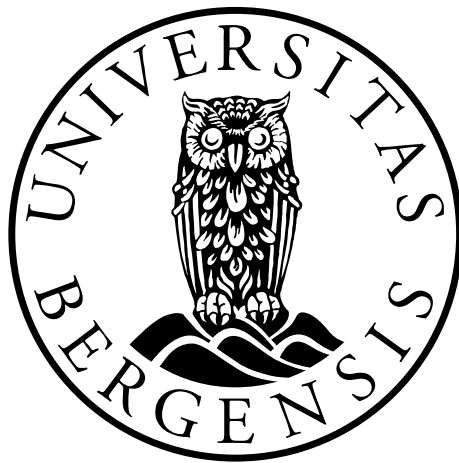


Navigating Environmental Schemes and Policies

An ethnographic study of how farmers in Devon, England experience and adapt to agricultural rules and restrictions



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Abstract

After Brexit, the UK decided on pursuing to reach ‘net zero’ emissions by 2050. In doing this, they turned away from the existing EU subsidy scheme – the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – and started creating their own schemes to subsidize farmers for their work. These schemes are called the ‘Environmental Land Management’ (ELM) schemes and are mainly focused on making farmers manage their land in more sustainable ways. In this thesis I explore how farmers in Devon, England experience and adapt to the changing environmental policies, schemes, and restrictions that are imposed on them by both the government and non-state actors. I focus on how these policies and schemes coming from actors above the farmers standardize them and ignore their local knowledge and needs. I argue that this way of creating and enforcing schemes and policies does not account for the different variations of each farm, which in turn can have negative effects. In this thesis, I show how the farmers in Devon wish to practice sustainable agriculture – after all, they are greatly affected by climate change – but find it difficult because of the continuously changing schemes and policies. I explore how farmers adapt to and attempt to understand these schemes and policies and how they go about restricting them. Furthermore, I argue that non-state actors – Arla and the Soil Association, respectively – act in a state-like way by imposing restrictions and schemes similar to that of the state, and I investigate the differences between restrictions from the state and non-state actors. Finally, I attempt to show how the farmers’ physical work on their land as well as the passing down of knowledge are important in the creation of their local and tacit knowledge and how family tradition drives a lot of this knowledge.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	III
Acknowledgements	V
Setting the scene.....	IX
1. Introduction	1
<i>State of the art – anthropology on agriculture</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Theoretical framework</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Devon – introducing the region.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Choosing and entering the field.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>My role in the field.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Ethical considerations</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Chapter outline</i>	<i>17</i>
2. “What’s good for the environment is also good for us”: How agricultural schemes and policies affect farmers in Devon	19
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The everyday life of a farmer</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – the spreading of slurry and ‘informal adjustments’</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Navigating new schemes and policies</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Standardized grants for sustainable farming</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>How farmers attempt to adapt to the schemes and policies.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Farmers’ resistance</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>34</i>
3. How non-governmental institutions and organizations apply restrictions and policies to farmers	37
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Arla’s Sustainability Incentive (SI).....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Rankings and indicators – the SI’s point-based system</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>The 56-day rule</i>	<i>43</i>

<i>Certification schemes – organic farming</i>	45
<i>Market-based logic and voluntary certifications</i>	47
<i>Conclusion</i>	48
4. Local Knowledge and Know-How: how schemes and policies ignore farmers’ practical and local knowledge	51
<i>Introduction</i>	51
<i>Practical and local knowledge</i>	52
<i>Knowing the cow</i>	54
<i>Individual farms and specialized knowledge</i>	55
<i>Globes and spheres vs looking and seeing</i>	58
<i>Oral histories</i>	60
<i>Family farming and passing down knowledge</i>	61
<i>Conclusion</i>	63
Conclusion	65
Bibliography	69

Setting the scene

“Last year this marsh was so dry that we could walk across it”, Oscar says as he points to a large – now wet, due to the latest heavy rainfall – marsh right in the middle of his land. Oscar owns a small, family-owned sheep farm which he took over from his own father when he decided to retire many years ago. His daughter Kate, a wife and mother of two, also works fulltime on the farm and receives more and more responsibility each year. The plan is that she will soon be ready to take on the farm so that Oscar can retire. I had met Kate and her husband in the local church the day prior to my visit and we scheduled to meet the very next day. When arriving at the farm, which was located only a short drive from the village, we were greeted by two energetic shepherd dogs who were happy to see the car pull up to the driveway. They were keen on another day of work, shepherding the sheep. Oscar greeted me and gave me an intricate tour of the farm.

After visiting the main house – where three generations of farmers live – Oscar took me along on some of his daily tasks. As we were driving around the farm delivering feed to the sheep – both the feed and I safely placed in the small utility trailer pulled by his old, red tractor - Oscar showed me around his entire farm, including all of his fields. As we were bumping along the uneven ground and stopping several times to open all of the different gates separating the fields, he continued to show me the effects that the climate change has had on his farm. In the last few years, the weather had been especially unpredictable, causing a lot of unwanted effects. Normal weather in Devon – or at least what used to be the norm – is, according to Oscar and my other informants, an even mixture of rain and sun on and off throughout the week. Now, the people of Devon experience weeks without rain followed by sudden, large rainstorms flooding the fields.

Later on in the day, after we had all fed the new-born, bottle-fed lambs, Oscar took me on a walk up to one of his fields where the few cows that he keeps for beef were peacefully grazing and enjoying the few rays of sunshine that were peeking through the heavy layer of clouds. When I visited Oscar, it had not rained for several weeks and as we were walking up to the very top of the field – the fields in Devon are very rarely flat – he showed me the effects that the long dry-period has had on the quality of the soil. His fields had been so dry for a longer period of time that he had to cut back substantially on the number of cows that he previously kept. Because of the drought, Oscar had also been forced to switch parts of his cow’s feed – mainly the kale he grew specifically for the cows – to something less nutritiously dense and

more hardy and able to withstand the tough conditions that come with the changing weather. Kale will simply no longer grow because of the lack of consistent rain.

Around lunchtime, the three of us – Oscar, Kate, and I – sat down to have a chat at their dining table located right in the middle of their spacious kitchen that the three different generations shared. Oscar proudly showed me the results of their latest carbon footprint survey. Although they were a bit difficult to understand, one can assume based off Oscar’s excitement about showing them, that they were good results. Oscar claims that because of all of the different actions that they take for the climate, that his farm is more or less carbon neutral. Some of the actions that he takes on his farm to make it more sustainable and achieve ‘carbon-neutrality’ are, among other things, planting trees around his farmland that absorb some of the carbon being emitted from his production; planting nitrate fixating alfalfa as feed for the cows; and uses as little fuel-driven machinery as he possibly can. In other words, it is obvious that he is very keen to make the changes necessary to make his farm more sustainable.

1. Introduction

Introduction

Oscar is not the only farmer who is being affected by the changing environment. Many farmers, in both Devon and the rest of Europe (Abnett, 2024), are experiencing changes so large that they have to adjust and, in some cases, completely change the ways that they produce on and run their farm. Climate change is also known to be a large issue on a global scale and because of the changing environment being high on today's list of priorities, many governments have implemented policies and schemes that aim to halt – or in some cases even stop – the changes that are happening and decrease their country's participation in carbon emissions. The United Kingdom is one of them. The UK has, in fact, set out a target to reach 'net zero' emissions by 2050, meaning that the country's climate gas emissions will eventually be equal to zero. This is what they have named the 'Net Zero Strategy' (UK Government, 2021). To achieve this, the farmers' subsidy scheme has now changed from the existing one to a Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), under the Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes which are run by the Department for Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Because of this strategy, the farmers in the UK are now facing not only climate change, but also climate politics.

This thesis is based on fieldwork conducted in Devon, England from January to June 2023. During the months I spent in Devon I visited several different farms and lived and worked on two separate farms – one of them a dairy farm – where I have focused mainly on doing participatory observation. I have also participated in different seminars and discussion groups and recorded one semi-formal interview. The ethnography and data from all of these experiences form the basis of this thesis and the arguments made in it. I look at how farmers adjust to and navigate the agricultural schemes and policies that are imposed on them. I also explore if and how the state's schemes and policies come from the top-down. Furthermore, I am interested in how non-governmental actors can act in ways that are similar to the state. Lastly, I investigate how local knowledge is important in the farmers' decision making, and how this knowledge is ignored in the making of policies and schemes. I will now represent my arguments.

I argue that most farmers in Devon wish to participate in the shift to a sustainable agriculture and to practice in more sustainable ways. They do, however, find it difficult to keep up with the continuously evolving policies and restrictions from different actors – both the state and non-state actors – that are being imposed upon them. I also argue that farmers who have

been practicing and running their farm in the same way for decades, perhaps the same as many generations before them, and who have established both specific techniques and equipment find it difficult to adjust their ways of production. If a farmers' practice is changed quickly and in drastic ways, years of knowledge and investments in equipment and infrastructure may go to waste. There are, hence, many things standing in the way of farmers' ability to shift to a more sustainable agriculture. I have experienced that although many farmers find it difficult to keep up with the continuously evolving information, many of them participate in forums and discussion groups in order to actively attempt to understand the new restrictions and the new information to the best of their abilities. Based on this, I argue that the farmers are not passively sitting around and waiting for all of the information to be given to them but rather take action in order to make sure that their practices coincide – as best as they can – with the latest requirements. I also delve into how farmers do resistance to these schemes and policies that they clearly do not always agree with.

Furthermore, I am, as already mentioned, interested in exploring how the UK government performs in a 'top-down' manner when imposing schemes and policies on the farmers. To do this, I will mainly use the theoretical framework from James Scott (1998) who argues that the modern state standardizes and homogenizes its subjects in order to make them more legible and easier to control. I wish to explore how the government governs the farmers through making standardizations of them and their farms, rather than considering the different individual needs and conditions of each specific farm. I argue that the government's SFI – and other policies and schemes - works in a way that is standardizing and generalizing. Building on this, I will make an argument that non state actors – Arla and the Soil Association, respectively – can also act in state-like ways, which Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue. By this, I mean that non-state actors use governing tools that are similar to ones that the state uses and act in similar ways to the state. We can see this in, e.g., Arla's Sustainability Incentive (SI), which has many of the same characteristics as DEFRA's Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). Because of this, I argue that both Arla and the Soil Association govern the farmers in similar ways as the state. Following the theories of certification by Kuiper and Gemählich (2017), I will show how these non-state actors act according to a market-logic, and how the restrictions and schemes that they use are in many ways used in order to make their products relevant and attractive in a market where sustainability is greatly valued. Using theories about audit cultures (Shore & Wright, 2015; Merry, 2011; Sauder & Espeland, 2009) on how governments have adapted techniques of measuring and ranking from the financial world to use on the general public. I also argue that this is true for both Arla and the Soil Association.

Drawing on the issue of local knowledge, I will be using James Scott's (1998) theory on how the state's schemes often seem to fail to consider local knowledge and the farmers' many years of experience and professional knowledge. Some of my informants were clear that they experienced the new policies to be based off science and expert knowledge only and wished that the policies would consider the massive pool of local knowledge that the farmers on ground-level possess. I will bring up the issue of family traditions to show how the farmers' knowledge is often passed down and therefore important when adjusting to different issues on the farm. We can see this very clearly in the way that both the government and the non-state actors implement policies and restrictions on farmers without including the farmers themselves in the decision making. This applies to both the state- and non-state's policies and schemes.

State of the art – anthropology on agriculture

One of the most important anthropological book on climate change – 'Anthropology & Climate change by Crate and Nuttal (2009) does not mention the effects that climate change has on agriculture or farmers. In fact, there seems to be very little anthropological literature on agriculture and the farmers' adaption to climate change. The anthropological literature that exists on this topic today focuses mainly on indigenous peoples and people in non-Western countries and has very little focus on farmers in Europe (see Crate & Nuttal, 2009; Taylor, 2015). It is crucial to stress that western, industrial agriculture is different than that of indigenous peoples outside of the Western world. It is therefore important to look at this as well. Although Crate and Nuttal argue that in the last few years, the focus on the anthropology of climate change has focused largely on adaptation (2009: 9), there still seems to be little to no literature on European farmer's adaptation to both climate change and climate politics. They argue that it is important to look at how people in places that are already experiencing the consequences of climate change: they mention Africa, Asia, and Oceania (2009: 10). I argue, which will be clear throughout the thesis, that people – and especially farmers – in Europe are also experiencing the consequences of climate change. It is therefore equally as important to focus on their experience as well.

In the last few years we have seen European farmers protest the agricultural regulations in, to mention some, Brussels, Spain (Henley & Jones, 2024), France (Willsher, 2024), and Germany (Henley & Oltermann, 2024). What these protests have in common are the many tractors blocking the roads, drawing large amounts of attention to the farmers protesting. Similar protests have also been seen in the UK, where farmers are opposing the new subsidiary schemes and the regulations coming from the government (Prior & Vladev, 2024) and the trade

deals that were put in place post-Brexit (Askew, 2024) (Butler, 2024). Although UK farmers seem to protest the schemes and regulations in similar ways to a lot of farmers in Europe, the farmers in Devon who are not my informants do not – at first glance – seem to engage in any types of protests at all.

Theoretical framework

Legibility and standardizations

Officials of the modern state are, of necessity, at least one step – and often several steps – removed from the society that they are charged with governing. They assess the life of their society by a series of typifications that are always some distance from the full reality these abstractions are meant to capture.

(Scott, 1998: 76).

To show how the UK Government works in terms of introducing policies and schemes on the farmers, I will use both James Scott's (1998) theories on the state's standardizing and homogenizing of society and James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta's (2002) arguments on how the state works as a 'top-down' entity.

James Scott (1998) makes an argument about how the modern state attempts to make its society as easily manipulated and controlled from above as possible. This is done, he argues, by making society 'legible', that is, making it readable and controllable for the outside viewer, the state. Making a society legible is done by standardizing it and imposing a grid-like structure upon it. Scott gives us several examples of how this has been done throughout the times. Some of them include the introduction of last names, which made taxation and population control easier; the standardization of weight, measurements, and language; population registers, etc. all of these different interventions were done simply so that the state could make a legible society that they could easily control (Scott, 1998). The state tunnels and narrows down its vision in order to see only certain limited parts of its society. To the state, an illegible society is only a hindrance to the interventions that they wish to impose (Scott, 1998: 78) and it wishes to make order out of an unpredictable and chaotic society. I will use these arguments to highlight how the UK Government standardizes different farms – despite their local and individual variations – and views them in a narrow way in order to easily be able to control them and impose policies and schemes upon them.

The issue with the state's attempt to create a legible society is, however, that they usually turn out to be self-defeating and failing. Scott argues that this is particularly due to the state's blindness: the state's work of legibility performs more as a map that gives a generalized overview of the area it represents. The 'map' lacks the details that can accurately describe the lived social lives of the people in the world that the map represents and only depicts exactly what the observer wishes to see (Scott, 1998: 3). Again, this shows us how the UK government fails to see the individual farmers and their farms and places all of them at the same level on a map that lacks important detail. The map – in this instance a map of the farms in Devon – only includes what the government wants it to include (Scott, 1998: 3). To create a map that lacks detail and view society in narrow ways are, of course necessary to the state in order for it to gain a useful overview of the society that it controls, as Scott (1998) argues. It would not be particularly beneficial to view a map that is as rich in detail as the reality of the lived local lives. The result is, however, that the state fails to incorporate important local details into its map, which results in most of their schemes to eventually fail (Scott, 1998). Scott also argues that the "maps" that are made of the society are not only representations of the specific society: the maps also create opportunities for the observer, i.e., the state, to put what it says into practice: "[...] they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade." (Scott, 1998: 3). "The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map: they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit their techniques of observation." (Scott, 1998: 82).

In most cases, when the state's interventions are of a smaller scale, they often do not have serious consequences. It is, however, when "... the state's objective requires changing the daily habits [...] or work performance [...] of its citizens such ignorance can well be disabling." (Scott, 1998: 78). The UK Government's ignorance of the local and individual lives of the farmers are just that: damaging for both the farmers and their farms as well as, in some cases, the environment, which will be shown through ethnographic examples throughout the thesis.

Drawing further on theories of the state, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta's (2002) arguments about the state as a top-down entity will be beneficial to stress the UK Government's ways of imposing schemes and policies onto farmers. According to them, the state is a 'spatially encompassing' entity which produces and maintains itself through different images, metaphors, and representational practices performed by the state itself. By using metaphors and images that represent the state as superior to any other institution, the state secures itself their legitimacy to the rest of society and the public. The act of doing these practices are what Ferguson and Gupta call 'state spatialization' and they are done because "They [the states] seem to recognize that a

host of mundane rituals and procedures are required to animate and naturalize metaphors if states are to succeed in being imagined as both higher than, and encompassing of, society.” (2002: 984). The state is, in Ferguson and Gupta’s view, ‘vertically encompassing’, i.e., the state operates in both a vertical way, where the state sits ‘above’ the rest of society and controls and plans it from the top-down, as well as in an encompassing way, where the state contains and confines everything within it, e.g., regions, people, communities, etc. (2002: 984). We can see the state’s vertical encompassment most clearly in the way it acts on the power that it has through its everyday and mundane rituals (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Sharma and Gupta (2006) argue that we can see how the state works and how they are present in people’s lives most clearly in their everyday, mundane practices. These practices could be anywhere from delivering mail, receiving rations, or getting audited. In other words, the repetitive and mundane practices of the state and bureaucracies are what shapes people’s relationship to the state (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 11). These practices are what helps us see the state’s ‘micropolitics’ work and how the state is present in people’s everyday lives (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 11-12).

