is also evidence of a different conception of *beneficent change* based more on a steadier, persistent and more iterative interpretation. And both that conception, as well as economic conceptions of change can be tied to a value in *hard work* (cf Weber, 1930). Aesthetic values of *beneficent change* maintained and recorded through the landscape appear more, however, to value the role of *hard work* in overcoming adversity rather than in terms of financial reward. *Hard work* retains a symbolic function that is not commensurate with output (cf Cohen, 1979). I will explore alternative conceptions of *beneficent change* and *hard work* through recourse to my ethnographic findings (Chapters 5-7) and reconsider their ideological and practical implications further in Chapter 8.

I end this section with a quote from Spratt & Harrison (1989: 9) which reminds us of the influence that both extra-spatial and extra-temporal factors now have on the local

situation. And it is to the extra-spatial, to the influence of policies and policy-makers from beyond the Esk valley to which the following section turns:

In early times the moors were moulded by the forces of nature and by the men who lived upon them. As time passed, events outside the area mainly shaped their destiny and will doubtless do so into the future.

### 4.3 Policy

This section is broken down into two principal parts. The first part provides contextual background to the recent changes in policy that have become a constituent of the *situation* in the Esk valley and for the sake of brevity, and pursuant to the needs of my current purpose, I limit that discussion to the 2003 reforms of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In the second part I examine the values held by the EU in agriculture and rural areas and show how, similar to the local historians, values are upheld in a progressive story borne out of the efforts of the small, family-sized farming unit. I further consider the reasons for the 2003 reform in the context of international trade agreements and how the EU tells a story of European agriculture, based on common values with which it defends its position and pursues its interests in the international arena. I look briefly at the difference in position between the EU, the UK and other Member States with regard to agricultural support and consider the implications of this for the rhetorical effectiveness of argumentative strategies made, and addressed to audiences, at different degrees of spatial extraction. Finally, I consider the relationship between productivist philosophy and a narrow, economic conception of *improvement*. The discussion provides the context for the structural changes occurring in the Esk Valley during my fieldwork and will contribute to my re-appraisal of the four propositions in Chapter 8. In particular, the continued importance of rural symbolism in the EU's quest for legitimacy is used to suggest that beyond the confines of the UK, farmers arguments couched in terms of "traditional" rural values may continue to have rhetorical purchase (cf *proposition three*).

#### 4.3.1 The 2003 CAP Reform and Environmental Stewardship

The CAP has remained a constant feature of the European Union (and its predecessors) since its formation. The policy derived from the original Treaty of Rome in 1957 which included amongst its stated objectives (EEC, 1957: Article 39):

- Increasing agricultural productivity;

- 
- Ensuring a fair standard of living and increasing earnings of agricultural workers;
  - Stabilising agricultural markets;
  - Assuring the availability of supplies, and;
  - Ensuring a reasonable price for consumers.

The objectives emerged out of a heightened concern for food security and domestic supply following the food shortages during the Second World War. Through financial measures such as guaranteed prices, production-linked subsidies and import tariffs the European Union pursued these objectives under the political philosophy of *productivism*. And whilst there is debate over the extent of a “shift” from productivism to post-productivism since around the mid 1980s (Wilson, 2001) the process known as “decoupling” certainly represents a departure, or, more accurately, represents an appearance of a departure from productivist policy.

The term decoupling is used by the EU to refer to the process of transferring payments to farmers away from production-based subsidies. With decoupled payments, then, farmers still receive a subsidy but it is not contingent upon the level of output (e.g. tonnage of grain or head of livestock). Decoupling began in 1992 with the MacSharry reforms of the CAP but it wasn't until Regulation 1782/2003 *Establishing Common Rules for Direct Support under the CAP* that decoupling was extended to cover the majority of farm payments. The reasons for the shift to decoupled payments reflect the EU's attempt to balance domestic, national and international pressures and will be discussed further in the following section. The principal focus of this section is to briefly describe the 2003 reform and consider its implications for the farmers in the Esk valley.

In the words of Regulation 1782/2003 the 2003 reforms represented a shift from “production support” to “producer support” (Para. 24) and replaced a range of production linked subsidies with a Single Farm Payment. As well as responding to a range of stakeholder interests decoupling is intended to make EU farmers more competitive and market-oriented as they are encouraged to produce in accordance with the demands of the market (EU, 2004a). The Single Farm Payment would be linked to previous production levels (though with discretion left to Member States) but paid on an area basis contingent upon the farmer's compliance with a range of existing criteria. This condition is referred to as “cross-compliance” and requires that the farm be kept in

Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) as well as meeting a range of existing statutory requirements on public, plant and animal health, animal welfare and environmental control (Regulation 1782/2003).

Despite its emphasis on compliance with existing environmental standards the Single Farm Payment is paid under Pillar I of the CAP as a direct income support for farmers. The division of the CAP into Pillars I and II was formalised during the Agenda 2000 reforms. Pillar I was to subsidise farming through market intervention and direct income support, whereas Pillar II amalgamated various previous elements of the CAP into payments for rural development and the provision, by agriculture, of public goods (such as environmental protection). Through a process known as “modulation” the 2003 reforms also set in motion a gradual transference of the funds being paid through Pillar I to those being paid through Pillar II. A compulsory modulation rate of 3% in 2005 would rise to 4% in 2006 and 5% in 2007 – 2013 (EU, 2004b). The UK, along with only Portugal, chose to hasten this process through additional “voluntary modulation” that had already been in place prior to the compulsory modulation of the 2003 reforms. This meant that the rate of modulation in the UK would total (combining compulsory plus voluntary modulation) 17% in 2007, 18% in 2008 and 19% in 2009 (Defra, 2009c) compared to just 5% in most other Member States. According to Defra, this was necessary to fund an expansion of the UK’s agri-environment schemes, and in particular the new Environmental Stewardship schemes which are paid for under Pillar II of the CAP (*ibid.*) (see below).

The 2003 reforms were transposed into UK law through Statutory Instrument 2004/3196 (as amended) and were implemented through the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) in January 2005. In the Esk valley, the most common livestock headage subsidies that were replaced are the beef special premium, suckler cow premium, slaughter premium and sheep annual premium. The financial implications of the SPS would be different for each farmer depending upon the size of their holding, their past farming activities and their past stocking density. This is because, in England, the shift to an area based payment is being phased in on a sliding scale offsetting an historic payment, based on the farmer’s previous entitlement prior to decoupling. This means that by 2012 there will be no link between the SPS and historical entitlements and the payment will be based purely on the area of the farm. A farmer with no historic entitlements (e.g. a dairy

farmer<sup>22</sup>), or with low historic entitlements but a large holding, therefore, would see his/her SPS increase over time. In contrast, a relatively smaller holding that had achieved higher historic entitlements through increased stocking density would see his/her payment reduced over time. So not only does the situation vary from farm to farm, the payment each farm receives will change each year as a result of the above process (referred to as ‘progressive modification’) in combination with reductions through modulation to Pillar II (RPA, 2008). Another quirk of the payment system, and a particular bone of contention to farmers in the Esk valley, is that the flat-rate area payment is lower for land in the Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA) (upland areas with difficult farming conditions) than in the lowlands. In 2005 the flat-rate payment for the lowlands was £19.23/ha compared to £16.09/ha for non-moorland SDA land and £2.29/ha for moorland SDA land (Defra, 2006). The measure is intended to prevent the overcompensation of farmers managing large, extensively farmed tracts of lands and to avoid the large redistribution of funds away from the lowlands.

With increasing modulation of funds from Pillar I to Pillar II in the UK more money is being made available for rural development and agri-environment schemes. The principal agri-environment scheme now operating in England is Environmental Stewardship (ES), which replaced a number of previous schemes in 2005 (notably the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme).<sup>23</sup> The scheme is funded through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and provides funding in pursuit of the following objectives:

- biodiversity conservation;
- maintaining and enhancing landscape quality and character;
- protecting the historic environment and natural resources;
- promoting public access and understanding of the countryside (Defra, 2005a).

ES is administered by Natural England and is broken down into a basic “Entry” Level Stewardship scheme (ELS) and a more demanding Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS) that attracts a greater level of support. ELS, and an organic version paying a higher rate per hectare (OELS), are available to all farmers and applied across the entire holding. ELS provides farmers with a range of management options, over and above

<sup>22</sup> Dairy farmers did not receive a headage payment prior to the 2003 reforms, although a Dairy Premium was paid during 2004 to offset a reduction in the EU’s intervention price for milk. This was subsumed into the SPS thereafter.

<sup>23</sup> And at the local level the North York Moors Farm Scheme (See Chapter 3).

those required by cross compliance, for which they are able to obtain a certain amount of points. From those options the farmers are free to choose which they wish to pursue across their holding in order to meet a points target of 30/ha. Agreements last for five years and typical management options include sensitive hedgerow management, creating buffer strips around field margins, reducing artificial inputs and the preparation of a soil management plan. The HLS aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority areas and concentrates on more complex management activities that require external advice and the tailoring of agreements to local circumstances (Defra, 2005a). HLS is a discretionary scheme, which must be applied for in conjunction with a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). Like ELS there are various management options available in the HLS but there is no requirement to arrive at a points threshold and agreements are drawn up in consultation with Natural England advisors and are only likely to be agreed on land that is “of significant environmental interest” (Defra, 2005b). There is also the option to apply for funding for particular items of capital works within a particular funding period. Agreements are usually made on a ten year basis and management/enhancement options available include: restoration of successional areas and scrub; maintenance of traditional water meadows, restoration of rough grazing for birds, and; the restoration of moorland (*ibid.*).

By the end of 2008 there were 37,300 ELS agreements covering over 5 million hectares and 2,900 HLS agreements covering 291,000 ha across England (Defra, 2009d). In the upper Esk catchment half of the farmers who I met (23) had entered into ELS agreements with a further six planning on entering ELS once their Farm Scheme agreements with the National Park come to an end (Chapter 3). One farm had a HLS agreement that had been awarded because the farm included traditional hay meadows designated as a SSSI. Experience from my field site showed that, due to resource constraints, English Nature were prioritising (pretty much exclusively) farm land for HLS agreements that fell within already designated conservation sites. During the course of my fieldwork, significant efforts were being made to draw up common HLS agreements between graziers and the estates on the common moors which are protected as a SSSI and SPA (Chapter 3).

A further source of financial support for many farmers in the Esk valley has been the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA). Hill Farm Allowance was designed to ensure the continuation of farming in England’s Less Favoured Areas (LFA) by compensating farmers for the difficulties of operating in difficult geographical locations. Previously the HFA has been regarded as a social payment, recognising the inherent value in

maintaining farming in upland areas (see Whitman, 2005), but the imminent replacement of HFA with a new Upland Entry Level Stewardship scheme in 2010 mandates that, like ELS, the payment is awarded on the basis of fulfilling a range of environmental management options.

The decoupling of direct income support; the cross compliance requirements of the SPS; the modulation of funds towards Pillar II payments; the widespread introduction of environmental stewardship, and; replacement of the HFA with an agri-environment scheme all send a very strong policy signal from the EU and the UK government. Although environmental considerations have been a part of agricultural policy for over 20 years the 2003 reforms, and the UK's particular transposition of those reforms, mark a significant shift in the types of roles that farmers are expected to play. No longer is increased production the sole driver of agricultural policy and this has implications for farmers' conceptions of "work", progress and their relationships with the land through which they come to understand themselves. With these political changes providing the contextual background to the research I aim, in this thesis, to shed light on the implications of these changes for farmers' processes of identification and, moreover, to examine how farming values that tie concepts of work, *beneficent change* and the land are used rhetorically to persuade and to encourage a performance. In the following section I examine the values held in farming at the EU level, the broader context of the CAP reforms, the UK's position in relation to other Member States and the relationship between productivism and a narrowly defined concept of *Agricultural Improvement*.

### **4.3.2 Rural Values in the Policy-Making Sphere**

#### *4.3.2.1 EU Legitimacy*

Commentators have referred to the EU's continued struggles to gain recognition on the international arena, among Member States, and with its own citizens as a 'legitimacy crisis' (Hansen & Williams, 1999). Furthermore, this 'crisis' has been associated with a lack of a common 'identity' that serves to provide an image of unity among its disparate Member States (Hellström & Petersson, 2002: 5). In a thorough analysis Shore (2000) has emphasised the importance of culture in the nurturing of such common identities:

The 'problem' according to the European Commission, is that Europeans are not sufficiently aware of their common cultural values and shared European heritage and are inadequately informed about what the Community is doing for them. Its 1988 communication on the 'people's Europe' thus concluded that 'action is

needed in the cultural sector to *make people more aware of their European identity* in anticipation of the creation of a European cultural area' (CEC 1988b: 37 – Shore's emphasis) (Shore, 2000: 25).

Interestingly the 1988 communication implies that a 'European identity' already exists and that it is simply a matter of making 'the people' more aware of that identity as opposed to the more likely situation that requires the convincing of the people that such an identity exists in the first place. Hence, Shore is right to refer to the EU as "one of the largest and most important new *imagined* communities to have emerged in the post-colonial era" (2000: 33, emphasis added; cf Anderson, 1983), whilst others, more critically, have referred to the EU project as a "delusion of cultural unity" (Steyn, 1999, cited in Hellström & Petersson, 2002: 7; cf Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). This rhetorical strategy is typical of attempts at 'national identity' construction which "often take the form of narratives that speak of a pure or original nation that existed at some time in the past" (Vandergeest, 1996: 283).

Indeed, this strategy is more explicitly evident in the discourse of Romano Prodi (former European Commission Chairman) who made it a prevalent sub-theme of his to refer to the "reunification of Europe":

We are creating a peaceful Europe in which the peoples of this continent can live together in safety. We are reuniting our family of nations (Prodi, 9th May 2001, cited in Hellström & Petersson, 2002: 14).

Efforts such as these recognise the symbolic importance of the past for European 'identification' and 'legitimacy'. To understand how Europe is being constructed as a political community, argues Shore (2000: 36), it is necessary to understand the role that symbols play in the articulation and formation of patterns of consciousness and 'identity'. The European Commission has recognised that 'empty' symbols such as a flag, a currency, or an anthem are not sufficient to ensure that the EU enjoys the 'emotional back-up of its citizens' because they are not connected to revered phenomena in the past or to bold common visions of the future (Hellström & Petersson, 2002: 6). What is missing in the European enterprise, argue Hansen & Williams (1999: 238, citing Obradovic, 1999: 196), is myth: "Myth provides the 'symbolic values within which people share an idea of origin, continuity, historical memories, collective remembrance, common heritage and tradition, as well as common destiny' which are the essential foundation of legitimacy".

I have thus far attempted to show how the land and the past, and people's work and efforts, carry significant symbolic value and are integral for processes of identification amongst farming communities. I will later suggest that such symbolic values, farming itself, and even the Common Agricultural Policy also play an important role in the EU's attempts to gain legitimacy. Prior to that, I briefly examine the political situation that gave rise to the 2003 CAP reforms.

#### *4.3.2.2 The 2003 Reforms in Context*

The 2003 CAP reforms were undertaken at a time when the European Union was under close scrutiny at the international level — during GATT negotiations — but also at the local level, among the tax-paying citizens of the EU and the farmers affected by the policy. In order to represent a 'model' of European agriculture which could be used in international negotiation, whilst at the same time allowing for divergent conceptions of rural space amongst Member States, the EU presented the diversity of its agricultural base as its defining feature. This approach, referred to as "unity in diversity" (Stråth, 2002: 388) can be likened to Anthony Cohen's symbolic construction of community (1985) which allows for the outward expression of homogeneity and the inward expression of heterogeneity. To strengthen that outward expression of homogeneity the EU relied on the common identification (differentiation) strategy of contrasting itself with a threatening 'Other'. By defining itself as what it was not, and by what it did not wish to become, the EU could present a united front with which to face international trade negotiations. In this case, that threatening 'Other' was an American system of landholding and agriculture of 'large reserves of land and few farmers' (CEC, 1988, cited in Potter, 1990: 3). Garzon (2005) has shown how toward the end of the 1990s this "European Model of Agriculture" came to be defined by the term "multifunctionality":

This model is not the one of our main competitors ... agriculture has fulfilled for many centuries multiple economic, environmental, social and territorial functions and missions. This is why it is essential that multifunctional agriculture be spread over the whole European territory, including regions with specific problems (European Commission, 1997, cited in Garzon, 2005: 11).

Multifunctionality, argues Garzon, is a discursive response to the EU's legitimacy crisis capable of simultaneously addressing at least four dimensions:

- Explaining the ‘World Vision’ of policy makers when applied to a decreasingly important sector of the economy;
- Regaining the citizens’ agreement that public funding should still continue to be allocated to such a sector while providing benefits to society as a whole;
- Maintaining farmers’ acceptance of the sometimes drastic changes by balancing their private economic interests with public goods, and;
- Assuming the responsibilities of a world economic and political power by making the policy and its evolutions acceptable to third countries (Garzon, 2005: 5).

Primarily, argues Garzon, multifunctionality was used as a ‘smokescreen’ in the international GATT agreements. The European Union was under pressure from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to remove the distortionary production-based subsidies that provided EU producers with an unfair competitive advantage over other parts of the world. By arguing that subsidies were no longer paid for production, but for the provision by farmers of public goods (including landscape and environmental protection), the EU was able to justify the continuance of financial support to its farmers. Furthermore, by associating multifunctionality with the ‘European Way’, as being symbolically important in Europe’s identification process the EU tied multifunctionality to the past and used it to justify continued support as a means of cultural, rather than financial protection. Although it has been argued that multifunctionality was developed purely to address this international dimension (Swinbank & Daughjerg, 2006) I suggest that “multifunctionality” was used as a rhetorical device both ‘bottom-up’ (as a defensive tool against the WTO) and ‘top-down’ as a means of achieving greater legitimacy for the EU among its Member States, citizens, consumers and farmers. To suggest that agricultural policy developments only service the EU’s interests at the international level is to ignore the importance that it attaches to agriculture and conceptions of rurality in its process of identification.

#### *4.3.2.3 European Rural Symbolism*

In Chapter 2, and the first part of this chapter, it was shown how farming personhoods are derived from embodied human-land interactions as a constant reworking of the values stored in the landscape and enshrined in progressive narrative accounts. Shore (2000: 57) shows that EU historiography typically presents European history as “a kind of moral success story: a gradual ‘coming together’ in the shape of the European Community and its institutions”. In this section I consider how rural areas and farming,

for much the same reasons as at the local level, are also important in the EU's quest for legitimacy.

According to Hoggart et al (1995) rural areas have come to play a major part in national representations and identification within Europe. They remind us, however, that whilst rural areas may be symbolically important to many nations, they may be important for very different reasons. These differences may reflect the perceived role and function of rural space within each nation and Hoggart et al. illustrate this by contrasting the "essentially aesthetic and preservationist conception of the countryside" of Britain with the French view of rural areas as "natural resources to be tamed and exploited by human activity" (1995: 91). Nevertheless it has been argued that divergent national interests have come to be embodied in European agricultural policy. Clark et al. (1997) argue that two 'core' principles sit at the heart of the Common Agricultural Policy, and these serve to direct policy changes:

The core principles of the CAP emerge as crucial in shaping evolution of the EU agri-environment policy. We define the most important of these principles as occupancy of agricultural land with the aim of ensuring rural stability; and the perceived centrality of the small-scale and family farmer to the (re)structuring of rural space (Clark et al., 1997: 1869).

What motivates the core principles of agricultural land occupancy and the maintenance of small-scale family farming, argue Clark et al., is national (Member States) self-interest, existing cultural traditions and experiences of agricultural policies at the State level that were 'codified' in 1958 at the Stresa Conference (1997: 1873-1874). Gray (2000a: 34) argues that the importance attached to these principles derives from an image of rural society, portraying people and their agricultural way of life, which has cultural value and which carries political significance in all Member States. The persistence of these principles lies not only in the strength of the interests which they protect, but also in their ability to engender consensus among national delegations and to improve the reputation of the EU as a decision-maker (Clark et al., 1997). The maintenance of the small family-farm is seen to serve a moral purpose. Indeed, Hoggart et al. (1995: 80) argue that "the mythology surrounding the notion of a family farm is one that farm organisations have long played with, calling up images of democracy, enterprise and independence to ennoble their claims for further cash support". The reason for the value attached to family farming has been outlined by Bowler (1985) and explained by Gray (2000a: 35):

Bowler's account of the origins of the Common Agricultural Policy provides some insight into the nature of this society nurtured in rural space by family farming. He argues that the Common Agricultural policy appropriated 'rural fundamentalism', an urban-base and edifying image of agrarian society pervasive in the member states of the community at the time: "farm people ... were thought to make a special contribution to political, economic and social stability, economic growth and social justice" and the ownership of small parcels of land characteristic of the family-size farm was considered to be the basis of 'vigorous democracy' (1985, p. 16) ... Family farming creates the kind of space where rural society can flourish and where the ideals of wider society are nurtured and preserved. Family farming preserves not just rural society, but society as a whole characterized by the ideals of stability, justice and equality.

The values upheld in the small family farm bear striking resemblance to those made by Atkinson of the farmers in the Esk valley (1891: 8). And it seems that in both cases a story of continuity drenched in the maintenance of moral values is told in the face of external threats that seek to bring about some kind of disturbance to the status quo (be it pressures for farm enlargement at the local level, or pressures for the reduction of trade distorting subsidies at the international level). Interestingly, it has also been argued that the CAP itself serves a pivotal role in the story of European integration because it was the first major common policy and has come to symbolise cooperation (Hill, 1993). However, it has also been argued that the symbolic nature of the CAP also makes it politically contentious as it has come to represent a 'battleground' for all the forces for and against European federation, and attitudes towards it often have little to do with agriculture (Hoggart et al., 1995: 119).

The wider societal appeal of rural values and the unifying nature of the CAP itself are brought powerfully together as the central tenets of EU legitimacy in a 2006 essay by the (then) parting Dutch agriculture minister Cees Veerman. And whilst his essay *Agriculture: A Binding Factor For Europe?* is not an EU publication it does make explicit the ideas that other authors have suggested are implicit in the EU's quest for legitimacy. Veerman begins with a progressive story of EU co-operation borne out of agricultural policy since Stresa in 1958. And that progressive story supports his principal thesis that the CAP must continue into the future:

I think that the CAP has been one of the greatest (if not the greatest) supports underpinning European cooperation to date, and can be so again in the future as

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long as we have the courage to further European cooperation and to forge new European relations and understanding in the coming years. And I am convinced that the historical values set in train by the founders of European integration can and must now form the basis for the goals and organisation of our policies. After all the European Union is a community based not only on economic and social motives, but also on a common history with commonly developed and shared values. These values are certainly worth defending. But they are also, and I think this is less and less recognised in our country, values which ultimately form the only reliable basis for growing unification (Veerman, 2006: 3).

Veerman also makes the link between values and rural landscapes, reminding us that we are not just stewards of the environment but stewards of values too. He refers to rural areas as having an “umbrella function” in providing “city-dwellers [with] a taste of the good life”. And by engaging with rural areas, he suggests, we invoke the inspiration of the great writers, painters, poets, musicians and scientists from European history and become “a citizen and participant of that world again” (Veerman, 2006: 26). And not only is engagement with rural areas necessary for citizenship, so too is engagement with others. Veerman would like the modern concept of freedom reacquainted with classical interpretations of that term based on relationships with others. Hence, he argues, freedom can only be achieved through greater community integration and it is only through integration that we have any chance of becoming a person:

Europe’s further growth to communality can only be given form from the power of people seeking a sense of community. I expect that in the coming years the tide will turn in the right direction: the sense of community will grow from the recovery of citizenship. Being a whole person will mean being free to unite with others and bring justice into being (Veerman, 2006: 28).

Ultimately for Veerman, then, it is only through greater European integration borne out of agricultural policy that we can have any chance of upholding the moral values necessary to being human. Such views on the role of the CAP appear to be in stark contrast to those of the UK government. Putting the UK firmly at odds with most other Member States its 2005 document *A Vision for the CAP* sought to massively reduce spending on the CAP through trade liberalisation and the removal of subsidies. To this end, the document posed the question:

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We have to ask ourselves whether there is anything unique about farming which justifies its [sic] having its own system of support payments (HM Treasury & Defra, 2005: 27).

At best, the document was seen as untimely and unhelpful having being published just after a period of major CAP reform (EFRA Committee, 2007). EU Commissioner for agriculture Mariann Fischer Boel made it clear that she fundamentally disagreed with the vision whilst the German farm leader, Gerd Sonnleitner, accused the UK government of “poisoning the political atmosphere” (*ibid.*: 8). The differences represent the UK’s greater emphasis on economic pragmatism and science-based decision making as opposed to more value-based policy-making at the EU level. In his analysis of England’s Less Favoured Areas, for instance, Whitman (2005) shows how the centrality of scientific knowledge to UK agri-environmental policy-making has given primacy to the knowledge of conservation organisations who frame their arguments using the science of ecology. In contrast, however, Clark et al. (1997) argued that the central tenets of the CAP reflect the diverse cultural concepts of rurality inherent amongst northern and southern Member States. This cultural influence has favoured “certain mechanisms for implementation of ... policy over others, and [ensured] the pre-eminence of cultural values over more objective scientific criteria as the modus operandi of policy in the longer term” (p1882).

Both European and British policy-making are constitutive of the local situation in the Esk valley. Moreover, the EU and the UK represent very different “audiences” to which arguments could be made. It can be envisioned, for instance, how farmers’ cultural arguments for the support of farming that have been marginalised at the expense of conservation science in the UK may have greater resonance amongst EU decision-makers. By extending the bounded unit of study beyond the confines of the catchment, and beyond the shores of the UK, the purchase and rhetorical effectiveness of strategies of argumentation may be better understood. The question that then arises is to what extent are the arguments of the farming community being heard at the European level and to what extent are their arguments made (or remade) for them by the UK. Similarly, to what extent would European policy, couched in cultural terms, find greater salience with the farming community in the UK if it did not pass through the filter of national government? Despite these questions, the continued social value placed on rural areas by the EU, and the influence of EU decision-making at the local scale, suggest that farmers arguments couched in terms of the societal benefits of farming are not wholly redundant.

#### 4.3.2.4 Productivism and Improvement

In the first part of this Chapter I suggested that *Agricultural Improvement* has relatively narrow connotations in terms of increasing productive efficiency. And whilst the above discussion has largely by-passed the role of productivism in both policy-making and farming personhoods it is pertinent to remember the importance of that principle in shaping agricultural policy and in determining the duties of “the good farmer” (Burton, 2004). For much of the post-war period farmers were financially incentivised to *improve* in specifically defined ways. The 1946 Hill Farming Act, for instance, lists in Schedule one a list of farm “operations” that are to be interpreted as *improvements* and thus eligible for financial support. *Improvements* in the schedule include reclaiming of waste land, drainage, artificial fertiliser application and the laying down of permanent pasture. We are reminded of the subjectivity of that term, however, by the fact that Ministers may “modify the kinds of operations that are to be treated as improvements” by adding, deleting or modifying the operations in Schedule one (para. 4).

A progressive story of productivism is told in the MAFF White Paper *Farming and the Nation* (1979). Not only does the paper stress the importance of farming to the nation but it also refers to “the efforts of British farmers and farm workers [to] supply an increasing share of the food we eat from a declining area of farmland and with fewer people working in the industry” as a “fine record of success” (MAFF, 1979: 1). In contrast to the Government’s 2005 vision document, the case was made for financial support to farmers in order to ensure continued increases in productivity:

If the country is to continue to benefit from gains in agricultural productivity ... the progressive farmer needs a reasonable assurance that his production will continue to be profitable (MAFF, 1979: 2).

So not only were *improvements* seen to be the route to increased profitability, their economic benefits were also felt directly in the form of subsidy payments. In Chapter 8 I examine further the relationship between productivism and those values held by farming communities and the EU that this chapter has described. I hope to show how, rather than productivism *being* farming values (cf Burton, 2004) or being borne *out of* those values (cf Thompson, 1995) capitalist ideology appropriated them and enshrined them in a productivist discourse. Through financial incentives to that end, and by re-interpreting the values out of which farmers’ derive their personhood, agricultural policy — and regnant political ideologies — attempted to direct changes in behaviour and

farming practice through recourse to the continuation of extant farming values. Through an examination of farmers own use and play with values in Chapters 5-8, however, I will maintain that, despite differences in power, ideas and practices have remained negotiated between farmers and policy-makers and any changes witnessed are to be understood as a culmination of such interactive processes.

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## Chapter 5

### Hard Work, Beneficent Change and their Multifaceted Pervasiveness

Complexity was a defining feature of my fieldwork experience and the material that I collected. In the second half of this chapter I present the importance to farmers of the values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* and give consideration to the significance of their varied manifestations. However, it is as much the complexity of these values (and their expression in equally complex and changing situations) as the values themselves that will become important for my subsequent analysis. In the first half of this chapter, therefore, I hope to first provide a taste of that complexity, without further elaboration, through detailed examples. The examples also provide a flavour of the social, economic and political issues that were introduced in Chapters 3 and 4 and that characterised my fieldwork experience.

#### 5.1 A Wander About Hawleydale ... and Sometimes Beyond

David Stroud is 57 and farms at Sinderwell Farm on the northwest facing slope of Hawleydale. Like many of the farms in the catchment the farm buildings and farmhouse (lived in by his brother) are situated mid-slope between the moor line at around 270m AOD and Hawleydale Beck at around 140m AOD. The 74 hectare farm provides full time employment for David as well as part time work for Darren, his youngest son (21), and Lawrence, a neighbour who is also a self-employed gardener. David refers to the farm as a “dog and stick farm” to indicate its smallness and relative lack of suitability to mechanised farming (for reasons such as slope, soil type and field size), or, on occasion as a “bastard farm” in that it is of a size to provide too much work for a single farmer but not enough to provide for two people full time. The farm supports a herd of 45 suckler cows (comprising continental Limousin and Belgian Blue breeds) and a flock of 150 breeding ewes (comprising Charrolais and Masham) that are crossed with Charrolais or Suffolk tups (rams) to produce crossed lambs that David fattens himself and sells directly to a large regional abattoir that supplies a leading supermarket chain. He tries to have the lambs away for slaughter by the end of July or August and has a double imperative to fatten them quickly by virtue of the costs of supplemental feeding and the fact that the market price is usually better (as supply is lower) earlier rather than later in the year. Although the farm comes with a moorland stray David’s family have not exercised their right to graze sheep on the moor for more than 40 years.<sup>24</sup> The progeny

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<sup>24</sup> A stray is a designated area on the moor upon which a farmer has the right to graze sheep.

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of the suckler herd are sold as store cattle (for further fattening elsewhere) at around 12 months old at the local livestock mart in the lower reaches of the Esk valley.

Sinderwell farm is unique amongst the farms that I visited in the catchment in that it has been in the Stroud family for at least eight or nine generations. Despite many assumptions that the small Dales farms remain in the same family for time immemorial the majority of farms that I visited had more usually been in the same family hands for just two, three, or exceptionally four generations. Movement from one farm to another was more prevalent than I anticipated because of either a desire to move to a bigger and/or better farm or because a farm could not support more than one sibling from a family with multiple children wishing to carry on farming. In addition to this are the first generation farmers, which are not necessarily restricted to the recent in-migration of wealthy hobby farmers in pursuit of the rural idyll. Arthur Livingstone, for example, moved to a tenanted farm at the head of Ollerdale in the early 1950s and farmed for a living despite no immediate history of farming in his family. As on many farms in my field site, the longer term management strategy for the farm depends to a large degree on whether Darren would like to take on the farm after David retires.

In addition to working on the farm Darren is also earning money working driving machinery for a heavy plant contractor. He had been thinking about going out and working on the oil rigs where you can do two weeks on and two or three weeks off. He thinks that might suit him because it wouldn't tie him down and he would be able to help on the farm when he was back. He does like to work on the farm but thinks it can be a bit of a "chow" during lambing time when its seven days a week from 6am to 9pm.<sup>25</sup> David made it quite clear that he puts no pressure on Darren to continue farming, but if he did decide to stay on then they would have to consider expanding. Darren also pointed out that it would affect his father's retirement plans because if Darren decided he wouldn't take the farm on then David would probably keep farming there, but cut back on the number of stock to make it more manageable as he gets older and then earn additional income by renting out the land.

For one of the Strouds' former neighbours in Hawleydale it had been a relief to them that neither of their sons wanted to carry on farming after them. Tom and Liz Richie sold their farm during the course of my fieldwork because both of them had been

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<sup>25</sup> Chow is the vernacular pronunciation of "chew" which is used to refer to laborious work.

suffering with ill-health and were struggling to make ends meet. If their sons were “even slightly interested” they felt there would be no way they could get out:

LR: ... we'd have thought you must hang in, and I don't think we'd have been doing them any favours because we were never gonna make money and each year as our books went on I think we were slowly sliding down a slippery slope. This way we've got out, we've invested money that will be hopefully, as long as nothing horrible happens, there for the boys, you know

TR: You've got to make enough money in farming to be able to plough a certain amount of the profit that you make back into your farm otherwise its just gonna get worse and worse and worse and worse (Richie interview., 05-02-08).

[Extract 5-1]

The Richies do find it sad to see farming come to an end in their family but when they see the ever-increasing level of regulation and bureaucracy they thank God that they got out when they did. Several other farmers who I spoke to expressed a concern that the younger generations weren't going into farming. They didn't blame them, however, because ‘the money's just not there and when they see their mates with £300-400/week in their back pocket to go down the pub with' why shouldn't they aspire to something similar (paraphrasing, various sources)? The shift to the SPS based on area rather than headage payments was also seen to exacerbate the problem. Terry Whitehead who is a tenant farmer and stone mason from one of the smaller northern tributaries of the Esk thinks that the Single Payment, and subsidies in general, has “kept a lot of bad farmers”:

TW: I think its doing a tremendous amount of damage 'cause it won't let youngsters in because I can take you to farmers round here where you have a farmer who's, he's er 68, he's got his pension, he's got his Single Farm Payment, he's got his Entry Level One, he's probably got a private pension, and he's probably sub-let all't'land out to somebody else. So he's got five sources of income, doesn't even need to work

SE: mmm

TW: and so really, it shut t'industry down.

SE: Yeah, and a nice house, doesn't need to keep many animals.

TW: He's got a nice house, yeah, doesn't need to do anything, and he's probably mekking more money in his retirement than what he ever did when he was working seven days a week. So, I think it's been bad that way for't younger people. So in some ways t'subsidies kept a lot of bad farmers (T. Whitehead interview, 22-04-08).

[Extract 5-2]

David Stroud thinks that his neighbour, Fred Atliss, is too old to be farming. “He treats his son like a dog” he told me, “he's seventy-odd, he should be out of it now”. Fred is 72 and farms as a tenant (as opposed to David who is an owner-occupier) with his son

Peter who is 47. Both are full time on the 105 hectare farm and they keep a herd of 60 suckler cows and 250 breeding ewes. They are also in the minority of farmers who continue to exercise their moorland grazing rights. When I asked Fred if he was starting to wind down because of his age he was quick to correct me: “slowing down, not winding down ... slowing down’s the word, you get slow” (F. Atliss interview, 06-03-08).

David also looks down on farmers who seek to maximise their subsidy at the expense of their ability to farm. He was offered the chance to buy land when the Richies sold their farm but he declined because he felt that he wouldn’t be able to manage the farm properly if it got any bigger. David thought that one of the other farmers in the dale who had bought land from the Richies to increase the size of his farm and his SPS claim would compromise his farming ability. The land is about 3km away from his farm and David questioned: “But how often does he get down to see ‘em? Once a day for half an hour? Now what sort of condition are the livestock going to be in?” Be it through financial pressures to expand and benefit from economies of scale, or be it through new environmental payment schemes which alter farming practice, David’s response is the same. If he can’t farm *properly* he’d rather not do it at all. Amongst many of the other farmers who I spoke to in the catchment David was held in high regard. When I told Andrew Middleton, who farms in Briardale, that I was going to stay with David he assured me that I would have a good time because he has a “tidy farm”. Reg Barratt, meanwhile, a former farmer and now Chairman of the Parish Council outlined to me the qualities of a good farmer that he admired in David.

RB: What I think is a good farmer is somebody who cares for the land, cares for his stock, and he’s very precise in his thinking and, he’s got to put his stock first, he’s got to put his stock first, which David does and he’s also great on detail.

SE: Yeah

RB: His breeding stock are, have to be up to a certain quality and er, there’s no negligence [unclear] where David’s concerned

SE: No

RB: and he’s also very attentive to his soil structure and, you know, he uses methods that are of an advantage to the area that he’s in as well. It’s surprising what he can grow on them odd stone hill ends down the’

SE: Yeah

RB: I think he’s great. And I think there’s quite a few farmers round here who should be put into the same category. I think David’s sort of struck a balance, he isn’t canning the area, he’s not killing it

SE: No, no

RB: but he's making it work. And grass or anything else, if you're making it work, and you're feeding it properly then it's good now (R. Barratt interview, 09-06-08).

[Extract 5-3]

David was not reluctant to point out, however, that he did get things wrong. Like when we turned out an in-calf cow from one of the buildings into the farmyard and she slipped on the surface and was unable to get back to her feet. David got angry and was swearing at the cow but he was angry with himself. He had thought she was okay to come outside but if she was that unsteady on her feet then she should be kept indoors otherwise she might lose the calf. David emphasised that every decision made in farming was a bit of a gamble and that there were no sure bets that a decision would lead to the right outcome, or that a successful decision one year would be successful the following year. This approach is consistent with the idea that the conditions on each farm are different (see Chapter 3) and that environmental, political and economic factors combine to increase the level of uncertainty and adds to the weight of responsibility that many farmers told me they feel. This responsibility is borne out of a combination of factors, but most importantly a responsibility for the welfare of the stock as well as a responsibility to honour both past and future generations of farmers. David referred to the molasses mineral supplement which provides magnesium for his cows as “liquid gold”. It might cost him £2,000 a year, he said, but it lets him get to sleep at night. In a recently published book Giles Heron describes how an understanding of the idea of “thrift” helped him and his wife to see themselves as stewards, rather than absolute owners of the farm that they moved into in the catchment. Moreover, this stewardship role was couched in terms of responsibility:

The farm together with everything that grew on it, animal or vegetable, was for our use during whatever time we should be fortunate to remain in charge. The abuse of that trust by some of those before us merely emphasised our sense of responsibility. Though we had no children of our own others would follow us who would depend on its produce for their livelihood and it was our vocation to restore the farm and leave it fit for them (Heron, 2009: 176).

[Extract 5-4]

David is held in high regard for his attention to detail and his incredible value in the aesthetic appearance and welfare, or “heart” of his farm, his livestock and his pasture. This is particularly true since David holds onto these values (seen by many, but not all, to signify the good farmer) unwaveringly despite economic and political pressures that might warrant their re-evaluation. David always uses the more expensive wooden gates on gateways that are adjacent to the road and is content with cheaper, less attractive

looking, metal gates for internal gateways. When walking the fields with David, he would point to a beast and comment on its appearance, or talk about the quality of the sward. ‘You see the hind quarters on that heifer’, he might say, ‘some lowland men would pay good money for a heifer like that, she’d make a good Christmas beast’. Or he might comment on the length of the grass or the composition of the sward in a particular field:

It can be too long for sheep and that’s why you need the cattle to come and take it down, you don’t want it getting so long that seed heads appear, if that happens you might have to come along and top it all. It’s not bad in here, I’d like there to be a bit more clover, but its not bad’ (Field Notes, 11-04-08).

[Extract 5-6]

Even Darren hinted that his father was perhaps quite an extreme case. He would say to me pointing to some nettles in a neighbour’s field: ‘you see Steve, my Dad wouldn’t let rubbish like that grow’, and kicking at some seaves with his wellington boot ‘he doesn’t even let this stuff grow’ (Figure 5-1).<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 5-1: Seaves - a sign of saturated ground favoured by conservationists but undesirable to the farmer. Source: the author.**

Several other farmers, whilst upholding the same values, thought that realistically it was inevitable that certain compromises had to be made. Clive Fisk, from Hawleydale End, James Morton, from Ollerdale, and Andrew Middleton from Briardale expressed different reasons for why it is not possible to judge a farmer on the basis of aesthetics alone. Clive thinks that generally people don’t worry about tidiness as much because it is accepted that people don’t have the staff and the resources that they used to. Clive

<sup>26</sup> Seaves is the vernacular term, from Old Norse, for rushes or marsh grass.

farms part time so doesn't spend as much time on the farm as he would like. He recognises the need for a compromise between keeping the place looking neat and making money from it:

CF: Its still important to th'looks of a place, I mean we're a little bit on show here cos there's a road runs right past us so you sort of have to think, well I better not leave too much crap about and you know you have to keep things a bit tidier, but you don't, it doesn't make any more money for doing that does it, that's the only thing. And some people'll think well you know its mekking me nothing I won't do it, but, you know, there's a little bit, that's the pride thing again isn't it. Its just, mmm, it's a fine line

SE: yeah it is

CF: get Annie running after me 'you gonna clean that road up cos we've got people coming' [imitating woman's voice]

SE: [laughs]

CF: 'huh, I don't get paid for that' [as himself]. But yeah, you can see where I'm coming from, its, its how it has to be, so.

...

CF: There's a little bit of that, there's a bit of pride in what the' do, er, don't know, there comes to a point when, you know, it has to pay otherwise, you know, you can have the best looking livestock in the world but it'll cost you an arm and a leg to get them looking the best looking livestock in the world (C.Fisk interview, 17-01-08).

[Extract 5-7]

James Morton, on the other hand, thinks that a farmer should be judged in terms of his commitment to farming and his animals rather than how the place and animals look *per se*. There are a lot of elderly farmers, he reminded me, who are still just as committed but might not be able to build up their walls any more because they don't have the physical strength, or they might not be able to afford the hired labour that they used to. Then there are farmers who might not be as wily, or as good at organising their time, but they're still good farmers if they remain committed to it. Andrew Middleton, a tenant farmer, would look at it on a case-by-case basis. A tidy farm in itself wouldn't be valued if the farmer had all the time in the world to spend maintaining it.<sup>27</sup> He would also have to demonstrate that it was viable, and if he was in a more fortunate situation than another farmer he would have to demonstrate this even further:

I mean its good to see that some people are maintaining their farms to a good high standard, but there again if they're doing that and then they're not, er, if they're not sort of viable or if it's a, if they've been owner occupier who've

<sup>27</sup> Another farmer looked down on other farmers who had been taken out by foot and mouth in 2001 because they'd received a large compensation cheque and basically had a year off to tidy their farm.

inherited, then, you could say yeah but they're doing that but then so what, they haven't had much of owt else to do (A. Middleton interview, 17-04-08).

[Extract 5-8]

Because of the staunchness with which David upholds his aesthetic values, as symbols of what it means to be a good farmer and out of which he constructs his personhood, he is particularly opposed to external changes that would impact upon his aesthetic ideal and all that that represents. He told me that he can't stand the idea of organic farming and sees it as a "licence to grow rubbish". Some of the environmental schemes and initiatives have him pulling his hair out at times and he thinks they haven't been thought through but devised by "some arsehole behind a desk ... that hasn't got a clue" (Field Notes, 15-05-08). He spoke about recent reports that mole numbers were in decline. "Well, it might be true on big arable fields where moles can't thrive because they plough them all the time, but they're a real problem round here. We used to be able to sort the problem out in an afternoon when we could use strychnine. Everyone knows that soil's no good in silage" (*ibid.*). In this instance, the unkemptness of a field full of mole hills is not just a direct reflection on the farmer but it has economic implications in terms of its affect on the quality of the pasture and the winter feed that could be made from it.

David, then, is reluctant to adopt both expansionist and environmental methods of farming if they compromise his ability to farm in a way that he perceives to be proper. And a proper farmer should care for his livestock and his land and display this through their physical appearance. It is on these terms that David challenges his neighbour Fred's standing as a good farmer. David likes farming in the Dales as opposed to the lowlands because it allows him to keep an eye on what his neighbours are doing and by virtue of the fact that Fred Atliss' farm borders David's along about half of his farm boundary, David gets to see firsthand how Fred goes about his farming. And he gets to see much more than other folks. Other people might know Fred, and respect him as a good farmer, because he often achieves the highest price for his livestock at the local mart and because he always has the biggest and newest farm machinery in the dale. But, as we have seen, David makes his judgements on different terms. David pointed out things like weeds or "rubbish" growing in Fred's fields, sections of wall that were down, or the dirty water that ran from Fred's buildings down David's track. And what about how he cares for the land and his stock? David said of Fred's fields that are adjacent to the road: "He's always got something on there, a few straggly ewes or some cattle, but he wants to leave it to recover a bit". And he thought it wrong that Fred turned out a

cow after it had just lost twins.<sup>28</sup> David would have kept it in for a few days to make sure it was all right, but then, knowing his luck, he'd have kept it in and "it'd ha' died".

Like David, Fred recognises the uncertainty in farming and enjoys being able to make comparisons between stock down at the auction mart. "We're all riding on the unknown" he told me but you've got to have faith and remain optimistic or you might as well not start. Things don't go right all the time and both stock and weather-wise you still need a "good bit o' good luck" (F.Atliss interview, 06-03-08). Fred thinks that the shift from headage to area payments under the SPS doesn't suit their way of farming and that the payment they receive now is too low. It wouldn't be so bad if the upland farmer was being paid the same amount per hectare as the arable men, but they aren't, so it isn't mounting up (*ibid.*, paraphrasing). Fred sees that the idea of farming has always been to "keep the countryside in good heart and pass it on to t'next generation" but also maintains that the:

Main thing with farming is to *produce* [emphasised] what the consumer wants. You know, the type of meat, the type of lamb that they want, and try and hit, hit that target (*ibid.*).

[Extract 5-9]

Fred's ability to do this was demonstrated to me when I visited the local auction mart and he achieved the top price at the fat cattle sale. Len Fielder, one of the auctioneers, told me that "that beast of, that heifer of Fred Atliss' today it just, it just was a beautiful animal" and more importantly it hadn't been kept for too long so as to get too fat because there is a tendency for some producers to "over-finish, to push beyond the market generally". And the buyers will usually know what type of cattle a stockman produces regularly, some people are known for being better stockmen than others and they'll be able to judge — albeit principally on the quality of an individual animal — "whether they're going to kill out for them and ... yield them a decent return" (L.Fielder interview, 16-06-08).<sup>29</sup>

Fred regrets changes to the local community and fondly remembers when it was comprised largely of farmers and everyone would meet up regularly. Now, 'you don't know who's who and there aren't even enough local lads to play in the Hawleydale cricket team, whereas in the past the dale used to support two teams' (paraphrasing,

<sup>28</sup> "Turning out" is the term used for moving livestock from indoors out into the fields.

<sup>29</sup> "Killing out" refers to the extent to which the slaughtered and butchered animal meets prior expectations in terms of quality and yield.

F. Atliss 06-03-08). Julian Sedgwick, a dairy farmer from Briardale, told me that unlike Briardale, which is still primarily being farmed, Hawleydale is like an “overgrown equestrian centre”. The increasing presence of horses in the Dales is symbolic of the incomers, townies or yuppies to the catchment and was derided by many farmers who I spoke to for letting good farm land go to waste and not stocking it sufficiently to control weeds. Interestingly, less than a hundred years ago, the Cleveland Bay, the local work horse would have been revered as a sign of a thriving agriculture and according to Cockcroft, even as late as the 1970s “the horse is still the best way to travel these roads and it remains the way of the Eskdalian when he is being true to his blood” (Cockcroft, 1974: 12) (Figure 5-2).



a.



b.

**Figure 5-2: a.) The revered pure-bred Cleveland Bay circa 1960s and b.) a pleasure horse of a non-farming landowner. Source a. [dalehousefarmcottages.co.uk](http://dalehousefarmcottages.co.uk); source b. the author.**

Fred frowns, in particular, upon the impact of incomers on some members of the local farming community in terms of their priorities and their lifestyle preferences. When I asked him if he thought it was understandable that farmers had to take part-time jobs and spend more time away from the farm in order to earn an income he replied “it’s the way they live isn’t it, it’s the way they live ... when we think we lived without electric” (*ibid.*). To Fred, farming shouldn’t and can’t be an easy life and it needs to be worked at all the time. He thinks that some farmers are trying to get on a level with other people but “farmers, farming won’t sustain that”. He gave the example of David who had recently returned from a fortnight’s holiday in Algeria. He questioned whether this sort of life could really be considered “better”:

Some change, all themat's [them that's] changed they *seem* to be better, but the thing is if there's a days shooting or anything like that to be had, they all want to be in on that side of it, better side of it, but they don't want t'nitty gritty, like when you're a stock farmer which is 365 days a year (F.Atlass interview, 06-03-08, emphasis added).

[Extract 5-10]

It just depends what you get out of life he said. He didn't go and fight for his country, he was deferred from national service, so he stayed on the farm and he stuck to agriculture (*ibid.*, paraphrasing). I recall, one evening, going for a drink with David to the local pub. There, we sat with a group of men from the local angling club — none of them farmers — and much of the discussion centred around foreign travel and there seemed to be a certain amount of one-upmanship and 'cash-splashing'. A retired teacher was saying how he had an apartment in Tenerife that he spends an entire month in over Christmas. He said that he wears a t-shirt that reads "Tenerife is Mucking Fagic". The signs of wealth were very evident in the pub, from the cars parked outside, to the talk of holidays and their homes. I didn't make a note, however, of whether I thought the story about the man from the village who drives a Hummer, and struggles down the narrow country lanes, was underlain by admiration or ridicule.

Without drawing out the many and diverse specific issues from the meandering example between David and Fred — which I reserve more broadly for the second part of this chapter — it may be worthwhile to summarise their main differences and make some inferences about their motivations and influences. Each have different opinions of what it means to be a good farmer, and appear to display themselves publicly in such light, in three different arenas and through different means. In the shared arena of the farming community in the dale David seems to portray himself more through the appearance of his stock, his farm and his pasture. In contrast, Fred seems to portray himself locally by having the best and newest farming equipment and by always being seen to be working. This includes staying on the farm 365 days a year and, apparently, demonstrating his commitment by staving off retirement until he can go on no longer. In a second arena, that of the auction mart, Fred portrays himself as a good farmer through the high prices that his livestock fetches. He enjoys going to make comparisons with other farmers and sees the main challenge of farming as being able to produce pursuant to the demands of the market. In a third arena, that of the wider local community, David competes not as a farmer, but as a member of that broader community in terms of holidays abroad. David downplays the significance of economic attainment that comes at the expense of the

appearance of the farm and the treatment of the livestock; whereas Fred disassociates himself from the lifestyle of the incomers and doesn't think that that sort of lifestyle could or should be maintained by a livestock farmer who needs to demonstrate his commitment through continued work. We might infer that each man casts his judgements based on a certain degree of envy. David perhaps wishes he could get the best price at the mart more often,<sup>30</sup> whilst Fred, if he wasn't on a tenanted farm — without the capital assets of the farm and the ability to retire on the value of the land — might like to experience other things and take time off. However, these can only remain inferences. What I do hope is evident, however, is that the men uphold a fairly complex and diverse set of values which, if it were possible to define a “farming community”, we might say were both influenced by external factors: that of the market and the changing social make-up of the local community. Furthermore, we might infer that the men's responses are both reflections of a broader capitalist process that emphasised production for the market and the separation of work and leisure:

More than that, the definitional distinction between work and leisure became sharper, so much so that leisure became the obverse rather than the complement of work: for the poor and nouveaux riches alike, a little leisure became hard work's reward. So, by the middle of the nineteenth century an ethic of work had emerged whose virtue and legitimacy was defined by its opposition to an ethic of leisure. Time taken in leisure was time off work, and vice versa. The two were dichotomous. This is one aspect of a more general process of industrial capitalism by which work becomes categorized or set apart as an entity standing in opposition to another (Parkin, 1979: 318).

[Extract 5-11]

A look at the interplay of some of these values follows in the second half of this chapter, whilst Chapters 6 and 7 examine how these values come to be used rhetorically for specific ends.

## **5.2 Farming Values and Personhoods: On Work, Beneficent Change and Relations with the Land**

I chose to present the above example with little prior introduction and in a rather meandering fashion as a consequence of the dissatisfaction I felt with my own attempts at managing my field data. I found that the process of managing and organising my material often concealed as much as it revealed and tended to oversimplify — through reduction — the complexity that is borne out of the uniqueness of each farmer's

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<sup>30</sup> For what might not be clear from the above discussion is that David is also respected at the mart as a good stockman and producer of good animals for the market.

situationality and the multitudinous ways in which values find expression and interact with one another. Such situationality is representative of the social, economic, historical, domestic, moral and environmental milieu *out of* and *into* which each farmer operates (cf Shotter, 1993). Furthermore, what I have written is just one example out of many, that itself could have been written in any number of ways. That is not to say that it has been written without consideration. The example highlights many of the issues relevant to the farmers in the Esk catchment and gives an insight into how those issues find everyday expression through language, action and recourse to place. In some form or another the problems with subsidy payments; differences between tenants and owner-occupiers; the impact of incomers; concepts of good and bad farmers; the sense of responsibility in farming; aesthetics and tidiness; the prevalence of continual compromises demanded by the need to earn a living; moorland issues; inter-generational considerations; relations with the land and the stock; the legacy of foot and mouth, and; links to the past and the future should have become apparent.

In *Moralizing the Environment* Lowe et al. distinguish between “radical” and “sceptical” farmers (1997: 173-180). The radical farmers, they contend, are characterised as being accommodating of environmental issues and viewing pollution as morally reprehensible. The “sceptics” on the other hand prescribe to a more “traditional” approach to farming that is “rooted in the ethos of family farming” and locked into “a productivist agricultural way of thinking” (Lowe et al., 1997: 174). Whilst the authors recognise that these two positions occupy alternate ends of a spectrum, and that the majority of farmers lie somewhere in between, the prescription of terms such as radical, sceptical and traditional may not convey the complexity with which alternative or competing value systems find expression. Moreover, they may be limited by a form of historical essentialism by virtue of the extent to which their prescriptions are constrained by the limits of their historical context: by where *their* story of farm change begins and ends (cf Cronon, 1992, see Chapter 4). How, for instance, would the terms “radical” and “sceptical” be defined within a pre-productivist mode of agriculture that may share more in common with modern environmentalism than productivism? Furthermore, within the historical limits of their study there appears to be a relationship between the ethos of family farming and productivism, but would this be the case if the historical limits of the analysis were extended? If farming values are believed to originate in productivism then the response of farmers to new environmental policy initiatives can only be viewed in terms of productivist values (cf Burton, 2004). Yet if certain values persist, but find expression through different means, then a truncated historical perspective may overlook

both the complexity and interpretability of underlying farming values (see Chapter 8, and of Chapter 1: *propositions one, two and three*).

It could be argued that the studies of Lowe et al. (1997) and Burton (2004) took place in quite different farming environments to my research in the North York Moors. Perhaps the system of farming in the North York Moors was never totally suited to the productivist mode and so its influence on farming values was not as all-encompassing as in other parts of the country? Nevertheless, extending the historical perspective allows us to recognise the persistence and yet mutability of farming values and how this is both a constituent and product of cultural change. The values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* have remained implicit in the above example and it is to a greater exploration of these values and their permutations that this section turns. I hope to show that it is their very implicitness combined with their pervasiveness that makes them important in rhetorical play and cultural change (Chapters 6 - 8). If the first section has attempted to demonstrate their implicitness within complex situations then this section attempts to demonstrate their multifaceted pervasiveness. It is on this basis, and in conjunction with the first part of this chapter, that I allow myself to draw out these specific values for further consideration.

### 5.2.1 Work and Work Ethic

If we reconsider Fred Atliss' rebuttal of my rather naïve suggestion that he might be "winding down" we could interpret his response ("slowing down, not winding down") as being in defence of his *work ethic*. We have already seen what he thinks about farmers taking holidays and time off, and "winding down" could be associated with relaxation, leisure and freeing up time for "the good life". It might also be taken to mean "scaling down", which would also cast judgement upon his farming achievement, or as having a more terminal outcome than simply slowing down which is an uncontrollable — and hence forgivable — consequence of the aging process. In a similarly succinct but evocative example I was struck by the response of another elderly farmer when I asked him at the end of an interview if he felt he'd had a good life. Ernest Mullaney is 81 and farms with his daughter and son-in-law in Ollerdale. It was he that was keeping the farm going, however, and, it seemed, it was the farm that was keeping him going. His granddaughter told me they were basically continuing farming, despite earning their income running a restaurant outside the catchment, for granddad. In response to my question Ernest looked at me, contemplated for a moment and replied "well, I've had a hard life". He offered no more direct clues as to what he meant by this. Instead of beginning his response with "well" he could have used either "no" or "yes". However, to say "no"

would imply that he hadn't enjoyed his life, which, through his nostalgic recollections, he had already let me know that he had. On the other hand, if he had replied "yes" to my question this could have implied that he'd had an easy life. And in line with Fred's thinking an easy life would not be considered virtuous. By using "well" Ernest was able to imply synonymy between a good life and a hard life without implying that it had been easy.

From my discussions with farmers and their families within the catchment I was offered many such examples of what seemed to be a genuine relationship between a hard life and a satisfying life. In the following example Arthur Livingstone's anecdote of a hard days work in the 1950's is concluded with a happy and nostalgic reflection:

AB: ...then we had the horses to rub down and that so erm, aaa, it would be one o' clock before we got to bed and had to be up next morning at kind of six to milk.

SE: So when, when was that?

AB: Nine .. about Nineteen Fifty

SE: Yeah

AB: Nineteen Fifty yeah

SE: So were you doing everything by lamp light?

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah

AB: Then next day, next day he said erm, he used to call me Albie, he said 'Albie', he said 'put darky that other cart horse in the block cart and put half a tonne of sulphate of ammonia on and go to the apple garth', which is about 2 mile away take there, and you had a hopper that's fitted in front of you and held about half a hundredweight. And you broadcast that, on, on, on the field, that and I was absolutely -ly done after

SE: yeah, I bet

AB: after being on a horse all day, yeah, anyway, that, that, [laughs] they were good days ... anyway (A. Livingstone interview, 30-10-07).

[Extract 5-12]

From my own experiences too I got a sense of this feeling. To work hard, to work with livestock and to complete lots of different tasks provided a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. On a particularly varied and busy day at Burrowbank Farm I recorded this feeling in my field notes:

Great day – very busy day, really felt satisfied after the day's work that we had achieved something (something which I realise I need and often lack in other forms of 'work'). The day involved feeding the animals, bringing up the lambs for the vet to blood test them, bedding the cows, collecting an ill lamb in the Landrover, going to Bilham to give the ewes some 'lick' (mineral supplement), PDing a heifer that we're due to sell tomorrow [pregnancy determination],

dehorning one of the store cattle, shifting the tups, steers and stores from place to place, filling sacks with pig food, creosoting a trailer, fixing the gear selection cog on the tractor, feeding the animals again, taking silage and nuts out for the cows in the field *and* log chopping.

I sat in the kitchen at the end of the day feeling very satisfied and content. I remember after lunch and Mike was finishing his tea I couldn't wait to get back outside again. I think its satisfying doing lots of small jobs, all of which needed doing – they just had to be done. As Mike said yesterday there is a lot of responsibility as a farmer – for the animals – and now I understand better what he means and also see the link between responsibility and satisfaction (Field Notes, 11-10-07).

[Extract 5-13]

Whereas on High Moor Farm an entry records a more masochistic pleasure from indulging in particularly strenuous work:

Carrying hoggs on our backs (each of us) whilst simultaneously trying to shepherd the others into the farm yard up a very, very steep slope was shattering, but great exercise, and that great feeling of working hard (Field Notes, 23-02-08).

[Extract 5-14]

The examples suggest that work is valued in its own right and, in line with the narrative accounts shown in Chapter 4, that the value is associated with enduring or overcoming hardship (e.g. Ford, 1953). As what might be an extension of what Carro-Ripalda (n.d.) has referred to as “making oneself through suffering” *hard work* is so integral to farming personhoods that it is presented as inseparable from happiness and its recollections are drenched in nostalgia:

Certainly the Sunleys, the Welfords and their kind, those whose forbears did not flee the land for the loom, do not have their emotions mauled every fine weekend. They know a serenity which is special to those who stayed and suffered with the land. And a few fortunate people have reaped such a reward from this loyalty and their happiness is so complete, that it hurts the soul (Cockcroft, 1974: 121).

[Extract 5-15]

The links between Protestantism and the value in *work ethic* amongst farming communities (cf Ingold, 1984; Thompson, 1995; also Weber, 1930) was apparent in the Esk catchment, although by no means overriding. There is a strong history of Methodism in the area and farmhouses are recorded as the first recognised meeting places for “Protestant dissenters” at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Davison, n.d.: 42). Methodist services are still well-attended in the Dales and Briardale, in particular, was referred to by some as “lemonade valley” by virtue of its history of temperance. There

was some association made between faith and farming in terms of the proximity to nature and farming success being at the whim of God or Mother Nature. In my experiences of everyday talk and practice, however, little emphasis was placed on an association between religion and farmers' values.

In order to later elucidate the rhetorical use of a value in the *work ethic* it is necessary to point out here an important difference. That is the difference between work or hardship *being good* and *hard work being seen to be good*. It is through this distinction that we become aware of the symbolic nature of the *hardworking* referent. Time and time again in my discussions with farmers in the catchment, labelling someone as *hardworking* was used to endorse their credentials as a good farmer. The following extract — from the Richies — is a typical example and demonstrates that *hard work's* reward is not always financial, that profit alone does not serve as a symbolic referent and that *hard work* finds expression in the land:

TR: The Burmans are good farmers

SE: What do you mean by good farmers?

TR: Puts the farm before everything else ... will stay home and look after the land before going out for dinner

LR: Real hard workers

TR: The best farms aren't always the most profitable, we don't do ourselves any favours if we don't look after the land (Field Notes, 23-05-07).