Non-governmental organizations

One thing that Scott (1998) does not account for is today’s modern, neoliberal society. Considering this, one must ask if the arguments presented above about the state can be useful when theorizing the world of non-governmental organizations, such as Arla and the Soil Association. This has been argued by other authors, such as Sharma and Gupta (2006), who argue that in today’s neoliberal world, non-governmental organizations are taking on tasks that are traditionally performed by the state. They argue that we need to “... think about how the analytics of government can be widened to make sense of the neoliberal world.” (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 25). In order to theorize the fact that transnational and supranational organizations are taking over some of the state’s traditional functions, Ferguson and Gupta introduce the concept of ‘transnational governmentality’ which draws on Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ (2002: 989). The move to a more neoliberal state with a market logic has caused the government’s practices to become transferred to entities outside of the state (Barry et al., in Ferguson & Gupta, 2002: 989). According to Ferguson and Gupta, these forms of governmentality on an international scale must be widened to account for international organizations such as NGOs. This is because, they argue “[t]he outsourcing of the functions of the state to NGOs and other ostensibly nonstate agencies [...] is a key feature, not only of the

operation of national states, but of an emerging system of transnational governmentality.” (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002: 990).

Another author analysing governing from ‘above’ or from the ‘outside’, is Arun Agrawal. He uses the term ‘environmentality’ – a merge between the concept of ‘environment’ and Foucault’s ‘governmentality’ (Agrawal, 2005: 8) – to describe an approach that addresses not only environmental questions, but also questions of power, subjectivities and knowledge. He uses examples from the preservation of forests in India and Kumaon to show how technologies of governing the environment have changed over a course of 150 years and how the newer ways of governing included the use of numbers and statistics. This form of governing, where the people who control the forests are removed and distant from the forest, he refers to as a ‘decentralized’ way of governing. This, eventually, led to large appraisals from the villagers that resided in close proximity to the forests and who were dependant on its resources (Agrawal, 2005: xiii). To protect the forests – which contained resources that the government made money on – they had to protect it from influence from the outside: this included the people who had always used the forest. The actions that they had performed in the forest all of a sudden became illegal.

When attempting to govern the vast areas of forests, the Indian government used numbers and statistics to represent the forests and keep everything under control (Agrawal, 2005: 32). The idea of a forest became reliant upon the numbers and statistics representing it and the forests were reduced to the representation of said forest (Agrawal, 2005: 34). By representing the forests in this way, the governors of the forests were able to standardize and homogenize large areas of forest, making it legible (Scott, 1998) and easier to control (Agrawal, 2005). By using statistics and numbers to divide the forests into different sections, the workers of the forest knew exactly what needed to be done and where to preserve it, all of which was done to exploit it for money (Agrawal, 2005: 57). These ways of representing the forests also strengthened the technologies of the government by giving them the right to define what a forest is (Agrawal, 2005: 58).

Certifications

When discussing certifications – specifically the Soil Association – the idea of them existing within a market logic is interesting to dig deeper into. Kuiper and Gemählich (2017) explore the emergence of certification schemes – specifically the Fairtrade certificate – in the cut-flower industry in Naivasha, Kenya, and how the certifications are creating “new modes of governance” (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 35). They argue that the large focus on the term

‘sustainability’ – which they argue is not defined very well in this case – has given certification schemes the opportunity to both disguise and reinforce power relations within the industry: “... the vague notion of “sustainability” has been used to legitimise existing practices rather than to bring about change.” (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 33). The standards that are used by the certification schemes in terms of sustainability are used as tools to govern the industry, i.e., “tools of governance” or “[...] tools of control over farms and labour.” (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 33). The authors argue that the certifications have their own form of ‘governmentality’, as they govern themselves without any involvement from governments (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 35). The farmers in the cut-flower industry that join the certification schemes are not necessarily concerned about the actual sustainability of their production, but rather the access that the certificates give them to the markets: being certified is good for their business. This, in other words, means that the certification schemes are not necessarily about actual sustainability, but rather about bringing new forms of governance to the industry (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 39).

Devon – introducing the region

Devon is a county located in the picturesque South-West of England. It has coastlines both in the north and in the south, making it famous for its many beaches and beautiful landscape. Devon is often characterized by green fields, well-preserved nature, and many kilometres of hedgerows separating the different areas of the fields. Devon has a particularly hilly topography, making it difficult for large-scale, industrial farms to exist in the region. Hence, most farms in Devon are – in UK standards – small-scale. Because of the large varieties in the landscape and lack of larger areas of flat land, many farmers struggle with getting enough land in close proximity to their farm. Devon has “[...] steep-sided valleys and rolling hills [which] make it generally less suitable for very intensive agriculture.”¹. Therefore, many farmers – as we shall see later in chapter two – have to drive large distances back and forth between their farm’s land. Devon also has a lot of rainfall, but in the last years the weather has been rather unstable because of the climate changes, causing problems for many farmers not only in Devon, but in the entire country. Winters in Devon are short and the snow rarely stays for long periods. Spring comes early, with the fields and the ditches along the roads being filled with large, yellow daffodils and different coloured crocuses.

¹ Devon County Council, Retrieved 02. May 2024, from <https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/wildlife/habitats-and-species/farms>

Of land in the UK, around 80% is farmland and it is very important in Devon, as the county mostly agricultural land. There is a very small percentage of arable land in Devon² because of the topography. In my experience, most of the farms in Devon do animal husbandry. Most people in Devon seems to be dissatisfied with the funds that are given to the county: “most of the money goes to London”, was commonly said to me. This is very clear to see in some parts of the county: for example, the roads in Devon are so bad that people often struggle to drive on the roads due to large potholes, floods that close off the roads, etc. A few times when I was riding my bicycle out of the village, I had to tread through water going up to my knees because of the roads being flooded after heavy rain. This seems to still be an issue, judging from the many complaints coming in daily in the village’s online discussion forum.

When picturing the rural countryside of Devon and the people in it, it could be beneficial to look at how the rural countryside in England is pictured to understand its position within the country. Cosgrove (1993) gives us exactly this: he presents a different way of viewing the English landscape. He starts by giving an account of Greek and Roman mythology and how they viewed landscape as the earth’s surface and the place where humans live their lives. He attempts to show how these mythologies can be used to shed light on some of the global concerns and discourses in the Western world that we are experiencing today (Cosgrove, 1993: 282-283). In these accounts, the earth’s surface is separate from heaven and the world below: i.e., the world is separated into three parts (Cosgrove, 1993: 284). When speaking of the Greek God, Apollo – the God of music, youth, archery, and prophecy -, Cosgrove argues that he represents what is called ‘animus’. Animus does not only represent the spirit, but also thought, awareness, intelligence, and self-knowledge. Apollo embodies these qualities that are intelligent, ethical, and rational. Greek mythology says that humans share personalities with both the Gods and the earth, meaning that the earth too inhabits animus. Because of this, Cosgrove argues that the earth has an ‘Apollonian’ spirit and inhabit the same qualities as Apollo and can be contrasted to the earth’s Dionysian spirit (1993: 287). Dionysus is an earth God and the “... God of vegetation and fertile organic growth.” (Cosgrove, 1993: 287). Opposed to Apollo’s animus, Dionysus is associated with *anima*, which is more female than the male animus. This means that the Apollonian landscape is more harmonious and beautiful, while the Dionysian landscape is unstructured, unpredictable, and wild: this makes two opposing landscapes – male and female – which are both needed when creating and sustaining

² Devon County Council, Retrieved 02. May 2024, from <https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/wildlife/habitats-and-species/farms>

social life. This can, for example, be seen in agriculture and farming, where the farmers' "... skills of planting, pruning and tending subdue the wilderness while yielding to its cyclic essence." (Cosgrove, 1993: 288). Farmers are, in many ways, attempting to tame the wilderness while also attempting to embrace it. This results in the creation of a middle landscape that consists of both the male and female landscapes, which Cosgrove also refers to as the 'garden' (1993: 288).

He goes on further to suggest a distinction between the city, the garden, and the wilderness. He argues that social life tends to move from nature to culture, i.e., from the wild and organic to the more controlled and ordered. This can also be said for the landscape that the social life exists upon (Cosgrove, 1993: 291). The landscape is hence divided into three different areas: the city, the garden, and the wilderness, which all contain different degrees of human intervention. At the two ends there is the city, which is represented the Apollonian landscape and the wilderness which is more Dionysian (Cosgrove, 1993: 293). The garden is in between these two opposite poles and represents a merge between the Apollonian and Dionysian landscapes. The garden contains controlled and cultivated nature and "... landscapes of domestic economy, of the loving family and the private life of citizens. They are landscapes of labour, to be sure, but of labour that honours and complements natural processes, at one with the hours and seasons." (Cosgrove, 1993: 296).

To show how the distinction between city, garden, and wilderness can be present in contemporary life, Cosgrove uses examples from the UK. He argues that Britain has the same three-way structure: at the centre is the city, i.e., London. London is considered "... unchallenged as a seat of power, culture and social privilege in Britain." (Cosgrove, 1993: 298). Outside of London lies the garden. The garden is the English landscape, and includes specific regions of the country, such as the counties in the South-West. The garden is placed in the intersection between nature and society (Cosgrove, 1993: 299) and they are viewed as in need of protection from urban life and scientific farming and protection of its title as 'rural England' (Cosgrove, 1993: 299). If we view Devon as a part of the UK's garden, we can see how it is placed right in the middle of the remote, rural landscape while also containing aspects of the Apollonian landscape, where the landscape is slightly controlled and cultivated, but not so much as it is in the city. Just like Cosgrove argues, the farmers in Devon also operate in the intersection of nature and culture: they cultivate their lands while they at the same time work their farms in unison with nature, its seasons, and its needs.

Drawing on Cosgrove's concept of the garden, Brace (1999) writes about what he calls 'Englishness'. He explores how the regional identities in England were constructed and how

they are connected to the national English identity. He argues that the regional landscapes and the countryside in England are an important factor in constructing the English identity – ‘Englishness’ – and how the preservation of this landscape is important in maintaining this national identity (Brace, 1999: 93).

Choosing and entering the field

What initially inspired me to decide to do my fieldwork in Devon, England was an interest in rural anthropology and the countryside. One day, after looking vicariously for inspiration on where I could travel and what my thesis could focus on, I found an article exploring the UK’s ambitious Net Zero politics and their aim to be completely carbon neutral by 2050. I had already decided that I wanted to do something rural, possibly within the agricultural industry, and decided to look into what sort of restrictions were imposed on the agricultural sector in conjunction with the Net Zero politics. It turned out that there were quite a lot of them and it seemed like the farmers were largely impacted by these new politics. Finally, I had something that I both found really interesting and that I was motivated to investigate further. After some reading and discussions with my co-students and supervisor, I decided on what I wanted to focus on. I wanted to explore how farmers in the UK navigated and adjusted their practice to all of these new, and many, restrictions that come from the UK Government’s net zero politics.

The semester prior to my fieldwork was abruptly coming to an end and I had not yet narrowed down the site of fieldwork, except from that I wanted to study the implications in England. I found it difficult to decide, without physically being there or knowing anyone that was familiar with the area whom I could ask for advice about, e.g., where in the UK it would be best suited to carry out a fieldwork of the kind I was interested in. I considered many different regions – The North, North-West, and the South. It was not until a few weeks into my fieldwork that I finally decided on exactly where to draw the geographical restrictions of my fieldwork. I had, prior to leaving the country, planned a two-week stay on a small, family-owned farm in Devon that I found online. The deal was that I would help out the farmers with whatever they needed in exchange for room and board. When staying at this farm I had not yet decided if I were to stay in Devon or if it would be best to move around the country to get a more nuanced picture. During this two-week period I decided, in agreement with my supervisor, that it would be best to stay within one particular region. This meant that the picturesque countryside of Devon would be my home for the rest of the semester.

As already mentioned, my first two weeks of fieldwork were spent on a small, charming family-owned farm in Devon. The farm consisted mainly of arable land, but they had a small

handful of sheep and cows which they kept for their own consumption. Because of the difficulties of planning and navigating the area prior to leaving, I had not yet set up a plan for where to go after this two-week stay was over. I was hoping to be able to use the snowball-method (O'Reilly, 2012 [2005]: 44) to get to know more farmers through the farmers that I was already staying with. The plan was to move around to different farms and gain access through working and staying with the farmers. This ended up being partially possible later on in my fieldwork - which I will discuss later in the introduction - but I, unfortunately, quickly came to find out that my very first informants did not have any recommendations as to who I could speak to next. That meant I had to look elsewhere, which led me to rent an apartment in a small, 'stereotypical' English village, where I would end up staying for most of my fieldwork.

The village, which I will for purposes of anonymity call 'Bloomfield Meadows', was located far away from the city and was surrounded by large, green fields. I arrived in Bloomfield Meadows one late afternoon in January. The sun was just setting and the entire village was covered in a warm light. Walking across the bridge that connects the two parts of the village – which are separated by a small river - I heard a larger choir of birds than I have ever heard, especially in the winter. The apartment was relatively easy to find, probably due to the small number of houses in the village. It was not until the next day, when the sun had rose, that I was able to fully take in the beauty of the village. The village of Bloomfield Meadows – a name appropriate for all the flowers that bloom all over the village in the spring and summer – mainly consists of two streets crossing each other to form a cross-like shape. At one end of the cross there is the local church: a church of about 50 m² and roughly twenty regular members. At another end of the cross is the community centre, a place where different events, like concerts, knitting groups, yoga, etc., for the villagers are arranged. At the opposite end is where my apartment was located and at the last end of the cross there is a road that leads to the local pub and most of the village's surrounding farms and fields.

Because of the village's large focus on agriculture and many surrounding farms, I initially thought that it would be no problem to get in contact with informants. However, after three long weeks of walking for hours looking for farmers who were working outside on their fields, knocking on doors of different farmhouses, and doing my best to find someone who could get me in contact with some potential informants, I still had not gained access to the farmers of Bloomfield Meadows. The animals on the farms were all inside because of the cold winter weather and there was no-one to see around on the many fields. During January, the village almost seemed like a ghost-town. The local pub, which I initially took for granted as being a place to find informants and contacts, considering the pubs in England being a common

place for people to hang, ended up not being what I had hoped it would be. The original village pub, which had served as the local meeting-place for many years, had been shut down a few years ago due to financial reasons. The new village pub had opened a couple of years ago and served more as a place for city-people to have their Sunday lunches or weeknight suppers because of its focus on more of a finer dining experience. The new pub had also only allocated a very small area of the pub for drinking only, making it unsuitable as a hang-out place for the village people. Thankfully, my landlord was very helpful and very happy to help me find my way around the village. Him and his dog took me on a few walks down the surrounding fields and pointed out to me potential farms that he thought could be relevant. He also introduced me to one of his friends, who ended up being one of my informants, that lived on an organic farm and who had a lot of knowledge on agricultural policy and sustainability. My fieldwork did not, however, properly start until one day in February where I suddenly remembered seeing an advert for a Sunday service in the local church which I spontaneously decided to attend.

Although the walk from my apartment only took about two minutes, I still had to walk through almost the entire village to get there. As I was walking through the gate to the small garden in front of the church, with my notebook and pen carefully tucked into my pocket, the church seemed almost empty. It certainly did not seem like there was a service happening there. The front door would not open, but I could hear voices on the inside when I leaned in close to the door. I stood outside the front door for a little while, contemplating if I should knock on the door, when the door suddenly was opened by a woman with grey hair wearing a pink and purple knit jacket. The door revealed three quite confused looking faces. As I would later learn, it was not very common for new people to show up at the church, especially not young students from a different country. The people in the local church were, as everyone else I encountered during my fieldwork, as welcoming and helpful as I could hope for and they ended up playing a really important role in me being able to get good contacts and informants. They were obviously curious as to what I was doing in their village, and as many of them were retired farmers they were delighted and interested to hear about my project. The next day, during church coffee, which was arranged every Monday, two very sweet ladies handed me a note each, both with a telephone number to two different people I could contact written on it. One of the numbers I ended up never reaching. The other number, which was the number to a retired man with loads of contacts in the industry, turned out to be the stepping stone to finding the rest of my informants. My fieldwork could now, finally, start properly. This thesis and the ethnography it is based on would not have been the same, or perhaps even been possible, had it not been for the tiny church and its wonderful members.