[Extract 5-16]

Here, the appearance and condition of the land, above all else, symbolises the synonymic good and *hardworking* farmer. The fact that this indictment can never truly be cast in terms of the quantity of work done shows that the referent “expresses the proximity to a symbolic ideal rather than an actual record of effort” (Cohen, 1979: 250). And as Cohen further showed, the word “work” in itself is not always used to refer to the undertaking of a variety of farm (or crofting) tasks and activities. During my stay at High Moor Farm over Easter Guy Bowman said, with some delight, that it was Good Friday so he didn't have to go to work. He then proceeded to spend a full day working on the farm. What he was referring to, of course, was his part-time job as an electrician. So although the tasks being undertaken may not be referred to as “work”, the record of those tasks on the landscape — such as a neatly built wall — would be symbolically endorsed through the *hardworking* referent. Conversely, I rarely heard *hard work* being used to describe something negatively. Like Darren's view of lambing time, laborious, difficult, strenuous or boring work would more often be referred to in different terms

(such as “a chow [chew] on”). This suggests a reinforcement of the relationship between *hard work* and goodness since it becomes difficult to describe something unpleasant in such terms.

The symbolic nature of being *hardworking* also means that its espousal — and its virtuous association — can be withheld regardless of the amount of effort or material output achieved by an individual. It is in such circumstances that incomers to the farming community might find that their best efforts to demonstrate that they are *hardworking* through physical exertion are not endorsed and rewarded with moral acclaim.<sup>31</sup> This is particularly true since the *hardworking* label is rarely used in self-adulation and has to be created through engagement with (through display or whatever means), and endorsement from, other people. When I asked Graham Wilson, a dairy farmer, if he took the opportunity to get some sleep during the day his wife stepped into the conversation to reinforce the rarity of such occasions:

SE: What time’s a usual start for you?

GW: I get up just before five, round about five, and have a cup of coffee

SE: Is that seven days a week?

GW: Oh seven days a week yeah [slight laugh], and go out about half past five time and come back in for breakfast about quarter past eight

SE: Yeah, and do you get any chance for a couple of hours sleep during the day, or

GW: Depends what, I, not normally no, I tend to have my dinner and I’m straight out again, er, but er, yeah if it’s a very wet cold miserable afternoon and I, you know with t’weather and everything I might just sit down there for a couple of hours, but I don’t do it very often do I?

Wife: Very rarely no - like you say - only if you have a really bad cold or something if he really isn’t well, not, certainly not routine.

GW: Yeah its, as I say its hundred and ten percent commitment (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07).

[Extract 5-17]

It is more common for *work ethic* to figure in a self-adulatory way collectively, through the representation of a “farming community” set against some broader societal “other”. It would be less common, therefore, to hear “I’m hardworking” than it would “we” or “us farmers” are “hardworking”. This is akin to Cohen’s (1985) notion of the symbolically constructed community, whereby interpretable values (such as being *hardworking*) allow the outward expression of a homogenous farming community and an internal

<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that all incomers are treated as such. Many incomers have received the adulations of being hardworking as demonstrative of their acceptance into the community.

heterogeneity that allows for moral differentiation at the local scale. The collective and individual use of *hard work* rhetorically is examined further in Chapter 6.

The pervasiveness of the *work ethic*, and the necessity for it to be socially endorsed was seen as a burden in some instances. Because Mike and Ellen Lockwood inherited Burrowbank Farm from the previous owners, and were not family heirs, it made Mike feel a little awkward and that he had a lot to prove to himself and others. He said there were probably other farmers in the area who thought ‘who is this person’ and resented them for being so fortunate in their inheritance. He thought that perhaps they had been welcomed because of their involvement in the broader community but admitted that he didn’t really know what other people thought of them. But he would like to know. He said he would always feel a bit of an outsider. Towards the end of my fieldwork, and without prompt from me, Mike and Ellen were discussing the local *work ethic* with Ellen’s second cousin, Virginia. Mike explained that it was very strong in the area and Ellen gave the impression that it was too much at times. Virginia made the connection with Methodism in the Dales and said *hard work* was believed to lead to the reaping of reward in heaven. And it wasn’t just restricted to farm work, Ellen pointed out, but extended into the domestic sphere as the women in the dale used to compete to see who could get their laundry out on the line earliest in the morning. On several occasions prior to that discussion Mike had given examples where the requirement to uphold the value in *hard work* could be used to castigate certain individuals or acted as a constraint on behaviour in some way. He told me of friends that were “house-husbands” in the local village that would get a hard time from the farming community. On another occasion before taking a short break from work he said “I’m going to have to have a rest, I know it’s pathetic”. Of course, Mike didn’t need to justify taking a break to me and I felt that his sentiments reflected this sense of burden. He told me that he also liked the idea of jogging around the dale to keep fit but didn’t feel that he was able to because other people might think “he hadn’t got anything better to do”. Like most farmers, Mike didn’t refer to himself individually as *hardworking* but did use the referent to endorse his neighbours and he, in turn, was referred to by others in similar terms. In perhaps the most frank example Mike admitted to me at the end of my initial tenure at Burrowbank Farm that he felt a little embarrassed that we hadn’t worked harder during my stay. Ellen also implied this when she suggested I would have to work harder at High Moor Farm than I had whilst I had been there. As it turned out, both Guy at High Moor and David at Sinderwell expressed similar sentiments of slight regret or being apologetic that things hadn’t turned out a bit differently so we could get more work done. Perhaps inviting someone to work and stay with them, particularly someone with an inquisitive

mind, a pen and paper, led the farmers to feel slightly laid bare and worried about the impression that I may leave with, or the comparisons that I would make with other farmers. But this was not my intention, and, bearing in mind considerations of time, effort, and variety of tasks I couldn't say that I worked, or was made to work, harder on any one farm than another.

### 5.2.2 Beneficent Change

From the wander about Hawleydale that introduced this Chapter we can pick out a variety of conceptions of betterness: A continental (faster growing and fatter) breed or a native (hardier) breed; expanding or spending more time on the existing farm; aesthetic appearance and welfare versus income; better machinery or a tidier farm; maintaining the countryside in good heart versus production; a diverse or closed community, and; work or leisure. By its very nature, we may assume that 'making better' is something to which everyone ascribes. We see from the examples, however, that what 'making better' entails may be quite different. Moreover, we see that different conceptions of betterness may be mutually exclusive, or, at least, in some ways antagonistic in terms of the types of responses or behaviour that they elicit. Furthermore, we see that that antagonism may feature not just between different individuals but be present in individuals too.

In this section I want to distinguish between two different conceptions of *beneficent change* that I call *fettle* and *improvement*. As alluded to above, however, it is not my intention to distinguish between individuals on this basis but to demonstrate the existence of these alternative (sometimes complementary, sometimes competing) conceptions of change and how this affects farmers attitudes, behaviour and farm management decisions in a variety of ways.

*Fettle*, as a noun, is used to refer to the health or condition of something. In North Yorkshire it also retains a vernacular usage as a transitive verb, meaning the act of maintaining the health or condition of something, or akin to mending or repairing. I use the word *fettle* to denote this usage and conception of *beneficent change*. I use the word *improvement*, here, to denote a conception of *beneficent change* aligned with the idea of *Agricultural Improvement* which allies progress with productivism, expansion, efficiency and output or income. Whilst I use these specific terms to distinguish between different conceptions of *beneficent change* — for reasons that will become clear — it is important to point out, before I describe them further, that they are not necessarily distinguished by farmers in the same way and that the terms may obfuscate

one another or be used interchangeably to have the same general meaning of a *beneficent change*. The ideological implications of such subtleties of language are considered further in Chapter 8.

Like *hard work*, the value attached to *beneficent change* is demonstrated by its synonymy with the idea of the good farmer. Fred Atliiss' conception of the good farmer outlined in the above example demonstrates notions of both *fettling* and *improvement*. He outlines a dual imperative of the farmer to "keep the countryside in good heart" for the next generation and to produce pursuant to the demands of the market. Whilst it was not clear whether Fred himself saw these imperatives as complementary or antagonistic we do know that David Stroud viewed them as the latter. Fred might be attaining better prices but the condition of his farm is in decline. We also know that David opposes expansion (*improvement*) if it inhibits his ability to keep the farm in good condition (*fettling*).

Tim Hasling, a dairy farmer from Neirdale, described a good farmer to me as "someone that leaves his farm in better fettle than when he found it and puts his livestock before hisself [sic]" (Field Notes, 23-01-08). This value was expressed to me by many farmers on many occasions in various terms such as "in better condition"; "in better nick"; "in good heart"; "well-maintained" or "in a better state". And *fettling* behaviour would be demonstrated through "maintenance" work such as walling, fencing and hedge-laying. It is tasks such as these that might be considered to make no direct economic contribution to the farm, although their cumulative impact, or their cumulative neglect could be seen to have long term economic implications. As a result, such tasks may be deemed non-essential and are the first to be compromised when the farmers' resources are stretched by economic pressures from either more intensive farm production, or work off the farm. This is not to say that the repair of a gap in a wall or a hedge would be deemed non-essential. Rather, it means that that gap might be filled with an old gate or a couple of pallets tied together to keep the stock in. With *fettling* behaviour, the requirement to fill a gap in such a way may never arise because a wall or a hedge would have been kept in such a condition so as to prevent its deterioration in the first place. *Fettling* is steady, incremental and continuous. You'd soon end up a bad farmer, Terry Whitehead told me, if you started cutting too many corners; "you've still got to keep the old circle going" (T. Whitehead interview, 22-04-09).

A simple but relevant example of *fettling* behaviour became apparent to me during my stay at Burrowbank Farm. When walking a field with either Mike or Ellen (usually en

route to a task elsewhere) I noticed they would pick stones up from the pasture and place them on the track, or in a gateway. Naturally, I followed suit. It was only after a while that the full implications and necessity of such a task became apparent to me. This act led to a simultaneous *beneficent change* to both the pasture and the track/gateway. A stone on a field will reduce the quality of the pasture, reduce the quality of the hay that can be made from it, and, possibly damage hay-making machinery. By returning stones to the track (since they were most likely carried onto the field from the track adhered to the muddied wheels of a tractor) the integrity of the track is maintained and the likelihood of it eroding reduced. Moving one small stone the size of a golf ball might seem completely insignificant but similar action over hundreds or thousands of walks across a field can be seen to have a cumulative beneficent impact. Were this action not taken regularly, then stones would accumulate on the pasture and the integrity of the track would decrease. The presence, or loss, of those stones (depending whether field or track) might not have any immediate economic implications for Mike and Ellen, but without those iterative actions the next generation of farmers, or subsequent ones thereafter, might find both a pasture and a track in worse *fettle*, and, requiring a much more significant outlay in terms of both time and money to clear the pasture and restore the track. As one farmer put it simply to me, the fabric of the place would have slipped.

Understanding *fettling* in this way overcomes an apparent contradiction in its usage as a transitive verb and to mean a *beneficent change*. If you are simply repairing or mending something then how can you be making it better in the long term? Surely it's just being put back to how it used to be? However, if we consider the use of *fettle* as a noun, to describe the *state* of repair of something, then the implication is that that state can always be made better. It depends on the *temporality of change*. If I put one small stone back on the track that had fallen off a tractor's wheel only the day before then I might be right to question whether I had made anything better. If my stone clearing actions over a life time, however, had the cumulative effect of there being fewer stones on the pasture than when I took over the farm then I could say that I'd satisfied my desire to leave the farm in better condition than when I took it over (in this regard at least) and that the cumulative impact of my actions had been beneficial. *Fettling* recognises the long-term nature of farming and those that prescribe to *fettling* values most ardently point out that you can't just change things over night in farming, that it's a long term game and you should 'farm today as if you're going to live forever' (E. Mullaney interview, 11-04-08; Richie interview, 05-02-08).

Just like Ellen pointed out that the *work ethic* transfers into the domestic sphere, so too has it been shown by Bouquet (1984: 147-8) that a value in steady *beneficent change* — akin to *fettling* — passes into the domestic sphere:

The alterations and ‘contributions’ made by women to the farmhouse are part of a logical system whereby women, otherwise separated by the nature of their reproductive work, are meshed into a hierarchy by the common values they share, which are partly expressed in the material goals towards which they work. Contributions such as these which occur over a period of time are considered dignified and proper. By contrast disapproval is expressed for the complete alteration of the farmhouse, made, for example by one young wife upon moving in. Such action conflicts with the system of mother and daughter-in-law choosing together such items as carpets whereby such ‘contributions’ are expressive of a certain female solidarity between generations of women who marry into the family and the house. Radical alteration to the house can be construed as a rejection of the contributions of the last occupant, who may well have been one’s mother-in-law, and are seen in a sense as the identity of the person who made them.

[Extract 5-18]

*Improvement*, on the other hand, tends to have a much shorter-term perspective on *beneficent change* and is more associated with rapid gains with easily recognisable material outcomes. In this case the good farmer might be described as “one that’s going forward and farming intensively” (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08). Of all the farmers who I met, it was the Spencers from Uptonedale who referred to *beneficent change* most unequivocally in terms of *improvement*. During my fieldwork the Spencer brothers (Simon, Carl, and Nick, all in their twenties) were moving to a bigger farm outside the National Park adjacent to their father’s farm to enable them to expand their dairying production on better land and without the restraints imposed on them by being in the National Park. They were to invest a significant amount of money on a new parlour, slurry system, shed and silage pits at the new farm that would allow them to increase their herd from 280 to 360 cows. They’d always talked about doing something big, they told me, but it could obviously never be in Uptonedale. Given the sense of attachment between farmers and their farms that I had read about, or had first hand experience of, I asked the Spencers whether leaving would be difficult and whether they were bothered what happened with the farm (if it was kept a working farm) after they left. To the former they saw it as “a change” and just the “right thing to do”, whereas to the latter Carl replied “no, we just wanted t’money”. Nick reaffirmed that “we would have *preferred* [emphasised] it to be farmed, but you know, we just go out with the maximum money really, that’s what its about int it?” (Spencers interview, 12-03-08). These sentiments represented the continuation of a history of *improvement* in their family that was characterised by rapid growth, movement and expansion. The importance of a

family narrative in terms of *improvement* to the brothers is demonstrated by their recollection for the facts, and their accordant telling of the story:

NS: Did you want to know t'whole history of, of how it started?

SE: Yeah, that'd be good

CS: Right, our granddad, he fired it all off right

CS: He's recently deceased so, O three he died didn't he, and he, he started off he was farming with his brothers wasn't he

SE: Right

CS: And then he wanted to go like on his own so he bought a farm in Diveton

NS: Twenty-five acre

CS: Yeah and t'chickens, he had a few cows, twelve cows he milked by hand and then er this farm came up for sale in '67 and it was at an auction, so he bought this farm, it was only a hundred acre at the time this farm. And he paid sixteen thousand for it, and er, sort of over, then he sold the other farm

SS: Not straight away though did he

CS: No, no

SS: He kept that, kept that, and didn't sell that [until] he'd bought one at Mastringham, Pickering

CS: So he kept, so he had, and then he kem [came] here and he made that, made the byre into a 40 stall byre, went up to forty cows

SE: And was it dairy back then?

CS: Yeah

NS: Yeah he had er, Ayrshire's didn't he?

CS: And then Dad left school in er, oh, seventy four or five or summat [pause] and he, he said to Granddad that he wanted to put a parlour in and go up to 80 cows. So they took his byre out and put the parlour, but one o' them, a ten-ten parlour, he went up to 80 and then as we sort of left school, we've just sort of kept

SS: And then Granddad bought t'farm over Pickering. He sold t'one at Diveton and then Dad moved a few more didn't he?

CS: And you see that was in 1982 he bought that farm over there

NS: Aye it was '82 by t'time he got there but they bought it in about '80 I think

SE: And has that one been sold now as well?

All: Nooo, still got that

CS: So that's 150 acre and er

NS: And then we bought a few other, the land off a couple of other farms, just to get us up to 220

CS: Here

NS: Here

CS: And then in '97 they bought another farm, 200 acre, at Flixton, Wath

SE: yeah

CS: The' bought 112 acre in '96 didn't the'?

SS: Bought 112 acres in '96 down...

CS: That was over there near Granddads farm,

SS: But we're having to sell that bit, block of land (Spencers interview, 12-03-08).

[Extract 5-19]

The account, then, represents a progressive narrative account of *improvement* which is told with a great deal of pride and implicit praise for the efforts of previous generations. It is illuminated through recourse to numbers and is relayed not just as an historical account but as part of *their* continuing story of rapid *improvement* and expansion into the future.

Like the *work ethic*, the value inherent in making *beneficent changes* could lead to some sense of burden, or imperative for continuity at all costs. Guy, at High Moor Farm, told me that because of his work away from the farm he gets depressed at the thought of not being able to leave the land in better nick than when he found it. Similarly, Mike at Burrowbank, whilst we were littering the steers one morning, explained to me that on occasions where he hadn't had much help about the place he felt he could only really get essential jobs done and that he found the sense of not being able to make *improvements* "psychologically demoralising" (Field Notes, 26-11-07). This may arise from a sense of responsibility to both previous and future generations (see Section 5.1) as well as a requirement to be seen to uphold the value amongst farming contemporaries. We may also imagine, however, how antagonistic conceptions of *beneficent change* may engender a dislocation in an individual's construction of personhood. In our example from Hawleydale, we saw how Clive Fisk found it a difficult trade-off between spending his time on paid work and on unpaid — but symbolically important — work (such as tidying). This suggests a struggle between *improvement* and *fetling* conceptions of *beneficent change*. This was further demonstrated when I asked Clive how he would like to make the farm better if time and resources weren't limited. His response suggests that the first thing that came to mind on this occasion was an *improving* concept of *beneficent change*:

I think it, I think the only thing would be quite a big expansion wouldn't it. I think it would be expansion which it doesn't lend itself, that's one of the reasons why we didn't, er it doesn't lend itself to er, you know big expansion as what I can see, we're in a corner as such, we're not in the middle of the area, the land isn't particularly great. Erm I think that'd be the only way to go, expansion (C.Fisk interview, 17-01-08).

[Extract 5-20]

Earlier in the conversation, however, when I asked about the enjoyment he got out of doing work as part of agri-environment schemes he suggested a more *fettling* conception of *beneficent change*:

SE: I think you said to me when I last spoke to you, you quite enjoy that side of things

CF: Yeah, yeah we do actually we quite enjoy you know keeping things, hedges and fences right, you know its something you can do and it just makes things, you know, your whole farm better (*ibid.*).

[Extract 5-21]

We may begin to imagine, then, how a desire to honour previous generations, to be respectful of future generations and to prove oneself to contemporaries as well as ones own self can become problematic in the face of competing values within and between different temporal and spatial domains. Furthermore, we may understand how external influences on a farmer's situation may be endorsed, accommodated or rejected on the basis of a complex interaction of farming values. The following section examines how the values in *hard work* and *beneficent change* are tied expressively to the land and lays a foundation for the analysis of farmers' responsiveness to environmental initiatives which may affect the interaction of such values in equally complex ways (Chapters 6 and 7).

### 5.2.3 Work, Beneficent Change and the Land

The Richie's conception of the good farmer outlined in Section 5.2.1 demonstrated that the *hardworking* referent finds expression and endorsement in the land, its appearance and the way in which it has been cared for. Implicit in this example, also, is a judgement on the nature of change. An *improvement* in terms of profit, we could infer, is held in lower regard than *fettling*-type work and change that maintains the land in good condition. A more explicit example of the expression of *beneficent change* through the land was made to me whilst fencing with Mike at Burrowbank. He told me that it was one of his favourite jobs and he finds it very satisfying. And this satisfaction was borne out of an enjoyment in the work itself as well as the pleasure gained in walking past the new fence after it has been erected and seeing it looking neat and tidy as opposed to walking round the farm and just seeing jobs that need doing all the time. Furthermore, he also said that it was important *to show to other people* that the farm was neat and *to show them that they were improving* (Field Notes, 16-04-08). The work may be enjoyable in its own right, but gains particular purchase in terms of its dual ability to be

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demonstrative of *hard work* (in accepted ways) and, through that work, of *beneficent change* too.

This tying of work and *beneficent change* through expression in the land is akin to a short narrative account. And just like Ford's (1953) reminiscence of Wolf Pit Slack (see Chapter 4) a man-made feature of the landscape may act symbolically as both an expression of the historical maintenance of important values and as a moral imperative for the maintenance of such values into the future. The inherent temporality of the landscape itself, as a vivid reminder of the past and an antecedent to the future, can be viewed as providing a kind of 'narrative accountability' (Carrithers, 2007) to people's motives and actions through the expression and interplay of values in *hard work* and *beneficent change*.<sup>32</sup>

With familiar succinctness Ernest Mullaney was able to express this relationship in a short indictment on hobby farmers. To Ernest, a farmer isn't recognised as local until there is a gravestone in the churchyard with his or her name on it. He proclaimed that hobby farmers were unable to keep their farms tidy because it is a lifetime's work. A lifetime's work: in those three words Ernest expressed the importance of both work and a steady, *fettle*-like, conception of *beneficent change* that could only find expression in the landscape. This suggests that the land can't lie. People may move in, make changes "overnight", and *appear* to have made the farm better, but Ernest's conception of tidiness (whatever that may be) — and its association with the good farmer — will only be endowed on an individual through the valued practices (work) and processes (*beneficent change*) that are perceived to *give rise to* that aesthetic ideal. The importance of the process rather than the outcome per se is also indicated by the fact that Mike said it was important to demonstrate that he was *improving* as opposed to having *improved*. How these values are used, and used differently, to make indictments about incomers, different methods of farming and environmental initiatives is explored further in Chapters 6 and 7.

This chapter has shown the complexity with which farming values manifest themselves in everyday social encounters and how this affects farmers' responsiveness to a range of changing external influences. It is the purpose of the next two chapters to examine, in particular, farmers' responses to policy initiatives aimed at a more 'environmental' than 'productive' system of farming. This chapter lays the foundation for that examination

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<sup>32</sup> I elaborate a more detailed example in Chapter 7 (Extract 7-4).

by outlining the complexity, pervasiveness, yet mutability of the farming values that govern responses and behaviour.

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## Chapter 6

### The Moor, The River and a Jungle in Between

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the importance of values in *work ethic* and *beneficent change* to farmers' sense of self, to their personhood. It also showed that these values often find expression in the land but are interpretable and are upheld and expressed in complex ways. This chapter examines the impact of a range of environmental initiatives in the catchment which, by their nature, impact on both the land and the actions (or work) of the farmer. By virtue of this, the initiatives may be seen by farmers as an affront to their means of expressing their values (i.e. the land), or as an affront to their values in their own right. The chapter outlines how those same values are used in farmers' argumentative responses to environmental initiatives, and the argumentative strategies of environmental implementers, in an equally complex way. The values are shown to be *used* in different ways according to the particular rhetorical situation and the audience being addressed.

The Chapter takes three examples from the moorland, the inbye land and the river to show, respectively, how work/hardship, aesthetics and knowledge are used in the argumentative strategies of farmers. This is not to suggest that the means of argumentation are dictated by their place in the catchment, nor that they work independently of one another. The purpose of providing the three cases is to fulfil the same general objective of this chapter. That is to show how the means of argumentation are tailored to suit the particular situation, and the role that farming values play in making those arguments. It is shown, in all three cases, how the arguments made by farmers are underlain by concepts of *beneficent change*: how environmental initiatives may be seen as an affront to their own values in *beneficent change*, and how the *type* (time-rate) of change that those initiatives introduce is challenged.

#### 6.2 Management of the Moor

In Chapter 3 I outlined the contested nature of the common moors and the differing interests of the estates, conservation organisations and graziers. Despite certain differences all three groups tend to agree that the maintenance of grazing sheep on the moor is essential to the protection of the moorland landscape and habitat and that, at present, the moors are under-grazed. It was further shown how the number of sheep grazed on the moors has declined due to increasing economic difficulties and how the

foot and mouth outbreak of 2001 led to the removal of flocks that were not reinstated. Trevor Eustace, who farms at the head of Ollerdale, was one such farmer who decided not to reinstate a flock of sheep because of the conservation requirements imposed by the National Park:

TE: We were, we had at one time about a thousand sheep on the moor

SE: really

TE: and we had pedigree Simmental cattle, which we sold bulls down the Esk Valley, did very nicely, and then our next door neighbour got foot and mouth, so they culled the whole blooming lot

SE: right

TE: none of the sheep had it, erm, the cows I could understand, cos they were next to the field where his were

SE: yeah

TE: erm, which was bad enough, but the sheep didn't have it. They wouldn't have had it because they were up on the moor and well away from the place.

SE: yeah

TE: Which annoys you because you spend all your 30, 40 years building them up

SE: So that was still when you had a flock of a thousand ewes?

TE: Well no it wasn't a thousand then, we'd cut back, they killed 520 I think. Erm, they were cut back quite a long way. We were going to go back on the moor but there's so many restrictions, with the National Park, they're so fussy about not feeding on the moor

SE: yeah

TE: which is absolute, its, its bollocks, because we fed, we came here and we hadn't any sheep but we hefted sheep onto the place.

SE: Did you?

TE: Erm which a lot of people now haven't, they've just taken over the farm, from their fathers. And the only way to do it is to spoil 'em for the first couple of years, i.e. give 'em a little bit of cake and give them hay on the moor and get them to know where they live and then get the lambs to know where they live. Er and the National Parks, then, were very fussy about not feeding on the moor, or they'd only give you a small portion, and I fell out with the lass who was sort of telling me how to do it.

[Extract 6-1]

The National Park and Natural England prohibit farmers from providing supplemental feed to moor sheep in specific locations by using ring feeders. Feeding in specific locations, they argue, damages the heather because it means that sheep graze down the heather in the immediate area, enrich such locations with dung and makes colonisation by grasses introduced through seeds in the hay more likely. Through the SWES scheme farmers are required to distribute feed across their stray so as to encourage the sheep to graze more widely over the moor. Trevor, however, sees this requirement as being at

cross-purposes with the conservation organisations' desire to encourage more sheep to be grazed on the moor. For, if he can not feed in specific locations then it is very difficult to heft a new flock of sheep onto the moor. This sense of unjustness was exacerbated for Trevor by the fact that the "lass" from the National Park that came round to ask him to stop ring-feeding on the moor, didn't even know what a Highland Cow was when she saw it, and then thought they could have four calves in a single year. She was just a young girl straight out of university. What authority did she have to be making recommendations to farmers when she clearly knew nothing about farming? A similar argument was made by several other farmers who emphasised that policy-making was often too short-term and inconsistent. In particular, the fact that environmental payment schemes for moor sheep shifted from a payment to reduce sheep numbers on the moor to one that looked to increase them. And it was the original policy that caused the problem because they were too short-sighted to see the long-term implications and ignorant of the fact that it is not straightforward to reintroduce unhefted sheep back onto the moor:

LR: I think its too little too late because, to erm, what's it called, when you put your sheep out on the moor and you've got to, they've got to be, hefted

TR: hefted

LR: to heft a flock of sheep takes forever doesn't it

TR: well you can't, you can't chop and change like that you know, you're looking at twenty year cycles on the moor you know, you can't one year say oh we'll pay you so much to tek [take] your sheep off the moor and the next year say well we'll pay you so much money to put the sheep back on the moor

LR: it takes people time to build

TR: you can't do that, it's a long term thing farming like [...]

TR: aye, and I'm quite fearful for farming I'm afraid

SE: yeah, you don't see any changes

TR: no I don't because I don't see any changes in policy or government like and I think the policy they've got at the moment is ridiculous

LR: its too much out of their hands now, because we've got

TR: the wrong people are making the big decisions, and they don't know anything about farming. It would be like me going into a hospital in the middle of Leeds and running it like, I wouldn't have a clue, not a clue

SE: no

TR: and they haven't got a clue, but they're making all these major decisions

LR: they've got probably a good business sense, but

TR: they're making all these big major decisions, but they can't see what its gonna do in the long term, and farming is a long term thing, its not a short term fix farming

[Extract 6-2]

Another reason farmers gave for not wanting to reinstate a moor flock was the workload. Graham Wilson from Neirdale told me that it is not just the financial situation but since he's getting older he doesn't know if he "wants to tramp around on the moors" when it's a lot of work. You can't just turn them out and forget about them — like some people seem to think — and the gathering in is a major operation (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07). I asked several farmers whether they would be willing to put sheep back on the moor if the level of support increased. Most that had already taken them off said it would take a lot of money. Tom Hasling, Graham's neighbour, told me that he does like sheep and he likes the work but he couldn't ever see them paying enough to justify him putting sheep back on the moor:

I'll basically be saying, look, I'll put hundred sheep up there and you know, I want £300 a week. Cover all me costs and I want £300 a week just for having them there, and work that out as you like per sheep, you know, erm otherwise, I'm happy to go and work for my mate down the village at, on a, I'm really flexible on the hours I do for him I do short days, long days, whatever (T. Hasling interview 24-01-08).

[Extract 6-3]

Tom outlines what he perceives the value of keeping sheep on the moor to be through recourse to another source of paid income which is much more flexible. For, as suggested by Graham Wilson, people don't seem to realise the nature of the work involved. During negotiations between graziers, the estates, and conservation organisations there had been some suggestions from the estates that if the graziers left the moor then they would keep their own flock of sheep to maintain the habitat in favourable condition and to provide hosts for ticks. When speaking at a hill farmers' meeting in the catchment Claire Roper, from the NFU, outlined the value of the hill farmer's work with an example of the reluctance of a land agent to get his hands dirty. When discussing the suggestions with an estate worker she said that she took him a mucky 70kg Texel tup and said 'there you are, turn that over and clip its feet' and he soon said 'no thanks, I'll leave you to do it'. A more astute economic assessment of the situation was made by James Morton, a farmer and regional chairman of the NFU. He said that the estates had soon backed out of the idea when they realised how much it would cost them to buy the sheep and to pay a full time shepherd a salary.

In these examples the farmers' work, clearly seen to be undervalued by the estates and conservation organisations, was used to justify increased financial support to graziers through public money. It was shown in Chapter 5 how suffering and hardship were

valued in their own right amongst the farming community. It was further shown how the *hardworking* referent was used to demonstrate proximity to a symbolic ideal rather than being demonstrative of effort or contingent upon financial income. It was also shown that *hard work* was rarely used with negative connotations because of the moral virtue with which it is associated. It is interesting, therefore, to consider why farmers speak negatively of the workload when talking about moorland grazing. The reason, I suggest, is because their audience has changed. If a farmer were to say “I’m not going to do that, it’s too much like hard work” then it would be deemed morally reprehensible from “within” the farming community (or, at least, within a community of farmers who subscribe to the same values). But to an audience made up of estate owners, conservationists, policy-makers and the general public a different strategy is required because the value of the farmer is not being recognised. The record of effort writ large on the landscape does not appear sufficient justification to value the work of the upland farmer. Some farmers place value on hardship and suffering and are willing to endure it, but if that value is not recognised and endorsed by others then it does not exist:

Yeah it does feel under-valued definitely yes, you know and, as though I’m not wanted, so that’s that knocks your spirit a little bit so you aren’t so keen. Farming’s always been difficult on these Dales farms, its always your coping with the weather and poor soil and difficult terrain but you accept that, that’s the life you’ve chosen you know, but when the politicians come in and pile on top of you as well, er, interfering with how you would like to [be] doing your good husbandry and good stockmanship that, it, it hurts that you know (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07).

[Extract 6-4]

Because this different audience, one that has the power to affect the farmers’ situation, does not uphold the same moral value (or does not uphold it through the same means of expression), the farmer must translate his own moral value in work into an economic one. In such a guise it is acceptable to talk of work negatively, because work’s only reward is monetary and not moral. Or, it could be that monetary success and reward is deemed to be morally endorsed (think of the farmers’ esteem at gaining the highest price at the cattle mart or for driving the biggest, newest machinery around the dale) but it is endorsed through the symbols of wealth, rather than the symbols of the landscape. We will remember from the previous chapter how these values interact and find expression in complex ways. Nevertheless, in an arena of argumentation where change is judged on the basis of costs and benefits, it appears that financial associations with work are the most effective rhetorically. Furthermore, we may infer that the complexity of expression of farming values derives from the fact that the farmer, that all *agents-cum-*

*patients*, are constantly encountering different situations, different audiences, and, if they are to be effective, the means of persuasion have to be tailored accordingly.

Such arguments were made to me over and over again during my stay with Guy Bowman on High Moor Farm. Farming purely moor sheep, Guy's financial return from the farm is entirely contingent upon the price he can get for his lambs and the subsidies that he receives for keeping them. And Guy expressed his sense of exasperation in powerful terms. People just seemed to have no idea of the hardship required to produce food and Guy said he doesn't feel a part of this country any more:

"I wanna feel part of this country again [and] don't want to feel exploited for all the work I've put in" (Field Notes, 05-09-07)

[Extract 6-5]

Guy thinks that the government needs to stand up for the farmer and treat them like "citizens". When relating to the wider world, therefore, economic considerations come to the fore since the market is what most powerfully connects the farmer to that wider world. Guy never claimed that farmers require any special support because they work *harder* than anyone else, he simply demonstrated the extent to which the farmer's work was under-valued by comparing the work that they do, and the reward they get, relative to other workers. Such arguments are combined with the threat of reducing sheep numbers from the moor, which Guy knows the conservationists, estates and (hopefully) the policy-makers are seeking to avoid:

Why should I bother when people don't thank me for the food I produce for them? I think, why haven't I had a holiday for 5 years? Other folks do, at least one holiday a year.

...

We're just as hard-working as people that build ships or work in Sainsbury's.

...

Let's be simple. We work, and I'm sick of being undervalued when these fuckers stacking the shelves with food that we produce earn more money than us. Why should I? I've decided I'm going to cut back on numbers. There are hundreds of jobs I could be doing on this farm if I didn't have to look after livestock and, you know, I want to leave it in better nick than when I found it. I want to keep a smaller number of quality stock – like we used to. (Field Notes, various).

[Extract 6-6]

Guy demonstrates that his work, not only in terms of the financial reward he receives but also in terms of the quantity of work he does is not being recognised. Why should he

maintain and uphold a value in continuous unremitting labour — by not taking holidays (cf Fred Atliiss) when that effort is not appreciated. He appears willing to abandon that value, to take holidays, when that value is not being upheld by those with the power to influence his farming practices and income. There is also a sense that Guy wants his work to be valued through both financial reward and amongst his peers through the appearance of the land. But he is achieving neither. By striving to make a living from sheep farming he has to compromise his ability to demonstrate his *work ethic* aesthetically through the appearance of the land (because he has to spend his time away from the farm earning money as an electrician). And if his work is not going to be rewarded financially, then he suggests he would give up on striving for financial reward in the face of market pressures and apparent government indifference in order to at least uphold his moral value by keeping the land in good condition. At present, Guy feels like he doesn't belong, because he is not valued and by cutting back on sheep numbers he can invest his time in maintenance work such as walling and fencing. And such work is literally 'maintenance labour' as defined by Wadel (1977, in Cohen, 1979: 264) in that it not only maintains the condition of the farm and the landscape but also maintains social values and relations. If the Market won't recognise his work, then at least his peers will and he can honour both past and future generations by keeping the farm in good condition and expressing this through the landscape.

Like James Morton — who saw that the estates and the government could achieve the least cost solution for moorland management by paying a small amount to the graziers — Guy accused the government of using the farmers to get good environmental management “on the cheap”. To make his ultimate point that moor sheep should be paid on a headage basis Reg Barratt, a retired farmer and councillor, argued not only that moor sheep and the work of the shepherds was undervalued but also emphasised the importance of their role in maintaining the heather moorland in favourable environmental condition:

RB: We were forced as, er we still managed to keep a fair percentage of graziers but there's a lot who'd just like to give up. And Natural England are going to have to get used to the idea of coming and talking to us chaps, to see how they can improve their measures to, they say they want to encourage 'em on, up to a certain number but we're all of a sudden, we've been under-grazed round here since 1948 or 49. There was a lot of flocks went off in the 1950s and 1960s and er we started to come under-grazed and er I think its sad because we've got something here, in this part of the country, which is unique, and that is a moorland, and the acreage of it is one of the biggest heather moors there is in Europe. And er, we needed to accept that what our ancestors have done for a hundred or two or three hundred years is why its looking like it does now. If we don't waken up to the fact we're going to find out that its going to get irretrievably going back to its, maybe 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> century, most of it was covered

with, what I call rubbish trees: silver birch, weeds ... and that chokes all the heather out, or most of it. It'll become useless, there'll be no shooting and there's areas of it now where sheep have gone off, where normally they would let 'em come up, you know, maybe three or four inches and then they would eat 'em off. They're up here now and they won't touch 'em

...

SE: so do you think the main reason for the sheep coming off the moor's been financial or political

RB: poor financial reward and er, I think the value of the moor sheep has never been fully recognised by the authorities. Because, they are keeping the moors in their unique condition and at the same time producing a very worthwhile lamb and breeding stock for [the] lowland farmer. And this is where your, your half-bred ewes come from, your Mashams and your Mules, and that's, that's where they start, up there. And its because of the ability of the local farmers who lived in these dale heads and kept sheep on the moors, they are unique stockmen, and they've been undervalued, undervalued, because if they want to keep the moors like they are now its gonna cost them a small [emphasised] fortune. Manpower, and that's what its goin' a' mean, manpower.

SE: so are you pessimistic about the future then?

RB: I have a little bit more hope than what I had. And I think if the government would only listen and adjust its hill payments. What the government wanted to do was get rid of the hill payments and instead of having headage payments they went for area payments. What they should do now, with the flock masters and that, is say 'right if you graze them we'll put you back onto headage payments'

[Extract 6-7]

In this rich account, which will be analysed further in Chapter 7, Reg makes the case for the graziers as being in the best position to manage the moors by virtue of their suitability to the landscape borne out of a long historical tradition (cf the genetic metaphor described in Chapter 2). For, it's a hard moor and a good lowland farmer would struggle to make a go of it round here. Whereas the Dales farmer is very resourceful and thrifty; he knows how to survive (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07, paraphrasing). Reg further argues that what will be needed to manage the moors if they want them kept in good environmental condition is what the graziers have in abundance: manpower. And if they don't pay the graziers to do it then it will cost them a small fortune.

Through his role in the NFU and his liaisons with various different moorland interest groups James Morton realised the importance of the environment for the future of moor sheep. He knows that Natural England must protect the moors' SSSI status at all costs and thinks the ball will come slightly back into their court because the National Park have accepted that what the graziers have done has always worked and they are aware that they are currently losing between thirty and fifty pounds/year for each sheep that they keep. The Parks and Natural England accept that the sheep are not commercially

viable; there is no value in them for meat and wool production. The only value in them is what they're worth as "lawnmowers or heather nibblers or tick hoovers" and it is for these reasons that the farmer must be supported through the new HLS schemes if they want them to be kept on the moor (J. Morton interview, 07-02-08). James was also one amongst a number of farmers who saw the potential for the environmental value of the sheep to be used in the marketing of moorland lamb. The establishment of a local co-operative to sell premium lamb direct to the consumer was marketed, during my fieldwork, on the basis of the environmental protection afforded by moor sheep. By buying the meat the consumer would be supporting the local farmer and contributing to the protection of valued moorland landscapes:

The hill farmers once looked like a picturesque hangover from the past. But now that they are cutting back their flocks and herds, everyone is panicking about the consequences. The Duke of Devonshire, North Yorkshire County Council, the Country Landowners and Yorkshire Forward, were among those who stumped up to help launch Food and Farming 4 REAL – essentially, a PR campaign for the hills.

The argument is that losing the animals means losing much more. Without grazing of the hills, walkers and hunters would be fighting through bramble, blackthorn and bracken. It has already happened on some Lakeland fells.

Without the need to keep livestock from wandering, there would be no incentive to keep up the stone barns and walls which complete the pattern on the picture postcards.

The whole of our "traditional" landscape, we are reminded, has been created over the past 900 years, since Cistercian monks demonstrated what could be achieved with organised hard work (Benfield, 2007: *The Yorkshire Post*).

[Extract 6-8]

The marketing rhetoric recognises the increasing value the public place on 'the environment' and rural landscapes. It makes use of the "wonderful vision" people have of "walls and hay meadows and barns" that has been embedded in the public psyche and immortalised in television programmes such as *All Creatures Great and Small* and *Heartbeat* (CLA Director Interview 24-06-08). The initiative has been given strong support by the *Yorkshire Post* through its *Save Our Uplands* campaign (Figure 6-1). Interestingly, the campaign ties environmental/landscape values with values in hardship and suffering for particular rhetorical effect. Articles under headings such as *Beauty and Hardship go Hand in Hand up on the Moors* and *Hidden Hardships of Heartbeat Country's Farmers* (Hickling, 2008a; 2008b) infer an inherent value amongst the readership of the *Yorkshire Post* in both environmental protection and the *hard work* and struggles of the upland farmer. There are two implications of this. The first is that

work, in this instance, seems to be valued and expressed through and in its impact on the landscape. We see in Extract 6-8 above how a value is upheld in the *hard work* of the Cistercian monks for their legacy on the landscape. The second implication is that this suggests that the *work ethic* is still used to uphold a symbolic moral ideal to a broader general public compared to a more economic interpretation that is directed towards the policy-makers. The reason, again, is that the audience has changed. Although the farmer might want to stress the economic value of his work to the public in order to justify increased allocation of public support, it appears that the environmental and landscape values of farmers' work are aimed at the public, whilst arguments made using the economic value of farmers' work are directed at the policy-makers: at those with the direct ability to control farm support.



**Figure 6-1: The logo for the Yorkshire Post's 'Save our Uplands' campaign placing the maintenance of moorland grazing by sheep at its centre.**

This section has demonstrated how farmers feel that their work on the moor is undervalued. Furthermore, it has shown how farmers represent the value of their work differently according to different audiences and how efforts to satisfy and express competing values in work might result in failure and raise questions of belonging. Because of the importance of the moorland to the public and policy-makers, and because the economics suggest farmers are the cheapest way to maintain the landscape in a desirable condition, farmers feel that they are in an increasingly strong position to negotiate additional support. Yet, despite the likelihood of increased incentives through Higher Level Stewardship agreements, those farmers who have removed sheep from the moor seem reluctant to reinstate them. A principal reason for this, it seems, is because the farmers have little faith in the authority of those responsible for making the decisions. They think that the government is out of touch with farming and outline that it is the short-sightedness of previous policies that has caused the problem in the first place. The farmers, like Tom Hasling (Extract 6-3), prefer to have more control over

their work and their income through alternative types of work that are not at the whim of myopic policies that fail to recognise and value the long-term nature of farming and farm work.

### 6.3 A Jungle In Between

Between moor line and river lies the enclosed pasture or the inbye land. This is where the best grazing is to be had and where winter fodder is grown and cut as either silage or hay. In this section I examine, broadly, the response of farmers to the increasingly environmental roles that they are expected to perform through the shift to the SPS and the availability of agri-environmental support through Environmental Stewardship. In particular I focus on arguments made using aesthetics, as the move to environmentalism is seen, by some, to infringe upon the farmer's aesthetic ideal of the tidy farm and the portrayal of the good farmer through the outward expression of the land. As in the previous section I will show how arguments are constructed using the value of work, tied to the appearance of the land, and how the same underlying values are used differently in different circumstances and by different people to make a range of different arguments.

We will remember from Chapter 5 how David Stroud's idea of the good farmer was threatened by both intensive and environmental approaches to farming. He saw organic farming as a "licence to grow rubbish" and rejected any external payment support that would affect the appearance of his land and the composition and quality of his sward. We also saw how David was one of the farmers who held this aesthetic ideal most vehemently and unwaveringly and how some accepted it was no longer as important as it used to be, or were prepared to compromise the appearance of their farm in order to farm more intensively, to benefit from environmental payments, or to earn money working away from the farm. Nevertheless, virtually every farmer maintained a strong value in the appearance of their farm and referred commonly to the impact of agri-environmental schemes with negative terms such as "untidy", "mess", "rubbish" or "waste". I want to illustrate this point with an interesting example between three neighbouring farms in Upton Dale.

Stag Farm and Upton Hall Farm are intensive dairy units farmed by the Spencers and Colleys respectively. We will remember the Spencer brothers from Chapter 5 as upholding a very productivist and expansionist value in *beneficent change* (Extract 5-19). Both they and the Colleys were in the minority of farmers who I met in the catchment (24%) that were not involved in any agri-environmental payment scheme.

Their neighbours the Spuhlers, on the other hand, were the only farmers who I met involved in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. The Spuhlers were also in the process of converting the land to organic status and subscribe to a very different system of farming than either of their neighbours.

William and Rob Colley are a father and son team who both earn their principal income from the farm. They keep a herd of 70 dairy cows on 44 hectares, of which half they own and half they rent. William and Rob are second and third generation farmers after William's father moved into farming from butchery. Alan Spuhler and his wife bought Yewtree Farm in 2003 for approximately £200,000 and keep ten head of beef suckler cows on just under 40 hectares of land. Their Higher Level Stewardship agreement requires that they keep a maximum of 13 livestock units in order to prevent over-grazing of their species-rich hay meadows which are protected as a SSSI and are the reason for the HLS scheme support. Alan is retired from the air force and bought the farm to fulfil the dream of his wife. "It gives us the lifestyle she wants" he told me (A. Spuhler interview, 10-03-08). The Spuhlers spend most of their time on extensive renovation of the farmhouse and its outbuildings, which they are converting into four luxury holiday cottages. Alan explained to me, however, that they don't plan to stay at the farm long term and that they will cash-in on its sale to support their retirement:

AS: ...but you can't make a living out of a hundred acres anyway, its lifestyle as you said, and er, we're just going to develop this place up. They'll all hate us at the end when we sell up and go ...

AS: 'cause we had it valued, finished, the house and everything with the land at about one point four million. So, I can go off and buy a five hundred thousand pound house to live in, 'cause its plenty big enough [laughs] in a nice part of the country

SE: so you're not planning to stay here for too long?

AS: No we'll get the business up and running and sell it on. Well I'm sixty four this summer so, I've done enough, I retired early from the air force to have a quiet life and you spend all this time doing this, and your body gets old you start to get a bit more arthritic and your back aches a bit more

SE: I suppose it's just a transition period is it? As something to occupy you with while

AS: Oh I've got plenty of things to do, it's my wife wants to do it, so, you know, so you've got to keep them happy haven't you. So we'll do it, and er, another two or three years and it'll be done. And we'll sell it all up and so we'll have half a million pounds in the bank

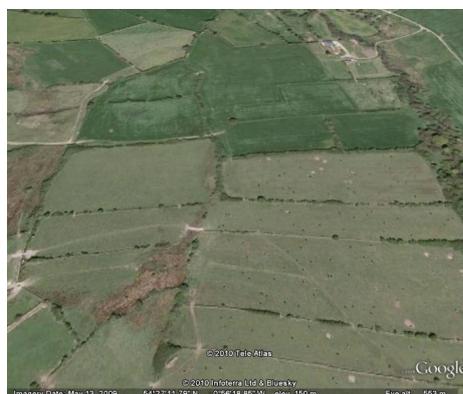
SE: yeah

AS: so we'll buy a nice house and we can have a boat and we'll go off and sail the oceans for a few years, then we'll come back and sell the boat and get the money back, and then go on cruises (A. Spuhler interview, 10-03-08)

[Extract 6-9]

Alan doesn't subscribe to farmers' values in unremitting work and the appearance of the land. He can't understand why they continue to farm when they really just scratch a living. And it's not a very good living. He can see no point in coming out and getting cold and wet and filthy and being tied to a place seven days a week for just a couple of thousand pounds a year. He also subscribes to a different aesthetic ideal than the majority of farmers in the catchment. When I asked him if other — more intensive — farmers took exception to the way his land looked, he replied “no, the villagers think it's fantastic”. And by the villagers he meant members of the local wildlife group, comprised predominantly of incomers and non-farmers. To him, and the members of the wildlife group, the hay meadows with all their buttercups look so much nicer than all these blue-green fields (*ibid*).

Despite Mr Spuhler's view, it is on aesthetic grounds that his neighbours most challenge his credentials as a farmer. The Colleys and the Spencers describe Mr Spuhler's approach as “growing a field of thistles” and “just letting it go to waste” (Colleys interview, 30-01-08; Spencers interview, 12-03-08). Both acknowledged to some extent that it was a matter of opinion. It depends whether you want to look at thistles or nice green fields William Colley told me. And they'd prefer to look at nice green fields. Some people might prefer to see a field of nettles with butterflies and ladybirds but they aren't very good, and they're not feeding anyone (Colleys interview, 30-01-08). During our conversation, the Spencer brothers also debated this aesthetic subjectivity but Carl was unable to accept that there was *anything* that looked better than a proper farm, from whoever's perspective. “Ah come on”, he said exasperatedly, “what looks better, a green field or a jungle?” (Spencers interview, 12-03-08) (Figure 6-2).



**Figure 6-2: Contrasting colours: dark green fields at the top of the picture on a farm applying nitrogenous fertiliser compared to the lighter green fields of a farm applying no artificial fertiliser in the lower half of the picture. Source: Google Earth 2010.**

In particular, the aesthetic condemnations of Mr Spuhler are linked to the quantity and nature of his farm work. “He doesn’t need a lot o’ diesel does he?” said Simon Spencer. Both the Spencers and the Colleys expressed that he was probably earning more than them (particularly the Colleys) through his agri-environmental payments for pretty much doing nothing. He does very nicely out of the subsidy system for what he puts in, for just growing a few daisies and leaving his beast out all year. And it’s “a bit of a laugh” to see them cutting grass because one technique they have is to start in the middle and go round and round running over it all. But for them it’s okay because they just cut the grass as part of their HLS agreement, they don’t need to feed their livestock with it. They cut about three hundred bales of hay last year, stacked it up in the farmyard and covered it with a plastic sheet. But they haven’t got any idea because the sheet blew off after about a week and they just left it all there to rot. And it just seems wrong that the system pays them more for doing nothing than the productive farmer gets for all his work (paraphrasing, Spencers interview, 12-03-08; Colleys interview, 30-01-08):

But he gets twice as much as us, *I mean not that we’re jealous or owt like that* [said quickly/tongue in cheek], but er he gets twice as much as us and he just leaves his beast out all year round like and gives em t’odd bale of hay. Whereas, you know, we’re chewing about three hundred and sixty five days a year trying to look after em aren’t we, and he’s getting, its just t’system that’s wrong there’s nowt that we can do about it, and its not necessarily that chap next door’s fault (Colleys interview, 30-01-08).

[Extract 6-10]

Despite not buying-in to a value in hardship and struggling, Alan Spuhler also used the *work ethic* rhetorically to respond to suggestions, from me, that the wider community might question whether or not they were “proper” farmers. “They probably think we play at it”, he told me, but we “actually probably work a lot harder than they do because we haven’t got all the expensive machinery”. Other farmers just couldn’t understand why they should be getting more money off their land but Mr Spuhler thinks that, if you keep the number of animals down, farming is actually “quite easy” (A. Spuhler interview, 10-03-08). Just as he made arguments using the *work ethic*, he also cast judgements on the economic success of farming based on appearance. Driving around the place he sees so many decayed and decrepit farms. He referred to the Colleys farm as a “wreck” because all their machinery is very old and they won’t be able to go on like that earning the small amount that they do from farming. Although Mr Spuhler might not be casting aspersions on whether the Colleys are good or bad farmers, his pointing to the appearance of the machinery as opposed to the appearance of the land suggests that

he judges success in terms of wealth, rather than the keeping of the land in good condition. So, the Colleys and the Spencers think that Mr Spuhler can't be working hard because it is not expressed in the appearance of the land; he's getting paid for doing nothing, for growing a "jungle". Alan Spuhler, on the other hand, suggests that he works a lot harder than other farmers (though he doesn't directly point to his neighbours) and is able to demonstrate this by the amount of money he is likely to make on the sale of the farm once the renovations have been completed. Capital assets (such as property, machines, yachts), then are the signs of *work's reward*, of wealth, whereas the land is just the sign of work. For one party capital assets are demonstrative of the *outcome* of work, while for the other party the land is demonstrative of the *process* of work.

As shown in Extract 6-10, the Colleys don't specifically blame Mr Spuhler because he's taking advantage of the incentives available. The Spencers, meanwhile, even expressed a bit of admiration for what Mr Spuhler was doing because he was upholding the same *improvement*-type conception of *beneficent change* that they subscribed to through productive and expansionist agriculture. He was changing things quickly to profit from the property value and just like in the sale of their farm he "goes out with the maximum money" and "that's what its about int it?" (Spencers interview, 12-03-08, see Chapter 5). However, they still challenge his approach to farming and the appearance of his land. Their value in both profiteering, whilst still upholding the aesthetic ideal of the good farmer, is aptly demonstrated in their description of Mr Spuhler as "not daft ... well ... he maybe is a bit" (*ibid.*). They ascribe to a similar view of *beneficent change*, therefore, but to different means of bringing about that change, and to different means of expressing it.

Ultimately, both the Spencers and the Colleys blamed the subsidy system and, just as the examples in Section 6.2 showed, they pointed towards the short-sightedness of the policy. 'It's alright while it lasts' was a typical response to the general impact of agri-environment schemes. Carl Spencer didn't think stewardship could be considered farming, it was just "growing rubbish". This sentiment reminded his brother Nick of something he read in the Farmer's Weekly:

There was a bloke in t'Farmers Weekly once and he was digging all these stone drains out to make his field a marshland and he said his forefather's 'd be turning in their graves, they'd be stood in a hole, digging all these drains in by hand, and he's there with a big digger ripping them all out to make it a bog, just so he can make more money by not doing anything, by having a mess (Spencers interview, 12-03-08).

[Extract 6-11]

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Implicit in this example is the fact that environmental policy is rapidly undoing the long-term efforts of previous generations of farmers to make productive agricultural land. And nor is it so straightforward to convert back to agricultural production. This point was made more explicitly by William Colley who suggested that the environmental approach wouldn't last forever. If they were to leave the farm and somebody else moved in that worked away in the town, the land would soon be overtaken by trees but then "when everybody started to starve they'd think, 'ah, well we can't grow nowt in that field now, it's full of trees'" (Colleys interview 30-01-08). The aesthetic arguments made by the Spencers and Colleys, then, are based on the fact that environmental schemes reduce the potential of the farmer to fulfil one of his principal, if not sole, objectives: to produce food. The presence of thistles, buttercups and ladybirds reflect this sentiment. They might look pretty in some people's eyes, but "they're not going to feed anybody" (*ibid.*).

In the final part of this section I want to leave Uptonedale and examine several other examples of the different ways in which farming values are played with in response to the shift to agri-environmental payments and the Single Payment Scheme. I begin with Tony Uttridge, an agricultural contractor from Briardale who works throughout the Esk catchment. Tony gets to see, and cut, a lot of hedges. And he is not happy with what he is seeing at the moment as a result of the environmental schemes that encourage farmers to only cut their hedges once every two years and to plant native species. Thorns make hedges, he told me, blackthorn and hawthorn, they need to be laid down, and allowed to grow up thick to keep the stock in and provide shelter in bad weather. But the National Park are telling them to plant "all sorts of rubbish", like holly and willow "that will never ever mek [make] a hedge till hell freezes over" (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08). Cutting them every two years means that when they get cut they are absolutely "smashed to bits" because they've grown up too tall and there's no habitat left for the birds afterwards because it completely removes the top canopy of the hedge. Moreover, it just looks an "absolute mess" and is "completely pointless" because they're getting paid for planting hedges and they "still don't have anything to show for it" at the end of it. But it's still "absolute bloody robbery" for the *hard work* the farmer has to put in and the man who tells them what to plant in the hedges "hasn't got a bloody clue" (*ibid.*).

As well as making arguments on the basis of aesthetics and contested knowledge, Tony uses the *work ethic* of the farmer to highlight the pittance that they get paid for the amount of work they're expected to do. This is quite a simple argument, and one I

expected to encounter much more amongst farmers to justify the need for financial reward in recognition of the *hard work* required to fulfil environmental duties. But this argument was actually very uncommon. I was surprised to hear the majority of farmers say that the agri-environmental payments don't require them to do anything different to what they were already doing, that its "money for old rope" (T. Hasling interview, 24-01-08). So why did they not take this opportunity to uphold and demonstrate the value of their work? I suggest that they did. By making the argument that they were getting paid for doing very little different, farmers were not downplaying the value of their work, quite the opposite. They were using the opportunity to uphold the value of their work symbolically, as the creator of all that is good in the first place; that it is their work that created the valued landscape that the policy-makers want to protect and they don't need to justify their work, in this instance, in terms of monetary reward (cf on the moorland in Section 6.2). The situation, and the strategy, has changed. In this instance the farmers want to take the opportunity to make an indictment on the policy itself, to demonstrate that the policy is ineffectual and to make one of the commonest arguments of all: that farmers are in the best position to look after the environment, and to know what's good. And this argument, in turn, supports another argument. That is, that direct financial support to farmers leads to the protection of the environment anyway, because that is what they do. If they can make a living, then they will look after the environment, without the requirement to be told what to by 'short-sighted policy-makers that don't seem to have much of a clue', and who 'keep shifting the goal posts' with negative consequences for the farming industry and the environment (paraphrasing, various sources). This argument, made by farmers and other groups is elaborated in Section 6.4 and in Chapter 7.

The shift to the SPS, and from a headage to an area-based payment system, was met with a similarly interesting array of responses. There was, of course, difference in argument as a result of each farmer's unique situation: borne out of the combination of their historical entitlement, the type of farming and the size of the farm. On top of this, however, there were arguments that represented different interpretations of values, and in particular of *beneficent change*. There were some, many, that preferred the headage rather than area-based system because they were better off under that means of support. The argument wasn't necessarily made quite so crudely however. We saw in Section 6.2, for instance, how Reg Barratt argued that a headage payment was the only way to keep sheep on the moor, and to protect the unique moorland landscape. Mike, at Burrowbank Farm, told me that in a conversation with one of his neighbours he asked them whether they would cut down on their stocking levels as a result of the shift to the

SPS. And his neighbour looked at him like he was mad. Mike explained that the idea of cutting back numbers was seen as an insult to all the *hard work* they'd put in over the years to *improve* the farm. They were locked into a mindset that associated *beneficent change* with expansion and growth in numbers, and anything which affected their ability to continue to do so would be viewed negatively.

Others could see the benefits of the shift to the area-based scheme in terms of reducing stocking levels. Again, though, the benefits were seen for different reasons. Arthur Livingstone from Ollerdale places the welfare of stock at the top of his list of credentials of the good farmer. Therefore, he sees the benefit of reduced stocking levels in terms of the ability of the farmer to look after his stock better, to pay them more attention and to value them more. Clive Fisk, however, saw the benefit in different terms. In Chapter 5 it was shown how Clive expressed certain antagonistic tendencies in terms of the values that he upholds. We know that, like Arthur, he values good animal husbandry and the production of quality stock. Unlike Arthur - who would rather go bust than not be able to care for his livestock properly – however, Clive also subscribes to an idea of *beneficent change* that is tied to profit. He, therefore, saw the value of the reduced stocking levels, in terms of the price he could fetch for his beasts. Because if the overall supply to the market fell, then the price should increase.

The values a farmer upholds, in combination with the specifics of the context — or rhetorical situation — determine the nature of the response, or argument, that they make in the face of environmental initiatives. Where a farmer upholds different interpretations of the same values, however, their response may not be so straightforward. This is demonstrated by Graham Wilson, who, like Clive Fisk, shows the dilemma of having to make compromises between different values:

Yes, yes, a good farmer does that anyway, yeah that's what he does, he doesn't like to see his fields full of rubbish and er, so yeah some of these environmental schemes don't go down too well. You're torn in two directions, you want a little bit of money for the scheme but you don't like to see your land, you know just run into a wilderness (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07).

[Extract 6-12]

In this case the environmental schemes are seen in terms of their financial benefit, as a means of income. And more income is seen as better. Yet their impact on the land, despite being better through the conservationist's or policy-maker's eyes, is viewed in negative terms. However, in this instance, it could be interpreted as a dilemma of

expression, rather than of values per se. For the tidy, well-kept farm can be symbolic of productive agriculture; of an agriculture through which one is able to earn a living (cf Burton, 2004). So, adopting agri-environmental schemes might allow income through payment schemes, but the detrimental impact on the land could be seen as reducing the potential to make an income through agricultural production. However, the farm aesthetics might not purely symbolise a value in productive and intensive agriculture to Graham, because he then went on to describe a good farmer as one that “doesn’t abuse his land or his livestock ... he doesn’t push it with massive amounts of chemical fertiliser and sprays and try and get 20,000 litres out of each cow, and it’s on the scrapheap after three years” (*ibid.*). So to view that aesthetic ideal purely in productivist terms overlooks Graham’s *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*. For not only should a good farmer not end up with their farm on the scrapheap after three years, they should also keep it “in good heart and good order” (*ibid.*).

The aesthetic indictments made by farmers such as the Spencers and the Colleys, then, are based on the fact that the aesthetic ideal they uphold is representative of food production and the encroachment of environmental schemes is seen as an affront to that goal. That aesthetic ideal is tied to environmental means of argumentation, and by suggestions that "everyone" subscribes to the same aesthetic ideal of the in-bye pasture as they do. This argument seems to have less purchase than the similar argument made by the moorland sheep farmer because: 1. Other people (the public, policy-makers etc) don’t seem to uphold the same aesthetic ideal of the in-bye pasture as the Spencers and Colleys (whereas they do with the bleak open heather moor), and; 2. Food production is not seen as irreplaceable, shortages can be overcome through imports from abroad, which the British government is in favour of encouraging anyway. In contrast, the heather moorland is perceived to be a unique and irreplaceable cultural asset, which must be protected by law. This section has also shown, however, how aesthetic arguments are used to make indictments on the nature of policy-making itself. How the work of the farmer, expressed in the appearance of the land is undermined by short-sighted policy initiatives that don’t maintain the landscape in as favourable a condition as the steady and unremitting endeavours of the farmer.

#### **6.4 The River**

In Chapter 3 I introduced the Esk Pearl Mussel and Salmon Recovery Project (EPMSRP). In this section I examine how the implementers of that programme attempt to justify it in two arenas. Firstly, in terms of external funders, how they emphasise the importance of protecting the pearl mussel to secure funding to carry out the project

work. Secondly, I look at how they justify the project to farmers and attempt to engage them in management works that aim to reduce sedimentation of the River Esk and *improve* the habitat for both pearl mussels and salmon. I then look at how farmers respond to this initiative in terms of their values. I focus, in particular, in this section on how farmers make arguments based on contested knowledge and how they challenge the legitimacy of this initiative on that basis. The implementers view the initiative as striving for a *beneficent change* in terms of pearl mussel habitat, but the farmers do not necessarily judge it similarly. It may not fit with their own conceptions of *beneficent change* and, once again, use this issue to question the benefits of the scheme and environmental initiatives more broadly.