Methodology

During my five months of fieldwork in Devon, I used a range of different research methods: some observations and some interviewing, both semi-formal and informal. The method I used the most, however, was participatory observation. I spent six weeks in total working voluntarily on two different farms, one small arable farm and one dairy farm. During these six weeks I had the unique opportunity to get a more detailed insight into what the farmer's days actually look like. I also had the chance to ask questions about things I learned from being engaged in the environment for a longer period of time. During my stays at both of the farms, I spent my entire days with the farmers, working alongside them and having all of my meals with them. This close presence to the farmers and their work led me to learn a lot about the industry as well as the environmental policies that I do not believe I would have had access to had it not been for these two intense and immersive experiences.

The rest of my fieldwork, excluding the six weeks I spent living on farms, I typically went on day-long visits to my farmer informants and their farms. The remote areas of Devon typically require a car to reach most farms and villages. I did not have access to a car during my stay, so I mostly relied on public transport. A few times I was able to borrow a bike. In the cases where the buses or trains did not quite reach the farm I was going to, the farmers were kind enough to pick me up with their cars to make it to their farm. Every single farmer I have encountered have been the most welcoming and kind, often inviting me for meals together with their family, telling me stories about their farm, and sharing all the knowledge that they so passionately possess. It was never difficult to get them to talk, and they all wanted to be of as much help as they possibly could.

During these farm visits I mostly used an interviewing method Wiederhold (2014) calls 'mobile interviewing'. She argues that mobile interviewing can be of benefit not only to researchers studying at 'home', but also to researchers that are doing research in a place where they are considered 'outsiders'. For people doing research anywhere other than at 'home', she argues that a mobile interviewing technique can be beneficial in "...help[ing] to build familiarity with local places and interpretations, while also facilitating access." (2014: 601). By giving her own informants the opportunity to show her the places they thought were most important or represented the research questions best, they were able to show – using the landscape as their guide – what they personally deemed most important to highlight to the researcher. By doing this form of interviewing, the researcher is able to unravel the meaning

that the informants themselves put into the landscape that surrounds them. Like Wiederhold argues, "... material things and spaces have a sort of narrative residue." (2014: 609).

Mobile interviewing can assist in revealing these narratives that exist within the things and spaces. This way of informal interviewing had great benefits to my research and on the visits I made to the different farms. I would start my visit usually by asking the farmer to show me around their farm and taking me with them on their everyday tasks. This would always lead to the farmers showing me the parts of their farm they felt they could use to explain and show their thoughts and experiences with the environmental schemes and policies. Just as Wiederhold experienced in her research using mobile interviewing, it "... allowed me to situate myself alongside participants in order to look at the [landscape] the way they look at it and move through the spaces as they move through them." (2014: 608). Mobile interviewing allows the researcher and, in my case, the farmer to experience and engage with the landscape together on the farmer's own terms (Wiederhold, 2014: 612). During these conversations I only asked questions if there was something particular I felt I needed an answer to or if I felt the need to say something to keep the conversation going. Other than that, I let the farmers tell and show me what they personally deemed important. By doing this, I could see how all of the different farmers thought about farming, sustainability, and environmental policy in their own, unique way and the differences in the things they thought were worth mentioning to me. It also led me to get insight into the unique problems that all of the different farmers experience, whether the issues they were experiencing were originating from the type of farming they were practicing or from the area their farm was located on and what topography was present in that area.

My role in the field

Before stepping into the field, I did not have a lot of prior knowledge about the agricultural industry, particularly not in the UK. My lack of experience with agriculture turned out to be mostly an advantage, but also a slight disadvantage in some cases. It was an advantage because I came into the field with a neutral outlook on things; I had no already existing expectations about how things 'should' be and/or work. My being new to the agricultural industry also, naturally, had an impact on the types of questions I asked. I was, in addition to questions about environmental policies and schemes, also interested in how the basics of the farm worked: I wanted to know how the farmers took care of their farm and animals, what a normal day for them looked like, how they make a living, etc. These are questions that would not necessarily come to mind if I had experience with it and thought I already knew the answer. Having knowledge about these things could lead me to believe that it is the same in the field – which is

not necessarily the case – and I would perhaps not explore them in the same way as I was able to do without previous knowledge and experience. On the other hand, however, having previous knowledge about these things would perhaps give me more space and time to explore questions about the environmental policies and schemes and how they are experienced by farmers, and spend less time focusing on the ‘basics. One could also imagine that having a background in agriculture to point to would give me more credibility as a researcher. Although I did not have any issues with getting access to the field – once I had found my initial informants – it could be thought that it would be easier for me to gain even further access, perhaps to different agricultural sectors, had I had more previous knowledge about agriculture.

Prior to leaving for my fieldwork, I had done a lot of reflecting on my role in the field. One of the concerns that came up was that of the evolving issue of people going undercover on farms to reveal the ‘behind-the-scenes’ of the industry. I had done lots of reflecting around how I was to avoid farmers being sceptical of my intentions, one of them being having my supervisor type out a signed letter explaining that I was affiliated with the University of Bergen and what my research set out to do. Luckily, this did not turn out to be an issue at all. I never experienced anyone questioning my intentions of coming to their farm, and I never heard anyone speak of it in general either. Although I’m not the most eager photographer, none of the farmers shuddered or showed any reaction when I pulled out my phone to take a few snippets of either animals, landscapes, or work that was being done.

As a young, female student I expected it to be a bit more difficult to gain access to the field, considering it is a very male dominated field. I did, thankfully, not perceive being a female as an issue. The farmers were, as already mentioned, very willing to help me and were eager to share their experiences. I never once felt unsafe during my fieldwork and being a young student came to my advantage in many ways: the farmers perceived me as someone that was willing and eager to learn and did not hesitate in showing me the ‘ropes’.

Ethical considerations

During the entire process of collecting ethnography and writing my thesis, I have been sure to follow the ethical guidelines of anthropological research. My project is registered and approved in RETTE³, and I have followed the guidelines that are required by them. Although my topic

³ RETTE is the University of Bergen’s system for registering projects. It is used to make sure that the project follows ethical considerations and that personal data about others collected during the project is being handled with care

of research is not necessarily of the most sensitive kind, I have still made sure to do the necessary work to ensure that my informant's identities and the particular places I have been to are hidden and anonymized. Most of my informants have expressed political opinions and discussed their thoughts on the environmental policies and schemes. Hence, in order to protect my informants, no real names – of both people and places – are used in this thesis. All names and place names mentioned are pseudonyms and some informants have been split or merged into one person. Farm names are also anonymized, ensuring that it is not possible to recognize the farmers that own and/or work on the farms. I have, however, chosen to not hide the county of Devon as my general area of research because of the many variations from different counties and the importance of describing the topography and climate of the county. The issues that the farmers in Devon experience will most likely be quite different from farmers in any other English county, and it is therefore important to acknowledge the particular county the ethnography comes from. With its large hills and lack of flat land, combined with its wet climate, Devon farmers have their own, unique set of problems and issues when it comes to their farm and their agricultural practices. A large part of Devon's agricultural sector consists of small-scale farms, due to its topography. A region where the farms are larger scale will naturally experience different roadblocks and have to overcome different issues than in Devon. I find this important to highlight and will therefore not anonymize the county of Devon in my thesis.

Chapter outline

Chapter two of this thesis will focus on the state's standardizing and homogenizing effects on the farmers in Devon. It will explore how farmers in Devon experience and navigate the different environmental schemes and policies that come with the country's shift to become more sustainable and how they experience the schemes and policies as coming from the top-down without considering individual and local factors. The chapter argues that these schemes, policies, restrictions, and grants ignore local knowledge and all of the different local variations that exist within the county of Devon. Chapter two will also argue how most farmers do, in fact, wish to produce and run their farm as sustainably and environmentally friendly as possible, but the uncertainties of the new schemes make it difficult for them to do so. Lastly, the chapter will explore how farmers do resistance to these restrictions and schemes that they so obviously are not happy with. I will focus on the different everyday resistances they do and examine why the

farmers of Devon do not participate in the large, spectacular resistances that we see elsewhere in Europe today.

Chapter three will use some of the same arguments from chapter two – that the state standardizes and homogenizes schemes and policies that affect the farmer – but instead uses the arguments about non-state entities that in many ways act the same as states and uses many of the tools that are traditionally associated with states or governments. It explores how the Soil Association and Arla act as states but through a market-based logic and how they use tools such as indicators and ranking-systems to, in some ways, ‘govern’ the farmers. The chapter also focuses on auditing and audit cultures and attempts to show how audits in many ways use logics from the financial world to govern and assess farmers.

Finally, chapter four will delve deeper in to the local and tacit knowledge that the farmers possess and how this knowledge is ignored by the state and non-state entities. In this chapter, I explore different ways of viewing the world, i.e., ‘looking’ vs ‘seeing’, and how these can have different implications. I also focus on family traditions and the passing down and on how ignoring local knowledge can have negative effects, in some cases, even the opposite effect of what is intended, which I will show through an ethnographic example of a farmer in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

2. “What’s good for the environment is also good for us”: How agricultural schemes and policies affect farmers in Devon

Introduction

Before leaving the European Union, the UK had for four decades operated with the EU’s agricultural subsidiary scheme, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP scheme played a great role in providing the country with extra food security after the second World War, but in the years after it has come with a cost (Bateman & Balmford, 2018). The CAP was able to provide this food security because of the large amounts of funds that were allocated to farmers based on how many hectares they had on their farm: i.e., the larger the farm was, the more money the farmer was getting. This caused the CAP scheme to, consciously or not, favour large-scale, intensive farming. These types of farms are the ones that contribute the most to agricultural pollution (Ogaji, 2005: 254). Hence, the consequences of the CAP scheme were that it caused large amounts of agricultural pollution and has, arguably, contributed to large parts of today’s problems with agricultural pollution (Bateman & Balmford, 2018).

Post-Brexit, the UK Government announced that they would be slowly phasing out the CAP subsidy scheme and implement a new one that would be created specifically for the UK and which would be focused on making the agricultural sector get on board to reach the net zero goal by 2050. In order to achieve this, large changes need to be made in the ways that the UK’s agricultural sector is operating. This is where the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes come in. The ELM schemes are created to give rewards to people who manage their land in an environmentally friendly way and consists of three different schemes focused on three different areas of land management: the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), the Countryside Stewardship (CS), and the Landscape Recovery (UK Government, 2023). The SFI is the scheme that most farmers within the agricultural sector, in my experience, are a part of. The basic idea of the ELM schemes is to award people who contribute to keeping the water and air clean and who are willing to adapt and change their practices to help fight environmental- and agricultural pollution. This means that the SFI will offer “... payments to farmers to carry out farming activities in a more sustainable way so that they can produce environmental goods and services alongside food.” (UK Government, 2023). ‘Public funding for public goods’ is what the ELM schemes are often described as; farmers get funding from the public sector for making their production more sustainable and therefore doing the public a service. To become part of the SFI one can apply for a three-year agreement where the farmers are provided with a

selection of paid actions which they can choose from. This could be anywhere from managing hedgerows which pays £13 per 100m, avoiding the use of insecticides which pays £45 per hectare, or producing a soil management plan which pays £6 per hectare (DEFRA & Rural Payments Agency, 2023). All of my informants, including Oscar, were a part of this scheme and therefore received money to perform different actions within the scheme.

Throughout the next few years, the ELM schemes will slowly be replacing the CAP, and it is the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) who decide what these new schemes will look like. In this thesis I wish to explore how farmers experience and navigate the different environmental schemes and policies that come with the UK's net zero politics. Farmers in Devon, as we shall discover throughout this chapter, have a generally difficult time with keeping up with the changing subsidy schemes and find it challenging to implement them into their practice, although most of them do have a wish to practice sustainably. This chapter will focus precisely on this. I wish to explore how farmers are both being affected by and navigate the shift from one subsidy system (CAP) to the next (ELM) and how they attempt to incorporate these new restrictions into their already existing practice.

Drawing on James Scott (1998) and Ferguson and Gupta (2002) I argue that the state's schemes and policies are clearly coming from the top-down. They are standardizing and homogenizing farmers and their farms in order to make them legible and easy to control (Scott, 1998). I attempt to show how the state is removed from the lived life of the people that they govern and therefore does not account for the local variations in society. I attempt to show how these schemes and policies seem to fail, in the words of Scott (1998) because of their lack of incorporating local knowledge and individual farms' needs. I explore how farmers go about understanding and implementing the restrictions to the best of their abilities through discussion groups, as well as how the farmers practice ideological and symbolic (Scott, 1989 [2015]) resistance.

The everyday life of a farmer

Before proceeding with this chapter, I believe that it is beneficial to look at what a day in the life of a dairy farmer – John - in Devon potentially looks like during calving season. This is to paint a picture of what a farmers' day of work looks like. During the month of April I stayed on John's farm together with him and his family, helping out with a range of different tasks on the farm. Through this experience I gained a more detailed insight into the struggles of a dairy farmer than I did on the rest of the farm-visits.

John lives with his wife and son on their family farm: a farm he inherited from his parents. John's parents bought the farm – Blueberry Hill Farm – before John was born. They started running it as a dairy farm right from the start and the farm has housed dairy cows ever since. John's parents did, however, not own as many cows as John does today. His herd amounts to around 250 dairy cows, an average amount for a modern, family-owned dairy farm in the region. John is the head of the farm, although he shared a lot of the responsibilities on the farm with his son David, in hopes that he will one day be interested in taking over the farm and keep the family tradition alive. John does not comply to a more typical way of dairy farming, where the cows are outside for only a certain amount of time each year. Instead, he practices something called 'extended grazing', meaning his cows are outside all year around, no matter the weather or climate. Hence, John's cows' most important source of nutrition is grass. As most farmers, John's average day is nowhere near predictable, nor are his days ever the same: with the exception of the regular tasks he does every day. Most days, John starts his workday at the crack of dawn and finishes his work when the sun sets at night, making his workday a lot longer than the average persons'.

Somewhere between 06:00 and 07:00. John gets up and gets ready to start his workday. He usually does not take the time to eat breakfast. The very first thing John does is to check on his calving cows. At the height of calving season, the whole family is busy marking, moving, and taking care of the newborn calves and their mothers. Most of the work with the calves and their mums is done by Agatha, an intern John hired to help during the busy calving season, but John oversees the work and makes sure everything is satisfactory. John practices something called 'block calving', meaning all the cows are inseminated at the same time to ensure the calving seasons only happen in the spring. Doing it this way ensures that he can get the calving done in a few months' time, as opposed to having cows calve at separate times throughout the year. It does, however, mean that this time of year is extremely busy. After John has finished rounding on the calving cows, he jumps into his small, two seated, pick-up truck. As previously mentioned, John's herd of cows is exponentially larger than his parent's, meaning he needs more space. Ten years ago, John and his family bought a second farm, creating more space for their animals. Because of Devon's topography and lack of available land, John, among many other Devon farmers, was not able to buy a second piece of land in close proximity to Blueberry Hill Farm. Thus, John takes a forty-minute drive every day between Blueberry Hill Farm and his second farm Blackrock Pointe. During calving season, John and his family, together with all their cows, move to Blackrock Pointe where the cows will stay until they have calved. Blueberry Hill Farm is used the rest of the year: John's milking parlour is located there and the

cows, once they have calved, are moved there to start being milked. This drive back and forth can easily take up a couple hours of John's day.

During calving season, before all the dairy cows are back at Blueberry Hill Farm, John and David only do one milking a day, usually early in the morning. The milking can take anywhere from one hour to two, depending on how wet the fields are: wet fields cause dirty teats, which will have to be properly cleaned before milking. Once the calving season is over and all his dairy cows have returned, they will start doing two milkings a day. John's day has only just begun once he is finished the first milking of the day. He still needs to make sure that his 'yearlings' – next year's replacement cows – are moved to a field with grass, all of his cows are healthy and where they should be, and that all of the electronics and technologies on the farm are working properly. He also always needs to be prepared for unpredictable things to happen; a cow could get sick or escape from its pasture, his parlous can stop working, or his car – of which he is dependent on to do his work – can break down.

John's calves, as most other new-born animal, require a lot of attention. As previously mentioned, most of this responsibility falls on John's intern, Agatha. Agatha prefers to start her day even earlier than John. A lot of the times the cows calve at the crack of dawn, and she needs to be there as early as possible to give the calves the care they need in the first few hours of their lives. When a calf has been born, Agatha follows a strict procedure that ensures that the calf gets the best start to life that it can get. Within the first few hours of the calf's life Agatha gives it a collar with a number that matches up with its mum, sprays its umbilical cord with iodine to prevent infection, and give the calf colostrum. Colostrum is the first milk that comes out of the mother when the calf is born, and it contains essential nutrients that is crucial to building the calf's immune system and ensuring that it can live a long and healthy life. Although most calves have an instinct to drink from their mother as soon as they're born, John and Agatha do not trust that calves get all the colostrum they need, so they give colostrum straight to the calf's stomach through a bottle with a long tube. Once there are only a few cows left to calve, John and Agatha's attention go to other things, such as milking. Often this results in the colostrum not being extracted early enough from the mother and there will not be enough colostrum for the last calves that are born. This year quite a few calves got sick and died. After a bit of investigation, it was discovered that all of them had not been given colostrum at birth and had therefore not developed a good immune system.