Chris Lawson is a freshwater ecologist with the Environment Agency (EA) and sits on the steering group for the EPMSRP. Chris enjoys his role with the EA because it combines project management and wildlife protection. His main responsibility is to secure funding in order to get some benefit for species and habitats. He identified a slight dilemma in his work, however. That is that environmental work is not particularly well paid and if you want to move up in the Agency you tend to move away from the practical wildlife work to more management focussed work. He gave the example of some of his friends that had gone more down this route because they wanted a “better quality of life, more money” but were then asking themselves questions like “well what am I doing managing a team of people and looking at budget sheets and doing health and safety assessments and this, that and the other’, and they think ‘this isn’t why I came into it’” (C. Lawson interview, 24-06-08). Like the farmers, then, the implementers may feel they have their own compromises to make.

As a means to draw in funding the implementers from the National Park and the EA told me that the pearl mussel project “ticked all the right boxes” or “pushed the right buttons”. It’s “got the lot: biodiversity, carbon storage and flood protection”. The team made the case for the pearl mussel through recourse to its uniqueness and rarity from the local to European level:

They are declining across Europe, all of Britain and there are only two rivers in the whole of eastern England that actually hold them and that is this, and the Tyne so I think we have got a genetically distinct population here as well from after the Ice Age when the things came back ... so a genetically distinct population. And I just think it would be a shame at the moment if we do nothing about the silts, then we are just going to watch them go extinct in the next 20 years (*ibid.*).

[Extract 6-13]

Mentioning the word “extinction”, said Rory Lane (National Park), made the funders sit up and listen: “Our pearl mussels are equivalent to the giant panda, just not as cuddly or exciting” (Field Notes, 04-03-08). It was interesting, he told me, because when funding was coming through the EU’s objective 5b fund for economic regeneration, all the focus was on the salmon and the sea trout (because developing the fishery was seen as a means for rural development). And he would have been quite happy to use the salmon instead of the pearl mussel to secure the funding because they both fulfil the same objectives for the river. But this time around it was the pearl mussel that the funders were interested in because they were bidding for ecological, rather than economically driven funds (R. Lane interview, 03-07-08). Tying the project to climate change and flood protection also increased its appeal to funders. Peat on the moorland is a store of carbon and linking the project with peat protection makes it more attractive. By blocking grips (drainage channels) on the moor the project can reduce peat erosion (and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), the transfer of sediments into the river and the likelihood of flooding:

The interest in climate change is working in our favour in that it's accepted that if the climate is going to become, if the rainfall is going to become intermittent, that heavy downpours are going to become more frequent then the likelihood of nasty amounts of silt washing into the river are going to increase, therefore it is all the more important that we do something to stop it now. And also with peat washing into the river and peat in the dale, oxidising peat giving off CO<sub>2</sub> and therefore contributing to global warming is also something that we can use as a spur to try and encourage people to help make, you know, get this big bit [of funding] which is what my colleagues are busy working on at the moment (P. Ringsell interview, 03-07-08).

[Extract 6-14]

Rory, farm conservation manager in the catchment, valued the pearl mussels but saw the benefit of the project in terms of bringing in money to help make more general environmental *improvements* across the catchment more broadly. The ecologists, Chris Lawson (EA) and Penny Ringsell (National Park), however, were more motivated by the plight of the pearl mussel in its own right. Penny talked of being motivated to get the project going by being “depressed” at the decline of these “poor animals” or “poor souls”, and being “depressed” just looking at an OS map with all the grips marked on the moor (*ibid.*).

An article in the Whitby Gazette in November 2007 publicised the project to farmers and to the wider public. The purpose was to make farmers aware of the issue and let them know that funding was available for riverside fencing. Its publication in the

newspaper, however, meant that it was also aimed at raising awareness about the issue amongst the general public. The article included quotes about the scheme from the Heritage Lottery Fund (funders of the project) and a member of the EPMSRP steering group:

Few people realise a lottery ticket has the potential to save the UK's landscapes, countries and wildlife but freshwater mussels are as important a part of our heritage as a Rembrandt (Heritage Lottery Fund manager, Seymour, 2007)

It is important we act now as the pearl mussels in the River Esk are an ageing population and unless we can improve conditions they will become extinct. The funding is time limited so I would ask any farmer who borders the Esk upstream of Glaisdale to contact me as soon as possible (EPMSRP Rep, Seymour, 2007)

[Extract 6-15]

The Heritage Lottery Fund manager appeals to the broader public (who are ultimately funding the project) by widening the significance of the pearl mussel to the national landscape and — quite remarkably — emphasising their importance to “our” (presumably national) cultural heritage through recourse to a Dutch baroque painter. The task, presumably, is to broaden the appeal of the not “so cuddly and exciting” pearl mussel by linking it to the landscapes and the pasts that people feel are important for their sense of ‘national identity’. The EPMSRP representative, on the other hand, hopes to spur farmers into action by using the same “extinction” word that was so effective in drawing in project finances; by emphasising the time-limited nature of the funding, and; by referring to the pearl mussels as “an ageing population”. I was told by Rory Lane that he used the “ageing population” line as a light-hearted way of seeking farmers’ empathy for the plight of the mussel, since everyone would know that farmers are also an ageing population. Financial arguments were also emphasised by the implementers as incentives for engaging farmers in the scheme. Chris Lawson said that his aspiration was that people recognised the value of the river and the mussel but admitted that realistically it comes down to money. So if the money is there, and they can benefit from it too (e.g. through funded fencing work), then he thinks they’d like to come in (C. Lawson interview, 24-06-08). Penny also said that she would approach the issue with farmers by letting them know it’s not going to leave them out of pocket. She would also stress, however, that environmental responsibility is considered to be a part of good farming, and if you don’t have that response then “you end up fouling your own nest” (P. Ringsell interview, 03-07-08).

The implementers, then, employ a range of different arguments to draw in external funding, to publicise the project to the general public and to encourage the farmers' buy-in. To the funders, the threat of extinction of a species shown to be genetically unique — tied to a host of nationally and internationally significant environmental issues — seem to “push the right buttons”. To the wider public, the value of the pearl mussel to cultural heritage and its place in the landscape is emphasised to broaden its appeal. And to the farmers, arguments about the threats to the pearl mussel and its importance are tied to economic benefits<sup>33</sup>, mutually beneficial solutions<sup>34</sup>, jocular similarities between mussel and farmer, and emphasising the increasing importance of environmental protection to conceptions of the good farmer. I now examine how the farmers in the catchment responded to the EPMSRP and to the arguments that its implementers were making.

As in Section 6.3, aesthetic arguments figured prominently in farmers' responses to the scheme. All the “crap” out of the river that the fence would catch when it floods, and all the weeds that would grow up behind the fence if it wasn't grazed down to the river are particular examples. I won't elaborate on such arguments here since they have been given sufficient attention in the previous section. The management approach of the EPMSRP is focussed principally on reducing sediment inputs that result from agricultural activity. This is despite uncertainty as to the extent to which: 1, there has been an historical increase in sediment loading; 2, the increase in sediment is responsible for the decline of the pearl mussel, and; 3, agriculture has contributed to sediment increase and mussel decline. Without historic monitoring, evidence for an increase in sediment loading in the Esk is largely anecdotal. And whilst scientific experts on the pearl mussel recognise that fine sediment damages pearl mussel habitat, they also recognise a range of other factors that affect their viability (see Chapter 3). The farmers, then, might have good grounds to challenge the scheme in terms of their own knowledge about the river. Such arguments are often tied to questions about the value of the pearl mussel, and the level of support it is receiving relative to the upland farmer. Some examples of these arguments are outlined below.

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<sup>33</sup> Or at least there being no economic disadvantages. The introduction of an option within ELS of paying farmers 4p/metre for the maintenance of riverside fences, however, was suggested as a means through which the economic benefits can be portrayed.

<sup>34</sup> Since there are various potential benefits to a farmer for keeping livestock out of watercourses — provided they have an alternative source of drinking water. For instance open waters can increase the likelihood of infection, cause the ‘mucking up’ of animals (particularly important for dairy cows that have to be milked twice a day and be as clean as possible), and be hazardous in their own right (particularly during lambing or calving).

Several farmers challenged the rationale of the project through recourse to alternative causal factors for the decline of the mussel and salmon populations. These can be categorised as arguments that suggest alternative causes of sediment; arguments that suggest alternative sources of pollution, and; arguments that suggest alternative reasons for wildlife decline. Brief examples of these include:

#### *Alternative causes of sediment*

If there has it'll have been because of erm, the nature of, you know, the way the rain comes down these days, it comes down in huge lots all of a sudden so, er yeah there is a lot more runoff but I don't think the runoff's due to more stocking or anything like that. I think it's due to erm, due to the climate like (A. Middleton interview, 17-04-08).

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Well, there was a forestry up there. They cut the forestry down and the soils gone clay, and across our banks all the, all the land sloped [unclear] down and we've got like, you walk across our banks at t'dale head, we have like a football sock about this high, where the clay has come down, its gone pwock [vocal noise – onomatopoeia] so it just, its all washing towards the beck and the water's washing the soil away

And it pours down now dunt it off the moors? Well it never did that when we first moved up here and the forestry was still there (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08).

[Extracts 6-16, 17]

#### *Alternative Sources of Pollution*

The other thing I think has probably, people mebbly don't add up is barn conversions. There's a lot more housing in the district, either holiday cottages or, you know for people to live in. And all these people use bathwater and they use all these strange concoctions: soap I think it is you call it! [laughs] and they're all turned off into soakaways, imperatively and that will soak into the river, the, there's all sorts you know as you can blame but they seem to like blaming us farmers. There's also they gripped the moors up here, the grouse moors, to drain 'em off and dry 'em up, and that was a mistake cos then you got your flash floods and you did, you got a lot of, sort of, acid water off the moors up here (R. Barratt interview, 09-06-08).

[Extract 6-18]

#### *Alternative Reasons for Fish Decline*

I think if they stopped the fishermen at Whitby trawling 'em and netting 'em they would get a lot more up here [laughs] ... its sediment int it! [laughing] the fact they're closing the river with a net on a night and gathering loads up doesn't make a ha'p'orth o' difference does it? (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08)

Its got nothing to do with the, the do-gooders that went and let the mink out that get in the beck that need three miles .. [unclear] pair o' mink that's ate all the moorhens and killed all, or ate all the fish, it 'ant to do with them has it? [sarcastic] (*ibid.*).

[Extract 6-19]

It is not my intention to assess the validity of the farmers' arguments but to point out that, of course, they want to defend themselves against finger-pointing that is based on uncertain scientific evidence. And, moreover, that their anecdotal evidence might be as equally valid as the fisheries and conservation groups that have their own interests to pursue. It is also interesting to note, with reference to the first example, that farmers also make arguments through recourse to broader environmental issues. We saw how the implementers used climate change mitigation to draw in funding for the project, while Andrew Middleton on the other hand, points the finger of blame at climate change in order to get farmers off the hook.

A handful of farmers saw a value in protecting the mussel, could see the benefits of installing some fencing to their farm and so willingly engaged in the scheme. Amongst the others, whilst some thought it important to try and protect the pearl mussel, the majority questioned the value of the project. I present the following response of Tom Hasling to the project to allow elaboration on a number of argumentative strategies that the farmers employed:

SE: and poaching on the banks, they reckon that's one of the causes

TH: right, yeah, yeah. Well bollocks then, that's about what I would say they've been doing that for a hundred years, they used to tek [take] hosses down there and water 'em, they used to bloody dip sheep in there at one time and all sorts of crap you know. Er, no, so I'm sorry I would just say that's todger

...

TH: there's a few cattle do go down to water I must admit but I mean, if they were putting so much sediment down then you would see a load of bank erosion and half the field disappearing. Well its not happened yet, there's a puddly bit down by the water's edge fair enough, you know, I'm sure all cattle do that, but its been the same puddly bit for all my life, its you know it hasn't changed

...

TH: He has, yeah, he has. That's great, he's done all that fencing [on the pilot farm], first time t'river comes out, t'bloody fence'll be full o' crap, and you know ... [unclear] ... but you know that's their money int it. Well it int their money, it's our money, you know it's our public money int it, you know

SE: You think it would be better spent elsewhere?

TH: well, I mean, I'm a farmer and a sheep farmer and all that but, if you look, go and have a look at some brochures up at t'National Park, everything you look at's got a Scott yow [ewe] or a Swale yow on't front, they sell the sheep, they sell the National Park's on the moors

SE: yeah

TH: that should be their main concern, look after them moors, you know, never mind the bloody mussel, I, you know, I can't stand fish any way

[Extract 6-19]

Tom questions the use of public money to fund the project. He combines this with an aesthetic argument to demonstrate the pointlessness of the endeavour. The same point was made by Andrew Middleton who argued that as soon as a big flood comes along all the newly installed fencing will be washed away, "so what a waste of resources" (A. Middleton interview, 17-04-08). There are three factors underlying this argument.

The first is a questioning of the inherent value of the pearl mussel and the use of public money for its protection. It may be possible to infer from the above examples that Tony Uttridge takes particular exception to the project. "What do the mussels actually do" he asked me, "what for? for ducks to eat 'em? what actually for our money?". Whoever gave the National Park money to protect the pearl mussel "should have had a sharp tap with a baseball bat" (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08).

The second, is a comparison between the value of the upland farmer, or moor sheep and the pearl mussel. Tom thinks that the National Park should be focussing on protecting moor sheep and demonstrates their importance by their use on all of the National Park's marketing material. Do the pearl mussels really contribute to the landscape that is valued so much (cf the argument made by the Heritage Lottery Fund on the landscape value of the pearl mussel)? It is the sheep that maintain the landscape (Section 6.2), and is the National Park really going to start using the pearl mussel as an emblem? Reg Barratt raised the same issue with regard to fencing. How could the National Park justify fencing the River Esk in for forty freshwater mussels, when they don't allow the fencing of the moor roads to prevent sheep being killed by motorists? (R. Barratt interview, 09-06-08). Efforts to engage farmers by drawing comparisons between them and the pearl mussels as an ageing population, then, might not have achieved the desired effect. Because if this was spurring the authorities into action to protect the mussel, why wasn't the same being done for the upland farmer?

Sometimes I think, there's too much emphasis on the environment, and not enough emphasis on food production and looking after small Dales farms but, I just think, you know, one day we might be needed a bit, you know and if we aren't looked after we'll have become extinct like the pearl mussel you know (G. Wilson interview, 28-11-07).

[Extract 6-20]

Thirdly, the example is underlain by arguments on the nature of change. Pollution used to be much worse in the past, argued Tom, with the sheep dips and horses going down to the river, so why should they blame the actions of farmers now for the decline of the pearl mussel? And the only area where his cattle do go to drink hasn't changed over the course of his entire life, so how can the policy implementers think that things have got worse, or suggest that it is cattle drinking from the river that has caused the decline? James Morton, regional chairman of the NFU made a similar argument, pointing to the very existence of the pearl mussel in the first place as being indicative of a high quality environment. For if the mussels have been around for at least 50-80 years then what farmers have been doing over that period can't have been that bad can it? And for them to have survived, combined with the amount of sea trout that keep coming up the Esk, suggests that not much has changed at all (J. Morton interview, 07-02-08). James gave the example of Natural England and their approach to moorland management. They came in and changed the burning regime, to allow the heather to grow longer but then five years later realised that shorter heather actually provides a much better habitat and more food for wading birds and things. In organisations like Natural England where you get relatively high levels of staff turnover, or people moving from position to position, they all seem to want to come in and stamp their authority and do something significant but they just can't accept that "if it isn't broke, you don't try and fix it" (*ibid.*).

Implicit in this point is the same argument that has been made over and over throughout this chapter. That farmers feel that they have demonstrated that they are in the best position to manage the environment because it is they that have created what it is that is so valued by everyone else. And those that come in and try and alter things with short-sighted policy initiatives have demonstrated that they just get things wrong. The National Park has been around for 20 years and farmers for the last 400, pointed out Tony Uttridge, "so who do you think's going to be in the best position to know how to look after the land?" (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08). During my stay at High Moor Farm Guy Bowman said that "the lunatics have taken over the asylum — and all under the banner of environmentalism". He then went on "but if we sat here long enough we'd realise that it's the farmers that are the best environmentalists and things are only as they are now because that's how its been managed by farmers" (Field Notes, 20-02-08). The sentiments reflect a longer term conception of *beneficent change* amongst the farmers and one which is expressed in the land. For the land cannot lie. To address this argument I examine in the final part of this section how the implementers view

beneficial change in terms of the project; how they will monitor it, and evaluate whether it has been a success.

All the implementers outlined that the ultimate success of the project would be judged in terms of their ability to have *improved* the habitat sufficiently to allow the reinstatement of a self-sustaining population of pearl mussels. They recognised, however, that they faced a difficult challenge to achieve that end and that it might be a long time before they could judge the success of the project. In which case, they needed to be able to judge and monitor the ongoing success of the project. I asked them how they would go about this. As well as the ultimate aim of sustaining the pearl mussel, Penny Ringsell said that the current work on the project would also be judged a success if it was able to demonstrate its worth and draw in more project funding. Now, this could be interpreted as a purely economic (cf *improving*) conception of success, although it could also be interpreted as a means to extend the length of the project and make the ultimate aim of pearl mussel reinstatement more likely. Chris Lawson said that one way in which the ongoing success of the project could be monitored would be in terms of numbers:

I think the best way we could do it would be in terms of what length of river bank have we got fenced off, out of a total length of river bank, what measures have we put it, over what sort of area, are we, and you know you could do some sort of rough and ready assessment of okay we've got x kilometres of river and we've, we've talked to farmers over y and of that we've got z in, we've fenced off, we've got restored bankside habitat on this length. We've put in so many new drinking points, we've put in you know, so many solar powered drinking troughs. That sort of thing, I think you could certainly do it in numbers. Erm and I think that would be a reasonable way of doing it (C. Lawson interview, 23-06-08).

[Extract 6-21]

Translating *improvements* into numbers, we discussed, made reporting the success of the project more straightforward. I assumed the *improvements* would be linked to some ecological indicators but Chris said that is pretty hard to do because natural systems and populations fluctuate from year to year so it would be difficult to separate the impacts that "your" *improvement* works had had from natural fluctuations. So *improvements* would be measured purely, then, on the basis of measurable components of work — such as the length of fencing erected — regardless of whether that measure had had any demonstrable benefit to the ecology of the river. The EA monitors performance internally in terms of meeting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are “sort of invented by people nationally” and defined in terms of “length” or “area” of a habitat that is “improved” or “restored”. But using the word “restored” Chris told me, didn't mean that it's absolutely restored to “great” just that you've “put in the measures to bring about the recovery” (*ibid.*):

I'll give you an example. Say, this table here, we were gonna, we were looking to create a wetland on there. Say it was dry grassland, we wanted that to become wet grassland. The minute I got in the water control structures, say on the ditches around it, that could bring about the recovery of that, that would be classed as the whole area of that table, say it was 33ha, that would be classed as 33ha of wet grassland achieved. Even though, it's not actually there yet. But it's about putting in the measures that could bring about that restoration (*ibid.*)

[Extract 6-22]

The use of the word “project” to describe the Esk pearl mussel undertaking has a temporal dimension in itself. And that is a finite one. So what happens when a project ends, I asked, does it continue to be monitored afterwards? Chris admitted that if a project is completely ended then there would unlikely be a lot of monitoring. He saw this as quite a shortfall that was symptomatic of pressures on time and money and staff resources. And then there would be the pressures of the next project: “‘oh that’s not important now’ you’re onto this next thing you know, so that definitely happens” (*ibid.*).

Projects have to be monitored, then, in terms of measurable outputs that needn't necessarily relate to the actual objectives of the project. Furthermore, projects by their very nature are finite, constrained by resources and their ongoing success is unlikely to be monitored. In this arena *beneficent change*, and by implication the work of the implementer, is judged in terms of outputs. This contrasts with *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* that are so often used by farmers to make indictments about environmental initiatives and to make the claim that farmers are the best environmentalists. For their conceptions of *beneficent change* are expressed through the appearance of the land, as symbolic representations of their continuous work. And that work is never finished. *Fetling*, keeping the land in good heart, requires long term application that is not easily reducible to numbers, to quantification or KPIs and is never judged as a job done, as a project completed, but as a job underway. So farmers may not buy into the scheme, despite financial incentives, if it is seen to be short-sighted and undermines (or undermines the nature of) their past work and *improvement* efforts. A more detailed assessment of the differences between the farmer's and implementer's conception of *beneficent change* is reserved for the following chapter.

## 6.5 Summary

The Chapter has shown how farming values, and the means of expressing those values, are used in the argumentative strategies of farmers as they make their response to environmental initiatives. It has been shown, further, that how those values are used

changes depending upon the particular situation encountered and, to a degree, differences between farmers own conceptions of those values. The chapter has shown how farmers' work or hardship; the appearance of the land; and, knowledge are used to make arguments in response to environmental initiatives. Despite presenting those means of argumentation principally separately, they are often inseparable and combine in different ways — once again — dependent on the particular situation. Underlying all these argumentative strategies is a value in a certain type of *beneficent change* that is presented in opposition to the types of change targeted and implemented by policy-makers. And that difference is temporal. Farmers outline the shortcomings of short-sighted policy initiatives, whose objectives are always shifting because of the failings of previous policies. But the type of change the farmers value can't be achieved overnight, it has to be achieved steadily through continuous labour and find expression in the land. So when policy initiatives affect the work that the farmer does, the nature (time-rate) of the change they are asked to comply with, and the means through which they express their values (the landscape), that policy is not just seen as oppositional to what is the best means of managing the environment, but is also a direct affront to the farmers themselves, to their personhoods.

The combination of the importance of such values to personhood and their mutability makes them useful rhetorically. For it may not be that the values themselves change pursuant to the requirements of a particular situation but, rather, the means of expressing those values. Despite farmers being shown to face certain dilemmas when faced with policies that offer financial incentives, the collective response of farmers in terms of the nature of the change seems much more accordant than their conceptions of change in other situations. When faced with what may be interpreted as an external threat (increasing environmental requirements) to their personhoods, then, the farmers respond with a long-term conception of *beneficent change* that most suits their purposes of making an indictment on the policy (cf the symbolic construction of community; Cohen, 1985). In other situations however, it appears that there is a greater variability in the conceptions of *beneficent change* that the farmers uphold (Chapter 5). In the following chapter I examine the rhetorical function of progressive and declensionist narratives, attachment to place, and the use of scale in conjunction with farming values. Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated that such values get used. Chapter 7 aims to explore the means through which those values are used and to reflect on the implications in terms of the success of policy implementation.

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## Chapter 7

### Farming Values and Rhetorical Play

#### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have shown that the values important for farming personhoods are mutable and how that mutability also renders them useable in the construction of arguments. In this chapter I hope to demonstrate that it is not just the interpretability of those values that makes them apt for rhetorical persuasion but their very importance for personhood and their pervasiveness. I hope to show how rhetorical play with the values most important to a person may be a particularly effective rhetorical technique. In particular I examine how initiatives that lay challenge to a farmer's personhood may bring about a response. Moreover, I examine how the engendering of a certain vulnerability might be more likely to bring about a response in the first place. Through narrative plots that cause alarm, through play with familiarity, scale and sense of attachment the chapter hopes to show how encouraging a performance, a change in behaviour, is most likely to succeed where a susceptibility has been engendered to the same values that are important to farmers' sense of themselves. In light of this, the Chapter also considers the effectiveness of environmental initiatives aimed at farmer engagement. It examines, in particular, how environmental schemes might not be as conformant with extant farming values as they *appear*, and, how the same means of rhetorical play as outlined in the first half of the chapter may be used to bring about a desired change in behaviour.

#### 7.2 Values and Rhetorical Play

##### 7.2.1 Values, movements and performances – the example of work ethic

Chapter 6 showed the different ways in which farmers use their *work ethic* rhetorically. It showed how that rhetoric is tailored to different audiences and pursuant to the demands of the particular situation and the interests being pursued or defended. It was shown how, against a commonly perceived external threat, that *work ethic* was more often portrayed collectively, and tended to rely on an association between either work/hardship and virtue or work and monetary reward. However, it was also shown in Chapter 5 how those collective expressions were underlain by significant differences — and complex associations between values and their expression — at the level of the individual. Despite those differences of interpretation of the values, and their means of expression, what is significant is that *some* interpretation of those values remain important for farming personhoods. It is this combined interpretability and persistence

of such values that gives rise to their rhetorical efficacy. Their interpretability is symptomatic of their *usability*. Moreover, and the point that I want to develop in this section, because those values are important to farming personhoods it may render farmers *vulnerable* to rhetorical play with those selfsame values. Challenging, or drawing into question, such values or their means of expression is not just an affront to those values but to the farmer him/herself. It raises ontological questions, may engender a push toward the inchoate, and encourage a response from the farmer: a concomitant performance.

This vulnerability to the values with which one understands who oneself is, applies to both *work ethic* and *beneficent change* — in terms of farmers — but could be applied widely in a variety of different situations. In this section, I focus particularly on *work ethic* and its rhetorical use *on* rather than *by* farmers (Chapter 6) and how it is used to bring about a movement and encourage a performance. In Chapters 5 and 6 it was shown how the *work ethic* operates symbolically and was used to endorse the good farmer and was also used as a kind of warrant to emphasise — to a wider audience — the value of the Dales farmer either symbolically or financially. It was also shown, however, that those values may be burdensome when they restrict or constrain behaviour, come up against alternative interpretations of the same value, or are made difficult to uphold because of external pressures. In this section I prefer to illustrate, simply, how the values that matter — through their manipulation — may be used in attempts to alter behaviour.

In Chapter 5 I showed how I accidentally challenged the *work ethic* or hardship value of Fred Atlass and Ernest Mullaney by suggesting, respectively, they might be “winding down” or had had a “good life”. These might seem like inconsequential examples but they show how performances were encouraged — albeit inadvertently — as a result of a sense of affront. This demonstrates how in the minutia of everyday life those men continuously reaffirm the values that they uphold, and they reaffirm who it is that they are. Their performances in this instance were minor and subtle. Consisting of no more than a little terminological nudging to reaffirm themselves in a manner appropriate to the nature of my infringement. We might expect a stronger response from these two old men, however, if they were to hear the incomer — Alan Spuhler — suggesting that farming is actually “quite easy” (Chapter 6).

As the antithesis of *hard work*, the indictment of laziness upon an individual might be considered the ultimate affront to a person that subscribes to a value in *hard work*. As

such, it might be the most powerful — albeit blunt — means of challenging personhood and encouraging a performance. One afternoon during the school holidays at Burrowbank Farm Mike asked Patrick to help us strip some fittings from an old freezer unit before we took it to the tip. And he duly obliged. Later on that evening Ellen asked Patrick what he'd been doing that day, perhaps questioning whether he'd done anything productive in his holiday. Patrick responded sharply, telling his mother that he'd been working, helping his father and I with the freezer unit. But he didn't stop there; he turned his mother's question back on her. "What have you been doing all day?" he asked, "you've been sleeping, you're lazy". Ellen, in fact, hadn't been sleeping but was running errands in Whitby. Mike took exception to this and said "don't call your mum lazy, she's not lazy, she does lots for you". Patrick smiled cheekily and said "I was just joking ... just trying to get a reaction" (Field Notes, 11-02-08). The incident was over. Patrick had succeeded in encouraging a performance with his indictment. And whilst Patrick was motivated by that common teenage pastime of agitating one's parents, rather than anything more sinister, we can imagine how the same indictment can be used in attempts at bringing about more substantial and long-lasting behavioural performances.

A simple example comes from my visit to the local auction mart. There, Len Fielder was explaining to me why horned cattle were undesirable. Not only may horned cattle be more dangerous to handle, they may also injure one another during transit from the auction mart and this is seen as akin to damaging the goods of the buyer. Len said he just doesn't like to see it, and that it's a sign of a "lazy farmer". Although this comment was made to me, rather than to a farmer, we can imagine how similar sentiments circulate amongst farmers and serve to affect behaviour. A farmer wishing to avoid being labelled as lazy, therefore, is likely to remove the horns of his cattle: a performance that suits the requirement of the market brought about by an indictment on the farmer's *work ethic*. Yet there is another — some might argue more motivating — incentive to remove horns; and that is price. The credentials of a farmer as a "good producer" (as opposed to "good farmer") are likely to be questioned if his livestock remain horned and he is unlikely to fetch as high a price at the auction. However, it was shown in Chapter 5 that there is considerable variation in farmers' interpretation of the "good farmer". Very few judged a good farmer solely in terms of his ability to make a profit and to produce for the market. More saw that this had to be balanced with other objectives such as animal welfare and maintaining the land in good condition, whilst some put these latter objectives above those of profit. Amongst some animal welfare groups dehorning is considered cruel and inhumane. We might imagine a hypothetical farmer who places animal welfare above profit, therefore, deciding not to remove the

horns. However, if that farmer also places a high value on his *work ethic*, being told that leaving horns on cattle is a sign of laziness may be more likely to bring about a change in behaviour than the signals of the market. The effectiveness of the rhetoric, then, depends upon the situation and interpretation of values that a particular individual subscribes to.

Such differences in interpretation may represent spatial or temporal differences in the performance of roles. Spatially, as soon as a farmer steps out of his Land Rover and into the auction mart he is no longer a farmer but a “producer”. There, he is judged solely in terms of his ability to produce what the market wants. Back on his farm, however, he may be judged differently, by the wandering eyes of a neighbour surveying the appearance of his land from behind a wall. Alternatively, the differences in interpretation could be seen as demonstrative of change over time. They might represent the encroachment of market values into the concept of the good farmer, which has been brought about by rhetorical play with — and reinterpretation of — extant farming values. This may represent efforts to make the “good farmer” synonymous with the “good producer”. Different values in work over space and time have been identified by Wallman (1979: 8):

In any one system, the value of particular forms or aspects of work, even of work itself, depends on other elements in that system. This is as true for individuals as for social forms. The extent to which a person values one kind of work above another depends not only on the values of the society in which he lives, but on other things happening at the time — other options, other constraints, other obligations. The evaluation of work therefore changes with historical and social context but also with personal circumstances.

It is not my intention to fully analyse exactly what is going on in this example. Chapter 5 demonstrated the complexity with which values are maintained and expressed in a variety of different situations. My purpose, rather, is to demonstrate that these mutable values that are so important for personhood *can* allow for alternative contemporaneous interpretations of the same value and allow different performances in different situations. And those values *can* allow for changes in interpretation and subsequent behaviour through time. Moreover, by demonstrating how rhetorical play with those values may lead to movement and concomitant performance, I hope to suggest that these differences over space and time represent the continual negotiation between agents and patients in the pursuit and defence of interests, as well as the continual improvisation required to deal with unforeseen — or inchoate — situations using the cultural means that one has available. In Chapter 8 I reconsider processes of historical change and

suggest that the persistence of diverse interpretations of farming values cannot support the notion that one set of values has been so ideologically embedded as to entirely replace another set (cf *proposition one*).

Where negotiations between agents and patients are unequal there may be something more troubling to be discerned from the insights of this example. And that is rhetorical play as an instrument of power. For if farmers are more inclined to respond to cultural rather than market signals, and if those cultural signals have been reinterpreted pursuant to market interests then a farmer may continue to produce what the market wants without any direct signal from the market itself. This may explain why farmers continue to produce for the market, despite falling returns. Several farmers I spoke to told of how the annual wool clip used to pay the farm rent, but now — under the price control of the wool marketing board — it doesn't provide enough income to cover the annual cost of having the shears sharpened. So why do farmers do it? Is it because the appearance and welfare of their livestock is associated with the good farmer? Do they continue to do it because the appearance of their livestock (and the work required to maintain that appearance) is a direct expression of themselves, as constitutive of their personhoods? If so, are they operating from a position of false consciousness? Are the actions that they perform, that they feel bring themselves closer to themselves, not as much of their own making as they might think?

On a much broader scale, and historically, we see the same tactics employed in religious doctrine or ideologically:

I passed by the field of the sluggard  
 And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,  
 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles;  
 Its surface was covered with nettles,  
 And its stone wall was broken down.

When I saw, I reflected upon it;  
 I looked, and received instruction.  
 "A little sleep, a little slumber,  
 A little folding of the hands to rest,"  
 Then your poverty will come as a robber  
 And your want like an armed man.

*Proverbs 24:30-34 NASB*

The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, which is naturally, or rather necessarily acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, and to apply his hand in twenty different ways almost every day of his life; renders him almost always slothful and lazy,

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and incapable of any vigorous application (from Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776, in Womack, 1989: 126).

In the above example Smith is championing the division of labour and the enclosure of agricultural land as a means of maximising economic efficiency. The agricultural worker that applies himself to an array of different and disparate tasks, he suggests, must be lazy. Of course, Smith's central arguments are economic but they are reinforced by indictments of laziness, by aspersions that are antithetical to the country worker's personhood and likely to encourage a performance that suits the mode of production that he espouses. Smith uses the *work ethic* symbolically, for whilst it may be possible to say that performing a range of different duties is less productive, it does not necessarily follow that it entails a lesser application of effort, nor the quality of its expression through other means. By tying work with productive capacity and by indicting alternative forms of work, the virtue associated with the *work ethic* (in Smith's terms) can only be demonstrated and realised through productivity. I reserve further discussion on the ideological function of such play with values, and with language to Chapter 8.

Proverb 24 shows that, like many of the farmers in the Esk catchment, *hard work* — or laziness — is expressed in the aesthetic appearance of the land. Making aesthetic indictments, therefore, is also a proxy indictment on *work ethic* (e.g. Section 6.3). Where an external influence, such as agri-environmental policy, is seen to affect the appearance of the land, therefore, it is not just an affront to the expression of that value. Rather, it is an affront to the values underlying that expression and, therefore, to the very people of whom the values are constitutive of (See Section 7.3). This imbues considerable rhetorical force on aesthetic symbols — such as thistles — that can be used in rhetorical play as proxies for the values that they represent. The association between weeds and laziness, we can imagine, served the purpose of productivist agricultural policy. Now, however, the job of the environmental implementers to convince farmers that environmental responsibility is part of what it means to be a good farmer (P. Ringsell, Chapter 6), is hindered by the success of past policy exigencies that did not just attach virtue in itself to political objectives, but did so through recourse to extant values already laden in virtue. Section 7.3 examines how agri-environmental policy attempts to bring about changes in behaviour through recourse to extant values in *beneficent change*. In particular it examines the success of attempts to bring about change through recourse to concepts such as stewardship that are akin to farming values in *fettling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*.

These examples may be considered to operate using the same rhetorical means as Patrick's suggestion that his mother was lazy. They seek to bring about a performance by challenging the ability of the status quo to be demonstrative of the values important to personhood. And those values are constantly negotiated and reaffirmed in everyday interactions. They are challenged, revered and upheld in ways as complex as the situations in which they operate. We saw in chapter 6 how values in work are tailored to the particular audience and to the specific interests being defended or pursued. We saw how different interpretations of the same value could be antagonistic and cause dilemmas. We saw how different individuals made indictments using the same values but through different means and we saw how individuals subscribing to one means of expression were unmoved by — or ignorant of — indictments made using alternative means of expression.

This process is incessant and self-perpetuating, for the performances that result from rhetorical persuasion can be rhetorical and reaffirming in themselves. They are propagated through both language and action. And their rhetorical effectiveness arises from an intersection of the said and the unsaid (Tyler, 1978) of the performed and unperformed. Or, more accurately, from performances that are not witnessed. Consider Mike Lockwood not choosing to go jogging around Briardale from a sense of the burden of the *work ethic* (Chapter 5). His behaviour is modified by his knowledge of that value and the appropriate means of expressing it. He is encouraged to perform through non-performance. And what's more, that non-performance in itself could be seen as rhetorical, by allowing his neighbours to infer that he *has* got something better to be doing.

The *work ethic* is pervasive and implicit. And it is as if it conceals itself through its ubiquity. For rhetoric that is identified as rhetorical has little, if any, rhetorical force. Its longevity and mutability is demonstrative of its importance in the process of identification but also gives rise to its usability. This section has suggested that the same processes of negotiation, of rhetorical play, that happen at the small-scale can also work at a broader ideological level. Moreover, those small-scale negotiations may work to reaffirm and perpetuate broader ideological interests, or be representative of broader ideological contestations. Chapter 8 considers further the ideological function of *work ethic* and conceptions of *beneficent change* in bringing about desired changes in behaviour. Ideological processes are presented as a cultural possibility, but the diversity of expression and the negotiated use of farming values that has been highlighted throughout the thesis is used to suggest that ideological attempts are neither wholesale

nor uncontested. The following section turns to look at *beneficent change* and looks at how alternative conceptions are purported through narrative, through progressive and declensionist plots and through play with scale and attachment to place.

### 7.2.2 Narrative and Beneficent Change

In Chapter 4 it was shown how historical accounts of the Esk Valley — and environmental accounts more broadly — were underlain by progressive and declensionist plots that served a rhetorical function (Cronon, 1992). Furthermore, it showed how values in work and *beneficent change* were tied to the landscape. The landscape itself, then, serves a narrative function. It acts as a record of past change, can be used to endow or withhold value on the nature of that change — or of an alternative type of change — and it can serve as a moral imperative for some future action. The landscape, and the stories told in and through it, may be used to give narrative accountability to actions (Carrithers, 2007), and serve as a motive for, or indictment on, future courses of action. The previous two chapters have shown the existence of a variety of conceptions of *beneficent change*; have shown that those values are upheld and expressed through the land; and that argumentative responses to external policy initiatives are often underlain by indictments on the nature (time-rate) of change. Farming responses that make recourse to change must have a narrative function. And the rhetorical effectiveness of that narrative is achieved by making a certain change *appear* directional; either positive or negative, progressive or declensionist. Furthermore, to give that narrative a directional component, the story must include what might be called ‘moral signifiers’. By this I mean words or phrases that denote the nature of change through positively or negatively virtuous associations (e.g. better/worse, good/bad, tidy/messy). This section will examine how progressive and declensionist plots are combined for particular effect; the means through which directional change is attributed and the importance not just of the direction of change, but the speed of change too.

In the following example Tony Uttridge argues the case for keeping a headage-based payment system. A high stocking level is required, he argued, to “keep the dale good; to keep it tidy”:

A well-farmed farm is a damn sight tidier than one that’s say used to keep 60 suckler cows and two hundred sheep and he’s dropped down to 25 suckler cows a hundred sheep, its just ‘oh I won’t bother with them fields there, they’re rubbish, I aren’t putting owt, might as well do owt wi’ them, we won’t bother wi’ them’. Then they just look, they look, well they look bad [emphasised] they look, you know, they’re going back. When my dad started contracting they reclaimed lots

of intakes and moor and got ‘em all grassed down, farming was booming and they were green, they were all green and looked like fields. Well now all them are going back to how they were before he reclaimed ‘em (T. Uttridge interview, 23-01-08).

[Extract 7-1]

Tony provides a story of change, using numbers, relating to the reduced stocking levels. This story of change becomes declensionist with the insertion of the moral signifiers of “rubbish” and looking “bad”. But the story doesn’t end there. The extremity of this declensionist plot is heightened by recourse to a previously progressive plot, which is being reversed. That it was progressive is signified by the terms “booming”, “green” and “looking like fields”. That that progressive story is being undone by the declensionist change introduced in the first part of the quote is signified by the fact that the fields are “going back”. Principally, it is the aesthetic appearance of the land, and the virtues with which that appearance is associated, that are used to signify a progressive or declensionist change.

It was shown in Chapter 6 that many of the arguments made by farmers in response to environmental initiatives cast judgement not just on their perception of the direction of change, but on the rate of change too. It was shown how both productivist and environmental policy might be rejected, or contested, if they were seen to be underlain by shorted-sighted, rapid changes that just wouldn’t last. The rate of change, then, through its virtuous association to *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*, serves a narrative function too. It was shown in Chapter 4 how Fowler’s account of the First Millennium AD portrayed a virtuous agrarian achievement, which was characterised by steady change and was achieved through unremitting *hard work*. The virtuosity of this achievement was demonstrated further by contrasting it with a more rapid change that followed the First Millennium that was not afforded such virtuous association (Fowler, 2002).

An excellent example tying the rates of change, progressive and declensionist plots, a value in *work ethic*, and virtuous expression through the appearance of the land is provided in Extract 6-11. The example shows a progressive story of steady change (“digging all these drains in by hand”) undone by a rapid change brought about by a mechanical digger “ripping them all out” that resulted in something much worse: “a bog”, “a mess”. The progressive story relies on a virtuous association to the *hard work* of the ancestors who dug the drains in by hand, whilst the declensionist story includes an indictment on the *work ethic* of the farmer making the changes: “making more money by

not doing anything, by having a mess”. The example is used to make an indictment on short-sighted policies through recourse to extant values in *fettling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*, to the *work ethic* and to their expression through the land.

The rhetorical efficacy of these narrative techniques is borne out of their ability to cause a movement and bring about a performance. A simple progressive story might provide a moral imperative for performance through the continuation of that story. It seems, however, that the likelihood of bringing about a performance is brought about by making the story altogether more alarming. And that can be achieved by threatening progress with decline, or by suggesting — through recourse to extant values — that rapid change is bad in itself. Rapidly declensionist plots that undo steady progressive plots, therefore, might be particularly effective. It was shown in Chapter 6 how not just the farmers but the environmental implementers used similar techniques. When I asked Chris Lawson of the Environment Agency how conservation priorities were assigned he told me that it is based more on the *rate* of decline of a species, than their absolute rarity. He gave the example of the water vole that had seen a population decline of 90-95% and so it triggered a response. This was even though "it wasn't the rarest species in the country" and because of the large number of species, priorities may also be designated on the basis of pressures from interest groups: by “who shouts loudest” (C. Lawson interview, 24-06-08). This demonstrates that a rapid change, to the environmental implementers too, is particularly effective in bringing about a performance. And those shouting loudly, with a rapidly declensionist narrative plot, might be the most likely to have their argument heard. We saw in the arguments of the EPMSRP representatives a rapidly declensionist story of the pearl mussel being told in order to motivate people into action. And what appeared more effective than just a declensionist plot was an *irreversible* declensionist plot. Rory Lane explained how the word “extinction” was particularly effective when facing funding bodies because it made them sit up and listen and think “shit, we’ve got to do something about this” (R. Lane interview, 03-07-08).

Both the direction, and the rate of change of a progressive or declensionist plot is illuminated through recourse to numbers and to issues of scale. Tony Uttridge, in the above example, shows how a decline in suckler cows from 60 to 25 and from 200 sheep to 100 has detrimental impacts on the landscape as well as the attitude of the farmer (“oh I won't bother wi' them fields”). We will also recall how the Spencers' progressive story of farm expansion in their family was illuminated with an accurate (seemingly) recollection of increasing livestock numbers and acreage (Extract 5-19). The use of numbers, in itself, adds rhetorical force to a narrative by allowing a direction to be

inferred and a rate of change to be quantified (assuming some temporal dimension too). I have also made the argument that rhetoric operates through what is concealed as much as what is revealed. And this can work with numbers. It may not necessarily be deceitful, but the story that is being told is enhanced by the story that is not being told. I illustrate this through recourse to Extract 6-1. We can consider the first half of this account by Trevor Eustace as telling a particular story. He begins with 1,000 sheep on the moor, then introduces his “pedigree” cattle, then his neighbour got foot and mouth and “they culled the whole blooming lot”. We further learn that Trevor had spent 30 or 40 years building them up. So the effectiveness of this story is borne out of a steady progressive change (30-40 years building them up) being undone by a rapid declensionist plot which is illuminated by the large number of sheep he had on the moor and their being culled all at once. At least, that was my interpretation up to that point in the conversation. I then asked whether the cull took place when he still had 1,000 sheep on the moor and learnt that he had actually already cut numbers back to 520 by then. If I had not asked that question then I would have been left assuming the cull of 1,000 sheep, which, by nature of its scale must be more alarming (and more likely to provoke a response) than the cull of 520 sheep.

Just like numbers, geographical scale too can be used to illuminate a narrative account, imply direction, increase the level of alarm and attempt to increase the likelihood of a concomitant performance. In Extract 6-13 we see how scale is used to emphasise both the broad and specific importance of the pearl mussel. We learn that they are declining across the whole of Britain and Europe. Therefore this is not just a local issue, but one that can be targeted at a broader audience. However, their presence across Europe might beg the question as to why it is important to protect *these* mussels. Therefore, it is also necessary to demonstrate the specific importance of *this population* of mussels and this is achieved by highlighting their particular rarity in the East of England and their genetic distinctiveness. So, their significance in Europe allows a broad audience to be targeted, whilst their genetic distinctiveness to a small area allows the telling of the most drastic and alarming declensionist story of all: one that ends in irreversible “extinction” and the loss of something unique.

A similar technique is used by Reg Barratt in Extract 6-7. Here, we see a declensionist plot of the moorland landscape, and the local farmer, illuminated — in amongst much powerful language — through recourse to scale. Reg also highlights the European importance of the heather moor since it is one of the biggest that there is in Europe. Scale works here along two lines. Firstly, like in the pearl mussel case, to signify the

importance of the moorland to a broader audience and secondly, to demonstrate the importance of the moor by virtue of its size. Unlike the pearl mussel population in the Esk which is tiny, it is the size of the moor that is used to reaffirm its importance, because if it is lost then a significant part of all of Europe's moor will be lost too. In both cases size is used to attribute uniqueness; the rarity of the pearl mussel is attributed to a small population, whereas the rarity of the moor is attributed to its large area.

Like we have seen is employed elsewhere, Reg tells a story of steady progress (achieved by reified ancestors over 200 – 300 years) being undone by rapid and, he claims, “irretrievable” decline. And once again, the direction of change is illuminated by moral signifiers tied to the appearance of the land such as the encroachment of “rubbish trees” and the “choking out” of the heather. More significantly, Reg ties the uniqueness of the heather moorland to the uniqueness of the local stocksmen that have created and maintained the moor. It is only they that can maintain the current condition of the moor through the grazing of sheep because they have the ability to live on the dale heads and shepherd on the moor. This serves the same purpose as arguing that the pearl mussel is genetically distinct: that the loss of the moorland will be irreversible. However it also serves another function, which is to tie the value of the moorland to the value of the upland farmer and use the arguments of scale that apply to the moor and apply them to the farmer too. Furthermore, this is reinforced through recourse to the work of the farmer which has been undervalued. This allows him to justify his final point, to pursue his ultimate interest; which is the reintroduction of a headage based payment system for the moorland graziers.

The extending of arguments through recourse to broader environmental issues, in this way, takes advantage of the ability of “the environment” to transcend cultural boundaries and appeal to a wider audience (Milton, 1995; Harper 2001). This was a common tactic employed by both farmers and implementers during my discussions with them (e.g. Extracts 6-7, 6-8, 6-13, 6-14, 6-15, 6-16). Farmers, in particular, would challenge the sense of planning restrictions, new legislation, or even local environmental initiatives through recourse to broader environmental problems such as climate change. How could it be better, for instance, to transport a dead lamb 60 miles for incineration rather than burying it on the farm? In this way farmers can not only indict policy initiatives as being too short-sighted, but as failing to recognise the bigger picture.

Play with scale, and with values expressed through the landscape is also a play with familiarity. Extending the spatial significance of a particular issue (e.g. the pearl

mussel) not only makes that issue seem “bigger” it also broadens the audience to which it might appeal: to make it more familiar. Moreover, by simultaneously tying the significance of particular issues to the landscape — which is representative of both space and the pasts it has borne — that issue is made more familiar to those people for whom the landscape is important. For it has been shown in Chapters 2 and 4 how the landscape is used as a means of identification by virtue of its historical longevity and ability to act as a store for the values deemed important for the formation of personhood. Tying the pearl mussel to the broader landscape then (Extract 6-15), represents not just an effort to broaden its significance, but an effort to make it as much a part of who ‘we’ are as the familiar features such as stone barns and walls that figure so prominently in the construction of identities (Extract 6-8).<sup>35</sup> We saw in Bonham-Carter’s declensionist account in Chapter 4 (1971: 13, emphasis added) how “the radical changes that seem rapidly to be destroying the countryside” were made particularly alarming through recourse to the loss of “*familiar* features” such as “hedges and hayricks”. And the loss of those features stirred feelings of anxiety, bewilderment, disturbance and regret. So familiarity breeds vulnerability. In the following section I examine how attachment to place and talk of the emotions, are used to engender a similar sense of vulnerability and, therefore, function rhetorically in themselves.

### 7.2.3 Attachment to Place , Vulnerability and Mole Killing

If we review the narrative accounts in Chapters 5 and 6 we find that not only do they play with extant values, with progress, decline and issues of scale and familiarity, they also play with emotion words. The moral signifiers that are used to convey the direction of change (better/worse) are complemented by what we might call “emotional signifiers” which infer upon the audience a sense that not only should we realise that the particular change is better or worse, but that we should *feel* something about that change too. Words such as happiness, depression, anxiety, hurt, sadness and shame figure in the accounts of both farmers and implementers alike (e.g. Extracts 5-15, 6-4, 6-7). If words and actions — without emotional significance — do not serve to bring about the desired performance, then this may be because the particular patient or audience may not have the requisite level of familiarity to a subject, the requisite sense of attachment. Before a performance may be encouraged, therefore, a certain degree of attachment to a particular goal must be engendered. However, how (if it is possible) does an incomer, or even an anthropologist come to be motivated by the same values of the “community” into which

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<sup>35</sup> We may also consider Rory Lane’s drawing similarities between the plight of the pearl mussel and the plight of the upland farmer as an attempt at moving toward greater familiarity.

s/he moves? The answer may lie in greater familiarity and the development of an intimate sense of attachment.

Mike Lockwood, was discussing with one of his friends on one occasion why another farmer who they knew continued to farm when he wasn't making any money. They came to the conclusion that it was because he was born on the farm and had an attachment to the land. Mike said that he would feel cowardice, or that he was betraying the efforts of past generations of farmers, if Burrowbank Farm ceased to be an operational farm during his reign (Field Notes, 17-10-07). Yet, as an incomer, they were not Mike's ancestors so why was he so motivated — through recourse to a sense of responsibility — to honour those past generations? I suggest that perhaps it is through an increased familiarity with the land, with the place. If we consider Carrithers' (2008) distinction between "contemporaries" and "consociates" and apply this to places instead of people, then perhaps the same movement towards increased familiarity can engender an "inexpressible" sense of attachment. For whilst contemporaries are understood through "categorisation" and "generic templates", consociates are those we have "touched, smelled" and shared "times" and "mutually experienced emotions" (2008: 167). If we further consider the narrative function of the landscape, to store and transmit personal biographies through features of the landscape, a greater attachment to a place may also be considered a greater attachment to those people with whom it has been shared. So when Mike looks at the ruins of old Burrowbank Farm, or goes to visit the old vinegar stone that rests beneath a hawthorn tree at the far end of the farm he is not just becoming more familiar with the place, but with its ancestors too. It is as with the values in *hard work* and *beneficent change* stored at Wolf Pit Slack (see Chapter 4; Ford, 1953). They not only serve as a reminder of the past, they also provide a moral imperative for those values to be upheld into the future. Nostalgia seems to have an uncanny ability to engender a sense of proximity to distant pasts. For as Stewart — following Walter Benjamin — suggested, "melancholy searches the past for an adequate object on which to stare itself out" (1988: 235).

The sense of betrayal to which Mike refers, would arise out of his inability to uphold and maintain the *hard work* and *improvement* efforts of past generations. I have shown how the appearance of the land, and engagement with it through practice, is seen not just as a means of upholding those values but of transmitting them into the future. The importance of this transmission is resoundingly demonstrated in a birthday tribute to Mike written by Burrowbank's former owner:

*That you have survived at all is worthy of celebration. Think how many larger, longer-established farms have not! Though you inherited a farm in better fettle than we did you have faced far more troubled times, agriculturally speaking, to mention no more than foot-and-mouth, mad cow disease and the bureaucratic epidemic of Health and Safety regulations. And when I celebrate your survival I am not thinking economically or financially as much as of your values and integrity (September, 2009).<sup>36</sup>*

[Extract 7-2]

And in some way, I too, through the closeness achieved through ethnographic fieldwork came to feel very familiar with Burrowbank Farm and shared an intimate attachment to the place. Moreover, despite not being my farm, a dream that I had after I had finished my fieldwork and the way that that dream made me feel suggested that I too could be motivated by this attachment, expressed through a sense of responsibility:

Last night I dreamt I went back to the farm and it was pretty quiet. I went down to the buildings and saw the tractors – the 250 was spiking a haylage bale and I thought it was Mike, but when I got near there was a woman driving and she just drove past me. Then the other tractor, the 135, came out with the hay bob still on it (although it clearly wasn't hay time) and I was encouraged to step up onto the cab and come along. The man inside was dressed in a tweed suit with a red tie. He said he'd had to move up here now but it wasn't so bad, he got four decent meals a week – but they don't like the cold. There was another man in a black suit sitting next to him but he didn't speak. I asked the man if he had moved from another farm and he laughed – saying in his public school accent that he worked in politics in London. It turned out that the woman driving the tractor was putting haylage bales out in the field for about four horses – she was putting out a new bale each day even though they were not eating them all. The man told me they would just come up and nibble at them and not bother.

I was horrified. No livestock, what would happen to the farm, what were these people doing? They had no clue. I felt how farmers must feel at the prospect of their farms going out of production (Field Notes, 09-12-08).

[Extract 7-3]

The dream turned out to be more of a nightmare. And just like the farmers in the catchment that I spoke to, the presence of horses symbolised a farm no longer being productively farmed and it demonstrated the sadness and sense of loss that I *would* feel were this eventuality to happen. Is it this growing sense of attachment, an inexpressible familiarity, that might motivate me into doing something, some purposive activity, a performance?

I also recall on High Moor Farm how I was motivated to work with a will to *improve* the condition of the farm. Was this purposive activity motivated by an increased sense of attachment too? After arriving back late from work away from the farm on a cold

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<sup>36</sup> Implicitly, the tribute also maintains the integrity of the former owner, in having passed it on "in better fettle".

February evening I gave Guy the bad news. Walking around the farm that day I had found a dead hogg and a sick ewe. We stood together in silence, in the dark and the rain, surveying the farm from the elevated position of the farmhouse. Guy had an agitated and solemn look on his face. We stood for several minutes before he spoke: “Come on, let’s go inside, we’re getting wet and I’m getting depressed” (Field Notes, 22-02-08). The sharing of that moment, and that sentiment of Guy’s, moved me. Perhaps it was just *pathetic fallacy* or perhaps it was borne out of my increasing attachment to both Guy and the farm. Was I coming to share the burden that Guy felt at the prospect of not being able to maintain the value of “leaving the farm in better nick”? Moreover, did the sharing of that burden lead me to behave in ways that I might not have otherwise?

I am not a vegetarian, and I wouldn’t particularly say I was an ardent animal lover. However, neither do I take pleasure in killing animals and wouldn’t usually support their killing unless they were going to be eaten. Despite this, I took to the principal task that Guy assigned me to with particular energy and zeal. And that was setting mole traps. Perhaps it represented my efforts to gain complicity, acceptance or to immerse myself? Or perhaps that added zeal represented the sharing of that sense of burden? The presence of mole hills is not only seen to look untidy, it also represents a loss of grazing, or fodder-making, pasture. Furthermore, moles can damage the soil structure (but may sometimes be beneficial) and their tunnelling actions under dry stone walls can cause them to collapse. Supposedly, a lot of earthworms are to be found beneath walls so it is a common tactic of the mole to tunnel parallel, and underneath, the edge of the wall. This may cause some subsidence on one side of the wall. The mole then digs a fresh tunnel and the wall subsides some more. Left unchecked, this process continues until it eventually collapses. The collapse creates more work for the farmer, may allow livestock to escape and detracts further from the aesthetic ideal of the tidy farm. So just like John Ford’s ancestors did pitched battles against the wolf, the witch and the swamp, I undertook my own battles with the mole. Each day I would check and reset traps and consider the best strategic locations for them. I would consider why a particular location had not worked, consider the merits of the various different types of trap and do my best to outsmart the mole by disguising the traps as well as possible and removing the scent from my hands by rubbing them with soil.

I remember also Penny Ringsell of the National Park talking about being “depressed” by the plight of the pearl mussel. Although on this occasion I didn’t feel particularly moved, but then the situation was different. In a warm dry office, with the Dictaphone

recording for a — relatively — short and “formal” interview the emotional motivation for the protection of the pearl mussel seemed somewhat more distant. Perhaps if I had conducted ethnographic fieldwork with the implementers, had grown familiar to them, and to the pearl mussel then I would have come to share this imperative too?

The final section of this chapter considers in a little more detail the difference in interpretation of values between environmental implementers and farmers and considers what the implications of this are for the engagement of farmers in emergent environmental initiatives.

### **7.3 Reflections on the Implementation of Environmental Initiatives**

#### **7.3.1 Outcome or Process?**

We will remember from Chapter 6 how Chris Lawson of the Environment Agency said that the success of project work had to be monitored in terms of quantifiable outcomes. In terms of the pearl mussel project, this might mean the length of watercourse that had been fenced. It was further shown that — according to official definitions — the putting in place of the measures that *could* lead to the “restoration” or “*improvement*” of a habitat were often used to record that those objectives *had* been achieved. Because the work of the implementers is “project” based it is also finite and in order to demonstrate the success of the project to external and internal funders it has to be demonstrated through tangible outcomes. The complexity and variability of natural systems meant that it would be difficult to demonstrate the benefits of a particular project in terms of the habitat (in the short term at least) because it would be virtually impossible to distinguish the effects of intervention from natural variation. It was also suggested in Chapter 6 that farmers’ opposition to environmental initiatives was often expressed (despite differences between farmers) in terms of their symbolic work and steady, *fettle*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*. Moreover, it was suggested that the landscape recorded those values as continuous and ongoing processes, rather than outcomes per se. And the same difference was shown to exist between farmers who upheld those values and an incomer who saw work, and *improvement’s* reward in terms of tangible outputs such as wealth or capital assets (Section 6.3). These different means of expression, then, might also represent different aesthetic ideals: the different ways in which work and *improvement* are demonstrated as either outcome or continual process.

During an EPMSRP meeting Chris suggested that it would be useful to get some GIS output of the measures put in place (such as riverside fencing) so that “we can really

visualise the improvement”. Because, he said, “If I see things they speak to me” (Field Notes, 02-04-08). In a later meeting the topic of discussion was on using consultants’ maps in order to target where work needed doing. On this occasion, Chris said that maps aren’t the most useful means for targeting work and it is the words and photographs that are most important (Field Notes, 15-05-08). This suggests that for targeting work Chris prefers words and photographs, but for displaying the outputs of their work he prefers digital maps. And perhaps the underlying reason is the same: ambiguity. Maps may be too ambiguous for targeting specific work, but in presenting outputs that ambiguity might be an advantage. For the force of digitally produced maps lies in as much as what they conceal as what they reveal. The map may serve to emphasise the measures put in place (fencing) whilst concealing the impact (if any) of those measures on the habitat itself. The map serves to abstract and simplify reality in order to make it comprehensible. Furthermore, maps not only summarise the facts that they portray, they may also transform them, or falsify them. And this transformative power lies not in the map itself, but in the hands of those who “deploy the perspective of that particular map” (Scott, 1998: 87).

The map’s strength lies not just in its powers of selective representation, but in its ability to fossilise a particular change too. Although a GIS image may be modified, we can imagine how if it is printed off and included in a project evaluation report then it serves as a reminder of a job completed, of an *improvement* achieved. And if we consider that farmers uphold their values in *hard work* and *beneficent change* through the landscape we may begin to understand why those values must be upheld as process rather than outcome. For it is not possible to fossilise the landscape. It is constantly, but slowly and steadily, changing. Their work and *improvement* efforts represent a continual engagement with the land that does not lend itself easily to abstract representation. The values that they are motivated by, and the portrayal of their own values are expressed aesthetically through the land and are continually reinforced through praxis. We will remember in Chapter 6 Mike Lockwood saying that it was important to demonstrate to other people that he was *improving* rather than having *improved*. Outcomes to the farmer will only ever be momentary and this is why it is less important for them to quantify or fossilise them. So long as they are able to demonstrate that they are engaged in the *process* of maintaining the values in the land through their own interaction with it, they are able to maintain their reputations and esteem. And unlike a map, the land cannot be hidden behind. So whilst the map of the environmental implementers might record something quantifiable and apparently clear, the landscape actually records the continual efforts of the farmer in a much more tangible — albeit subtler — fashion.

### 7.3.2 The borders of the soul

We saw in Section 7.2.3 how environmental initiatives that affect the appearance and make-up of the land could be seen as an affront to farming personhoods and as a betrayal of the *hard work* and *improvement* efforts of past generations. This was demonstrated particularly well by Extract 6-11, which showed that forefathers would be “turning in their graves” as a result of the undoing of their steady and persistent efforts to dig drains in by hand by a mechanical digger which was “ripping them out” in order to create a wetland habitat. Ernest Mullaney expressed similar sentiments to me when responding to the conservationist’s desire to create new areas of wetland. He relayed an anecdote of when he had a digger on the farm to sort out some drains and they found a drain that had been dug 8ft six deep into a “proper bog”. It demonstrated, he told me, that “somebody had been looking at it long term” (E. Mullaney interview, 11-04-08). The sense of affront to extant values and the nature of the change (rapid and declensionist) being brought about, then, make environmental initiatives that alter the appearance of the landscape particularly unpopular.

There are also environmental payment schemes, however, that might be considered less of an affront to farming values and their aesthetic ideals. Moreover, they may actually pay farmers to maintain those values through the maintenance of features deemed important to the character of the landscape. The Entry Level Stewardship scheme, for instance, pays farmers to maintain dry stone walls. Whilst such schemes might, therefore, be taken up more widely by farmers they remain contested. If the scheme complements existing farming values then why is this the case? I suggest because they may only *appear* to complement farming values.