Each year, every dairy farmer needs a certain number of calves to become their replacement cows. John and the rest pick out their new replacement cows by their size and general health. The calves that are picked as replacement cows will be put in a separate field

together with cows that will rear them until they are ready to be on their own. The cows that will go with the replacement calves are not necessarily the calves' mother, but a cow that shows a great deal of motherly instincts. Most of these cows are given the responsibility of two-four calves each. The calves who will not grow up to become dairy cows are removed from their mother as soon as possible after birth. By doing this, John and Agatha can ensure that the bond between them have not had a lot of time to develop, creating a less traumatic experience for both cow and calf. During the height of calving season many calves are born throughout the night/early morning and John and his family/workers must take care of them as soon as possible. Since the cows are outside all year, they also calve outside, making it more work for John to make sure both cow and calf are okay. When the cows calve this way, unforeseen things can also, unfortunately, happen. This year, a terrible thing happened. It was at the very start of calving season, when the most calves are being born every day. The weather had been cold for the past few days, but no one thought anything of it. During the night it had snowed, and the snow had melted, resulting in a few centimetres of wet mud laying on top of the field. New-born calves can handle the cold, but they cannot handle wet, resulting in many of the cows born that night drowning in the mud before anyone had the chance to check on them. Many of the calves born that night were heifers that John was hoping to use as replacement heifers. Because of this incident, John had to use all the heifer calves born as replacement cows, which could potentially affect his milk production in a few years, considering that the replacement cows from this year were not his best heifers.

John, as every other dairy farmer, needs all of his dairy cows to produce one calf each year. Without the calf, the cow cannot produce milk. Most bull calves are of no interest to dairy farmers, as they, of course, do not produce milk. Common practice is to either send the bull calves to slaughter – the meat is usually used for cheap meat like burgers, etc. – or sent to market. For reasons that will be discussed later, sending the calves to slaughter is not an option for either John or Albert. Because of the widespread cases of Bovine Tuberculosis – usually shortened to T.B. – all calves, cows, and bulls need to test negative for T.B. before they can enter the market. This forces the farmers to keep their bull calves for longer than they would prefer. Keeping a calf costs the farmer a lot of money and time, all things they will not get back, considering a calf is only worth a few pounds on the market.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – the spreading of slurry and 'informal adjustments'

One of the main critiques the agricultural industry gets is the large amounts of water pollution it causes. Livestock waste, nitrates from fertilizers and agrochemicals are the main pollutants

of water; in the 1980's it was discovered that 55% of water pollution was caused by cow slurry (National Rivers Authority cited in Ogaji, 2005: 254-255). This is caused by the use of nitrate fertilizers becoming more common as well as organic waste being allowed to enter the watercourses, often through poor management or storage of organic wastes. Because of financial issues, where the prize the farmers get for their products has declined while the cost has risen, farmers have been forced to increase their herd levels, which in turn makes disposing of the waste more difficult (Ogaji, 2005: 255). The UK Government's solution to this is to mark out the areas that are especially vulnerable to agricultural nitrate pollution in the water streams. These areas are called Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) (UK Government, 2018).

Albert's farm, Honeydew Meadow, is a dairy farm in Devon with a herd of around 200-250 dairy cows. Honeydew Meadow is located in a particularly wet area of Devon. The farm's acres are also sloped, as the farm is on a particularly hilly area. Because of the heavy rainfall on his farm, Albert keeps his cows inside for most of the year: keeping his cows outside while his fields are wet would cause his fields to be destroyed as the soil is vulnerable to destruction from the heavy cows when it is wet. Honeydew Meadow is also located in an NVZ. This means that Albert is restricted by the many rules that come with being in an NVZ. Some of these rules include the demand that the farm must be able to store all organic manure produced on the farm; only spread slurry on land that is not at high risk of water run-off (UK Government, 2015a) and if spreading on such an area, the farmer may only spread at certain times of the year (UK Government, 2015b); and following strict rules about how to store solid manures to avoid getting it in to the water streams, e.g., storing it in a roofed building or on a waterproof base to make sure that the rain does not cause the manure to run into the water (UK Government, 2015a). Thus, the farmers on the 55% of English land that is within an NVZ have to follow an extra set of rules to avoid polluting the waters (UK Government, 2018).

For Albert, these restrictions mean, among other things, that he cannot spread his slurry when he needs to or when he feels it is right: he must wait for the window in which he is allowed to spread slurry in an NVZ. First of all, this causes his slurry storage to become full to the brim before he is able to empty it on to his fields. The most damaging effect of this, however, is that he cannot spread his slurry whenever he himself feels it will cause the least amount of water pollution. Due to the farmers themselves being interested in keeping their agricultural pollution to the minimum, as previously mentioned, Albert wishes to spread onto his fields when he is sure he will not pollute the waters. However, because of the restricted periods of spreading slurry, his slurry storage is so full when the time to spread comes around that he is forced to spread as soon as he allowed. Farmers know when the best time to spread their slurry is; they

have worked the same land for many years and have a heap of knowledge about farming and pollution that they have either learned from their ancestors or learned themselves by running the farm. Albert knows that the risk of water pollution is highest when the fields are wet and it is raining. If he was able to spread on his fields whenever he feels it is the right time, he would choose to do it on a day with no rain and dry fields. This example will be brought up later, when discussing the importance of local knowledge.

This examples shows very clearly how the government's policies can end up failing when being implemented, like Scott (1998) warns about. Because of the strict rules about when and where to spread in an NVZ, farmers are forced to spread their slurry even if they do not feel that it is the appropriate time to do so. Thus, the attempt to make the farmers' spreading of slurry done in more sustainable ways, instead does the exact opposite. The restrictions within the NVZs also shows clearly how the UK government standardizes each and every farm – giving them the same dates for spreading – rather than considering the different conditions each farm has: an appropriate time for spreading for one farm may necessarily be the appropriate time for another.

A different issue with the ELM schemes, or the SFI in particular, is that they require more labour and time invested in the practices that the farmers do on their farm to make it more sustainable. Albert provided me with a good example of this as we were walking around his farm. One of the things that is required by the farmers for them to receive subsidies on the new scheme is for them to avoid spreading their slurry through the air; instead, they want the farmers to spread their slurry directly into the soil. Spreading through the air will soon become illegal, according to Albert, but is today only a preference from the Government. The reason for this is because of the large amounts of gases that is being released into the air when spreading it the 'regular' way – i.e., through the air. Spreading directly to the soil will limit some of the gases introduced to the air. However, spreading in a new way requires not only specific, expensive tools and machines, but it also takes more effort. This is because when spreading directly to the soil the slurry needs to be more liquid than if it were to be spread in the air. Albert tries his hardest to spread his slurry in the way that the government would prefer, but sometimes finds that the slurry just isn't liquid enough and he chooses/has to spread through the air. This is what Susan H. Lees (1986) calls 'informal adjustments, which will be explored further towards the end of this chapter. This is exactly what Albert does when he sometimes neglects to spread his slurry into the ground. Albert is, however, usually very willing, and eager to implement the practices of the SFI, because it is through this scheme that the farmers make a lot of their needed income. When Albert does things on his farm that the government consider environmentally

friendly, he makes money off of it; in other words “what’s good for the environment is also good for us”, as he exclaimed with enthusiasm as we were touring his farm.

What this example shows us exactly how the state does not take into account the different needs of each farm. The rules within the NVZ standardizes and generalize each farm and farmer (Scott, 1998) and ignores the local varieties. This, inevitably, causes the whole point of the NVZ – to contribute to less pollution of water – to do the exact opposite. The policy fails, in Scott’s (1998) words, because of its lack of attention to local varieties. These rules also clearly come from the top-down (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002), as they seem to make no attempts to include the farmers who are affected in the making of these rules.

Navigating new schemes and policies

One sunny afternoon in the early spring, Florence and I met at the small, cosy village pub to discuss the new agricultural policies and the implications they have on the local farmers. The sun was shining through the window, creating a comfortable temperature inside of the pub to sit down and enjoy a warm beverage. The pub was fairly empty – considering it was in the middle of most people’s work hours –, but a few of the tables were filled with hungry guests who were enjoying a warm meal and engaging in conversations with each other. The window next to our table provided us with a scenic view of the river flowing through the village, surrounded by newly sprung yellow daffodils that were dancing in the cold spring breeze. Florence works at a University in Devon, where she has, together with other scholars, produced a report that focused specifically on highlighting farmer’s thoughts and opinions on the UK’s transition from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the new Environmental Land Management schemes (ELM). The project was based on several discussion forums that were held to provide a space for farmers to voice and discuss their opinions on the transition to net zero agriculture and the new subsidiary schemes. As well as creating a space for critical discussion, the discussion forums also provided the participating farmers with an important arena in which they could present the difficulties they are facing when trying to implement the new rules and regulations that come with the shift of subsidiary schemes.

Throughout my conversation with Florence, she made it clear that a lot of the farmers in Devon face large uncertainties and difficulties when attempting to understand and incorporate the new ELM schemes. As previously mentioned, the CAP subsidy system favoured large-scale, intensive farming, which in turn caused local damage to the environment and loss of natural habitat (Ogaji, 2005). In order for the UK to reach their goal of reaching net zero emissions by 2050, this needs to change. This is exactly what the ELM schemes are attempting

to achieve. One of the issues the farmers in the project expressed about the transition to the ELM schemes was, according to Florence, is that the government is still attempting to figure out exactly what the new schemes are going to look like, which is causing a lot of confusion for the farmers. This also makes it difficult for a lot of the farmers to make changes right now, because they don't know what the subsidy system will look like when it's finished and what specific requirements the new schemes will have. In four years, counting from 2023, the old subsidy system, CAP, will be completely replaced with the new ELM schemes. Until then, DEFRA are slowly implementing the new changes. There are, in Florence's words, "... massive uncertainty of the new policies that are arising.". There is also, according to Florence, a widespread misunderstanding that most farmers in the UK voted for Brexit, while in actuality, many of them didn't. Most farmers knew very well what would happen if they exited the European Union: they were aware of how dependant they were on the European market without any constraints. Because of Brexit, the UK's free access to the European market is gone. They have more issues with export and there are concerns with the UK's new trade deals causing lower quality food from the United States and Australia being imported and taking over the British market.

The ELM schemes are, according to Florence, focused on public goods and preserving nature. She is, however, worried that

it seems much less focused around food production, which is something which is causing a lot of concern and anxiety amongst farmers ... even the ones who want to farm, you know, in a very sort of nature friendly way ... are very concerned about how they will make a living under the new scheme.

Because of the ELM schemes' large focus on, amongst other things, planting trees, Florence argues that a lot of farmers are concerned about how they will be able to make a living under the new scheme. A lot of them don't really see where the profits will come from under the new scheme. She argues that "... trees don't pay the bills, at the end of the day.". The UK Government (2023) claims that the SFI will give farmers opportunities to do the environment good while producing food. It seems like the farmers think that the rules of the SFI makes it difficult for both of them to exist at the same time.

Although farmers are still confused about the new policies, Florence does point out that DEFRA have been trying to meet the farmers at their level. They are doing surveys and consults to best try to understand how they can bring the farmers with them. Instead of the changes

coming from the top-down, where farmers are being told what to do by people ‘above’ them, Florence argues that the people implementing the policies need to listen to and work with the farmers and try to find solutions that work for them both. Farmers do need to adapt the new practices to reduce their impact on the environment, but they need support – both financially and through information – and knowledge to do so. The financials of the farm are the bottom line for all farmers: without making money, the farm cannot run, and therefore the farmers need financial support in order to achieve what DEFRA wants them to. The economic aspect must be a part of the solution. The cost-of-living crisis in the UK – resulting in high electricity and food prices, etc. – is “... bad news for the environment, the fact that all these costs of living things come now at a time when we really need to speed up our action on the climate.”, Florence says. “... the national governments really have to step up, way more than they are doing now.”. The agricultural sector has a high emission output, and this is not something that can be ignored. It needs to change, she exclaims.

Another issue when it comes to the introduction of the ELM schemes is that of scale and general differences in farms. One of the main things people are concerned about when it comes to the new policies is that they seem to be presented as ‘one size fits all’ and don’t appear to consider the different sizes, ways of productions, and locations of each farm. A very large farm will have very different needs and opportunities than a tiny, family-owned farm. For example, the ELMs desire for farmers to plant trees seem to be more suited for larger farms with large, open areas. A smaller farm might only have a small area that is appropriate for tree planting and might not afford advisors on where to plant the trees, etc. like a larger farm might. You also can’t ask farmers to completely change their ways of production to planting trees: many of them have thousands of pounds invested in infrastructure and equipment, which would all go to waste if they were to change what they are producing. “That [the farmers’ production] can’t change overnight; it has to change gradually.”. So, although planting trees and managing hedges – which are two of the things that can be done to make money through the ELM schemes – seems like a good way of making money at first glance, not every farm is built for these sorts of activities. Although planting trees and managing hedges may seem like a good ways of making money at first glance, not every farm is built for these sorts of activities. For example, a small farm on a hill will not have the same space or available, appropriate land to plant large amounts of trees as a farm with loads of flat, available space. A very large, industrialized farm will have very different needs than a small-scale, family-owned farm. For example, the SFI’s desire for farmers to plant trees seem to be more suited for large farms with large, open areas. This shows the issue of scale and the implementation of what seems to be, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ subsidy

system. A smaller farm may only have a small area that is appropriate for tree planting and may not be able to afford advisors on where it is best to plant the trees, etc., as a larger industrial farm may be able to. You also can't ask the farmer to completely change their ways of production to planting trees: many of them have thousands of pounds invested in infrastructure and equipment, which would all go to waste if they were to change what they are producing. To show how scale is an issue that has not been properly addressed when it comes to the ELM schemes, I will in the next section provide a few ethnographic examples that showcases the issues that many small-scale, family-owned farmers experience. Again, this showcases how the farms are standardized by the government and the different local and individual needs of each farm are not considered.

What the issue with people coming from the top-down telling farmers that they need to change the way they farm, is that there becomes a clash between the actors: instead of bringing the farmers with them and meeting them at their level, they're trying to impose something on them that does not align with the way they already run their farm. Florence thinks this is a big problem. What Florence mentioned to me about farmers wanting to practice sustainably, but hesitant to change their practices too much before the ELM schemes were completely figured out, was similar to what I had myself seen with my informants. What Florence said about it becoming a clash between different actors – the state and the farmers – and that the farmers are not being included in the changes that are being implemented is closely tied to what both Scott (1998), Ferguson and Gupta (2002) and Agrawal (2005) argue. By imposing restrictions and rules from the top, a divide between the people making the restrictions and the people being affected by them is created.

Standardized grants for sustainable farming

In order to produce more sustainably on their farm, farmers can apply for different grants that can help them either build necessary infrastructure or buy important machinery. Most of the grants are provided by DEFRA, but a farmer can also apply to grants provided by several different actors. A farmer can, for example, apply for a grant to build a roof for his cows to protect the cows' manure from rain and thereby avoiding water run-off, like Oscar told me one day as we were feeding hay to his cows. A farmer can also apply for grants that will provide him with financial aid to build an improved slurry storage, a grant John told me about on one of our trips in his two-seated, blue pick-up truck on our way between his two farms. The issue with a lot of these grants is that they come with a set of rules and expectations and the recipient will be bound to a set of different requirements. For example, if applying for financial aid in

building a new slurry pit that follow the rules of slurry storage, the grant requires the farmers to build a building that has a specific set of measurements and is built in a specific way. The recipient of the grant could therefore be forced to build a much larger slurry storage than what he personally needs, which makes it pointless for him to apply to the grant. Again, this gives a good example of the standardization and homogenization the UK Government is doing.

Another example of grants is provided by Rose and Edgar, who own a small-scale, family-owned organic farm. Each year, Rose and Edgar make the majority of their yearly income through selling organic geese for Christmas. Edward had, a few years back, received a grant to build an abattoir on their farm. Having their own abattoir would ensure that the carbon emissions that come from the geese would be cut down as they would no longer need to transport the geese to a separate abattoir, as well as it would ensure that the animal welfare was kept as good as possible. This may all seem great and easy at first sight, however, when being awarded with such grants, the farmer has to pay for everything out of pocket before being reimbursed. The reimbursement can happen when the farmer presents the correct receipts to the providers of the grant. Not all farmers are in the financial position in where they are able to pay out of pocket, and in Rose and Edgar's case they had to pay for everything using credit cards. What they did not know, and later came to find out when inquiring the givers of the grants about reimbursement, was that using a credit card to pay for everything initially would not give them the proper receipts necessary for reimbursement. This meant that there was, unfortunately, no way for Rose and Edgar to get their money back. In other words, receiving the grant to build an abattoir caused Rose and Edgar to spend more money and accumulating even more debt because of the grant that was – at first glance – a great opportunity to improve their farm and make it more sustainable. Grants in general are, according to all of the farmers I have encountered during my fieldwork, generally a long and difficult process. To apply for a grant, one must include several documents and go through difficult bureaucratic procedures. Still, in the end, the likelihood of receiving the grant is small. Grants that are given through DEFRA – and therefore the Government – are so standardized that it is difficult or nearly impossible for farmers to apply to a grant and make it fit the needs of their own individual farm, even though they are applying for the grant so that they can receive the financial aid they need to make their farm more sustainable; which is exactly what the Government wants their farmers to do. We can clearly see Scott's theories of state standardization when it comes to grants being awarded to farmers; the recipients of the grants need to follow a strict set of rules and requirements – for example the size of the slurry storage or a specific sort of receipts to be eligible for reimbursement – regardless of the farms' size and particular needs.