Another excellent example of the moral imperative provided by the landscape to keep the land in good condition comes from High Moor Farm. There, built into a dry stone wall is an epitaph to Guy’s father, the previous tenant of the farm. It reads:

*In loving memory of Richard Bowman*

*Take a look at the walls around you and marvel at the borders of one man’s soul*

What greater incentive could Guy have to maintain the walls in good condition, than as the earthly continuance of his father's soul?<sup>37</sup> How must he feel when he doesn’t have

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<sup>37</sup> And imagine the effect this had on me and my mole killing enterprise.

the time to maintain the walls as much as he would like because of the financial predicament he's in? Unable to earn enough money from the farm, Guy has to spend the majority of his time away working as an electrician. Furthermore, that situation is not of his own making but, he feels, is the result of an unfair system of subsidies, and the domination of supermarkets and large buyers that control the price paid to farmers. Moreover, how does he feel when someone from Natural England comes and tells him he can earn 15 pence a metre for the upkeep of the walls through the ELS scheme? Does he rub his hands together and think, 'great', money for old rope? Or does he think 'is that what my father's soul is worth, fifteen pence a metre?' Guy sees it as an insult: the ELS is "enough to feed the cat" and that, combined with the price he gets for his lamb, leads to his sense of being undervalued and not feeling like a citizen of this country (Extracts 6-5, 6-6). Putting a monetary value on something that is deemed priceless can only ever be incommensurate. In the following example Andrew Middleton relays a story of several days spent hedge-laying with his son. There he demonstrates that the function of the work, and of its legacy on the landscape is much more valuable to him than any payment he might get for doing it through environmental stewardship.

SE: So are you quite happy with the condition of the farm, you know, are there not areas you'd like to invest certain things, and just, you know, just maintain the farm I suppose

AM: Not really, I mean we do quite a bit, erm we laid a hedge last year, we've been coppicing some hedge, erm and planting bits up, and I think, no I think we're sort of alright like that. I quite, I do like it anyway, I don't do it coz the bits that we do aren't under a scheme where you get more money for doing em

SE: no

AM: So its not erm, its not a thing that we're erm, sort of relying on money wise but, I, I think its important, I mean even though Bill complains at the time when we laid this hedge, at the end its quite sort of satisfying you know and I'm sure he'll, even if he doesn't do too many, now that he knows what its like, I'm sure that, he complained a bit at t'time coz it was a bit you know laborious and that but

SE: yeah

**AM: in years to come I think he'll look at that hedge and think, oh yeah, and get interested to do more. He, he doesn't mind, we do get quite interested in, in, erm, you know making things right and that sort of thing**

SE: mmm, do you think its important that you can see what you've done on the farm, that it's a lasting reminder of the time you've spent on

AM: yeah it is, that's right, I mean erm, particularly when a lot of people these days don't bother with such things, that, if you, you know its there, I suppose really we don't farm for money coz if you did farm for money you wouldn't do it, erm, so, we try to be modern and commercial in some ways but on the other, ways [unclear], these jobs don't pay, I mean we were on there for days but on the other hand, er, if it's a time a' day when you aren't so busy and you're passing on skills, I'm quite happy to do it. And I was also paying, you know, our Bill to help us, but I mean, it would've been far more economical just to put a fence up, we

could've put that up, but, I mean, we'll keep doing that coz, we sort of, we're interested in it like so (A. Middleton interview, 17-04-08).

[Extract 7-4]

The example demonstrates that Andrew undertakes maintenance work for reasons other than financial reward. He wouldn't be farming if he was in it for the money. He demonstrates a *fetling* conception of *beneficent change* ('making things right') and shows the importance of passing on skills to his son and the legacy that that newly laid hedge will provide into the future. It will transmit the selfsame values that motivated the energy that went into undertaking the work and will be there as a reminder for his son into the future. The landscape provides a kind of narrative accountability and imperative for some future action. And that not just includes a value in "making things right" but also in the work that went into it. It is interesting that Andrew's son, Bill, found the work a bit laborious at the time. It is interesting because the implication is that he will come to look back on that work fondly in the future and get "interested to do more". He might perhaps come to recount the story to his own son, associating the hardship involved with virtue (as, for instance, Arthur Livingstone did in Extract 5-12). And that story will be drenched in nostalgia, linked to the memory of his dad and perhaps motivate him to pass the same skills on to his own son. The work that was laborious at the time, then, may be transferred into an anecdote that endows value on that work symbolically and ties it inextricably with virtue (Figure 7-1).



**Figure 7-1: A newly laid hedge. Source: the author.**

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Demonstrating that the work is not done for financial reward supports the central argument made by farmers that was shown in Sections 6.3 and 6.4. That is that: farmers look after the environment anyway; they are in the best position to do so; it was they that created the valued environment in the first place (as attested by the values stored in the landscape itself), and; they wouldn't need to be paid for this work (with what is seen to be an insulting amount of money) if they actually earned a fair price for their product and weren't hindered by supermarkets 'screwing' them down, and a government that didn't allow them to compete on a 'level playing field' with other countries (through modulation of funds from Pillar I to II of the CAP and more stringent production, health, safety and animal welfare standards). That, if the farmer is able to make a living, he will do these jobs anyway, because they represent not just the maintenance of the landscape but the maintenance of values important for personhood too. What's more, the farmers have learnt from past environmental initiatives that they may be equally short-sighted as productivist policy. Thus, they are seen in the same light, and rapid and short-term changes — in whatever guise — may be interpreted negatively. So it may be no good pushing a farm with 'tons and tons of fertiliser' to increase productivity, only to be “on the scrapheap” after three years. Nor, however, may it be any better to allow good food-producing land to go out of production when that land might be needed at some point in the future and it is not so straightforward to convert back into agricultural production. Short-sighted policy initiatives that are destined for failure mean that the 'goalposts keep shifting' and the implementers are continually having to rectify their past mistakes: mistakes which would never have occurred if 'they hadn't interfered in the first place' and had realised that 'if something isn't broke it doesn't need fixing' (paraphrasing, numerous sources).

These are not my arguments but those of the farmer. And of course there is no such thing as “the farmer”. Whilst it has been shown that farmers may present a more coherent front collectively, the values that they uphold, their interpretation of those values, and their means of expression are wholly complex. The purpose of Chapter 5 was to demonstrate the injustice of abstracting from the subtleties of everyday interaction without at least trying to present those subtleties in the first place. What I have tried to present here is the threads of a common argument that seemed to be being made (whilst never forgetting that complex milieu from which it is made) through recourse, in particular, to the values in *hard work* and *beneficent change*. And the commonality of this argument — that direct support to farmers brings about desired environmental benefits — was not restricted to the farming community.

It was unsurprising to hear the same arguments being made by the NFU and the CLA (interviews 16-07-08; 24-06-08). And, respectively, with their proximity to the North Yorkshire Moors farmers, and their different views on farm support it was understandable that the National Park and the European Commission made a similar case (albeit to varying degrees) (interviews 03-07-08; 11-07-08). What was more surprising to find out was that Natural England and even one of the most influential environmental lobbying groups in the country (the RSPB) supported direct income support to farmers as a means of environmental protection (EFRA Committee, 2007). It seemed that it was just the government that was asking “whether there is anything unique about farming which justifies its having its own system of support payments” and favours the complete removal of income support subsidies (through Pillar I of the CAP) in favour of payments for rural development and environmental protection (through Pillar II) (HM Treasury & Defra 2005: 27). Moreover, the government itself subscribed to similar views during a period of productivist policy (e.g. MAFF, 1979). The argument made by the farmers, then, may gain particular appeal by virtue of its broader recognition and by virtue of the fact that it represents a past government policy. But that government policy has shifted. The British government still prioritises “food security” as driving agricultural policy but it now sees that security being provided not by safeguarding home production but by allowing freer trade and greater imports from abroad (HM Treasury & Defra, 2005).<sup>38</sup>

The arguments that farmers make at the local level, are equally applicable at a broader European level. Terry Whitehead explained to me that he thought the additional voluntary modulation by the UK of funds into Pillar II meant that British farming would get left behind the rest of Europe that were "wanting to keep putting their money into production". Whereas “we’ll be left chasing a few bits of wildlife and damming up bogs on moor” and it won’t “be very good in long run” (Terry Whitehead interview, 22-04-08). The scale of the argument has been broadened yet remains underlain by the same indictments made on the temporality of environmental initiatives at the local level. To some farmers modulation was seen as 'a bit of job creation' by Defra or Natural England because the provision of funding through Pillar II takes a lot more to administer than it does through Pillar I. According to EFRA Committee (2007) the implementation costs of funding through Pillar II are in the region of 20% because it requires a greater number of staff to administer and implement. And the value of such staff, we know, is questioned by farmers who refer to such bureaucrats in terms like “an arsehole behind a

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<sup>38</sup> True to the changeable nature of agricultural policy, it appears that that policy may have again been re-thought. (See Chapter 8, Defra 2009e).

desk” that “hasn’t got a bloody clue”. The arguments of the farmers, then, may find more purchase amongst higher tiers of decision-making (such as the EU) and the environmental organisations that they see as being in the frontline of introducing the short-sighted policy initiatives that they are so opposed to.

### 7.3.3 Stewardship and the play with farming values

Earlier in this section I asked the question as to why recent environmental initiatives that seemed complementary to farming values were still, in some cases, rejected by farmers. A possible answer is that it is only their outward appearance that conforms with farming values and beneath a discursive façade lie exigencies that are more at odds. To demonstrate this I consider the concept of “stewardship” which lends its name to the current agri-environmental schemes being implemented in the UK. That word has longer term connotations that might seem more in line with farmers’ values in keeping the land in good condition and *fettling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*. Yet beneath that term, in the explanatory material for the ES schemes we find increasing reference not just to farmers but to “land managers” as the groups that can benefit from the scheme. Now, the difference between “stewardship” and “management” might not be particularly clear, but if we consider one farmer’s interpretation of those terms the fact that they appear together in the ES supporting documentation becomes a little more interesting. Clive Fisk, who has been shown to uphold different, sometimes antagonistic interpretations of *beneficent change* (Extract 5-7) thinks of stewardship as looking after your land non-profitably whereas you *manage* things to make a profit (C. Fisk interview, 17-01-08). In this sense, stewardship appears to represent *fettling* conceptions of *beneficent change* whereas management represent *improvement* conceptions.

The use of this term “land managers” beneath the heading of “stewardship” might simply represent the fact that the policy seeks to engage people in the scheme who might not classify themselves as farmers. Or, it might represent that the people engaging in the stewardship schemes might actually not conform to the same conceptions of stewardship as the *fettling* farmer. It was one of the greatest ironies of my fieldwork that the only “farmer” that I spoke to that was in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme was as far from a definition of a steward (in terms of long term care for the land and *fettling* conceptions of *beneficent change*) as it was possible to imagine. We will remember from Section 6.3 that Alan Spuhler bought Yewtree Farm with the intention of “doing it up” and selling it on to make a profit. He had no long-term interest in what would happen to the farm and admitted that everyone would hate them when they sold up and

left (Extract 6-9). What's more, he was happy to claim the money for the HLS scheme because it made a financial contribution to their endeavour and, more importantly, wasn't at odds with his own values. And this represents the extraction of profit from the value of the land: the conversion of symbolic capital into financial capital. This is consistent with the idea that stewardship schemes see the environment as "part of the output and asset base of the hill farm business, producing a conservation crop of value" (Task Force for the Hills, 2001). Under this guise, stewardship seems a lot more like productivism than it might first appear: as increasing the production of a certain "crop" in order to extract more value from it. In this sense, stewardship might represent a commoditisation of the environment.

Stewardship might also have been seen in a similar light to productivism when it was viewed as introducing rapid changes that 'just won't last'. Farmers who subscribe to *fetling* conceptions of *beneficent change*, then, may be just as unwilling to engage with stewardship as they are with productivism: when the motives behind those policies are seen to be short-sighted and likely to change again in the future. And not just the farmers but the environmental implementers recognised this too. Rory Lane from the National Park said to me during an interview (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that "I've suspected this for about 10 years; I've kept saying that one day my job will actually go round to turning back what we've been doing for the last ten years!" (R. Lane interview, 03-07-08). The successful implementation of agri-environmental schemes, therefore, will depend on its fit with the values upheld by a particular farmer. Farmers upholding productivist values might see agri-environmental schemes as an affront to their values in food production and *improvement* (cf Burton, 2004). Whereas farmers upholding *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* may see agri-environmental schemes as oppositional to their values if they invoke rapid but short term change. The fact that productivism and stewardship might be closer in terms of their ideological underpinnings than it first appears, and the fact that it has been shown that farmers subscribe to complex and often competing values, means that it might not be so straightforward to judge farming responses as Burton suggests (cf *propositions two and four*).

If the objective of environmental initiatives is to encourage the buy-in of farmers by appealing to their existing values then they should be genuinely long term, incremental, and allow the farmer to adapt steadily to their requirements. Both the nature of the policy itself, and the types of behavioural change they elicit might find more success by focussing on *fetling*-type, rather than *improvement*-type values. However, it appears

that this is not necessarily the objective of the policy. That policy, rather, seeks not to get the buy-in of farmers, but seeks to bring about a desired change in behaviour by challenging the farmers existing values and behaviour and by proposing an alternative means of behaving that *appears* to conform with their existing values. The means through which such attempts operate, and the reasons why they might fail, are considered further in Chapter 8.

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## Chapter 8

# Conclusion: Reflections on the Persistence and Complexity of Farming Values

### 8.1. Introduction

Throughout this thesis I have examined the importance and rhetorical functioning of the values of *hard work* and *beneficent change* amongst farmers in the North Yorkshire Moors. In Chapter 4 I demonstrated how those values are narratively embedded in historical accounts of the Esk Valley and find wider purchase in agricultural histories and European policy-making. Through Chapters 5-7 I showed how those values are pervasive and implicit, are upheld and expressed by farmers in complex ways, and are capable of being reinterpreted and *used* according to changing circumstances and situations. I also showed how those values are central to the construction of farming personhoods and are often understood and expressed through the landscape. In this guise the landscape was presented as a vehicle for symbolic play as the relationship between values and their expression can be altered. Moreover, I suggested that the importance of those values to personhood, in combination with their persistence and interpretability, gives rise to their rhetorical efficacy. It was within this context that I examined how agri-environmental policy, and environmental implementers *used* the values important to farming personhoods to try and encourage changes in behaviour and how the same values — amongst other strategies — were used by farmers in their response. In particular I have examined two alternative conceptions of *beneficent change* through recourse to the words *improvement* and *fettle*. I further suggested that those alternative interpretations did not necessarily represent different *types* of conception maintained and *used* by different *types* of individual. Rather, they represent the *use* of different *interpretations* of *beneficent change* according to the requirements of changing situations.

It is the purpose of this chapter to reflect on the complexity and pervasiveness of these values within the framework of the approach to rhetoric and culture outlined in Chapter 2. This is done along two principal lines. Firstly by re-examining the ideological and agentic use of those values in accordance with the debates outlined in Chapter 2 (Section 8.2 and 8.3), and secondly by examining and challenging four alternative (yet linked) interpretations of the contemporary situation from a theoretical, historical and policy perspective (Section 8.4). Through an examination along both lines I will show how a view of culture as a thing of possibility, and as incessantly negotiated through

interaction, allows a more nuanced interpretation of the contemporary situation. Beginning with the latter, I will now elaborate on these two lines.

### 8.1.1 Four Propositions

In Chapter 1 I outlined four propositions that could, and have been made in interpreting processes of historical change and the contemporary implementation of agri-environment schemes. All of these propositions reflect differently on a) the role of values in influencing the uptake of agri-environmental schemes amongst farmers, b) the significance of the diversity of farming values or, c) both of these. I now outline these in turn, before returning to readdress them in terms of my own interpretations in Section 8.4.

*Proposition One: An older interpretation of values has been replaced by a newer set of values that has been propagated ideologically and through government policy.*

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.4) I outlined Polanyi's (1945) observation on the processes of *Agricultural Improvement* in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. He suggested that during that process "the common sense attitude toward change was discarded" in favour of an unbridled belief in *economic Improvement* (1945: 41). This idea could be used to interpret the distinction between *fettling*-type and *improvement*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* that I identified through the course of my ethnography. Indeed, it is precisely such ideological processes that I examine in Section 8.2 through the rhetorical play with the word "*improvement*" itself. Throughout this chapter, however, I will maintain that that is not the only process operating and the continued existence and use of *fettling* conceptions of *beneficent change* means that any ideological attempts to impose *Improvement* conceptions of *beneficent change* were neither wholesale nor uncontested.

*Proposition Two: Productivist values are so embedded within farming communities that it is these values which serve to restrict the uptake of agri-environment schemes amongst farmers.*

Like proposition one, this proposition recognises that productivist (*improvement*-type) values were propagated through government policy. It also suggests that productivist values are so embedded within farming communities that it is these values which dictate the responses of farmers to agri-environment schemes and limits their uptake of such

schemes because the values underlying agri-environment schemes are seen to be antagonistic to productivist values (Gasson, 1973; Burton, 2004). This view also follows a line of interpretation which suggested that extant farming values (notably the *work ethic*) were not only conducive to productivist values, but were also central to the development of those values (Thompson, 1995). In contrast to proposition one, this interpretation suggests not that older farming values were replaced by productivist values, but that farming values gave rise to, and are therefore synonymous with, farming values.

*Proposition Three: The emergence of agri-environmental policy represents the ascendance of a new 'environmental morality' which is oppositional to farmers 'traditional' values.*

This proposition follows proposition two in that it suggests the introduction of agri-environmental policy, and the values on which it is based, are in opposition to farmers' 'traditional' values. It was shown in Chapter 2 how Lowe et al. (1997) represented this moment as a "pitched battle" between competing moralities. In Chapter 7 I argued that 'traditional' values are hard to interpret — depending upon their historical context — and in this chapter I hope to present an interpretation in which alternative 'moralities' are not seen to be in direct opposition, but are *used* and negotiated through interaction.

*Proposition Four: Farmers upholding 'traditional' fettling-type values are more likely to be conducive to agri-environment schemes than farmers upholding productivist values*

Like proposition two this proposition presupposes that agri-environment schemes are particularly oppositional to productivist interpretations of farming values. Unlike the other propositions, however, it recognises greater diversity in the interpretation of values amongst farmers and suggests that farmers upholding 'traditional' fettling-type values are more likely to engage with agri-environment schemes because there is a greater degree of conformity in the values underlying them. This proposition follows an assertion made in the Government's 2002 Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, wherein the then Secretary of State for the Environment — Margaret Beckett — likened the old farming maxim "farm as if you'll live forever" with the new sustainability agenda enshrined within the new approach to agricultural policy (Defra, 2002: 7).

### 8.1.2 Ideology or Agency?

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.1) I outlined different interpretations of power relations in terms of how culture is used to shape ideology and surreptitiously govern behaviour on the one hand, or how culture may be understood as a manifestation of the combined actions of individual agents pursuing their interests on the other (e.g. Wolf, 1999; Fox, 1985). In particular I outlined the contrast between the views of James Scott and Pierre Bourdieu. James Scott argued that since subordinate classes are able to demystify the prevailing ideology, relations of domination can only be maintained through physical coercion (Scott, 1985). In stark contrast, Bourdieu argued that strategies of domination can only take place by getting themselves "misrecognised" or "euphemized" as moral relations (symbolic violence) (1977: 191). I further proposed in Chapter 2 that neither of these interpretations alone could conform to the view of rhetoric-culture that I have followed. Instead, I proposed that as a thing of possibility and as under constant negotiation in the play of agents and patients, a rhetoric-culture view allows that both processes can exist simultaneously. The key insight from rhetorical theory, which allows their mutual existence, is that rhetoric can only ever be understood as an *attempt* to persuade.

The potential workings of both ideology and agentic action have been demonstrated in the presentation of my ethnographic material. It was shown in Chapter 7, for instance, how the *work ethic*, as a moral value amongst the farming community, *could* serve to influence farming behaviour in a manner that suited the functioning of the market. However, if that ideological means of domination were wholesale and complete then a greater degree of conformity would be expected than was apparent and the practices and behaviour of farmers would always be operating in the interests of some broader system of power. Yet whilst farmers value hardship and suffering it was shown that they also exercise discretion as to from where that value is to be derived.

Farming's always been difficult on these Dales farms, its always your coping with the weather and poor soil and difficult terrain but you accept that, that's the life you've chosen you know, but when the politicians come in and pile on top of you as well, er, interfering with how you would like to doing your good husbandry and good stockmanship that it, it hurts that you know (G. Wilson Interview, 28-11-07).

It's almost as if farmers say, we want to suffer, because that's who we are, but please let us suffer according to terms of our own choosing, against the vagaries of the climate, the seasons and the land. Furthermore, because *hard work is* symbolic and because it is

valued in multifarious ways, it doesn't always follow that it is the type of *hard work* that subjects farmers to exploitation that is held in highest moral regard. The symbolic nature of *hard work* means that farmers may produce pursuant to the requirements of the market for little financial reward, but equally work may be undertaken, and valued, that is of scant reward to the functioning of the market.

Due to its close fit with the approach to culture which I follow in this thesis I have found Stephen Lukes' (2005) view of power relations particularly instructive. Lukes' view maintains that power may operate by preventing people from having grievances by shaping their "perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things" (Lukes, 2005: 11). It also maintains, however, that:

social life can only properly be understood as an interplay of power and structure, a web of possibilities for agents, whose nature is both active and structured, to make choices and pursue strategies within given limits, which in consequence expand and contract over time (Lukes, 2005: 68-9).

Lukes' view allows that all people have the potential to *use* culture: sometimes within set constraints; sometimes in setting those constraints, and; sometimes transcendental of those constraints. It allows that agents may operate within a dominant rhetorical frame, but that those frames are susceptible to "endogenous shifts" as the boundaries of the frame are continuously negotiated from above and below (Cruz, 2000: 277; Grillo, 2003: 160). It acknowledges possibility but also inequality. It recognises that the likelihood of achieving particular outcomes through the *use* of cultural ingredients differs amongst individuals and groups.

In Sections 8.2 and 8.3 I demonstrate in a little more detail specific examples of how both ideology and agentive action make rhetorical *use* of farming values. In Section 8.2 I consider, in particular, the ideological rhetorical function of the persistence and interpretability of the word *improvement*. It provides an interesting example of how language can be used to serve an ideological function and operate to encourage *performances*. I also examine how the rhetorical efficacy of the term is borne out of its endearing association to a farming value in *beneficent change*, whilst at the same time allowing different interpretations to be upheld. In Section 8.3 I show how the landscape is used by both policy-makers and farmers and represents a significant and persuasive means through which farmers can exercise agency and creativity. I further suggest that farmers' most intimate relations with their farms may be beyond the realms of rhetorical

play with language and that this may be understood as an "inexpressible" relationship, which also represents a rhetorically "inaccessible" arena. This idea can be used to understand why farmers may not change their behaviour according to language-play, or even financial incentives and why, therefore, more direct (violent) means of behaviour change remain necessary (e.g. legislation). The persistence of *fetling*-type values is then re-examined in Section 8.4 to re-assess their significance in terms of the four propositions outlined in 8.1.1. I suggest that the maintenance of such an interpretation is reflective of the agentive action of farmers as it remains practically functional in guiding farming behaviour and it remains a useful argumentative strategy with which farmers can collectively couch their arguments against new policy initiatives.

## 8.2 Language and Ideology: The Rhetoric of Improvement

Throughout the thesis I have suggested that rhetorical play can operate at the level of ideology and as part of a hegemonic process. This is not to say that ideology operates entirely, or always, beyond the realms of consciousness but that it falls within the realms of the possible (Lukes, 2005). With a focus on the implementation of National/European policy, and with a focus on the functioning of rhetoric in that process, it is pertinent to examine here how play with particular words may be used to bring about (or attempt to bring about) desired changes in behaviour through their apparent affinity with the values with which farmers construct their personhoods. For those words prescribed from above, incorporated into those policies from above, may also be seen to represent the ideas and interests of 'those' from above and to operate at the ideological level.

In Chapter 7 I suggested that the use of the term "stewardship" in agri-environmental policy discourse represents a rhetorical attempt to make that policy appear more conformant with extant farming values than it may really be (see also Section 8.4.3). Here, I want to consider how the word *improvement* operates in a similar fashion: appealing to extant values but being underlain by capitalist ideology. Throughout the thesis I have referred to the doctrine of *Improvement* to represent a certain interpretation of *beneficent change* that may be allied with productivism, expansion, rapid change, and the generation of profit. I chose to use that word in recognition of its rhetorical function in bringing about, or at least attempting to instigate, changes in behaviour. I have distinguished the use of that term from a more general conception of *beneficent change*, which it may also represent, because it is through the very dissolution of that distinction that the term functions rhetorically. Moreover, the introduction of terms such as

“stewardship” into policy discourse might more readily be recognised as rhetorical than a more persistent and apparently general term such as *improvement*. The argument here is that the very pervasiveness and ubiquity of the term — combined with its fertile polysemy — simultaneously conceals and gives rise to its rhetorical force.

In *Improvement and Romance* (1989) Womack shows how the broadening of the term *improvement* around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century coincided with and functioned as part of an extension of capitalist ideology. Prior to around 1750, he argues, the primary meaning of the word was the narrowly economic interpretation meaning the cultivation of an asset in order to profit from it. After that date the term also came to be understood in its vaguer sense as making something better. The function of the broadening of the semantic field, argues Womack, is to make managing a stock so that it increases in value the universal type of *beneficent change*. Through the broadening of the term, therefore, *improvement* came to mean making better, yet by retaining its earlier meaning too, making better and yielding a profit became synonymous (Womack, 1989: 2-3). In Chapter 2 I showed how the highland clearances were justified under a guiding philosophy of *Improvement* which suggested that the clearances not only made the productivity of the land better, but also the lives of the highlanders that were being dispossessed (Prebble, 1963). This demonstrates a very conspicuous and brutal attempt to align an *economic Improvement* with a more general, and personal, interpretation of *beneficent change*. In *The Country and the City* Williams (1973) demonstrated how the ideology of *Improvement* operated much more broadly and subtly through 18<sup>th</sup> Century popular literature. He showed, for instance, how Defoe did not consider the underlying social reality in his writings on rural life and agricultural change. Instead, “he projected, into other histories, the abstracted spirit of improvement and simple economic advantage” through novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* (1973: 62). Williams argues that the broadening pervasiveness of the *Improvement* ethic around this time “could be more readily and more single-mindedly apprehended in deliberately isolated histories” (*ibid.*: 62). Furthermore, he shows how, through classical writing, the *Improvement* ethic became embedded in emotions and feelings in order to strengthen the synonymy between personal satisfaction — in terms of love, happiness and honour — and material advantage:

“This, indeed, is very much the position from which *Tom Jones* is written. It is the morality of a relatively consolidated, a more maturely calculating society. From such a position, the cold greed of a Blifil, the open coarseness of a Squire Western, can be noted and criticised; but calculation, and cost, are given a wider scheme of reference. Love, honour, physical pleasure, loyalty: these, too have to be brought into the reckoning with incomes and acres. The humanity is of a resigned and settled kind: firm and open when faced by the meaner calculators,

but still itself concerned to find the balance – the true market price – of happiness. Tom Jones learns from his apparent disregard of advantage, but it is not only that his more immediate satisfactions are tolerantly underwritten; it is also that *Fielding's management of the action is directed towards restoring the balance in which personal satisfaction and material advantage are reconciled, compatible, and even identical*" (Williams, 1973: 63, emphasis added).

Profit, thus, is not just aligned to a general concept of betterness, but to the specific ingredients of personal satisfaction. It was shown in Chapter 4 how histories of the Esk Valley were also underlain, and illuminated narratively, through a discourse of *improvement*. Through literature and narrative accounts, then, the term embedded itself and gave rise to its pervasiveness and persistence. It was further shown in Chapter 4 how the interchangeable use of alternative conceptions of *improvement* (as either the expansion of production and capital generation, or a more general *beneficent change*) served to blur the distinction between them. It was further suggested that the broadening of the meaning of *improvement* coincided with a decreased usage of now archaic or vernacular words that were signifiers of a *beneficent change* independent of any economic association. The term *menseful* meaning becoming neat/orderly or comely (Morris, 1892; Ray; 1817), which was used by Canon Atkinson in relation to stone-clearing, for instance, has since fallen out of popular usage (Atkinson, 1891: 13, see Chapter 4). The word *fettle*, too, which has figured prominently in the discussion of farming conceptions of *beneficent change* in the Esk Valley throughout Chapters 5-7 can be viewed in a similar light. Writing about the journal of William Bagshaw Stevens from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, we learn from Tucker (1966: 470) that the contemporary use of *fettle* as a noun (most often expressed alliteratively as *in fine fettle*), meaning the health or condition of something, was a new adoption into the standard language around 1750. Unfortunately, Tucker offers no causal explanation for the introduction of this new usage. However, etymology dictionaries suggest that prior to 1750 the term was used as a verb from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century meaning "to make ready, arrange" or "to put things in order, to tidy up" and derives from the Old English *fetel* meaning a girdle belt and was used as a verb meaning "to gird oneself up", or to prepare (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001; Quinion, 2000).

We have seen in the North York Moors, too, that *fettle* retains a usage as a transitive verb meaning to put things in order, to maintain the condition of, or to mend or repair and denotes a *beneficent change* independent of any direct economic association. It also seems that the use of the word as a verb is on the wane; may be used interchangeably with the term *improve* and, moreover; its demise may be associated with the broadening interpretation of *improvement* as a general *beneficent change*. Intriguingly, it appears

that at exactly the same time (circa 1750) that the meaning of *improvement* was broadened to make the achievement of material advantage and a more generic concept of *beneficent change* synonymous, a new usage of the term *fettle* was introduced that took it away from its use as a verb denoting a type of *beneficent change* independent of economic association, towards its use as a noun meaning simply the condition or health of something. Thus, the penetration of the term *improvement* into popular usage to denote a *beneficent change* may have been facilitated by the contemporaneous demise of alternative words for expressing such a change.

States (1996) refers to words, such as *improvement*, that are subject to “tropological drift” as proto-keywords or “pelican” words. Keywords are to be distinguished, he argues, by their two-edgedness: belonging to “the fields of both ideology and method” and being “at once an attitude and a tool” (States, 1996: 2). The importance of pelican words derives from the fact that “the mother-word feeds its errant offspring with its own blood (its prior meanings)” and no matter how submerged it gets in its new meaning its semantic history (or blood-line) can be invoked to “justify new conquests” (States, 1996: 3).<sup>39</sup> The word *improvement*, then, carries with it its original meaning, despite being open to interpretation and application in multifarious ways. Moreover, by attaching itself to an extant value in *beneficent change* and by replacing alternative words to describe such a change, it becomes synonymous with the values that those who subscribe to a value in *beneficent change* understand themselves through.

### 8.2.1 The Paradox of Improvement

Through its perseverance in language, despite changes in meaning, *improvement* has been embedded as a fundamental component of farming personhoods. Paradoxically, this places a concept that imbues change, and a concept that is interpretable, at the heart of an essentialised farming identity with which external changes are resisted. And therein lays the particular rhetorical efficacy of that concept. The paradox supports the idea that History conceals historicity (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004) and, in the terms of Baumann (1999), that all essentialist rhetoric is underlain by processual theory (refer to Chapter 2). So, therefore, the propagation and perseverance of *improvement* as a fundamental value through narrative and historical accounts actually conceals its interpretability and usability. Moreover, according to Baumann, it allows those who wish to preach an essentialised view of a particular culture to employ the very mutability

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<sup>39</sup> I am reliably informed that it is a myth that pelicans feed their offspring on their own blood.

of its essential components to give the appearance of continuity and stability. For, as Womack remarked:

Improvement doesn't in principle establish any limits for itself; it's a comparative concept, not an absolute one; it could always be taken further. Its implication is therefore not only that some methods and attitudes need to be changed: it is also proposing change as a way of life. As well as opposing certain customs, it is opposed to custom as such (Womack, 1989: 174-5).