The examples provided above shows us, again, how the state ignores the different local and individual needs of each farmer and his/her farm. When DEFRA are making new schemes and policies, they create a general map of the farms within their control which lacks the important local detail that the farms and farmers possess (Scott, 1998). Although this is necessary for DEFRA in order to gain a useful overlook over the farms, I argue, drawing on Scott (1998), that this removes a lot of the important information that is needed in order for these schemes and policies to work. In order to make the farmers' reach their potential of making their farm as environmentally friendly as possible, the schemes and policies need to account for the varieties and the farmers' abilities to change their productions and how they run their farm.

How farmers attempt to adapt to the schemes and policies

The examples above are written in order to provide some context on what farmers actually deal with in their work. It is the farmers who have taken over or bought the farm; it is they who are hands-on on the farm every single day, and it is they who know what their animals, farm, and soil needs. To me, it was very clear when talking to my informants that they genuinely wished to do good for the environment. When talking to Oscar on the day I visited his farm, he both told me and showed me through his actions – like planting trees, using little machinery, and planting alfalfa instead of different, more unsustainable feeds for his animals – On every farm I visited, most of them told me that sustainability was important for them. It did, however, seem like most of the farmers needed some sort of motivation to change their productions: the money in farming is not great, and the farmers must put finances first. The policies and schemes did seem to motivate the farmers. The clearest example I experienced of this was the one time that John invited me to come to his discussion group meeting.

Until this day, I had not heard of such a thing as a discussion group for farmers. The discussion groups are usually farmers' own initiate and they can be used however the farmers please. The discussion group John was a part of was put together of a handful of dairy farmers, where several of them also used Arla as their milk buyer. The group gathers once a month and their discussion groups are held on one of the members' farm. The particular discussion group I attended together with John was held on a Tuesday around one hour away from where John's farm is located. After a long, but scenic, drive through one of Devon's national parks we finally arrived at a large dairy farmed owned by one of the group members. The topic for today's group session was 'farming rules for water'. To help the dairy farmers navigate this topic, they had invited a local agricultural consultant who specialized in the environmental aspect of

agriculture. After we had all ‘dipped’ our boots – a saying for dipping your shoes in an iodine solution to kill bacteria and prevent the spread of disease – we were shown into a large, almost empty, barn. A load of straw bales were stacked and placed in a horseshoe shape, creating comfortable seating for all the participants.

The first part of the discussion group was dedicated to the agricultural consultant’s presentation on the new farming rules for water. While the farm dog was running around the barn, chasing the pieces of straw the wind was picking up, Sarah, the agricultural consultant, was going through the rules the farmers must follow to keep water pollution to a minimum. The rules are created by DEFRA and the Environmental Agency (EA) to ensure that livestock farming practices are not a cause of pollution of the nearby waters. There are a total of eight different rules the farmers must comply to, which include, but are not limited to, application of organic manure and manufactured fertilizers, storage of organic manures, and soil management (DEFRA, 2017)

One of the several concerns for farmers when it comes to these rules is the new definition of ‘slurry’ that was introduced in 2018. The problem with this new definition is that it now includes the water run-off from buildings and paces where livestock has resided, which Sarah told the farmers about during the discussion group. This new part of the definition means that rainwater from any area that the cows are as well as wastewater from washing down the milking parlour must be disposed of as slurry. Previously the farmers have been able to dispose of this straight away, whereas now it will fill up their slurry storages much quicker than previously. Although the new definition was introduced back in 2018, this was news to most of the farmers present.

The second part of the discussion group took place after a short break of tea and biscuits. For the next hour Sarah, together with the owners of the farm, took us on a walking tour of the farm. The purpose of this was for all of the members to discuss if the farm’s slurry storage and storage of other polluting agents would be approved in a potential check from the EA. The EA do farm checks every few years and the time for the next one was coming. After a brief discussion it was agreed upon that the farm’s slurry storage would not be approved: it was too close to a slanting hill, which could result in rain washing some of the slurry down the hill to the nearby water stream. Sarah did assure the farmers that the EA are not out to punish; they would rather use their visitations as a teaching opportunity rather than punishing the farmers. This gives the farmers a good indication of what they need to improve until next time the EA comes around.

These discussion groups do not only provide the participating farmers a place where they can invite others to help them with certain topics; it also gives them a safe space where they can learn from each other's mistakes and successes, bounce ideas off one another, and explore different ways of doing agriculture. This shows that farmers are genuinely interested in changing their practices. Although it seems like a large part of the reason for attending the discussion group was to avoid getting fined, I also argue that some parts of it was the farmers' interest in making the practice better. This shows the farmers' interest in producing sustainably and how they actively try to do so to the best of their abilities.

Farmers' resistance

In the middle of a sentence, Florence stops and points to the parking lot outside the window we are seated in front of. She tells me a story about how one time, the parking lot was so flooded that they had to shut down the pub for several days. Due to heavy rainfall for a longer period than normal for the area, the rivers had overflowed, and the village's draining system was completely clogged. She goes on to tell me - in a low whisper so that no one else can hear - how she believes the flood happened because of the large, intensive farms surrounding the village. Because of the intensive land management and the plants that had been planted in the area, the soil structure had become weak, causing it to almost melt away during the heavy rainfall. The local lack of hedges caused the overflowing river to penetrate the soil and flood large parts of the village. "The reason for it is basically because of the farming practices around here.", she whispered as quietly as she possibly could.

This thesis cannot be written without considering the farmer's resistance to these policies that I, hopefully, have made clear throughout this thesis that they do not always agree with. As we have seen all over media and the news lately, farmers in many of the European countries are doing spectacular forms of resistance to their government's agricultural policies and schemes (see Henley & Jones, 2024; Henley & Oltermann, 2024; Willsher, 2024). This does, however, not seem to be the case of my informants. None of them expressed at any time that they were participating in protests and none of them seemed to be active in their local politics, although every single one of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the policies and schemes. There were a few instances however where Albert engaged in what seemed to me to be what Lees (1986) calls "informal adjustments". Following is an ethnographic example from Albert's dairy farm which showcases this.

One of the things that is required by the farmers for them to receive subsidies on the new scheme is for them to avoid spreading their slurry through the air; instead, they want the farmers to spread their slurry to their fields directly to the soil. Spreading through the air will

soon become illegal, according to Albert, but is today only a preference from the government. The reason for this is because of the large amounts of methane that is being released into the air when spreading it the 'regular' way – i.e., through the air. Spreading directly to the soil will limit some of the methane introduced to the air. However, spreading in a new way requires not only specific, expensive tools and machines, but it also takes more effort. This is because when spreading directly to the soil the slurry needs to be more liquid than if it were to be spread in the air. Albert tries his hardest to spread his slurry in the way that the government would prefer, but sometimes finds that the slurry just isn't liquid enough and he chooses/has to spread through the air. This is what Susan H. Lees (1986) calls 'informal adjustments. Informal adjustments are ways for farmers to subtly break the rules that they are practicing under. When rules or policies are in conflict with the needs of the farmer or his farm, farmers either have the option to follow the rules and having their production affected or adjusting them slightly so that they fit their needs (Lees, 1986: 610). This is exactly what Albert does when he sometimes neglects to spread his slurry into the ground.

This could be explained with James Scott's (1989 [2015]) concept of 'everyday forms of resistance'. In this work, he argues that resistance by people of the lower classes to the politics coming from the top is not only confined to revolutions, protests or strikes and marches. Resistance can also be the more individual, unorganized (Scott, 1989 [2015]: 21), and subtle forms of resistance. These forms of resistance can be things such as ignoring doing something that is supposed to be done, poaching, or slandering (Scott, 1989: 5). I.e., resistance of a smaller scale. The aim of using these techniques is to stay safer and avoid getting attention for it (Scott, 1989 [2015]: 6), which is exactly what happens when the more spectacular forms of resistance are being used. These small actions will eventually have large effects (Scott, 1989: 6). This definition of resistance does not really apply to the farmers in Devon. What can be applied however, is what Scott mentions in his work: symbolic or ideological resistance. These forms of resistance are, according to Scott, "... gossip, slander..." (1989 [2015]: 8) etc. With symbolic defiance, Scott argues that people will often say what their bosses expects them or wants them to say, while they actually have completely different meanings which become apparent in "off-stage conversations" (Scott, 1989 [2015]: 30).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how farmers in Devon are being affected by the ELM schemes and different policies and restrictions coming from the government. It argues that the schemes and policies are clearly coming from the top-down and uses standardization techniques in order to

gain control over large areas of farmland/farmers. Although each and every farm has different needs, these are not considered when the policies are created. This may cause unwanted effects, like the example from Albert's farm in an NVZ. The standardizations of the policies are also shown through the different scales of each farm: not every single farm has the space to plant trees, which is one of the things that a farmer can get paid for through the ELM schemes. I also look at how the farmers – who already have a wish to produce sustainably – try to gain knowledge and stay updated on the latest requirements. Lastly, this chapter deals with the farmers' form of resistance, which differs from the large-scale, public resistance we see in the news elsewhere in Europe. The next chapter will deal with some of the similar issues – how farmers are being affected by schemes and policies and how they deal with them – but with a focus on non-state institutions and organizations rather than the government.

3. How non-governmental institutions and organizations apply restrictions and policies to farmers

Introduction

The warm fireplace felt nice on our cold skins as we entered Frederick's living room. We had just finished a walking tour of his chicken farm, where they hatch and sell day-old chickens. He showed me all of the different stages their chicks go through before they are sold. After we had walked around his entire farm, he showed me the way into his living/dining room. While the kettle was still warming up, Frederick was keen to talk to me about his taste in music. He showed me his entire CD collection and played me some of his favourite songs by his favourite artist, Bob Dylan. While Frederick and I were warming our hands on a cup of tea each, the words and tunes from the song "Gotta Serve Somebody" by Bob Dylan, were filling the room.

Frederick's chicken farm is certified organic through the Soil Association; a certification scheme that certifies farms in the UK as organic. This means that he has to comply with not only the schemes and policies coming from the government, but also the Soil Association's own rules and policies. It is exactly this that I wish to explore in this chapter: if the state acts in a top-down manner and imposes policies and schemes on the farmers, is it possible that we can see similarities and/or differences in the way that non-governmental organizations and institutions impose rules and restrictions on their members? In Scott's (1998) account in *Seeing like a state*, he does not mention the neoliberal world that we live in today. Sharma and Gupta (2006), however, argue that in today's neoliberal world, we need to acknowledge that it is not only states that can function in ways that have previously been associated with the state only: non-governmental organizations can also carry out a lot of these same functions (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 25). Building on this, this chapter argues that - just like the state imposes schemes and policies on farmers - that non-state institutions and organizations can act in similar ways to the state. Drawing on Scott's (1998) arguments about how the state standardizes and generalizes societies - or, in this case farmers and the agricultural sector - I will attempt to show through ethnographic examples how schemes and rules made by non-governmental actors - Arla and the Soil Association, respectively - also standardize and generalize in similar ways. This can, as we shall see throughout this chapter, sometimes fail, just like Scott (1998) argues about the state's schemes.

The first part of this chapter will start by providing a few different examples from farmers' experiences with Arla's Sustainability Incentive (SI) model and their 56-day rule. I argue that Arla imposes schemes and rules on their farmers that are in many ways very similar to the SFI scheme that the government runs. I will show through ethnographic examples what Arla's Sustainability Incentive (SI) looks like, in what ways it is similar to the SFI, the negative implications of the 56-day rule, and what implications this has for the farmers who are affected by it. I will also look at how the Soil Association – an organization that gives out organic certificates – work in similar ways as well. The second part of this chapter focuses on how these non-governmental organizations work through a market-based logic (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017) and explore what it means that the farmers are involved in these organizations voluntarily. Agrawal's (2005) examples from the governing of forests in Kumaon shows us how the Indian state uses numbers and statistics to control the forests, which he refers to as 'technologies of government'. I argue, using different theories on audits, measuring and statistics (Agrawal, 2005; Shore & Wright, 2015; Merry, 2011; Sauder & Espeland, 2009) that Arla and the Soil Association uses these techniques in order to standardize and homogenize the agricultural sector. Finally, I look at a small business owned by a family of farmers that sell products that are produced 'sustainably' by several different farmers through a website. I argue that this website, which will be explained and explored in more detailed closer to the end of this chapter, can in some ways be considered an 'unofficial' certification scheme. In this example the issue of scale mentioned in chapter two will be brought up again. What now follows is an ethnographic example from two different dairy farmers who are both members of and deliver their milk to Arla.

Arla's Sustainability Incentive (SI)

George – another dairy farmers whose farm is located in Devon – is a member of Arla. According to Arla's website, they are considered a cooperative. This means that it is owned by all of its members, rather than just a single person⁴. A quick scroll through their website makes it very clear that they seem greatly concerned with both sustainability⁵ and animal welfare⁶. A member of Arla also delivers their milk to them, where it gets produced into different dairy

⁴ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arlafoods.co.uk/about-arla/owned-by-farmers/>

⁵ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arlafoods.co.uk/sustainability/>

⁶ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arlafoods.co.uk/sustainability/cows/>

products depending on the quality of the milk, according to my informants who were members of Arla.

The morning I went to visit George and his wife Peggy on their Arla dairy farm, I had borrowed a bike to make the trip. The bike ride took me almost an hour longer than expected because of the heavy rainstorm that had wreaked havoc the night before. When I arrived and knocked on the door of the farmhouse I was completely drenched in rain. George and Peggy invited me in for a cup of coffee and some toast for breakfast. When I had gained back the warmth in my body, we all put on our wellies and headed outside. After receiving a detailed tour of the farm, which is already explained in the last chapter, we headed back inside for some lunch. After we had the lovely meal that Peggy had made for us, she took me to their office at the very end of their house, right beside the kitchen. During lunch both George and Peggy had mentioned something about the Arla Sustainability Incentive (SI)⁷, which I at the time had not yet heard of. Peggy told me to sit down and logged onto their account at Arla's website. When the account was logged into, a page full of statistics popped up on the screen. These statistics represented the SI and showed the farms results. The SI is a model that where farmers are rewarded points based on a reward-based system⁸. Farmers who are members of Arla can register a range of different data from their farm and their production and Arla will give them points based on how sustainable the farm is. The model contains several different categories where the farmers can score points. Some of these include death rates among the cows, how the farmers spread their slurry, if and how many trees the farmer is planting on their farm, etc. The farmer can reach a maximum of eighty points, and if they reach a certain number of points, they get more money for their milk. However, if Arla feels that the farmer has too low of a score, they risk getting paid less for their milk. According to their website⁹, one point on the SI gives the farmer 0,03 eurocent extra per kilogram of milk they deliver. Within the SI model the largest categories that Arla deems the most important in terms of reaching sustainability are sustainable feed – i.e., no soya; renewable electricity; manure handling; carbon farming; breeding; and

⁷ Arla has, since my fieldwork ended, seemed to have changed the name of the Sustainability Incentive to FarmAhead™ Technology. I have, however, chosen to use the term 'Sustainability Incentive' throughout this thesis as it was the name for the program when I was doing fieldwork and the name that the farmers used to refer to the model.

⁸ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arla.com/sustainability/the-farms/arlans-sustainability-incentive-model-qa/>

⁹ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arla.com/sustainability/the-farms/how-arla-farmers-reduce-dairys-carbon-footprint/>

green fertilizers. Together, these categories are called the ‘big five’¹⁰. They are also the categories that gives the farmers the most points.

Every year, all of the farmers in Arla have to answer a yearly survey sent out by Arla. This is called Arla’s Climate Check, where they have to answer a set of questions about the sustainability on their farm. The questions include what type of feed they use for their cows, how they manage their manure, how many animals they have, etc¹¹. The answers from this survey create the base for some of the points that the farmers are rewarded through the SI model. The questions that are not provided in the Climate Check have to be registered by the farmers themselves.

George and Peggy’s farm held a pretty high score and they believe that it is mostly due to the fact that they do not use soy-based feed and that they handle their manure in a ‘responsible’ way, by not letting it get into the nearby waters. Peggy was, however, clear that there are several things on the farm that they are already doing ‘right’ according to the SI model and that plotting the data for these actions is a much easier way of receiving points than spending a lot of money on making completely new changes that could potentially give them more points. One of the issues that George and Peggy are facing is that achieving and receiving a lot of the points take a lot of hard work. Some of the requirements in the model are things that the farmers are already fulfilling and the only thing they need to do to get the points is to submit the paperwork, like Peggy mentioned. In other cases, there are things that the farmers need to change on their farm to get points. This could be everything from something small like changing the types of feed they use to something larger, like building new or changing current infrastructure. The latter costs the farmers quite a lot of money and although there are grants, they can apply for they still have to cash out in order to fulfil these sections of the model, which I have already shown. Regardless of if the farmers need to make changes to get the points or not, there is still a lot of work and money that goes in to collecting these points. Most farmers, like previously mentioned, hire a consultant to help with the environmental aspect of their practice. Consultants are also used in cases like these, where the farmers need help to understand what needs to be done to fulfil the points. Once the work has been done, the farmer also needs to hire someone who can confirm that it is up to their standard and they need to submit paperwork to. To get rewarded the points they need to submit documentation that proves that

¹⁰ Arla Foods, Retrieved 28. May 2024, from <https://www.arla.com/sustainability/the-farms/how-arla-farmers-reduce-dairys-carbon-footprint/>

¹¹ Arla Foods, Retrieved May 28, 2024, from <https://www.arla.com/sustainability/the-farms/how-arla-farmers-reduce-dairys-carbon-footprint/>

the measures they have taken to achieve the points are up to Arla's standards. Often, they need to hire a consultant that can help them with doing the right things to achieve the points, which is also expensive.

John, the dairy farmer introduced in chapter two, is also a member of Arla and delivers his milk to them. John has to comply to the exact same Sustainability Incentive Model as Albert and Peggy. In contrast to Albert, John's score was not particularly high; regardless of John using little to no machinery, keeping his cows outside for the entire year, and feeding them mostly fresh grass. John thinks that it is because that they have not sent in as much documentation as they should and that they could be potentially able to gain quite a lot of points from things that they are already doing. He was, however, also a little bit confused as to why their score was as low as it was. His neighbour, for example, has a much higher score than John, even though the neighbour uses lots of heavy machinery in their production. John claims that Arla has not considered the amounts of emissions a machine produces; not only emissions from fuel, but also from the metal that is used to produce it, etc. John argues that his farm is more environmentally friendly because he, amongst other things, practices 'extended grazing' where his cows are outside for the entire year and live mainly off of fresh grass. When the cows are mostly outside, their slurry spreads naturally and their slurry will not pollute the waters and the air in the same way as when the cows are inside and the slurry needs to be spread from a slurry pit. John feels that the SI does not account for the local and individual varieties that are on all of the different member farms. An example he gave me of this was the questionnaire Arla makes their farmers answer occasionally. The options for the answers are usually quite limited; the options are often only 'yes' or 'no'. However, the real-life answers are not always that black and white. For example, one of the questions asked in the survey are if the cows have comfortable housing: on John's farm the cows are outside all day, so it will be difficult to answer this question without having the opportunity to elaborate the answer. Because of all of these different factors, John believes that Arla must consider the farmer's local and professional knowledge that they have spent years to attain. Another rule that Arla imposes on their farmers is what they call the 56-day rule, which will be explained in the next section.

Rankings and indicators – the SI's point-based system

Before proceeding with the next example, I will use this space to discuss the audit culture within Arla's Sustainability Incentive. The SI model is based on numbers and statistics in order to gauge how sustainable a farm is. It is therefore beneficial to look at theories on audits, indicators, and rankings. Agrawal (2005) mentions, as previously mentioned, that the forest

department in India represented the forests using numbers and statistics. I argue that Arla's SI does the same thing to farmers: they represent the farmers' sustainability using numbers and statistics. The "[...] widespread proliferation of calculative rationalities of modern financial accounting and their effects on individuals and organizations [...]" are what Shore and Wright define as 'audit cultures' (2015: 421). They explore how these techniques, such as measuring and ranking, are now being used in the governing of the public sector – and in the agricultural sector, as this example shows us. They argue that the public sector is using numbers to govern (Shore & Wright, 2015: 430) and to assess people's performances (Shore & Wright, 2015: 421). In these cases, Shore and Wright calls these tools 'political technologies', and they "... have been expanded as vehicles for assessing the quality, efficiency, and, increasingly, the organizational *effectiveness* of municipal services, hospitals, schools, NGOs, and businesses." (Shore & Wright, 2015: 422). One of the issues with this type of governing is that people and their actions cannot be measured in the same way as money and inventory of goods (Merry, 2011: S88). This is also true for the SI: farmers and their actions are not measurable in the same way as something that is easily counted: the stories and circumstances between each farmers' action are all different and a result on the SI model needs more context than just plain numbers and statistics. Another word for these business models that are now used in the rest of society is 'indicators' (Merry, 2011). Merry uses the term indicators to describe modes of thinking and techniques of government in social spheres outside of the business and management world (2011: S83). To her, indicators are used as a tool to standardize and generalize large and variable pieces of information (Merry, 2011: S85). They also tend to favour standardized knowledge over more specific forms of knowledge and turn qualitative information into quantitative data, which runs the risk of important information being lost in the process (Merry, 2011: S86), which we also can clearly see in the way that Arla ignores the local contexts and knowledges that the farmers possess.

One could say that the SI model works through a sort of ranking, where the farmers who gain the most points get the most money for the milk they deliver. Sauder and Espeland (2009), in line with Shore and Wright (2015) and Merry (2011) explore how rankings have become important features in universities and schools. I use the same arguments, but on the farms and farmers of Devon. Most of the teachers and staff at the universities do not necessarily like or agree with the rankings but are forced to comply with them because all of the other universities do and their results of the rankings matter when attempting to make their school attractive for new students (Sauder & Espeland, 2009: 68). When a school or university raises their ranking, they can expect bonuses. If they drop their ranking, the schools face issues with new students

applying (Sauder & Espeland, 2009: 70). We can draw clear parallels from this to the SI: if farmers receive a good amount of sustainability points their pay for each kilogram of milk raises. If they do not have a high score, however, their pay either drops or stays the same. In Sauder and Espeland's case, they found that the staff of the schools and universities felt that the rankings influenced every decision that they made (2009: 68). This is also the case for Arla's farmers: they base a lot of the decisions that they make on their farm on their ability to gain more points on the SI model.

The 56-day rule

Right after I had helped milk the cows around lunchtime, Albert and Peggy showed me the two sheds that they keep their calves in. In one of the sheds – the one that was located right next to the shed that the cows were in – were the female calves that they were going to use as replacement cows. This shed had a regular layout and the calves were not separated – except by a fence – from the rest of the herd of cows. All of the male calves are, for obvious reasons, not needed on a dairy farm, so the farmers usually wish to get rid of them – in many cases this means slaughter – as soon as possible so that they do not have to have any expenses with them. There are, however, a number of factors that stop the farmers from doing exactly that. First and foremost, due to the high risk of an outbreak of Bovine Tuberculosis (T.B.) the farmers are required to quarantine their calves for several weeks and provide two negative tests before sending them off to the market. This is to avoid bringing potentially sick calves into new herds and contaminating the other cows. On Albert's farm, the male cows that were later being sent to the market were isolated in a shed a short drive away from his main sheds on his farm, in order to avoid potential disease spreading through the air. The shed was also surrounded by three lines of electrical fence, all of them at different heights but at close proximity to the ground. This is to avoid badgers – who are the main spreaders of T.B. - to enter the shed. This is, of course measures that are necessary to be taken in order to avoid the spreading of disease and keep people's cows healthy and applies to everyone; not just farmers that are members of Arla. Another thing that Arla farmers have to consider is Arla's 56-day rule. The 56-day rule is concerned with animal welfare and means that farmers are not allowed to kill or slaughter – also meaning that they cannot send them to market, as that often means that they will be slaughtered - unwanted calves until they are 56 days old. Although Arla's documents state that healthy calves are not to be slaughtered (Arlagården, 2022), the farmers I encountered seemed, for some reason, to have an idea that the rule also counted for unhealthy calves, which I will show further down. The reason that the rule exists is to ensure that the animals live longer and

happier lives and that they do not get sent to slaughter right after they are born. This can, however, result in the opposite effects.

On John's farm his son, David, and I were on our way towards the calves to give them some fresh straw to sleep on, we noticed that one of the calves were laying down in an unusual way. This particular calf was one of the last calves to be born during this particular year's calving season. Usually the very first thing John and David does when a calf is born is collect the colostrum, as it contains the nutrients that a calf needs, as previously mentioned. The reason that he milks the cows for colostrum is so that he can feed it directly to the calves' stomachs through a tube: he does not trust that the calves get enough of it on their own. When the last of the calving cows were standing, however, John had so many new-born calves and work to do with the cows that needed milking, that he did not have the time to take the fresh mums in to milk them for colostrum. This meant that some of the last calves did not get as much colostrum as they perhaps needed, because John had to rely on them drinking enough from their mother by themselves. The cow that we found lying on the ground we later found out was one of the calves that did not receive colostrum through a tube. They came to that conclusion because the same thing had happened to a few other calves, and the only common denominator was that none of the calves had received colostrum from John and therefore, most likely, their immune system had not developed properly and they had not developed a proper immune system. A few of these calves, including the one David and I found lying on the ground, had developed some sort of lung condition, causing them to become very sick and suffer, not being able to eat or drink. The calf was wet, cold, and screaming in pain and it was a rough sight to see. I asked John later if they were planning to do something about the sick calf. By this I meant if they had the intention to put it down and out of its misery. He told me that they were not allowed to. If he were to put a calf down before 56-day period had ended, he could risk getting fined from Arla, which he could not afford.

Another case that showcases how the 56-day rule fails in doing what it aims to do – that is, increasing animal welfare – was not something that I saw myself during my fieldwork, but something that both John and Albert told me about. Both of them had heard several stories of Arla farmers that were struggling with the 56-day rule. The reason that many farmers choose to send their bull calves and the female calves that they will not be using to slaughter as soon as possible is because keeping them alive costs a lot of money: they have to be fed several litres of milk every day, costing the farmer a few pound per calf per day and they need clean fresh straw. This is money that the farmers will not make back, considering that the calves don't produce anything that can be sold and the farmers are lucky if they can get a few pounds per

calf on the market. Although Arla farmers are obliged to keep their calves alive for at least 56 days, they are not compensated by Arla for the large expenses they have to use in order to keep them alive for that long. What then sometimes ends up happening is that farmers will neglect their calves in order to save the money that many of them can't afford to spend on something that will not bring them revenue. This means giving the cows just enough milk to stay alive, not providing them with clear bedding which eventually makes them sick, and not giving them the general care that they need.

Both of the examples from Arla shows us how they seem to act in many ways that are similar to the state. Arla's Sustainability Incentive model is standardizing and generalizing farms with their point system, not taking account for the differences on the individual farms and their basis and opportunities to produce in the exact way that the model requires. Like the example given above from John's opinions about the questionnaires the farmers are given from Arla, there are different ways of producing sustainably and the answers to the questions are not necessarily black or white and need to be filled in with context in order to judge if a farm is sustainable or not. The also make a map of the farms like Scott (1998) argues, that lacks local detail and only focuses the larger picture which causes the important details to be missed when creating the SI model. The 56-day rule is also a perfect example of rules that aim to do one thing but end up failing, like Scott (1998) also argues. This next section will explore organic certification through the Soil Association.

Certification schemes – organic farming

Standing at the bus stop in the small village I had just come to for the first time I tried several times to reach Frederick on his cell phone. When I spoke to him a few days prior he had very generously offered to come and pick me up at the bus stop to drive me the last stretch to his farm. I had already taken both the bus and the train for a longer journey to come and see his organic chicken farm. Frederick gave me a warm welcome as I jumped into his car – which I finally located after looking around for a few minutes – and expressed to me how happy he was that someone found an interest in their farm. He was very keen to share his knowledge. As we pulled up to his driveway, I could instantly see the beauty of the large farm he had created. Entering the main entrance of his 13th century, traditional English farmhouse, the warm and welcoming smell of homemade soup hit our noses. As the three of us were eating lunch we talked about their farm, organic farming, and Frederick's passion about sustainable farming. We had an open conversation about organic farming, and I had the chance to ask a few

questions. I asked, among other things, about the criteria to become certified as an organic farm through the Soil Association. According to Frederick, there are many factors that come into play when applying for organic certification. There is a limit to how many animals you can have on your farm. Frederick argues that the largest factor is the use of fertilizer and pesticides that is the most important factor. Frederick does not use pesticides, herbicides, or artificial fertilizers. When I asked them if they ever felt that there were any extra complications with producing organically his answer was a clear no. In his mind, this is the way that agriculture and farming always has been done. It is only now recently that artificial fertilizers have become a thing. Before that, farmers were doing completely fine farming in the way that we today consider 'organic'. He went on to passionately tell me about some of the cases where farmers have experienced negative consequences using chemicals that they originally thought were safe and recommended me a lot of literature to read to further understand why he chose to become an organic farmer. During my visit to Frederick's farm it became very clear to me that both him and his family were very passionate about farming in as a sustainable way as possible.

Although there are certain requirements that Frederick – and every other farm that is certified as organic – must follow because of the certification, he still claims that there are other things that he does out of his own interest and initiative to make his farm as sustainable as possible. He has, of course, also become organic out of his own interest. He is also active in the organic farming community and told me about a farming conference that is held in Oxford every year. One part of the conference is for organic farming and the other for traditional. When Frederick first became an active organic farmer many years ago the organic conference had almost no attendees, while the traditional one had many. Now, according to him, the tables have turned, and the organic conference now sees many more visitors than the traditional one. The interest for organic farming seems to have peaked in the last few years, Frederick says.

Frederick took me on a walking tour of almost his entire farm after we had eaten lunch and had a good discussion about organic farming. He, amongst other things, took me through the entire process of producing the chickens; from getting the eggs delivered, hatching the eggs in many different stages using advanced technology, as well as him showing me their biomass burner, which they use to send hot water throughout the entire farm to heat it up. Unfortunately he could not let me into the main coup where most of his chickens were located because of the high number of cases of the avian flu in the area. Frederick had until now stayed clear of it, and bringing someone new into the coup would risk bringing infection to his chickens. This was a risk he could not take, as the avian flu can be detrimental to many farmers and could, in the worst cases, wipe out their entire flock. He did, however, think it was safe for me to come into

the large building where they hatched their chickens. As we were entering the room where the machines that were used for the final stages of hatching, we could hear a large orchestra of chirps coming from some of the machines. The chicks had just hatched and as we were opening one of the doors, we could see thousands of chickens tumbling around in the little trays that once held their eggs. He also showed me his apple orchards, and his large, beautiful fields. As we were walking around the wet fields, Frederick told me that this particular day was the first day it had rained in slightly over a month.

As previously mentioned, Frederick's farm is organically certified through the Soil Association, one of the organizations in the UK that are licensed to give out organic certificates. They are a UK-based organization with an emphasis on organic food and sustainable agriculture/food production. The Soil Association Certification Limited is the branch of the Soil Association that is certified to give out organic certificates¹². In order to gain permission to give out organic certificates, an organization needs to be approved to do so by the UK Government¹³. Organizations that are allowed to do so are called 'UK organic control bodies', and the Soil Association Certification Limited is one of these¹⁴. In other words, the Soil Association is a non-governmental organization that carries out the task of giving farmers organic certificates for the government. This makes it so that even though a certification scheme is technically non-governmental, it can still have ties to the government, which raises a lot of questions about to what degree these organizations are non-governmental.

Market-based logic and voluntary certifications

The example above is provided to shed light on what being an organically certified farm may entail. Although I have shown how these non-governmental actors – Arla and the Soil Association - Like mentioned in the introduction, Kuiper and Gemählich (2017) explore how certification schemes act within a market-based logic. This means that even though certification schemes advertise that they are concerned about sustainability, does not necessarily mean that they are concerned about sustainability but rather use the term as a tool of governance. This is applicable to both the Soil Association certification and Arla. We can clearly see through the

¹² Soil Association, Retrieved 25. April 2024 from <https://www.soilassociation.org/who-we-are/>

¹³UK Government, Retrieved 25. April 2024 from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/organic-food-uk-approved-control-bodies>

¹⁴ UK Government, Retrieved 25. April 2024 from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/organic-food-uk-approved-control-bodies>

ethnographic examples provided that Arla and the Soil Association work through a market-based logic. By this I mean that the measures that Arla and the Soil Association take to make their members' farms become more sustainable are made to make the products with their label more attractive to their consumers. Kuiper and Gemählich argue that although the schemes do not actually originate from the market but use different techniques and mechanisms that use logic from the markets to achieve a better position in the market (2017: 35). Using this argument, I argue that Arla and the Soil Association use the term 'sustainability' to make their products more appealing to their consumers who are often concerned with the sustainability of their products. Arla and the Soil Association also use techniques similar to governmental ones: they have their own form of 'governmentality', in Kuiper and Gemählich's words (2017: 35).