The categories — or identities — that are applied in order to achieve a sense of stability, stasis or comfort, therefore, are rooted in a discourse of change. It is in this sense that culture may be seen, at once, as both the answer to, and the cause of, a susceptibility to rhetorical persuasion. The concept of *improvement*, then, may be seen to perform a very important cultural role. For it may be seen as a particularly powerful means of rhetorical persuasion that, as a constituent of cultural arrangements, “places the will to make something happen, to make something change ..., at the very foundation of ideas about ourselves” (Carrithers, 2009: ix). *Improvement* may also have a narrative function borne out of its combined inference of a change and the attachment of moral virtue to that change. So when alternative courses of action are underwritten by narratives of *improvement* they may still find “resonance” amongst the intended audience. The term may function, in this sense, as what Carrithers (2007: 7) calls a “minimal narrative”:

When a minimal narrative finds resonance in listeners, it is because it calls up familiar information, familiar motives, familiar story lines though it may nevertheless make unexpected connections, connections across gaps and against the grain.

And that “resonance” of alternative behavioural responses underlain by narratives of *improvement* is what makes the acceptance of such alternatives more likely. It allows conformity with the stories that people want to tell of themselves, to themselves and to others: to tell a story that their actions *are* making things better.

Bailey describes this rhetorical achievement as shifting the "victim" “out of the citadel of his own values”, driving him “out onto the open ground” and making him “run for cover in your citadel” (Bailey, 1983: 147, 148). This means that ideological persuasion functions by first imposing a challenge to an existing interpretation of values (e.g. 'your current practices are *not* making things better'). Secondly, that challenge introduces a certain disorientation and vulnerability as the values important for the construction of personhood are drawn into question. Such disorientation and vulnerability then makes the acceptance of an alternative interpretation of values more likely (e.g. 'if you now do

this you *will* be making things better'), and that process is facilitated if the new offering appears conformant, or is delivered using the same lexicon, as the previous interpretation. Following the introduction of disorientation a new interpretation may be taken up, then, because as Rapport remarked "to find in new situations echoes and reflections of old is to have one's prior assumptions and evaluations vindicated, and to reaffirm that the world around one is governed by principles which are consistent, and amenable to one's reason and comprehension" (1993: 153-154).

The above discussion on the ideological manipulation of language, and its association with extant values, could be used to support *Proposition One*. It could suggest that the limits imposed on language serve to constrain how things may be perceived. Shotter (1993: 193), for instance, asked "[w]hat if the very words one uses in participating in the arguments reproducing the tradition, make one feel that one does not belong?" So if it is important to maintain a value in *beneficent change* but that value can only be expressed through recourse to the word *improvement* then a sense of alienation from "one's" own understanding of that value may ensue. However, it has been argued by Rapport that the persistence of seemingly stable cultural forms is not borne out of their orthodoxy or repression of alternatives, but by their very interpretability and ongoing negotiation (1993: 169-70; following Devereaux, 1978).

The fact that *fettle* is still used as a verb amongst the farmers of the North York Moors (and in other parts of the country), for instance, has allowed for an alternative expression of *beneficent change* that may be independent of capitalist ideological connotations. It is true that the word *fettle* did not figure prominently in everyday speech and *fettling* behaviour (steady, incremental maintenance work) was often expressed through recourse to *improvement*. However, the word *fettle* was still used and if we question Wittgenstein's (1922) assertion that language is the limit of rationality and the limit of the world then a value in *fettling* can be, and is, seen to remain regardless of the terms used to express that value. Furthermore, I have shown throughout this thesis that that value continues to instruct practices and is not only propagated through language but through expression in the landscape and the practices of interaction.

In the following Section I suggest that there may be limits to the ideological rhetorical play with words. In Section 8.4, meanwhile, I reconsider and elaborate upon the continued existence and *use* of *fettling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* amongst farmers in the North York Moors.

### 8.3 Landscape, Agency and The Limits of Rhetoric

In this section I briefly revisit the role of the landscape in rhetorical play and demonstrate that, through its wider significance beyond the farming community, it represents a useful agentive means through which farmers can construct their arguments. I suggest that despite alternative perceptions of the landscape, and despite the legitimacy of farmers' knowledge being challenged by competing discourses (Whitman, 2005), farmers' historical and ongoing practical involvement with the landscape gives continuing purchase and broader rhetorical appeal to their arguments. I further consider situations in which desired performances (or behaviour changes) are not successfully encouraged, relate this to the intimate relations between farmers and the land and comment on the limits to the rhetorical use of language that this may suggest. I also examine how values and personhoods are incessantly negotiated and give rise to alternative interpretations and changes in behaviour that are more iteratively and interactively achieved.

I have shown throughout this thesis that the landscape is symbolic, a means of storing and transmitting values, narrative in its own right and capable of being valued and interpreted differently by different people. This affords the landscape a certain rhetorical force; in terms of both its own interpretability and the values that it is used to express. With Extract 6-15 I showed how policy implementers attempted to increase awareness of the plight of the pearl mussel by suggesting that it is an integral part of the landscape that "we" all value so much. Similarly I showed that farmers also tie themselves to the landscape in order to achieve greater recognition from the public and policy makers for their role in maintaining the landscape (e.g. Extract 6-7). Such arguments not only involve association and stylistic identification (Burke, 1969) through the landscape but through the past too. The landscape is used to represent a common past between rhetor and audience and to engender a shared common vision of the future. Like the values that it transmits, then, the rhetorical force of the landscape is borne out of its combined persistence and interpretability. The landscape represents a persistent medium through which values are expressed and transmitted. However, just like culture, the landscape, too, is dynamic and changing. Values may change, or be reinterpreted as a result of a changing landscape, but equally views and perceptions of the landscape may change as a result of changing values or differing interests between different groups and individuals.

The use of the landscape by farmers and implementers does not just represent the symbolic capital of the landscape in terms of its historical association, but also its association to a wider environmental morality. Various examples in Chapters 6 and 7 (e.g. Extracts 6-7 to 6-16) showed how farmers used "the environment" in the construction of their arguments. This might have taken place in order to question the knowledge and sense of proposed policy measures, but it could also be seen as farmers' efforts at rhetorical play with the values familiar and important to the conservation bodies and policy makers. In doing so, farmers do not just *use* a morality that is unfamiliar to them in order to make their arguments, they actively contribute to the construction of that morality through their negotiated interactions with policy makers, conservationists and the public. I have shown in this thesis that, even amongst single-issue conservation organisations, the important role that farmers play in producing and maintaining the landscape is widely acknowledged. Farmers may thus be seen as in a privileged 'frontline' position in terms of relations with the landscape and by tying an emergent environmental morality with the landscape, and concurrently with themselves they have a powerful means through which to negotiate and pursue their interests. The increasing recognition of the need for greater financial support for moorland sheep farmers is demonstrative of this and, as shown in Chapter 6, the arguments of the farmer find greater appeal by virtue of the value afforded moorland landscapes and the perceptions that they are threatened. This idea of negotiated interaction will be re-examined in light of *proposition three* in Section 8.4.2. Prior to that, I now turn to examine the potential for limits to ideological rhetorical play.

Section 8.2 showed that rhetorical or ideological play with words could potentially lead to the encouragement of desired performances. It was suggested that the desired outcomes may not always be achieved, but nevertheless, that rhetorical play allows that they might be. In this section I want to reflect on situations in which desired performances are not encouraged, and may never be encouraged, through rhetorical word-play because of the limits of language itself. In this sense, language is not seen solely as a means of imposing limits ideologically, but also as limiting the extent of ideological play. I want to consider, therefore, the situations in which rhetorical attempts may fail. In particular, I want to suggest that where relationships may be understood as *inexpressible*, there is little that play with language can achieve in trying to introduce disorientation in advance of encouraging a performance. In such instances those wishing to bring about a change in behaviour, and those with the power to do so, may find no purchase in word-play and resort instead to a manipulation of the situation

through more coercive means. This might occur, for instance, through the introduction of new legislation prohibiting or mandating certain types of behaviour.

Examples from the literature in Chapter 2, and examples from my ethnography in Chapters 5-7 demonstrated that there are many instances where farmers do not change their behaviour as a result of ideological word-play, or even following the introduction of financial incentives to do so. In Chapter 6 (6.3) I gave the example of Mike Lockwood's neighbour who had looked back at him as if he was mad when Mike asked whether he would reduce his stocking levels as a result of the shift from a headage to an area-based payment introduced under the SPS. I also showed in Section 6.4 how members of the EPMSRP believed that farmers would be willing to get involved in the scheme to protect pearl mussels by installing bank-side fencing if there was money available to do so. Furthermore, one of the implementers stressed that she would emphasise the financial benefits whilst simultaneously stressing that environmental protection is a sign of the "good farmer". Nevertheless, I showed how despite the rhetorical efforts, and despite the financial incentives many farmers still questioned the scheme and suggested that they would be unlikely to get involved. Mike suggested that his neighbour thought the idea of reducing stock numbers was an insult to previous generations of farmers' efforts to *improve* the farm and build up stock numbers. Meanwhile, those farmers who I spoke to with regard to the installation of bank-side fencing demonstrated that it would impinge upon their aesthetic ideal of the tidy farm, challenge their knowledge, and challenge the value they place in long term *fetling* conceptions of change.

I want to suggest that this reluctance is borne, in part, out of the intimate nature of relationships between farmers and their farms which may be understood as inexpressible. Carrithers (2008: 167) describes relations between *people* as "consociates" and contrasts them with the less intimate relations between "contemporaries":

Consociates are people we grow old with, whose lives we participate in, whom we know intimately and in their own terms. We are entwined with them; we are able to join in their absolutely individual life story ... We have, with consociates, a "thou-relationship", an intimacy and mutual knowledge of one another face to face, and a "we-relationship", in that we have experiences in common with them; we have, at least in part, "grown old together" with them (Schutz 1967 [1932]). ... Whereas contemporaries are those whom we understand through categorization, typification, and with whom we can relate successfully through generic templates, consociates are those we have touched, smelled, and with whom we share mutual times, mutual places, mutual autobiographical memories, and mutually experienced emotions (Carrithers, 2008: 167).

The inexpressible, as Carrithers describes, represents forms of intimate knowing and I want to suggest that farmers' relations with their land can equally be understood as "inexpressible" or akin to consociate relations. If we replace the word "people" with "places" in the above passage, despite some exceptions, the type of relations described seem wholly recognisable as those I have come to understand as existing between farmers and their farms. By definition, inexpressible relationships are beyond words and are maintained and understood — instead — through embodied practice, social memory, touch, smell and entwined biographies (Setten, 2004; Ravetz, 2001; Carrithers, 2008). Moreover, those relationships are the basis of the mutual reinforcement of important farming values which are maintained and expressed through farmers' ongoing intimate interactions with the land. Where relationships are beyond words silence may be the only form of expression. Such as on that dark, wet night that I stood for a few moments with Guy Bowman at High Moor Farm and, despite no exchange of words, began to sense the enormity and significance of his relationship with his farm (Chapter 7). Tyler (1978: 424) suggests that silence arises when "we have a sense of knowledge beyond words, when we despair of communicating the fullness of our emotions or of describing the ineffable". If the inexpressible, borne out of intimately familiar relations, lies beyond words then it may also be seen to lie beyond persuasion, at least insofar as persuasion is instigated through language. In this sense the inexpressible may also be understood as *inaccessible* and the arena in which farmers are least likely to respond as desired despite social pressures or even financial pressures for them to do so.

The upshot of this inaccessibility borne out of extreme familiarity is that in order to bring about a change in behaviour amongst farmers policy makers must resort to other means. And those means do not involve the manipulation of values through language but of situations themselves, for instance through the imposition of legislation (cf Scott, 1985). When faced with farmers so intimately embedded in their relations with their farm, with their practices and their stock the only way to break the silence is with violence; with the imposition of rules that forcefully alter the ways in which a person may interact with the land and the means available for the construction of personhood.

This requirement for both legislative coercion and the ideological *use* of farming values is supportive of the view of power outlined by Lukes (2005) and presented in Section 8.1.2. That view maintains that, in contrast to both Scott (1985) and Bourdieu (1977), both physical coercion and subterfuge can operate simultaneously within the realms of the possible. Moreover, it allows for a combined approach to bringing about changes in

behaviour. One that modifies the situation, introduces disorientation and necessitates response (coercion), and another that plays with the familiar values and their means of expression that are seen to matter (symbolic violence).

The fact that ideological means of control are never entirely complete and without contestation maintains the negotiated view of culture that I have followed throughout the thesis. Farmers, therefore, are not to be understood as passive "victims" of persuasion but as capable of both agency and patiency in processes of interaction (as demonstrated in Chapter 6). Of course, that does not mean that the power is equal or that silence is an impenetrable means of resistance. It does allow, however, that farmers are able to pursue their own rhetorical strategies and continue to take part in the negotiation of their own personhoods. It can be envisaged how legislation that alters the means through which personhoods are constructed and values transmitted (e.g. farming practices and the landscape) are particularly disorienting for farmers. They therefore not only need to respond to the direct policy imposition itself, but if they are to comply with the new requirements they may have to modify their processes of identification too. I have shown that farming practices or work are important to farmers in their processes of identification. In Chapter two, through the work of Cohen (1979) and Wallman (1979), I showed how farmers may continue to identify with forms of work that had lost economic significance due to the symbolic nature of such practices. Wallman suggested that this might represent a "lag" as adjustments are made to processes of identification. Where the political and economic conditions are such as to necessitate particular changes in behaviour a shift in farmers identification processes may also take place. For instance, Burton (2004) suggested that the productivist policies of the post-war period led farmers to identify themselves with productivist practices. This might be taken to represent the success of the ideological and coercive means with which such changes were brought about. However, it can be envisaged that those means of identification were not entirely imposed but adapted by farmers themselves to make them amenable to their own particular values. More importantly, it has been my suggestion in this thesis that farmers *have* maintained practices and values that run contrary to productivist ideology and this is representative of their practical function as guides to behaviour and as appropriate means with which to cast aspersions against the policies imposed upon them. I develop this alternative view to Burton in the following section as I reflect on the continued salience of *fettling*-type values amongst farmers in the North York Moors and the four propositions that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

## 8.4 Fettingling and the Four Propositions

In this final section I reflect on the persistence of *fettingling*-type values amongst North Yorkshire farmers and the complex ways in which values are upheld, expressed and used more broadly. In doing so I re-examine the four propositions outlined in Section 8.1.2 and reflect on the implementation and effectiveness of agri-environmental support that represented the contemporary moment in the Esk Valley when my fieldwork was undertaken. I argue that the persistence of alternative interpretations of values and their polysemy is demonstrative of their continued negotiation through interaction. Their persistence is borne out of their usability. Moreover, I argue that the persistence of *fettingling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* represents their use as a purposeful means with which common arguments can be made by farmers (despite internal differences) to indict a variety of policy impositions upon them. I also argue, however, that the persistence of such values represents not just their rhetorical usefulness, but their ongoing practical usefulness too, in serving to guide farming behaviour in ways appropriate to the environment in which they operate.

### 8.4.1. Productivism and Historical Change

The continued use of *fettingling* conceptions of *beneficent change* that I have demonstrated challenges both *propositions one* and *two*. It challenges the idea that "older" conceptions of change have been wholly replaced by the doctrine of *Improvement* (cf Polanyi, 1945), and it also challenges the notion that farmers' opposition to agri-environmental schemes is wholly instructed by productivist and *improvement*-type values (cf Burton, 2004).

Polanyi's historical interpretation, then, is challenged by the persistence of *fettingling* values and their ongoing use in complex interaction. There is an antithetical historical interpretation — related to *proposition two* — however, that can be challenged on the same grounds and that is the one of Paul Thompson in *The Spirit of the Soil* (1995; also Silvasti, 2003). Following the idealism of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) Thompson proposes that farmers, by virtue of their values and their work environment, were particularly conducive to the propagation of capitalist productivism. Those values were underlain, he suggests, by three philosophical or religious tenets: the link between virtue and industriousness; the doctrine of grace, and; the myth of the garden. Not only does Thompson suggest this gave farmers a "bias in favor" of productivist beliefs or a receptivity to the emphasis upon production but that they were "willing conspirators" in the rise of productivism (Thompson, 1995: 51).

Such an interpretation suggests that productivism was an almost inevitable consequence of existing values and overlooks the ability of prevailing political ideologies to ingress upon, or to reconfigure extant values.

Thompson's approach leads him to a similar conclusion to that drawn by Burton (2004), which associates the morality of farming values, through recourse to "the good farmer", with productivism (Thompson, 1995: 68). For if farming values gave rise to productivist values then they are seen as one and the same thing. It suggests that productivist values *are* farming values. Yet the evidence from my fieldwork, in that particular situation, demonstrates that alternative conceptions of farming values — notably in the *work ethic* and *beneficent change* — exist that are independent of a productivist or economic association. If the ideas that gave rise to productivism derived from farming values, then how can the existence of alternative interpretations of farming values that oppose productivism be accounted for? Thompson's view overlooks the role that ideology may have played in the emergence of productivist values. I showed in Section 8.2, for instance, how the word *improvement* functioned rhetorically and played with and manipulated existing farming values.

To summarise, the argument developed in this thesis refutes the suggestion that productivism arose *out of* the prevailing farming values (cf Thompson, 1995; Weber, 1930) or that productivist values are synonymous with farming values (Thompson, 1995; Burton, 2004). Instead, extant farming values are seen to have been accosted by a political ideology and, through the limits that ideology imposed, came to be *expressed* through a productivist discourse. However, in line with the view of Lukes (2005), as outlined in Section 8.1.2, I maintain that ideological strategies can only ever represent *attempts* to persuade and are not immune to contestation. The plasticity of the values which gives rise to their usability in ideological rhetorical play, therefore, also gives rise to their ongoing use and negotiation by farmers.

#### **8.4.2 The Negotiation of Values**

The idea of *negotiation* is also the grounds on which I wish to re-examine *proposition three*. Like Polanyi, Lowe et al. (1997) provide a commentary on historical change. Unlike Polanyi, however, Lowe et al. examine a moment of contemporary change rather than taking a retrospective look at a particular historical moment. In their study amongst dairy farmers in Southwest England they highlight the negotiation of an older rural morality and an ascendant environmental morality between farmers, environmental

implementers and wider public opinion. They present this negotiation between the two moralities as a "pitched battle" (Lowe et al., 1997: 192). Whilst witnessing and acknowledging negotiation between farmer and implementer Lowe et al. suggest that this negotiation is only short-lived since they frame their study as one of the eventual "eclipse" of farming values by the new environmental morality (1997: 8). In this sense, the negotiation they witness is seen as only an ephemeral moment that will culminate in the inevitable replacement of one set of values by another. They take the differences they witness to be indicative of a *moment* of change, rather than it just being straightforwardly representative of difference *per se*, or of *incessant* and ongoing negotiation. The approach that I have taken in this thesis, however, recognises that negotiation and change are the *modus operandi*, and not merely the product of a fleeting moment of socio-economic tumult.

I am not proposing that change is illusory, only its impermanence. And I am not proposing that the changes witnessed by Lowe et al. are not happening. I am suggesting an alternative way of interpreting the *process* of change. Not as a fight between an eventual conqueror and conquered but as a process of continually negotiated values and moralities. I also acknowledge differences in power between the "sides" which might give sway to one argument over another. I maintain, nevertheless, that farmers contribute to the negotiation process and are themselves constructive agents in the ebbing and flowing of moralities.

The purchase of farmers' arguments in the negotiation process can be demonstrated along two lines. Firstly, and as shown in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, it may be the case that beyond the confines of the UK "traditional" farming values, or the value of farming itself, find greater salience in strategies of argumentation. In an interview with a Director of the National Farmers Union, for example, he expressed to me his pleasant surprise at seeing a sign on the EU's DG Agriculture building in Brussels:

So the first thing I notice when I got to the Commission building was there's a massive sign on one of the doors saying "Agriculture je t'aime" ... and the idea that you would ever see 'I love agriculture' on the front of Nobel House<sup>40</sup> is probably the day that Satan gets to work! (NFU Director, 15-09-08).

I suggested in Chapter 4 that at the level of EU decision-making rural symbolism continues to influence policy and the EU's own quest for legitimacy amongst its citizens (Bowler, 1985; Hoggart et al., 1995; Clark et al., 1997; Gray, 2000a; Veerman, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Nobel House is the headquarters of Defra.

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And whilst the extent to which farmers' arguments are heard by the EU remains a pertinent question, it remains the case that the European Union is a powerful constituent of the contemporary moment and rhetorical situation in the Esk Valley.

Secondly, the representation of alternative moralities as entirely oppositional and engaged in battle may overlook the fact that it is not necessarily the case that one morality informs the arguments of one "side" and another morality informs the other. I have shown, for instance, how both "sides" use both moralities in the construction of their arguments. I have shown how important farming values are used by policy makers to present their cases and in order to encourage changes in behaviour. However, I have also shown how arguments made by farmers make use of the ascendant environmental morality to construct their own arguments. In Chapter 6, for instance, I showed how a media campaign to support upland farmers made use of values in both *hardship* and environmental beauty to portray to the public the benefits of supporting the farmer (Hickling 2008a; 2008b; Extract 6-8). I also provided numerous examples of farmers challenging the sense of planning restrictions, new legislation and even local environmental initiatives through recourse to broader environmental problems such as climate change. Thus, the emergence of an "environmental morality" may be understood not purely as a threat to farmers, and their own values, but as another tool that farmers can themselves make use of. Moreover, "the environment" need not just be considered as part of a carefully planned strategy on the part of the farmers. Instead, it may be seen as something that is used as farmers respond to the changing *situations* in which they find themselves. And such improvisations have the potential to modify existing social relations and locally shared understandings (Tilly, 1999: 350), for, as Tsing suggested, the translation of environmental issues at the local level — according to local actors' symbolic and political worlds — is able to reconfigure the global environmental narrative itself (Tsing, 1997). In these incessantly negotiated processes, then, the rhetorical improvisations of farmers can contribute to and modify the emergent environmental morality. At the same time, however, the environmental morality may come to influence the construction of farming personhoods as it becomes an increasingly familiar part of their repertoires. Through such creative processes an environmental morality may be interpreted as ascendant. That doesn't mean, however, that alternative moralities must be discarded or that they offer no rhetorical or practical purchase.

A rhetorical approach, and the dynamic view of culture that it supports, allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the contemporary moment as well as of the processes and nature of historical change. In addition to the historical and theoretical inferences that it

allows, it also provides the basis from which the particularities of the implementation of agri-environmental policy and conservation schemes in the Esk Valley can be examined.

#### 8.4.3 The Response to Agri-Environment Schemes

*Proposition four* maintains that farmers who continue to uphold "traditional" *fettling*-type values are more likely to engage with agri-environment schemes than farmers upholding "productivist" values; the reason being that the principle of sustainability that underlies the new policy agenda has been presented as conformant with "traditional" farming values (see Section 8.1.1). I challenge this proposition, in part, on the same grounds as I challenged *proposition two*; that being that the findings from my research suggest that the uptake or rejection of a particular scheme is not contingent upon values that are common to all. Chapters 5 and 6 showed how farmers uphold and express values in complex ways and *use* them differently in different situations. It may not be so straightforward, therefore, to understand and predict how farmers respond in practice to new initiatives: a collective position may conceal heterogeneous internal interests, and farmers are able to make use of an array of interpretations of values to make their arguments and to justify their own actions to themselves. Applying categories to farmers according to the values they uphold, therefore, may not adequately serve as a means of predicting behaviour.

In contrast to *proposition two*, it emerged from my research that rarely were arguments against agri-environmental policy made in terms of their conflict with productivist values. Moreover, if there was any commonality detected in farmers' response to agri-environment schemes, then it was on the basis of *fettling*-type values. Many arguments were shown not to be underlain by indictments against the substance of the change being imposed, but on the time-rate of that change. Moreover, this was shown to apply to both past productivist policies and contemporary agri-environment schemes. Any imposition that was seen as an attempt to bring about a relatively rapid change, with little thought for the long-term consequences of its imposition, would likely be rejected, regardless of the substance of the change itself. The shift to environmentalism, thus, was seen by farmers upholding (or using) *fettling*-type values in the same light as productivist policy: as an affront to their concepts of both work and *beneficent change* in terms of the timescale, the nature, and the means of expressing those values through practice and the landscape.

Amongst arguments of competing knowledge claims and the attribution of funding to the pearl mussel, many arguments against the EPMSRP were made in terms of the short-

sightedness of the management intervention (Chapter 6). One view, for instance, was that putting a fence along the river might keep the cattle out for a while, but as soon as "a flood comes down" it will all be washed away. There was also a difference between the implementers and farmers in terms of how a *beneficent change* should be demonstrated. The implementers on the EPMSRP recognised that their job was limited by the finite nature of the project work they undertake and the regular reallocation of priorities for funding or management effort. This meant that measures introduced through policy tended to be outcome-based and the value of work and *improvement* had to be demonstrated through quantifiable outputs. In contrast, away from perils of "Key Performance Indicators", *fetling* values were expressed and maintained by farmers through a process of *ongoing* work with the land that does not lend itself easily to quantification. *Beneficent changes* were seen as iterative and virtuous, whilst work was valued in its own right in the process of upholding that virtue. The landscape is quite literally viewed as a "work in progress" (Ingold, 2000: 199); meaning that not only is work to be viewed as continuous, but also that without work there is no progress. And whilst the outputs of the implementers (such as maps) may have been quantifiable and graspable I have suggested that those outputs are actually less tangible than the enduring expression of farming values through the appearance and engagement with the land.

Rather than "traditional" farmers or "traditional" values being more conformant with agri-environmental policy, then, opposition to both productivist and agri-environmental policy was made on the basis of *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change*. There are two inferences that could be made from this observation. The first is that agri-environment schemes only *appear* to be conformant with "traditional" values. I have argued that the apparent outward conformity between agri-environmental policy and *fetling*-type values may be more representative of that policy's rhetorical appeal to extant farming values (in much the same ways as discussed in Section 8.2) than to a closer alignment between the values underlying the two. The second inference is that there may be less difference between productivist and agri-environment policy than first meets the eye. With the contemporaneous ingress of market-derived terms such as "management", "asset" and "conservation crop of value" it was suggested that the new policy directives have more in common with previous productivist policies than might first appear. Although not subsidising increased production of livestock and crops, they still propagate an idea of *improvement* that is to be understood in terms of managing the land in order to extract a profit from it. Moreover, it not only commoditises the environment itself, but aspects of farming practice that were hitherto beyond the realms of economic valuation. This not only places an economic value on the symbolic work

and practices that farmers deem to be beyond an economic price, it also seeks to replace those symbolic values and the ways in which farming practices can be understood and justified. Furthermore, just as the large buyers and supermarkets control the prices farmers can charge for their agricultural products, it is the agri-environmental schemes that determine what the value of a metre of wall or hectare of unimproved hay meadow should be.

If the fundamental ideas underlying productivism and agri-environmental policy are less at odds than they appear, then it may be the case that agri-environmental policy represents an extension of those ideas into an environmental discourse, rather than simply being oppositional to them. From this perspective, farming responses to the imposition of new policy initiatives need to be understood in terms of their nuanced complexity, yet the opposition they engender must also be recognised as more consistent and enduring than the changing face of the policy directives that are imposed upon them.

#### **8.4.4 At the Root of All Success**

In this chapter I have argued that the persistence and mutability of farming values are refractions of one another. I have used that basic argument, in combination with a rhetoric-culture approach to re-examine the four propositions that I outlined at the beginning of this thesis. I have proposed alternative ways of interpreting processes of historical and contemporary change and have suggested that — in the context of the Esk Valley at least — farmers' responses to agri-environmental policy cannot be read off from a uniform set of values but must be understood to represent the complexity and continued usability of such values.

In the previous section I suggested, in particular, that the continued existence of *fettling*-type values may represent their collective use by farmers as a means of indicting policy impositions made upon them. In this final section I want to propose that their persistence represents not only their rhetorical usefulness, but their practical usefulness too.

In *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), Tim Ingold's essay on *Work, Time and Industry* argues that what are commonly referred to as non-Western concepts of time and work are to be found at the heart of "our" own societies too. He proposed that task-based concepts of time continue to serve a practical function in spite of the ingress of capitalist concepts of time associated with the clock. In fact, he suggests, the two

competing concepts are dialectically related and the task-based concepts are an essential means of "coping" with the shortcomings of clock-time. The arguments of Ingold echo those of James Scott in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). Scott showed how, under a guiding philosophy that he calls high modernism, state bureaucracy seeks to establish legibility through standardisation and simplification. He demonstrates that whilst high modernist schemes attempt to suppress practical, local and experience-based knowledge — which he refers to as *mêtis* — they are untenable without it. The work of Ingold, like my own arguments in this chapter, challenges the idea that an "older" set of values/concepts have been replaced by the ideological and forceful impositions of a new set (cf *proposition one*). Instead, like Scott, Ingold recognises that the functioning of the bureaucratic or industrial system is contingent upon the continued existence of an alternative conception. I support this view in relation to the persistence of *fettling* values amongst farmers in the North York Moors, and almost 120 years down the line, support Canon Atkinson in his view of the enduringly practical merits of the steady industry of the Esk Valley farmer (Atkinson, 1891).

In the past, farmers grew and cultivated a range of crops and livestock as an insurance against the capricious seasons and the daily vagaries of the weather. That practice has now, largely, been replaced with specialised agriculture that is able to benefit from the economies of scale as dictated by market forces. However, instead of cultivating a range of cereals, root crops, grasses and livestock the farmers now cultivate and express a range of values as an insurance against the newer vagaries of short-term policy making and the constant emergence of amorphous situations that require comprehension, delineation and appropriate response. As I write this final chapter the UK government has proposed a significant departure in its approach to food security (Defra, 2009e). For the last five years the government has espoused a food security policy based around freer trade and the opening up of the British market to greater imports from abroad. The new publication, however, suggests that this approach has been rethought and, just like in the post-war period, the government is returning towards an idea of food security that is based on increased home production. Such a policy direction could see significantly more support for British farming and makes the decision of farmers to “hang-on in” and ride the storm of recent political indifference seem altogether more sensible.

The comings and goings of both the climate and policies serve as a reminder to the farmer that there is genuine value in their long-term iterative interaction with the land. For, to return to the wisdom of Canon Atkinson introduced at the start of this thesis, it is “the steady, persistent industry and energy” which is seen to lie “at the root of all real

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success in the multitudinous ways in which men's heads and hands are occupied" (Atkinson, 1891: 13-14). That steady, persistent industry epitomizes the *fetling*-type conceptions of *beneficent change* that I have shown throughout this thesis (despite alternative interpretations and expressions) to influence the nature and value afforded to their work, as well as the judgement of, and responses to, the ever-changing policy incentives. The land, through its longevity, historical significance and propensity to being used in processes of identification may render farmers susceptible to rhetorical play. But as the possessors of the most intimately familiar relations with the land it also provides them with a kind of wily assurance that projects to them through their everyday interaction with it, and through the values that it transmits, the kind of behaviour that will maintain their long-lasting and successful relationship with it. So despite the comings and goings of myopic policies, and despite the ingress of any broader ideological values, leaving the land *in better fettle* remains a pre-occupation of the farmer which serves to direct their behaviour and practices in a fashion that is enduringly suitable for the dales and moors on which they farm.

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