When farmers are members of one of these organizations, they are obliged to follow restrictions and policies from both the government and the organizations they are under. One can argue that being a member of organizations such as Arla and the Soil Association are completely voluntary. It could, however, also be argued that it is not necessarily so. Like Kuiper and Gemählich (2017) show through their ethnography from the cut-flower industry in Kenya, being under a certification scheme can give the farmer access to a market that he may be dependent on in order to make a living. The flower farmers would not have access to the large flower-market if they were not Fairtrade certified (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 39). Although I do not argue that the dairy farmers in Devon are as dependant on being part of a certification schemes to gain access to the market, I do argue that they are to some degree. A dairy farmer must deliver their milk to some sort of company that collects their milk. Some of the dairy farmers I spoke to mentioned that they had chosen Arla because they did not require the farmer to deliver the same amount of milk every time they collected, which a lot of other companies do require. Therefore, it is convenient for farmers who struggle to deliver an average amount of milk every time. Hence, being an Arla member is not necessary voluntary. A farmer who cares about producing organically and wishes to do so must be certified to be able to sell the products he has put in the labour and money to produce organically at a reasonable price. On the basis of this, I argue that by using the term 'sustainability', Arla and the Soil Association, use sustainability standards and rules to achieve control over the farmers (Kuiper & Gemählich, 2017: 33) just like the state does.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to use some of the same arguments and theories from chapter two to show how a lot of this can also be true for the non-governmental organizations Arla and

the Soil Association. I have used theories about how the state imposes schemes and policies on the farmers in a top-down manner (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002) and standardize them to make them legible (Scott, 1998) and, through my own ethnographic material, how Arla and the Soil Association work in similar ways. Arla's Sustainability Incentive is similar to the UK government's Sustainable Farming Incentive, both in its name and in the way they impose rules and restrictions on farmers. I argue that the use of measurements and ranking within the scheme is similar to what Shore and Wright (2015), Merry (2011) and Sauder and Espeland (2009) argue, where techniques that are used to count things that are generally easily counted are being used on farmers and the agricultural sector, which is not easily counted and very context dependent. The chapter also shows how Arla's and the Soil Association's drive sustainability is based in a market-logic. This means that the measures that they take are mostly based off its attractiveness on the market.

4. Local Knowledge and Know-How: how schemes and policies ignore farmers' practical and local knowledge

Introduction

Crack...*Snap*... The sounds were coming from deep within the soil as Bernie and I were removing unwanted weeds' roots from the asparagus bed right outside Bernie and his Brother's farmhouse. Using our senses, we could navigate the deep roots within the soil and ensure that all of the weeds were properly removed: if not, the asparagus would not be able to grow when it was in season. "Feel the roots with your rake", Bernie coached me as I was clumsily struggling to remove every single piece of unwelcome root. As my rake was pulling and breaking the roots, we could not only see the roots being pulled up: we could also *feel* and *hear* them snap and break. The next day, Bernie and his brother put me to work on 'aerating' the soil in their garden. After years of people walking on top of it, the soil had become compact and did not allow for air flow or water to enter. To fix this, the soil needed to be aerated. In this particular instance, it was done using a pitchfork which was driven into the soil and pushed up to 'lift' the soil, creating pockets of air within it. This sort of labour requires both the use of senses as well as tacit knowledge. When pushing the pitchfork into the soil, you must feel how deep to go before it hits rock. This is learned by doing the same activity several times to get a feel for it. When lifting the soil with the pitchfork – "fracturing the earth", as Bernie calls it – you must listen to the breaking of the soil and watch as it is being raised up to ensure that it is lifted enough.

The example above illustrates some of the tacit and practical knowledge that farmers must use when working and running their farm. This particular type of knowledge is used in almost every single task that is being executed on the farm, whether the farmer is moving or his herd of cows or planting seeds. Farmers have, in all of the cases that will be mentioned in this chapter, inherited their farm from their parents, who have inherited the farm from their parents, and so on. Farmers have local knowledge about their particular farm and land, a knowledge that is crucial for a farmer to be able to adapt and survive in the landscape he is situated in (Šūmane et.al., 2018), which can be seen in the example from a day in farmer John's life. As has been shown in the previous chapters, the state's agricultural policies and schemes ignore these local knowledges that farmers possess and scientific knowledge is being privileged over farmers' knowledge (Scott, 1998; Šūmane et.al., 2018). This chapter will dive even deeper into this issue. In this chapter, I explore exactly what these local and practical knowledges are and how farmers

use them to farm in the best possible- and most sustainable – way. I look at how farmers have gained practical knowledge through both working the land for many years and how the state’s ignorance of this unique, local knowledge can result in negative consequences. I argue with Scott (1998) that the state does not account for this knowledge when creating policies and restrictions. Because of this, they seem to fail in some instances, which will be shown through ethnographic examples. I will look at different ways of viewing knowledge and the landscape by using Tim Ingold’s (1993) concept of globes vs spheres and Judith Okely’s (2001) ‘looking’ vs ‘seeing’. I use different ethnographical examples to highlight these arguments. I will also explore how family traditions and the inheritance of farms contributes to the farmers’ local knowledge and how family tradition is an important subject for most of them. Drawing further on this, I argue that when farmers are taking care of their farm and their land, they are also caring for their families and their social relations (Hugøy, 2024).

Practical and local knowledge

Driving around in his worn-down, black car, John and I were discussing the ELM schemes as we were speeding past the large, dominating windmills spinning around in the green and lush landscape of Devon’s countryside. The first milking of the day was due, and we had just started our half-an-hour long drive over to John’s main farm – Blueberry Hill Farm – where his cows were waiting patiently outside of his milking parlour. From the first day that I met John, it was clear to me that he did not particularly think anything of the new schemes that were implemented in the UK post-Brexit. Like many other farmers, as mentioned in chapter two, he was still unsure about what exactly the ELM schemes would look like once they were completely finished and decided upon, and he therefore found it challenging to fully weave them into his already existing practice. Most importantly, however, he was clear that he found it annoying and inconvenient that they do not account for the massive amount of local knowledge that the farmers already possess. He stated to me that he was worried about most of the schemes being based on expert knowledge and favouring the perspectives of people who have not engaged with the land like the farmers themselves have and who do not have years of personal experience from farming. All farms are different and have completely unique needs, and a complication of the ‘one-size-fits-all’ model that the ELM schemes and agricultural policies seem to be based on is that the farmers will not be able to practice in the ways that the farmers’ feel is necessary or best for their particular farm.

James Scott (1998) gives us some theories to think with when it comes to this. As mentioned in previous chapters, Scott’s argument is that the state is able to manipulate and

control its population through making it legible and easy for the state to read and understand. In the start of his book, Scott gives us a detailed description of a city from the Middle Ages: the city of Bruges. At first glance, Bruges – like many other cities from the same time period – seems to be unorganized and chaotic. With streets and paths with seemingly no obvious pattern, one could easily write off the city of Bruges as messy and out of order. As an outsider, one could not possibly navigate the city. This is because the city favours local knowledge. In order to find your way through and understand the inner workings of the city one would have to either be a local or receive assistance from a local. The city does not conform to what we would think of as the ‘normal’ way of what a city is supposed to look like, i.e., organized, tidy, and easy for an outsider or tourist to navigate. Rather, Bruges privileges local knowledge over outsider knowledge (Scott, 1998: 53) and it is hence not legible for a person coming from the outside and into the city. I wish to make a comparison between the organization of Bruges and the farms in Devon. Just like Bruges, the farms in Devon are unique and require local knowledge – i.e., the farmer’s knowledge – to navigate and fully understand how the farm works. The outsiders of the farms are the top-down actors that impose schemes and policies on the farmers. Using this comparison, I argue that the state and non-state actors, rather than favouring the local knowledge of the farmers – like in Bruges – favour scientific ‘outsider’ knowledge. Following are a few examples that emphasize this argument.

Šūmane et. al. (2018) use the term ‘informal knowledge’ to describe the practical knowledge that farmers possess, and they argue that this kind of knowledge can help make agriculture more sustainable and resilient (2018: 233). Informal knowledge is opposed to ‘formal knowledge’, which refers to scientific and expert knowledge (Šūmane et.al., 2018: 234). They also make a divide between ‘local’ and ‘farmers’ knowledge, where the local knowledge is a set of knowledges and practices that are developed over time by people being in the place that they are. Farmer’s knowledge is a form of local knowledge but refers to the farmer’s knowledge about local conditions and resources that “... enables them farm in specific local conditions.” (Šūmane, et.al, 2018: 233). The formal knowledge is often privileged over farmers’ knowledge (Kloppenborg, 1991 in Šūmane et.al., 2018: 234) and a consequence of this is that farmers’ knowledge is viewed as insubordinate. Because of the large standardizations in the agricultural industry, the correct knowledge – i.e., scientific, and expert knowledge – is prioritized over local knowledge, and the application of farmers’ knowledge “... can be restricted by laws and regulations.” (Šūmane et.al., 2018: 234). By not viewing informal knowledge as equally important as formal knowledge, Šūmane et.al. argue that they lose out on knowledge that can improve both sustainability and resilience in the agricultural industry (2018:

234). Farmers do, however, not use just ‘informal’ or ‘formal’ knowledge, but a mixture between the both of them. They do not blindly trust the formal knowledge either but weigh them up against their own experiences with farming (Šūmane et al., 2018: 234). The authors also argue that if local knowledge was taken more seriously, they could use it to weigh formal knowledge up against “... complex local conditions, concerns and experience.” (Šūmane et.al., 2018: 234).

Knowing the cow

On one of my last days at Blueberry Hill Farm, I, along with John and a few other people, were running the rotating milking parlour early in the morning. When having milked the same cows for years in John’s case and weeks in mine, one gets familiar with the cows, the cows’ teats, how easy the suction cups latch on, and how the cow acts when being milked. Cows are creatures of habit, and they all had their own permanent places in the parlour: the same cow would be first every single day, and the same cow would be last, making the milking and the reaction of each cow very predictable. On this particular day, everything had gone smoothly until the very last cow stepped onto the parlour. Usually all of the cows would stand close to the parlour, ready to step on when it was their turn. This cow, however, came running from one of the fields a few minutes after what we thought was the last cow of the day had stepped on. The teats were familiar – I mostly noticed because this her teats were small and irregularly shaped, causing the cups to have some issues with latching – and I recognized her as one of the cows who usually was right in the middle of the queue of waiting cows. On this day, Something had held her up in the field, causing her to come late. She was not happy about this. She was kicking and risking everyone injury, making it very difficult to get the cups placed safely on to her teats. John, who knows every single one of his cows in and out, understood immediately why she was acting like this. She was mad that she was the last cow on the parlour.

Every single day on the parlour, John and his son David would check every single cows’ utters to make sure that they were healthy and that the milk that was coming out looked normal. By using touch and sight, they could see and feel when a cow’s utter was infected and needed treatment. Several times during the milking David would stop the parlour whenever he could see something that looked out of the ordinary. Whenever he would show me what was wrong, I could not see what it was until he explained it to me. This was knowledge that John had learned from both his parents and from being hands on with cows every day for most of his life. It is also knowledge that he has passed on to his son David. These examples help us understand how farmers use tacit and practical knowledge to read their cows and to give them the help they

need. I will now provide examples of how farmers use local and practical knowledge to work their land.

Individual farms and specialized knowledge

To compare the local knowledge that the farmers have with the more general ‘outside’ knowledge that the state has, Metis is a good concept to think with (Scott, 1998). Metis refers to practical knowledge of practical skills and comes from ancient Greece. “Broadly understood, Metis represents a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment.” (Scott, 1998: 313). In some cases, responding to these changes do not require a lot of knowledge, whereas in others, like farmers adapting to the changing climate, local knowledge and practical knowledge is required. Metis is required when doing activities that you cannot learn without doing it yourself (Scott, 1998: 313): for example, you can’t learn exactly what the soil needs without having years of experience with working that particular soil, or you can’t tell if a cow is sick without having a long, tight relationship with that particular cow. You also can’t tell someone how to ride a bicycle and expect them to get it on their first try: learning to ride a bicycle requires lots of practice and it requires the person who is learning to participate in the activity (Scott, 1998: 313). Just like a firefighter needs background knowledge of a lot of different situations to put out different fires (Scott, 1998: 314) a farmer needs a large collection of specific, local knowledge to adapt to unfortunate situations, like heavy rainfall or drought, to avoid the work he has done being for nothing. Scott also argues that the knowledge associated with Metis is almost always local. That is, the practical knowledge acquired by a farmer is bound by the location his farm is in.

Going back to the example about Albert’s farm in an NVZ provided in chapter two can be beneficial to fully understand the importance of practical knowledge when executing different tasks on a farm. Being in an NVZ implies that water around the area is particularly exposed to nitrate pollution from surrounding farms. According to the UK Government, “Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. They include about 50% of land in England.” (UK Government, 2018). Being in an NVZ comes with a handful of different rules and restrictions. Some of these include a limit on how much nitrogen containing fertiliser – both from organic manure and manufactured fertilizer – you can spread each year, planning and recording all of your nitrogen usage throughout the year, assess the risk of applying nitrate to a specific area – it is considered a felony to contaminate nearby water sources with nitrogen - and only applying nitrogen within a fixed

period of the year (UK Government, 2018). These restrictions and rules of spreading nitrogen comes with difficulties for farmers whose farms are in NVZs.

Albert and I were walking around his entire farm as he was telling me, in detail, how they kept their cows and how they worked on their farm. We had just been to see the sheds where the cows are held and were nearly finished touring the farm when we arrived at the farm's fields. Most of Albert's fields were located directly behind his sheds, in close proximity to his slurry pit. Although, at the time, I did not know what it meant for Albert and his farm, I could clearly see that his fields were sloping towards a stream of water nearby the end of the fields. I later came to find out - during a conversation in the kitchen with Albert's wife, Peggy – started telling me about their experience with being in an NVZ. The whole point with the NVZs being established and rules and restrictions imposed on these zones is to prevent nearby water streams being polluted by the agricultural sector, but the result is, seemingly, quite the opposite of its wanted effects. Because of the regulations and restrictions' lack of listening to local knowledge, the water streams are at risk of being polluted; exactly what they don't want to happen.

A similar example of this can also be found in Scott's 'Seeing like a state'. When planning the lower Shire Valley, the schemes that were being implemented had – or at least very few of them – been compared to and verified to the local contexts. The schemes were to promote modern agriculture and follow certain aesthetic and visual standards. One of the issues that needed to be tackled in the lower Shire Valley was soil erosion. The solution to this, according to the planners, was a process called 'ridging'. Ridging was, for several good reasons, refused by the local population. Some of the reasons were that "[r]idging on sandy soil was unstable, tending to create larger erosion gullies during the rainy season, and ridging caused the soil to dry out quickly during the dry season, encouraging white ants to attack the roots of crops." (Scott, 1998: 227).

We can draw parallels from what Scott calls High Modernism to that of the top-down agricultural schemes and policies. In strong versions of High Modernism, "[o]nly those who have the scientific knowledge to discern and create this superior social order are fit to rule in the new age." (Scott, 1998: 94). Although I am in no way comparing the UK Government or other agricultural actors to Lenin's High Modernist authoritarian regime (Scott, 1998), the ways that scientific knowledge is favoured in these types of regimes can be compared to restrictions and rules imposed on the farmers. Scott provides a few different examples of how ambitious high-modernist schemes on the agricultural industry have ended up completely failing, one of them being a giant sovkhos built in Russia. The aim of this sovkhos was to use its very large area of acreage to grow wheat. The first years after it was established, the sovkhos was

successful in producing large quantities of wheat. After the initial years, however, it started failing. Scott argues that a large part of the reason for its failure was the context in which the farm was located within. “The farm, unlike the plan, was not a hypothecated, generic, abstract farm but an unpredictable, complex, and particular farm, with its own unique combination of soils, social structure, administrative culture, weather, political strictures, machinery, roads, and the work skills and habits of its employees.” (Scott, 1998: 201). The planning and the execution of the sovkhos had completely failed in considering both the context of the specific, individual farm and local knowledge (Scott, 1998). Scott also provides us with an example of colonial agricultural policy in Africa, where the farmer’s local knowledge was considered useless and scientific knowledge was privileged over the practices of the African agricultural practices (Scott, 1998: 226). The reason I give some of these examples is to highlight Scott’s argument about how scientific knowledge has, in many cases all over the world, been privileged over local, practical knowledge. This can also be seen in the policies and schemes imposed on the farmers in Devon, England.

Scott (1998) emphasises throughout his entire book that farming is very dependent on context and is place specific. A machine, a specific crop, or a certain way of doing farming can work in one place and completely fail in another. Scott gives us another example from Africa, this time in Ethiopia. When the Ethiopians were forcibly resettled during colonial times, a large amount of place specific knowledge that had been accumulated throughout many years and generations was lost:

“[t]he farmer was familiar with each of several varieties of any crop, when to plant it, how deeply to sow it, how to prepare the soil, and how to tend and harvest it. This knowledge was *place specific* in the sense that the successful growing of any variety required local knowledge about rainfall and soils, down to and including the peculiarities of each plot the farmer cultivated. It was also place specific in the sense that much of this knowledge was stored in the collective memory of the locality: an oral archive of techniques, seed varieties, and ecological information.” (Scott, 1998: 251).

From this example, one can begin to think about the importance of passing down important knowledge about farming and specific places of farming to newer generations to keep the knowledge alive and ensure that it does not get lost. This will be explored later on in the chapter.

Globes and spheres vs looking and seeing

In order to fully understand the different ways of viewing knowledge and different perspectives, I will present two different theories on different ways of viewing the world. The first one is that of Tim Ingold (1993) who claims that the general Western image of the environment – that is, the world in which we live – as a globe, implicates that we need to view it from an outside perspective. Although this perspective of the environment as a globe is what is most widely taught, Ingold points out that it is simply impossible for us to achieve a global perspective: “... life is lived at such close proximity to the earth’s surface that a global perspective is unobtainable.” (1993: 29). Because of the global perspective being ‘detached’ from lived experience within the environment, Ingold states that “[t]he global environment is not a lifeworld, it is a world apart from life.” (1993: 30). Instead of a global perspective, Ingold introduces the sphere, a concept which is somewhat of an ‘ancient’ European idea compared to the image of the globe: instead of being opaque and hard, like the globe, a sphere is transparent and soft. The idea of the sphere is that man’s attention at the centre and points outwards, so that his mind can penetrate each sphere. “Unlike the solid globe, which can only be perceived as such from without, spheres ... were to be perceived from within” (Ingold, 1993: 30). What Ingold argues is that the perception of the environment as a globe implicates a “world divorced from life”, whereas the perception of the environment as a globe implicates a lifeworld imaged from an experiential centre (1993: 32-33). Using this concept, I argue that the farmers in Devon view the environment, in this case the farms, from the perspective of the sphere – that is, they are experiencing the environment from ground-level – whereas the actors implementing agricultural schemes and policies are viewing them from a global perspective.

One of the consequences of this divide in perspectives is that there becomes a split between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ perspectives. “In so far as the latter, afforded to being outside the world, is seen to be both real and total, the former, afforded to beings in the world (that is, ordinary people), is regarded as illusory and incomplete.” (Ingold, 1993: 33). This is important to keep in mind while discussing the farmers’ local knowledge role in their agricultural practices. Because of the general western idea of the world as a globe, knowledge that is obtained from looking at the world through and outside perspective is privileged from the knowledge we achieve by being and living in the world (Ingold, 1993: 33). The difference between a ‘local’ and ‘global’ perspective are the different ways of perceiving the world: the local perspective is more focused on actively engaging in the world, ‘dwelling’ as Ingold calls it, instead of the detached observations from the global perspective. A Local perspective is thus not less valued or more narrowly focused: it is simply a difference of ‘kinds’ of knowledge and

observations (Ingold, 1993: 38). Although there only exists one global perspective, the local perspectives will vary from place to place, resulting in infinitely different local perspectives that vary from different contexts. Ingold is firm to point out, however, that this does not mean that the local perspective is more incomplete than the global one (1993: 38). This last part is closely related to that of Scott's (1998) argument on local knowledge being place and context specific; it varies greatly from place to place.

Judith Okely (2001) also explores different perspectives, but on a smaller scale than Ingold's globe and sphere perspectives. Through detailed ethnographic description of the landscape and the farmers' relationship to it, she describes how viewing the landscape can be done either by 'looking' or by 'seeing', two very different perspectives that it is crucial that we differentiate between, according to her. "There is a distinction between the distant, commanding overview and a participatory seeing and understanding. There is a difference between surveillance and a receptive, absorbing experiential seeing." (Okely, 2001: 103). If we look at 'looking' and 'seeing' through the perspective of anthropology as a discipline, Okely argues that the distinction between looking and seeing can be found in anthropology's participant observation: when an anthropologist is participating in participant observation, the anthropologist is not 'looking': she is 'seeing', meaning that she is engaging in the activities of the informants she is following (Okely, 2001: 104). During fieldwork "... the anthropologist draws on empathetic participation, [it] attunes us to the minutiae of others' experience and life contexts." (Okely, 2001: 104).

Okely goes on to explain how farmers in her field site, Normandie, France, engaged with the landscape through different forms of skills and knowledge that were both grounded in physical labour. The farmers did not just view the landscape from afar: "[t]hey lived, worked and ate from the landscape." (Okely, 2001: 107). "The landscape was worked for consumption; in eating its products, the cultivators were devouring these fruits of their labour in relation to the landscape." (Okely, 2001: 107). Okely argues that when it comes to produce "[t]here are significant contrasts between the experience and beliefs of the cultivator as producer/consumer with the purchaser/consumer who has not engaged with the landscape as producer." (2001: 108). Okely uses the term 'panoptican outsider perspective', which she defines as a surveillance gaze from above, contrasted to the more local gaze where the farmers are actively working the landscape they are gazing (Okely, 2001: 111). People who have not themselves worked and engaged with the landscape only acquire second-hand knowledge about the products and the landscape: they do not have the same feel for it as the people who produced it (Okely, 2001:

116). “The sense of taste, like other senses, is intimately bound up with visions and labouring within the landscape.” (Okely, 2001: 117). This is also the case for farmers in Devon.

One could argue that Ingold’s position of the global versus the sphere romanticizes and privileges the sphere perspective, i.e., the local perspective. Although this is very important, as I have hopefully shown throughout this thesis, one must also not forget that the global perspective is equally as important. Farmers, especially young ones, make use of a mixture of the knowledge that has been passed on to them, and knowledge that they themselves have acquired through school university, etc. They are combining the globe and sphere perspective. By combining these two forms of knowledge they are able to bring on new changes to the agricultural industry that the generation before them may not have been able to. This will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

Oral histories

Building on Scott’s statement about oral archives, I will use Riley and Harvey’s (2005) arguments on how oral histories can help us understand the meaning of the countryside. They argue that most academic and media interpretations of heritage and landscape are mainly based on scientific and expert knowledge (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 269-270) and that an oral history approach might help us understand these things from a local perspective and which accounts for personal and local understandings of the agricultural landscape in Devon (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 270). They do, however, point out that most people’s thoughts toward the countryside are based on non-expert opinions, and that events such as foot and mouth disease have made people sceptical towards expert knowledge (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 270). One of the issues with a scientific way of viewing the landscape in Devon is, according to Riley and Harvey, that it is viewed as simply something ‘aesthetic’ (2005: 272). One of the examples that Riley and Harvey give of scientific vs local interpretations of the landscape is a burial mound from the bronze age that is located on one of the farmer’s land. The archaeologists that recorded and surveyed the burial mound in the 1990’s claimed that they were the ones that discovered it because it had not previously been recorded. The farmers who’s land it was on, however, had known about it his entire life. The farmer had used it as a cattle ramp (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 274). This means that the farmer viewed the burial mound as an aid to his work rather than as an aesthetic and historical object (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 274). Using a burial mound as a cattle ramp is also not seen to be the ‘correct’ way of using it. Although the farmers use of the mound was not considered correct, it still carried with it a lot of meaning that needs to be recognized. The use of the mound as a cattle ramp may also have helped preserved it as the farmer found a use for

it instead of removing it to make space (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 273). Another example that the authors provide is that of the hedgerows that are everywhere in the landscape of Devon. Farmers have over the years had many different uses for these hedgerows, amongst some of them is that they used the trimmings from the hedges to light the fire (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 276) and, from my own experience in the field, as fences for animals (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 283) and to stop water from flooding the fields. This means that the hedgerows in Devon are not purely aesthetic and there to create a romantic view of the countryside, but actually have a purpose for the farmers which becomes apparent when you look at farmers' narratives of them (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 276). Riley and Harvey argue that “[e]ach of the oral history examples ... reinforces a level of scepticism towards the ‘one size fits all’ approach that is so common in present-day agri-environmental policies.” (2005: 277). One of the examples they use is the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and how they pay farmers to manage their hedgerows in a ‘traditional’ way, which only focuses on their aesthetic value and ignores the practical and functional value that they possess and have possessed for so long (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 277). In many of the accounts of the agricultural effects on the landscape in Devon, the farmers themselves have been completely rules out, and scientific and expert knowledge have been privileged (Riley & Harvey, 2005: 281).

Family farming and passing down knowledge

As we were sitting in front of the fireplace on a haybale each, eating pancakes and drinking coffee, Edward and I talked endlessly about sustainable farming. Edward and his wife, Harriet, are both farmers and the owners of a web-based provider of sustainably farmed produce. Their focus is on quality produce that has been produced both sustainably and with strict rules about animal welfare. During our conversation on sustainable farming, the topic of family tradition came up. In Edward's opinion, family farming is the most sustainable way of farming. When a farm is family owned, one could assume that the farmers are keepers of several generations of important, local knowledge. This deep, local knowledge provides the farmers with important information about the individual needs of the farm, which in turn helps farmers avoid certain risks. Avoiding risks on the farm, which could potentially affect the farmer's produce and revenue, is sustainable in environmental terms because the farmer avoids wasting produce, but also in the sense that the farm is able to run for more generations to come. These small-scale, family-owned farms are therefore much better equipped with the knowledge needed to farm in that specific place and context than farms of larger scales. The issue with small-scale farms being replaced with larger-scale farms is that a lot of this local knowledge is lost, meaning less

sustainable agriculture. The rising of large-scale farms creates a “monoculture of both crop and mind”, Edward argues. By this, he implies that monoculture in the sense of monoculture of crops is just as environmentally damaging as farmers mostly being focused on producing as much as possible for revenue, i.e., monoculture of the mind.

One common factor I kept seeing on every single farm I visited – regardless of if it was a sheep, dairy, or chicken farm – was the focus on family tradition. All of my informants who were farmers personally had inherited their farm from their parents. All of them also had children – most of them sons but some daughters – who had already or were planning to take over the farm. Frederick had retired and his middle son had already taken over the entire responsibility on the chicken farm. Albert was still running the farm but was thinking of retiring and had his son started on slowly taking over parts of the running of the farm. Oscar was also, at the time of my fieldwork, close to retiring. His daughter, Kate, had taken over large parts of the farm, although Oscar was still the head of the farm. John’s son was still young, and John had no plans to retire anytime soon, but he had already started prepping his son and sharing the responsibility on their farm, hoping that he would someday want to take over. It seems very common, at least in my experience, for farmers to have a strong wish to pass down both their knowledge and their farm: most of the farmers have themselves inherited both from their own parents. One could think that part of the reason for this is that farms in England are too expensive for most to buy: one almost has to inherit one if one wishes to own a farm. However, it did seem like the largest reason for this is the desire to pass down knowledge and to keep the farm within the family.

One of the motivations that farmers often have when working on their farm is the pride that they have in farms that they have, in many cases, inherited and which has been in the family for several generations. Although this can have negative consequences. for example being unwilling to defer from long-standing family traditions – it often causes the farmers to be adaptive in times when it is needed to be creative and resilient (Šūmane et.al., 2018: 236). Gaining experience and knowledge from family and community is important for new, young farmers to choose to become farmers themselves (Šūmane, et.al., 2018: 239).

Some of the things often talked about in relation to climate change is that the new, young generation will be the ones who will be at the forefront when trying to combat it. Similar discussions are often heard within farming communities. Like previously discussed in chapter 2, many of the farmers who have been farming for many years have a hard time adapting to both climate change and the new schemes and policies. When talking about the new generation of farmers, many have hopes that they will not only be more willing to adapt their practices to

the changing environment, but also that they will have a positive influence on their parents. Many of the younger farmers have university degrees, often in agriculture, where they learn about ways of reducing their carbon footprint on the farm and how to make sure that their farm is as environmentally friendly as possible. This, combined with the local knowledge they have been taught by their parents, is hoped by many to create a new generation of farmers that will be able and willing to make the changes that are needed. I argue that when the farmers care for and work on their farms, they also care for their families and their social relations, as well as for the farmers who have worked the land in the past (Hugøy, 2024: 15) and for the next generation who will inherit the farm from them.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with farmer's local knowledge and how their tacit and professional knowledge are important in order to deal with the different issues that they face on their farm. I have shown through different examples how the farmers have – over years of working their own land and being present with their animals – have learned to read their soil and their animals. This makes it possible for them to easily adapt to different challenges, like when their cows are sick of it their soil needs attention. I have argued that this knowledge is crucial for farmers to use when attempting to make their farm more sustainable. However, the schemes and policies that they are being put under ignore this knowledge, which can sometimes backfire, as I have shown through the example from Albert's farm in an NVZ. The chapter shows how different ways of viewing the landscape – globes and spheres (Ingold, 1993) vs seeing and looking (Okely, 2001) – shows how the state views the agricultural sector as an outsider while the farmers themselves view it from an inside perspective. Finally, chapter also argues that the passing down of knowledge and tradition is important in providing farmers with knowledge on how to best work their farms and how it is important for most farmers to continue passing down their knowledge.

Conclusion

At the end of this thesis, I wish to provide a brief summary of the research questions I have addressed and the ethnographic examples that follow them. In the introduction chapter of this thesis I made it clear that I wished to focus on how farmers themselves experience, navigate, and are affected by agricultural restrictions and policies that are being inflicted on them. I have argued throughout this thesis that the state's schemes and policies are clearly coming from a 'top-down' perspective, where expert and scientific knowledge is heavily privileged over the farmers' local knowledge. By using ethnographic examples, I have attempted to show how farmers experience the restrictions that are applied to their practice and how they gain information on the schemes and policies and change their practice to conform to them as best as possible. I argue that all of the farmers included in this thesis have a desire to practice sustainably, but on their own terms, i.e., by using their own local knowledge. They also find it difficult to fully comply to some of the restrictions, as the ELM schemes are not yet fully finished being created. Although standardizing and making a general map (Scott, 1998) is necessary for the state to gain a useful overview, it is still problematic that it ignores the local details. I also show how institutions outside of the government act in ways similar to the state, by imposing their own schemes and policies on the farmers, such as Arla's Sustainability Incentive. Although non-state actors act in state-like ways, like Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue, and govern the farmers in similar ways, they also work in a clear market-based logic, like Kuiper and Gemählich (2017) argue. Using these arguments and ethnography from farmers that are organically certified through the Soil Association or deliver their milk to Arla, I have shown how these institutions seem to, through a market-based logic, focus on sustainability because it looks good on the market and for the consumer. Lastly, I have focused on family-traditions and how the passing-down of both the farm and important local knowledge makes the farmers able to adapt to unforeseen conditions and to know what is best for their farm both in terms of profit and sustainability. Farmers gain knowledge from working their land and from years and years of adapting different changes and overcoming different challenges, which I have shown through some examples of farmers engaging with their animals and their land. This knowledge, I argue, is important to acknowledge when the state and different institutions are imposing restrictions on the farmers in order to reach a certain sustainability goal. As Cosgrove argues, the garden of England – in this case, Devon – is after all a landscape of labour (1993: 296).

Although my findings during my fieldwork have provided me with lots of good answers to questions I had beforehand, as well as rising new and interesting questions that I have attempted to address in this thesis, there are some questions that still remain partially unanswered. First of all, it would be interesting and beneficial to gain more insight into the ways that family-traditions are both discussed and produced within the farming families. Although I have sufficient data on how my informants all had a wish to pass their farm on to their own children to keep it within the family, it would be interesting to explore exactly how this is talked about, how the knowledge is passed down, and how it is done in practice. A detailed account of how the children are prepared to take over the farm and to what extent they are followed up by their parents after taking over the farm. Furthermore, it would be interesting to dig deeper into how the family economies are connected to the farm's economy and how the success of the farm affects the livelihood of the family. Exactly how much money each farmer receives and for what through the ELM schemes would also be interesting to include in order to highlight how the schemes affect the farmers' practices, however, this was not something that the farmers would generally include when explaining how they were affected by the ELM schemes.

Finally, I wish to come with a few concluding remarks about the road ahead for farmers in Devon. As the ELM schemes are being perfected and changed it will be interesting to see what their final form will look like. DEFRA and the government are continuously updating their schemes and policies, and it is impossible to predict what they will mean for farmers in a few years' time. One could speculate how the schemes and policies can be changed to accommodate for the farmers' already existing knowledge in the best ways possible. One of these possible solutions could be what Agrawal (2005) writes on a decentralized government or decentralized environmental regulations, where the citizens of the villages in close proximity to the forests are invited to be a part of deciding how the forests are to be regulated. Similarities to this can be found in the UK government's SFI pilot, where farmers are invited to test out the scheme and give their opinion on it. This is, however, not something that there seems to be a large focus on for now. It will be interesting to see what the schemes look like in the near future. Furthermore it will be interesting to pay attention to the potential future protests and oppositions from the farmers in Devon and the UK as a whole. As previously mentioned, there seems to be a lack of grand protests and oppositions from the small-scale, family-farmers in Devon which I have spoken to. The farmers I have talked to resist the schemes and policies by talking privately about them with their farming colleagues and family rather than the large, public

resistance that many farmers in the world are participating in. The future additions to the agricultural schemes and policies will show us if this changes or if it stays the same.

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